

The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God

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“The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God”
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This is the first in a series of articles that, when complete, will explain how the ancient Hebrew idioms “build/make a house,” “raise up a seed,” and “raise up/make a name” both conceal and reveal the first of seven messages God has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. Recommended reading for this series includes Michael David Coogan’s **Stories From Ancient Canaan** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978) and N. K. Sandars’ **The Epic of Gilgamesh** (London: Penguin Books, 1972). Academically minded readers might also want to consult John Gibson’s revision of G.R. Driver’s **Canaanite Myths and Legends** (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd., 1977).

Introduction

The above-mentioned works of Coogan and Gibson contain translations of some of the longer Canaanite mythological texts discovered at Ras Shamra (ancient Ugarit) in the years between 1929 and 1939. Coogan’s work gives both a translation and an interpretation of the original texts. Gibson provides a transliteration of the texts along with a literal translation. However, both men make completely unwarranted assumptions, assumptions that undermine the validity of their translations, as I will explain below.

In this series, I will provide my own translation of the texts I quote, including the Hebrew Scriptures. I have to do that for the Canaanite texts because all other translations of these texts are protected by copyright. I include my own translation of the Hebrew Scriptures because specific words and idioms in the

original language need to be imbued with a more salient English meaning than they are normally given. At times, however, I am going to do nothing more than transliterate a Hebrew term and tell you what the term *means*. That way, you can read the text for yourself without having your understanding diminished by my use of an inaccurate English term that imparts an erroneous connotation to the text.

The importance of the clay tablets discovered at the ancient city of Ugarit lies in their subject matter. Several of them describe the death and resurrection of the Canaanite god Baal. Although some of the tablets were broken and had to be pieced back together, that is nothing compared to the many other factors that make their interpretation so difficult. For example, by the time they were found, much of the cuneiform writing on them had been etched away by centuries of exposure to moisture. However, even that is not the most imposing obstacle scholars have had to overcome.

The most severe impediment to understanding the Ugaritic texts uncovered at Ras Shamra is the fact that scholars do not know what purpose the texts served. Also, since many of the Baal texts were written by the same scribe, scholars have assumed that they are part of the same sequence of texts. That assumption is not valid. However, without an accurate understanding of the Hebrew idioms “build a house,” “raise up a seed,” and “make a name,” it is impossible for anyone—scholar and layman alike—to understand why these mythological texts were never intended to be understood that way.

I am going to explain in layman’s terms the Canaanite culture/religion that stands behind both

these Canaanite texts and the Hebrew Scriptures. I do not make that claim idly, so pay close attention. Even the most learned scholars do not understand the mind-set that gave rise to the ancient mystery religions in general and the message of the Hebrew Scriptures in specific. Only after I have completed my work will you be able to appreciate the incredibly rich mythological imagery the Prophets of Israel used to speak concerning Jesus Christ. I know my claims make me appear to be either arrogant, ridiculous, or suffering from serious delusions. They were meant to. However, the God Who called me has ensured that I have academic credentials equal to the best of them. So it's clear He intends to use what I teach to reveal the theories of proud but ignorant scholars for exactly what they are—the vain imagination of fools.

Now, I realize my explanation of the seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures is not only subject to dispute, it is extremely controversial. So it will certainly be disputed. That's to be expected. Most folks would rather argue over minute details than agree with the obvious. So their kind will no doubt reject what I have to say. However, scholars only vaguely understand the Babylonian, Canaanite, Greek, and Hebrew texts from which I got my information. That is in spite of decades spent trying to understand the areas of Biblical Theology, Sumerology, Egyptology, Assyriology, Ugaritic mythology, Comparative Religion, and half a dozen other related fields. But their lack of insight is due in large part to the fact that they haven't yet been able to discern the *meaning* and *significance* of the various semitic idioms I am going to explain to you. If that notion seems farfetched, perhaps you should read what the Apostle Paul said about God making fools of the wise:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?
(1 Corinthians 1:20)

The ignorance of scholars concerning the things I teach doesn't concern me in the least. They wouldn't accept my explanation even if they had it explained to them. That's why I am not seeking to "prove" anything to them, or to anyone else for that matter. I'm only doing what God called me to do: I'm disseminating information, specifically, a detailed explanation of

the vast body of "evidence" in the Hebrew Scriptures. God wants certain folks to understand the *meaning* of that evidence before the End. So He sent me to explain it to them.

You'll know if my explanation of the Scriptures is meant for you. It will make sense, and you will believe it. If it isn't meant for you, it won't make a bit of sense, and you won't believe it. But that's your choice. I've already told you "evidence" is the only objective thing. ["The Demons Also Believe (Poor Devils!)" *The Voice of Elijah*, October 1991.] "Proof" is entirely subjective. It exists only in your mind. That is, whether or not you think something "proves" something else depends entirely on whether you find a particular explanation of the evidence convincing. That being the case, please don't bother writing me a pseudo-intellectual request asking for more "proof" of the things I write. If that's your mind-set, it's obvious God did not call me to teach you anything.

So there it is. In God's wisdom, He called me to do but one thing. That's the only thing I'm going to do. I'm going to put together an explanation of all the evidence God has gathered against you. Then, after I've done what God called me to do, He will Himself be along to judge you on the basis of whether or not you have admitted my explanation of the evidence against you is true. The Final Judgment will certainly "prove" to you once and for all time that it is true. Unfortunately, that will be a bit too late for your belief to do you any good. However, if you honestly believe what I teach, you will have already asked for and received the clemency of that Supreme Court.

Have I left sufficient room for anyone to misunderstand the claims I make concerning my calling? Undoubtedly. Most would rather believe I have a mental problem. Consequently, they will not even bother seriously considering my explanation of the evidence. But the God Who called me did not call me to teach morons. And by the time I have fulfilled my calling, only the morons among us will continue to refuse to believe that the God of the Bible is a God consumed by a fiery, burning wrath instead of the goofy god of unconditional love they want to go on believing He is (contrary, I might add, to the evidence one finds in the Scriptures).

There. Is that plain enough for you? The God of wrath Who created us all and will soon destroy the wicked sent me to do exactly what I am doing—mock

and ridicule those who think they are much more intelligent and sophisticated than they actually are. He did not call me to teach anyone who cannot recognize and admit their own ignorance. That includes anyone who finds my use of terms like “stupid,” “idiot” and “moron” even the slightest bit offensive—which only goes to show you the depth of God’s rage.

Let me do one additional bit of housekeeping for the benefit of those misguided souls who think the Apostles and Prophets wrote the King James Version. When I refer to the Hebrew Scriptures, I have in mind those books of Scripture that Christians usually call the Old Testament. By the same token, I normally call the New Testament the Greek Scriptures. I use that terminology to emphasize the fact that the Truth of the Scriptural message lies hidden in the original languages in which they were written. It cannot be found in some translation, no matter how terrific anyone considers that translation to be.

My point is, although the Old Testament exists in various languages, the Hebrew Scriptures exist in only one. The same applies to the Greek Scriptures. Purists may find fault with the nomenclature I have chosen. So be it. Let them use whatever designation they find more appropriate. I’ll continue to use what I have chosen. I realize the Hebrew Scriptures have a bit of Aramaic mixed in. As a matter of fact, an even smaller amount of several other ancient languages is scattered around in them. But by and large, the Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew or, if you want to be even more picky, a Canaanite dialect we call Hebrew. Now that I’ve gotten that out of the way, let’s move on.

A Silent Witness To Change

It is an undeniable verity that the one sure thing in life is change. People change. Places change. Things change. People, places, and things—these are what make history history. But the trouble with history is, it leaves behind so few witnesses to testify concerning what used to be. And then there is always the idiot factor, that is, those ill-advised folks who ignorantly twist the testimony of the few surviving witnesses so that it better agrees with what they believe should have been. Yet in spite of the idiot factor, a multitude of silent witnesses continue to offer testimony for the benefit of all who have ears to hear.

The Hebrew Scriptures—the Christian Old Testament—is one such surviving witness. It stands today much as it has for the past 2,500 years, silently testifying concerning ages past. And the idiot factor continues to believe it proclaims a benign message about a god of unconditional love. However, they do so only because they have chosen to believe that is what should have been. The Truth is, no matter how desperately those folks want to believe that lie, the Hebrew Scriptures tell quite a different story. They describe the God of Israel in no uncertain terms, and they tell us He is a God of unmitigated wrath.

Think about it: Change is the price we all pay for participating in history. And one day you too will be “history.” Just like everything else, you will fall prey to the inevitable “here today and gone tomorrow.” That’s a sobering thought, isn’t it? Like it or not, you will eventually submit to that sudden change. Face the facts, folks. You are going to shed your mortal body just as surely as a snake sheds its skin. That’s when you will be forced to deal with the angry God of Israel.

People, places, and things. They all change. You really should remember that. It’s important. But it is also important to keep in mind the fact that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob does not change. I didn’t say that, somebody else did. And if you’ve done your homework, you already know who that certain someone was. Yet the idiot factor has twisted even that simple Truth to their own ignorant ends. That’s why most church-goers today prefer to believe that means the way God deals with mankind will never change. Those folks are in for a big surprise. It’ll be along shortly. But first, God intends to tidy up a bit in regard to the nasty little issue of ignorant people distorting the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The Hebrew Scriptures have an easily understood tale to tell, and their tale will definitely be told before the End. It doesn’t matter whether or not you want to listen. You will eventually hear it anyway. And that will occur in spite of the temporarily comforting twist the idiot factor has applied to what God has said. So you can listen to the testimony of the Hebrew Scriptures now or, if you prefer, you can listen to it later—when it can’t possibly do you any good to know the Truth.

Did I mention things changing? I’m sure I did, but I’ve written so many things over the past few years that I sometimes forget what I’ve said. Actually,

that's not true. It was just a facetious transition to this: Over the past year and a half, various things have changed in regard to my calling. I'm not exactly sure what all those "things" are right now. Understanding will undoubtedly come later. It usually does. Although I don't understand everything right now, I do know that eighteen months ago I could never have stated openly what I explained in the last issue of this newsletter. I have in mind my explanation of the Book of Job. The same holds true for what I am going to tell you in these pages over the next several years.

You see, after seven years of writing about it in a cryptic, little-bit-here-little-bit-there fashion, I am now free to explain the sometimes sordid story the Hebrew Scriptures tell about how God "built the house" of Israel. You know—*The House*. That's the first of the seven messages God concealed in the Hebrew Scriptures ("Did Jesus Leave a Will?" *The Voice of Elijah*, July 1991).

The Scriptures' chronicle of how God "built the house" of Israel is, at its heart, a sarcastic mockery of the ridiculous religion the ancient Canaanites firmly believed and enthusiastically practiced. I'll tell you all about their religion over the next few years. It's a torrid tale of how idiot folk strived to attain eternal life by piously reciting religious pornography, religiously engaging in sexual intercourse with sacred prostitutes working out of the church-house, and inhumanely sacrificing bastard children intentionally conceived during sacred sex rites.

Now that I think about it, Canaanite beliefs are not a whole lot more ridiculous than folks today thinking they merit the resurrection of the righteous just because they warm a church pew two or three times a week. Small wonder. Religious fools have been with us ever since Adam chose Eve over God. So if all my talk about the seamy side of Canaanite religion is a bit too much for the saintly disposition you undoubtedly acquired while gracing a cold pew with your most holy backside, you should probably stop reading right now. Don't even bother reading the next paragraph. What I've described so far is nothing compared to what I have yet to tell you about sacred sex rites and the ancient Israelites. But if you feel you have the stomach for more, sit back and relax. The worst is yet to come.

For the benefit of all who have decided to stay the course, let me remind you again of something I

have stated elsewhere. (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* listed on the Order Form.) The only way anyone will ever understand the Hebrew Scriptures is to first understand the culture and religion of the people living at the time they were written. I've already told you the culture/religion that informs the first five books—the Books of Moses—is Egyptian. I'll open that can of worms down the road a bit. Egyptian beliefs provide insight into the Hebrew idioms and mythological images that stand behind the second and third messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures—*The Way* and *The Light*. Before I can explain those messages, however, I have to explain the first message—*The House*. To understand that message, you need to know a few things about Canaanite beliefs. Those beliefs shed incredible light on statements the Prophets made.

You see, the Prophets use various Hebrew idioms, all with specific meaning, to tell the intricately detailed story of a male child—the One Moses calls "the man"—Whom the God of Israel promised King David He would engender for him through a virgin. Those Hebrew idioms are all based on images found in the myths and sacred rituals of the ancient Canaanites. As the story of the Prophets unfolds, however, we are also told that because of the circumstances of His birth, "the man" Whom God was going to engender would not be His Son. He would first be the son of David and only afterward the Son of God. That is, the text tells us how God, after He has acted as David's "Redeemer" by "raising up a seed" for him, would then demand that this "son of David" be "given" to Him by means of ritual sacrifice. That Son of David would thereby be used to "build a house" for the "name" of God.

Everything I have just told you (and a whole lot more) lies hidden in the Hebrew idioms and mythological images I am going to show you in the Hebrew Scriptures. Should you view the things I teach as a mere intellectual curiosity, I remind you once again why these things were hidden. The Prophets intentionally concealed them to mock those who refused to believe what they heard. If that shoe fits you quite comfortably, let me point out one of the more elegant details that God Himself stitched into its uppers:

*The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed:
"Let us tear their fetters apart,*

And cast away their cords from us!"
He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury.
 (Psalm 2:2–5)

That doesn't sound like the goofy god of unconditional love you hear taught in the Church today, does it? That's because the god worshipped in most churches today isn't the God the Prophets describe in the Hebrew Scriptures. If you didn't know that already, you should spend more time reading the Old Testament. Unfortunately, if you don't understand the message of the Old Testament you can't fully appreciate that of the New.

For example, without an understanding of the message of *The House* that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures, the fact that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin when she conceived her firstborn son holds no more significance than any other miracle of God. And lacking a knowledge of all the pertinent information the Prophets provide in the Hebrew Scriptures, you would forever remain ignorant of the fact that God actually "built the house" of David twice. The first time, He "built" it in the sense that the Hebrew idiom conveys when used to refer to Canaanite religious drama; the second time in the sense it conveys when used to refer to the spiritual reality the religious drama was meant to influence.

Is that confusing? Most likely. And it will continue to be for quite some time to come because nearly everything in the first message depends on your understanding of something else in the first message. That's why I have struggled for over twenty years trying to piece together statements the Prophets have made here and there in the Hebrew Scriptures. Yet I am still seeing pieces of the puzzle come together even now. It will probably take me two or three years to explain everything you need to understand before the first message comes into perfect focus. No one piece of evidence is conclusive in itself, but all of it will ultimately fit together in one coherent whole. So I am not going to take the ridiculous "proof text" route and "prove" individual points by quoting Scripture like a parrot. I am merely going to explain what certain passages are *talking about*. Therefore, you may find it somewhat of a stretch to understand why I am explaining certain

things here at the beginning. After I've explained the basics of *The House* message, however, you can reread these earlier segments. They should make more sense then.

Have You Considered These Things?

I have told you repeatedly that your accurate understanding of the seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures depends on your insight into the meaning of various Hebrew idioms. However, you can gain that insight only by visualizing the *parabolic image* that corresponds to each idiom. For the time being, I am going to concentrate on explaining the house image that stands behind the Hebrew idiom "build/make a house." The other two idioms that help to conceal *The House* message—"raise up a seed" and "raise up/make a name"—have much the same *meaning* as "build a house," but they look at the same concepts from a slightly different perspective.

I will tell you at the outset that all three of these idioms generally mean "to engender a son." But I can't easily explain the precise idiomatic meaning of what it means to "build a house," "raise up a seed," or "make a name." That's because God in His wisdom has stated the Truth in terms of both an image—a myth or symbolic ritual—and a word or idiom that captures the essence of the myth or ritual. He has done that to make it easy for us to understand what He has said.

Researchers now know that different areas of the human brain work in tandem. One area stores words, another images, and yet a third stores grammatical rules. Therefore, everything God has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures is part of a tightly integrated right-brain/left-brain combination of words, images, and grammatical rules. That is why you must understand every idiom of Scripture in terms of an ancient myth or ritual. The idioms the Canaanites used to talk about their rituals succinctly sum up the reason why they practiced them. Therefore, the image of the ritual rounds out the *meaning* of the idiom in your mind.

When you put the appropriate images together with the idiomatic statements of the Prophets and Apostles, an incredibly beautiful picture of what God has done (and is still doing) will begin to come together in your mind. But trust me on this one: It is possible for an unregenerate person to understand some of the things I am going to explain. For that reason, many will

think they see the Truth God has reserved for His children. But they won't actually see much of anything at all because they have never been born again. So I have but one word of advice for such folks. Actually, it's not my advice, it comes from the Lord:

"The lamp of your body is your eye; when your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light; but when it is bad, your body also is full of darkness. Then watch out that the light in you may not be darkness."

(Luke 11:34–35)

Just to emphasize that point for those who should pay close attention but won't, Matthew says Jesus put it this way:

"But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!"

(Matthew 6:23)

That's the same thing John tells us Jesus said in another place. However, he says Jesus said this:

And Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see; and that those who see may become blind." Those of the Pharisees who were with Him heard these things, and said to Him, "We are not blind too, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no sin; but since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

(John 9:39–41)

Obviously, Jesus was speaking *parabolically*. But just in case you are one of those who arrogantly thinks they already "see" everything they need to know about the message of the Scriptures, consider this: Every book in the Greek Scriptures contains a variety of things stated *parabolically* in terms of idioms and images. Yet nowhere do the authors of those works ever explain that what they have written will make sense only if the reader thinks in terms of specific Hebrew idioms and their corresponding *parabolic images*. The reason for that is actually quite simple: They didn't feel it was necessary to explain the obvious. They assumed their readers would already be thinking idiomatically and *parabolically*.

For nearly a century after the Apostles died, Christians did in fact have a fairly well-informed understanding of the images and idioms of the Scriptures. So they understood the Apostles were speaking *parabolically*. Unfortunately, things change. (Have I mentioned that before?) After the Church lost *The Apostolic Teaching* and everybody started interpreting Scripture for themselves, understanding took a nose dive. As a result, we have idiots today who adamantly insist the Scriptures can only be understood if they are interpreted literally. Ah! If ignorance is bliss, those folks must already be living in Paradise.

Pay attention now! God has called me to restore the mind-set of the fathers. If you are one of those to whom I have been sent, bear with me while I explain what you need to know in order to think as the Apostles thought. Be patient. If you apply yourself, you will find yourself thinking *parabolically* and idiomatically in no time at all. When you do, what you find written in the Scriptures will begin to make more sense.

The Truth is, I could cite well over a hundred instances in the Greek Scriptures where the author is speaking in terms of a specific Hebrew idiom and its related image. In each and every case, a *parabolic statement* reveals an understanding of how the Prophets had spoken *parabolically* to describe how the "house" of God would be "built." Amazingly, it is just as clear that nobody in the Church today has anything more than a vague understanding of what Jesus and the Apostles *meant* by what they said.

If I expanded my count to include some of the other Hebrew idioms I have mentioned—"cut off from," "walk in the way," and "keep the commandments"—the number of instances I could cite in the Greek Scriptures would easily double or even triple. Obviously, I can't begin to touch on all those here. But I do want to point out some of the more obvious places where the "house" image has been used.

There is, first of all, the *parabolic statement* Jesus made when He drove the moneychangers out of the temple:

The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and

will You raise it up in three days?" **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.** When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken.
(John 2:18–22)

Does Jesus' hostile attitude on that occasion seem out of character to you? It should. He was conducting a *parabolic pantomime*. His point becomes clear only if you understand the *meaning* of the idiom "build a house." He took the uncharacteristic action of driving merchants out of the temple to emphasize that He would one day direct His anger at anyone who is illegitimately in His Father's "house." By His allusion to the "house" image, however, He indicated that will happen only after His resurrection.

You see, the resurrection of Jesus was the second occasion on which God "built a house" for David. The first was when He engendered a child through the virgin Mary. Yet the resurrection was but the first time He "built a house" for Himself. That "house" is the one Jesus was depicting by driving the moneychangers out of the temple. Unfortunately, that's the best explanation of the pantomime I can give you right now. But I will tell you bluntly that you would not believe in the goofy god of unconditional love if you understood and believed the message of His pantomime.

From what Jesus said after He cleansed the temple, it is obvious He was aware God had already "built a house" for David through His mother Mary. It is also clear He was absolutely certain God would resurrect Him after He had died on the cross as a sacrifice for sin. That can be seen, however, only by those who know Jesus was playing with the fact that the two Hebrew idioms "build a house" and "raise up a seed" have essentially synonymous *meaning*. That is, both idioms convey basically the same *meaning* but use a completely different *parabolic image* to do so.

John says Jesus' disciples believed the Scriptures when they remembered what Jesus had said about "raising up a house." That is because after His resurrection, Jesus explained to His disciples the seven sealed messages that Moses and the Prophets concealed behind the various idioms and images one finds in the Hebrew Scriptures. Luke says Jesus said this on that occasion:

And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" **And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.**
(Luke 24:25–27)

One of the things Jesus revealed to His disciples that day was the message concerning *The House*. The Apostles heard Jesus explain exactly the same things God is allowing me to explain to you now. The major difference between their day and our own is this: Jesus had to reveal the seven messages of the Hebrew Scriptures to them because the Scriptures were still sealed. Now that He has removed the seal from the first of those seven messages, the Truth concerning *The House* is available to anyone who is willing to read and understand it. God has merely called me to explain it to those who cannot read Hebrew so that anyone who wants to can hear and understand the Truth without having to figure it out for themselves. He is doing that in these Last Days in preparation for Judgment Day.

I hardly think God would have sent me to teach if He didn't expect you to listen and to learn. So pay close attention. I am certain He will one day test you to see how much you retain. (I'm mocking your ignorance of the Truth concerning testing that God has revealed in the Scriptures.)

The *parabolic pantomime* that John recounts was certainly not the only occasion on which Jesus mentioned He was going to "build the house" of God. How do I know that? Well, first of all, I know that Jesus was a Teacher. I also know that, like every good teacher, He understood the most effective teaching depends on repetition. That means the statements you find recorded in the Greek Scriptures must be nothing but a sample of various things that Jesus said time and time again. It only makes sense that Jesus frequently explained how He was going to "build the house" of God. But He must have done so on at least one other occasion because His use of that idiom provided the basis for the only corroborated charge brought against Him:

Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, in order that they might put Him to death; and they did not find {any},

even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, and said, "This man stated, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.'"

(Matthew 26:59–61)

The word "rebuild" in that last verse is the result of the translator's mistaken understanding of what Jesus *meant* by what He said. The Greek verb *means* nothing more than "build." My point is, Jesus did not mean He would "rebuild" the temple. He was speaking *parabolically* about His physical body, just as John indicated, telling His listeners He was going to tear down the temple of His body by enticing the Jewish leaders into arranging His execution. He would then "build a house" for God in three days through His resurrection from the dead. However, the resurrection was not a "rebuilding" of anything that had ever been before. It was the "building" of an entirely new creation from part of this creation. To understand why that is, however, you must first understand the second and third messages, *The Way* and *The Light*.

The verb these witnesses claim Jesus used comes directly from the idiom "build a house." Yet the Apostle John specifically said Jesus used the verb "raise up." Jesus took that verb from the idiom "raise up a seed." However, it doesn't matter much which verb Jesus used as far as the essence of what He said is concerned. I've already told you both idioms have essentially the same meaning. They mean "to engender a son." Jesus was speaking *parabolically*, telling people He was going to "build a house" for God through His resurrection from the dead. But before you take that bit of information and run with it, keep in mind the fact that there is a complete set of mythological beliefs standing behind the Prophets' explanation of how the resurrection of Jesus Christ "built the house" of God.

The passages I just mentioned tend to indicate Jesus pointed to the temple on at least two different occasions when He spoke *parabolically* concerning the certainty of His resurrection from the dead. I have no doubt He did that on several other occasions as well, but I'll settle for just these two. Look at it logically: The *parabolic message* concerning *The House* is but the first of seven messages that lie hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. However, it alone explains in precise detail God's purpose in orchestrating the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. I seriously doubt that Jesus

would have used only sparingly the one idiom that provides the image most central to that message. If He had not done so fairly frequently, how would the leaders of the Jews have ever been able to find two witnesses who remembered Him making such a statement?

Enough of that. Let me point out a few places where the Apostle Paul uses the same imagery to speak *parabolically* concerning *The House* message. Again, these citations are not an exhaustive listing. They are just a few of the more obvious instances where Paul alludes to the *parabolic imagery* of *The House*. After I have explained *The House* message, you will be able to see he has done the same thing in various other places as well. The first instance is near the end of his letter to the Romans. Paul makes this brief *parabolic statement* concerning his ministry as one of the workmen involved in "building the house" of God:

And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was {already} named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation.

(Romans 15:20)

Paul makes another, somewhat more extended, use of *The House* image in his letter to the Corinthians. On this occasion he is urging the members of the church at Corinth to stop thinking of themselves as followers of a single Apostle and start thinking of themselves as members of the one "house" of God. As you read what Paul wrote about *The House*, notice that he has coupled it with agricultural imagery related to the Hebrew idiom "raise up a seed." He did that because the two idioms and their corresponding images are used together in the Hebrew Scriptures to explain things you need to know about *The House*:

*What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave {opportunity} to each one. I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God's fellow workers; **you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it.***

But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

(1 Corinthians 3:5–11)

Paul continues on in that chapter to make other statements concerning the *parabolic image* in which Believers are members of the Body of Jesus Christ, which is, incidentally, *The House* of God. I won't bother to quote the rest of what he said. You can read it for yourself. However, I will warn you that the individualistic mind-set of the Corinthians did not die with that generation. It is still alive and well in the Church today. That mind-set certainly won't help you understand what Paul said about the fate that awaits the one who "corrupts the temple of God." He was speaking *parabolically*, warning Pretenders of the dangers inherent in contaminating *The House* of God, that is, the Body of Jesus Christ, with their idiocy.

If you want to understand what Paul was saying to the Corinthians, keep in mind the fact that all the pronouns he uses to address them in that passage are plural. That tells us he was not addressing individuals; he was addressing the collective Body of Jesus Christ. You can get a better feel for what he had in mind if you take a look at the context in which he uses *The House* imagery in his letter to the Ephesians:

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner {stone}, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

(Ephesians 2:19–22)

That translation is not perfect. No translation is. But it is about as close as the English can get to conveying the nuances of the original text. At the very least it allows you to see that Paul is using *The House* image along with the idiom "build a house" to speak concerning Believers who have become members of God's "house." The Greek word that has been translated "household" actually comes from the same root as the word for "house." It has the sense of belonging to a particular family, that is, of belonging to a "household."

Paul used it in this context because *The House* message explains how God made it possible for each of us to become a member of His family, that is, His "house." That *House* is and always has been Israel, the Firstborn Son of God. That's what Paul had in mind when he wrote this:

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

For indeed in this {house} we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.

(2 Corinthians 5:1–2)

There is no bigger fool than the one who insists that statement has no greater *significance* than a desire to die and be with the Lord. An accurate understanding of what Paul has said depends on a knowledge of at least the first three messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. If you take a closer look at the context in which Paul made that statement, you will find the word "glory." The glory of God is *Light*. God's glory provides the basic image for the third message concealed in the idioms and images of the Hebrew Scriptures—*The Light*. The purpose of that message is to further explain things that are mentioned only briefly in *The House* and *The Way*.

The Apostle uses the *parabolic image* of *The House* again in what he says to his disciple Timothy:

Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness." Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these {things}, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.

(2 Timothy 2:19–21)

You can see that Paul introduces the image of *The House* by referring to its "foundation." He then goes on to speak *parabolically* concerning Believers as "vessels" in *The House* of God. It is obvious he has in mind the collective Body of Believers. He did so because he knew *The House* message tells how the eternal dwelling place of God is *parabolically* the resurrected Body of

Jesus Christ. That *House* is a collective Body in which every member is humbly submitted to all others in fear of the Lord because they have seen and believed the seven sealed messages God has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. Their mind-set has little in common with the individualistic believe-what-you-want-to nonsense you hear taught in the Church today.

The passages I quoted above are just a few of the many I could have pointed out in the writings of the Apostle Paul. In each and every one of those passages, insight into *The House* message is essential to an accurate understanding of what the Apostle has said. However, Paul was not the only Apostle to allude to what the Prophets said about *The House*. His are not even the most revealing. The following two passages are perhaps the two clearest indications in the entire Greek Scriptures that the Apostles understood exactly the same message concerning *The House* that I am going to explain to you here. First, the author of the Book of Hebrews said this about Jesus "building the house" of God:

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession. He was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was in all His house. For He has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by just so much as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later; but Christ {was faithful} as a Son over His house whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end.

(Hebrews 3:1-6)

You can easily see the author's viewpoint is one in which the Church, that is, the Body of Jesus Christ, is the "House of Israel." I won't bother telling you why Jesus Christ is Israel. I have already done that in the book *Not All Israel Is Israel* (see Order Form). However, I have not yet explained the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the things I explained in that book. I intend to get a good start on that in these pages over the next few years. Perhaps then you will be able to understand the *parabolic imagery* the Apostle Peter had in mind when he wrote this:

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For {this} is contained in Scripture:

"BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER {stone},

AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve,

"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,

THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER {stone}," and,

"A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE";

for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this {doom} they were also appointed. But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR {God's} OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.

(1 Peter 2:1-10)

Wow! Peter has alluded to so many different facets of *The House* message in that passage that I feel completely overwhelmed by the task of having to explain everything to you. If you look closely, you will see he has quoted Moses (Ex. 19:6) and the Psalmist (Ps. 118:22), along with the Prophets Isaiah (Is. 8:14; 28:16) and Hosea (Hos. 1:10; 2:23). He must have believed he saw something specific in what all those men said. Yet each of the statements he quoted has its own *context*, its own *meaning*, and its own *significance*. You must understand all of those things about each and every one of those passages before you can ever hope to comprehend what Peter had in mind when he put them all together. It is obvious he is *talking about The House* that Jesus Christ said He was going to "build" for God. It is just as obvious that he understood what Moses and the Prophets said about *The House*. So don't be stupid. Admit that you have no

understanding at all of those things. Only then will you have ears to hear what God called me to teach.

You will never be able to understand the Truth the Prophets and Apostles understood if you are not willing to think in terms of the same Hebrew idioms and *parabolic imagery* that they understood. I am going to explain those things to you. If you actually want to understand the things I teach, however, you must keep this one thing in mind: The seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures are a mocking, taunting ridicule directed at the beliefs of an ancient semitic religion that, by the time of Christ, had spread throughout the civilized world. In their ridicule, the Prophets describe how the God of Israel is going to accomplish the very things those people stupidly believed their god would accomplish for them. So let's take a look at that lunacy.

Let's Talk About Sex and Resurrection

If you believe the accounts one finds in ancient Near Eastern mythological texts, Jesus Christ was not the first son of god to attain resurrection from the dead. By no means! The first such son of god is described in Sumerian mythological texts that were composed at least two, and perhaps more than three, thousand years before Christ was born. By the time of Christ, quite a long list of religions worshipped a son of god who had been resurrected from the dead. And the list of beliefs these religions held in common with Christianity was equally as long.

As a matter of fact, one of the "sons of god" worshipped by multiplied thousands at the time of Christ supposedly died an agonizing death on a tree. After he had been taken down and buried, however, his tomb was discovered to be empty, and his followers rejoiced because they knew he had come back to life. Interestingly enough, the religious drama of this particular cult even involved the sacrifice of an animal, which represented the slain "son of god," so that all who were "washed in the blood" might be "born again." Does all that have a familiar ring to it? It should. The symbolic message of this religion displays an uncanny resemblance to the *parabolic message* of Christianity.

I am by no means the first to have noticed the parallels that exist between Christianity and the Greek mystery religions. Scholars have known about them

for a long time. They have logically concluded that one religion must have borrowed its symbols from the other. The question is, *Who borrowed what from whom?* Christians would prefer to believe they had the symbols first. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The religion I described above was the Phrygian cult of Attis and Cybele. That particular mystery religion is known to be several hundred years older than Christianity.

Shortly before the Church lost *The Apostolic Teaching*, even Early Church leaders pointed to the Greek mystery religions and accused Satan of having made what they called a "devilish counterfeit" of Christianity. Their accusations would seem to be completely unfounded. How could Satan have made a counterfeit of Christianity at a time when it did not even exist? Exactly the opposite assertion would seem to be a more reasonable claim: Christianity appears to have borrowed its message from these other religions.

Any prudent person who wants to know the Truth will at least ask themselves how these things could possibly be. The fool will continue merrily on his way, dismissing it all as irrelevant, continuing to believe whatever he wants to believe. The Truth is, the symbols of these ancient religions show up in Christianity because the Prophets of God used them to mock the stupid notions these people believed. I am going to show you how they did that.

One of the earliest reported cases of a corpse that supposedly turned up living the good life in Paradise involves the Sumerian god Dumuzi. Another is the Akkadian (Assyrian/Babylonian) god Tammuz, who is, incidentally, mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ez. 8:14). However, Tammuz and Dumuzi are actually one and the same "son of god," since the Akkadians absorbed the entire Sumerian culture, lock, stock, and resurrected god, sometime during the third millennium B.C. It's just that the Akkadians spoke a guttural semitic language rather than the agglutinative Sumerian which has more in common with Turkish, Finnish, and Hungarian than it does with semitic languages like Akkadian, Hebrew, and Arabic. Consequently, the Akkadians had a slightly different way of pronouncing dentals. (You know, "dentals." If you notice when you speak, you will find the "t" and "d" sounds both begin with the tongue stuck to the same spot in back of your "dentals.")

The Sumerians and Akkadians were not the only ancient people to believe in a resurrected son of god,

however. The Egyptians had Horus, the son of god who became Osiris when he entered the resurrection. Although, to be perfectly honest, Osiris was the one who was resurrected, not Horus. (See *The Passover Parable* listed on the Order Form.) Horus was the “name” of Osiris whose reign on Earth made the resurrection of Osiris possible. Osiris had reportedly been murdered, hacked in pieces, buried in several different parts of the country, and then put back together and resurrected after the first successful scavenger hunt. Consequently, he offered the hope of resurrection to anyone who believed in him.

The gospel message of Osiris has a bit too much in common with the tale of Frankenstein for my taste, but it suited a lot of folks just fine for well over 3,000 years. By the time of Christ, the entire civilized world knew about the god Osiris and the hope of eternal life he offered all who would believe. Then Christianity came along making slightly more believable, yet in some ways even more incredible, claims about a peasant from Galilee. That’s why the Jews, who knew all about these other religions, saw Christianity as nothing but warmed-over paganism.

The Greeks, being the avid religious syncretists that they were, worshipped various sons of god who had come back from the dead. Dionysus was one. Attis another. Adonis yet a third. However, it is well known that the Greeks borrowed Adonis from the Canaanites, who worshipped him as Baal, another resurrected son of god. The Greeks called Baal “Adonis” because he was known to the Canaanites as “lord” or “master,” which was pronounced *adon* in their tongue. And thus we come to the primary subject of our investigation: Baal, the lord of the Canaanite resurrection.

I would be extremely remiss if I allowed you to continue under the impression that all these “sons of god” lived a solitary mythological existence in which they supernaturally effected their own resurrection. Such was not the case. Each and every one of them owed his resurrection to the efforts of a heroic woman who risked life and limb to snatch the one she loved from the jaws of death. Dumuzi was loved by Inanna, Tammuz by Ishtar, Osiris by Isis, Attis by Cybele, Adonis by Aphrodite, Baal by Anat. Dionysus was ostensibly loved only by the barbarian Mad Women of Euripides fame, but his is a story in and of itself. Remind me to tell you about it sometime.

So what do all these women have in common other than their apparent ability to bring about the resurrection of a dead god? They were all virgins. Yep, you heard me right. I said, “virgins.” And if you know anything at all about Inanna, Ishtar, or Anat, you know what a ridiculous claim that is. The Greek goddess Artemis was a bona fide virgin. However, the myths clearly indicate the “virgins” Inanna, Ishtar, and Anat were all whores. But then again, maybe my choice of terms isn’t all that appropriate. It’s just that I try to call ‘em as I see ‘em. Artemis probably didn’t start out as the supreme advocate of chastity either. She was evidently worshipped at some earlier time as a perpetually virgin prostitute in a fertility cult just like the others.

Did you notice I just said “fertility cult”? That’s what scholars think the various cults involving the worship of a virgin goddess and a resurrected son of god were all about—fertility. But there was a whole lot more to the mystery religions than fertility. We’ll get to that later on. For now, I need to explain what these ancient people were trying to accomplish through their sacred sex rituals. Then I can tell you where all these religions originated.

Way back then—in that part of the world at least—religious folks didn’t slip around on the sly to satisfy their lust surreptitiously like they do today. But then again, they didn’t have to. Engaging in sexual intercourse with a sacred prostitute at some sacred spot was a necessary part of life. Their compatriots viewed their willingness to fornicate with anyone and everyone as solid evidence of a deep spirituality. And none were more spiritual than the women (and men) who offered their favors to one and all out of complete devotion to their resurrected lord (Baal). So if your one and lonely has cheated on you and you feel bad, consider King Ahab. That poor sucker knew Jezebel was sleeping around and he never once suspected it was because she had a libido stuck in overdrive. He thought she was just being religious. In case you wonder how I know that about Jezebel, her makeup and hair covering gave it away (2 Kings 9:30). But I’ll have more to say about her distinctive attire and her attempted seduction of Jehu a bit later.

Judah and Hosea are a couple of the more obvious examples I could point out where the Bible tells us Israelite men availed themselves of the services of sacred prostitutes (Gen. 38:12–26; Hos. 1:2–9). To be perfectly honest, however, Judah didn’t do any such

despicable deed. He only intended to and thought he did, but he really didn't. He merely enjoyed a brief respite with his daughter-in-law, which Moses tells us was an equally abominable act (Lev. 20:12). There's some extremely interesting information hidden in the story of Judah and Tamar. I'll tell you about it when you are better able to understand why Tamar did what she did. But I need to explain a few other things first. Actually, there are a few even more interesting details hidden in the *parabolic pantomime* of Hosea. Trust me. We'll get there. Eventually.

Gilead and Samson were evidently not above enjoying the pleasure of an intimate relationship with sacred prostitutes either (Judg. 11:1; 16:1). However, I probably should tell you "prostitute" is not an entirely accurate translation. The Hebrew term in the Scriptures that is routinely translated as "prostitute" or "harlot" is *zonah*. However, a woman who functioned as a *zonah* was not necessarily a career woman. Some, if not most, of these women were honest-to-goodness virgins doing an obligatory one-night stand out of devotion to their lord (Baal).

You see, before a devoutly religious Canaanite girl could consummate her marriage, she had to surrender her virginity to a stranger she picked up down at the sanctuary. Now you know why God made such a big deal about an Israelite woman being able to show evidence of her virginity when she married (Deut. 22:13–21). She couldn't very easily engage in one of the most basic rituals of Canaanite religion and still be a virgin on her wedding night.

The myth of the perpetually virgin goddess who offered herself to mortals as a prostitute (*zonah*) stands behind the semitic practice of a woman sacrificing her virginity to a stranger. These women were only playing the role of the virgin goddess, trying to entice the god into having sexual intercourse with them.

The religious fiction was, the god quite often came down in human form seeking to cohabit with the virgin goddess. So a woman would put on a distinctive dress, paint her face in a certain way, and put a special type of veil over her face and head so that her facial details were obscured but her makeup remained visible through the veil. Her goal was to hide her own identity while taking on the appearance of the virgin goddess. She would then do what the mythology told her the virgin goddess did. She would take a stand at some sacred spot and invite a stranger to "enter" her, hoping

the stranger would be the god. Now you know why Tamar dressed the way she did (Gen. 38:14–16) and what Jezebel was up to when she got all dolled up for Jehu (2 Kings 9:30). Tamar just wanted to trick Judah into getting her pregnant. Jezebel knew Jehu would spare her if she could entice him into "taking" her. So the remark she made to him on that occasion (2 Kings 9:31) was certainly not the hostile comment you have been led to believe it was.

We can see Tamar and Jezebel obviously had their reasons, but what motivated other women to do these things? Well, they were trying to acquire a human/divine son of god they could then offer as a sacrifice. Since the woman did not know the identity of the man who "entered" her, if she got pregnant it was assumed he was the god, which meant the child was a semi-divine son of god. That's why you find various women mentioned in Greek mythology who supposedly had a greater-than-mortal child fathered by the god Zeus. Zeus was, like Adonis, nothing more than a Greek adaptation of the Canaanite god Baal. The Greeks weren't as barbaric as the Canaanites, however. They didn't sacrifice the children produced by this ritual, they abandoned them at the foot of the mountain of the god.

By the same token, since her male partner did not know the identity of the woman, he did not know but what the goddess herself was seeking to seduce him. So it was not considered wise for a man to reject the advances of any woman who accosted him wearing the distinctive garb of the virgin goddess. The humor in that situation lies in the fact that the ancients evidently felt a need to ensure that a man did not traipse off to the sanctuary thinking he could pick and choose. If a woman dressed like the virgin goddess made overtures, he was expected to oblige her request lest he incur the wrath of the real thing.

Several myths drive that point home. For example, the Sumerians and Akkadians told one about Gilgamesh. When he spurned the goddess Inanna (Ishtar to the Akkadians), she went absolutely ballistic and nearly killed him. You can read the account for yourself in Sandars' *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. The moral of that story is fairly obvious: One had best not refuse the virgin goddess when she offers her favors. However, the point of the Canaanite myth about Aqhat's "bow" in Coogan's *Stories From Ancient Canaan* is not quite as obvious. [Editor: To order either

of these two books, use the Order Form.] In that case, one needs to know that the Canaanites, like other semitic peoples, were fond of euphemisms.

Aqhat's "bow" is not a literal bow. The virgin goddess wants Aqhat to give her a "bow" that will satisfy her sexual desire. That's the same *parabolic* "bow" that stands behind the Psalmist's sarcastic mention of "arrows" and "quiver" in the same breath as "fruit of the womb" and "children" in Psalm 127:3-4. When Aqhat refuses to give the virgin goddess Anat what she wants, she takes his "bow" by force; that is, she emasculates him, killing him in the process. Emasculation is a recurrent theme in ancient myths. Such were the incentives given any man who might consider rejecting the favors of a less well-endowed young lady in hopes of finding one more to his liking.

The Canaanite practice in which a woman had ritual sex with a stranger at some sacred spot is the reason why Moses prescribed that a widow woman was not to "belong to a stranger outside" her immediate family (Deut. 25:5). The key word in that text is *stranger*. That prohibition pertains to the *parabolic pantomime* that scholars have mistakenly called "Levirate Marriage." That's because God instituted the *parabolic pantomime* of Levirate Marriage as both a defense against and a mockery of the sacred prostitution practiced by the Canaanites.

The careful reader who wants to understand the Truth has probably already noticed that two of the three Hebrew idioms I mentioned above—"build a house" and "raise up a name"—occur in connection with the stipulation in Deuteronomy 25 that governed Levirate Marriage. So we'll have to look into that prescription later on. I should probably also mention that the idiom "build a house" occurs in the same context as the "bow" image I explained above (Ps. 127:1). In that case, the Psalmist is talking about God "building His house" through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But we can talk about that later also.

Before I move on to other things, let me briefly point out that the Prophet Ezekiel, speaking *parabolically* concerning Israel as a woman, indicts her for functioning as a *zonah*. That is, he mocks the people for doing what the Canaanites were doing, setting up shop in all the right places and engaging in the sacred sex ritual with every stranger who happened to come along. We will see later why he did that:

"How could your heart [mind] be so feeble?" The Lord, His Majesty, declares: "In your doing all these things (the activity of a domineering zonah woman), in your building your sacred place at the head of every way (You even made your high place in every open area!), you were not like a zonah to refuse a gift. (The woman of adultery takes strangers instead of her man!) They give a tip to every zonah, but you have given your tips to all your lovers. You bribed them from all around to enter you during your practice of the zonah ritual. There was more perversity in you than the {other} women during your practice of the zonah ritual. (The zonah ritual was not practiced on your behalf when you gave a gift and a gift was not given to you.) You were {just doing it} to be perverse." Therefore, zonah! Hear the word of His Majesty. This is what the Lord, His Majesty, has said: "Because your brazenness was poured out and your nakedness was revealed during your practice of the zonah ritual for the benefit of your lovers and for the benefit of all the ancestral idols of your abominations, and because of the blood of your sons whom you gave to them, therefore, look! I am going to gather all your lovers for whose benefit you gave a pledge—even all those you loved—for the benefit of all those you hated. I will gather them against you from all around and I will reveal your nakedness to them so that they see all your nakedness." (Ezekiel 16:30-37) —my translation

Contrary to what scholars assume, Ezekiel uses several technical terms and idiomatic expressions related to the *zonah* ritual in that passage. All have specific meaning that goes far beyond anything scholars understand. Therefore, before you can understand what Ezekiel has said, I must first explain the mind-set that stands behind the ritual. It will take me awhile to do that, so bear with me. We'll come back to this passage a bit later, when you are better able to appreciate what Ezekiel has said about Israel's great sin.

Ezekiel's condemnation of Israel is interesting for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that the Prophet is obviously speaking *parabolically*. In the process, however, he has told us several things we need to know about what these women were doing and why. But his statements also hold promise of greater things to come because, in them, the Prophet has described Israel as a *zonah*. That is an extremely important bit of information if only because more than a century earlier, Hosea had—by means of *parabolic*

pantomime—already said God would one day “take” the *zonah* Israel to “raise up a seed” for Himself. That’s why Peter quotes Hosea in 1 Peter 2.

A Man + A Woman + ? = A House

Let’s get one thing straight from the outset. In the ancient Near East, a “house” was a family long before it was ever a building with four walls and a roof. That can be seen from the fact that the Hebrew words for “son,” “daughter,” and “house” all come from the same root as the Hebrew verb *banah*, which means “build.” Not surprisingly, that verb also carries the meaning of “create/procreate.” And the three nouns I just mentioned were originally used to refer to “what has been procreated.” So it should be obvious that long before men ever built a house of wood, stone, or baked clay bricks, they were living in caves and “building houses” the old-fashioned way.

Building a house was a fairly intuitive process at first. Everyone sort of let nature take its course and nine months later another member of the house appeared, fully formed and functioning. Then along came a fellow who confused the issue. He “built” a “house” of baked clay bricks in which the members of the other “house” could live. What were folks supposed to do then? Well, they did the same thing they had been doing all along. They continued to use the noun *house* to refer to a family and the verb *build* to refer to the act of procreation. That is not a characteristic unique to Biblical Hebrew. All of the ancient semitic languages exhibit the same fundamental understanding of these terms. A “house” is both a group of people and the physical structure in which they live. To “build a house” is to engender a son or to erect a physical building.

Did that explanation make sense? I hope so, because am I now going to “build” on that “foundation.” I’ve already explained how the noun *house* is used in the Hebrew Scriptures. (See *The Mystery of Scripture* listed on the Order Form.) That explanation is more than adequate to show you the term has the general sense of “family” in the Hebrew Scriptures. So let me show you how the verb *build* is used.

There is, first of all, the account of how God created Eve. The text literally says He “built” her from one of Adam’s ribs:

The Lord God caused a sound sleep to fall on the man and he slept. Then He took one of his ribs and closed up his flesh in its place. Then the Lord God BUILT the rib He had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.

(Genesis 2:21–22) —my translation

That’s interesting, isn’t it? Adam was formed from the dust of the ground. Everybody else has been “built” from part of somebody else. Those are the facts. And Eve is the only one that can ever be said to have been “well-built.” The rest of us will just have to settle for something less and, given the prevalence of modern methods of abortion, some for a whole lot less.

Now let me mention one other verse to illustrate the fact that the verb *build* also carries the sense of “procreate.” I’ll point out other occurrences as we go along. In this instance the verb *build* happens to be part of the idiom “build a house.”

And all the people who were in the gate, and the elders, said, “Witnesses! May the Lord give {a male child to} the woman who is entering your house as {He did to} Rachel and Leah who BUILT—both of them—THE HOUSE of Israel, so as to make a mighty host in Ephrathah and establish a name in Bethlehem. And may your house be the same as the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore for Judah, from the seed which the Lord will give to you from this young woman.”

(Ruth 4:11–12) —my translation

That verse provides us one extremely important piece of information. It tells us two women “built a house.” However, it also clearly indicates that “house” did not belong to those two women. It was the “house” of a man, the one man Israel. That was true of every “house.” Whether it had just a few members or several thousand, it was still the “house” of the one man who was the “head” of the “house.” Everybody else in the “house,” including the women who helped “build the house,” was nothing more than a member of the “house.” The man in whose “house” they were remained the only “head” and “master” of the “house” as long as he was alive. That meant he had the right to do as he pleased with any member of his “house.” For example, he could divorce a woman just by giving her divorce papers and “sending her away” (Deut. 24:1). He could disinherit a son the same way (Gen. 25:5–6)

or, under certain circumstances, take his life (Deut. 21:18–21).

Does that put a new slant on what Paul had in mind when he talked about Jesus Christ being the “head” of the Church (Eph. 5:23)? It should because, in what he said, Paul didn’t use the English term *church*. He used a Greek term that clearly indicates he was talking about the “assembly” or “congregation” of the House of Israel. He also used the *parabolic image* of the “Body of Christ,” which is an image of that same “house.”

Whose Seed Was It, Anyway?

The ancient semitic culture was patriarchal. That is, lineage was reckoned through the male. So all a man had to do to “build a house” was “take” a woman and “enter” her. Any “seed” “raised up” from their union belonged to him unless he stipulated otherwise. (The words in quotes are all technical terms that refer specifically to the process of “building a house.”) As we shall see, a woman was necessary to the house-building process, but any woman would suffice to “raise up a seed” for the man. For example, Sarai urges Abram to use her slave for that purpose (Gen. 16:2). Rachel and Leah do likewise (Gen. 30:3, 9).

As far as the ancients were concerned, the “seed” (semen) of the man was the only essential ingredient. Their mind-set is more easily understood if you keep in mind the fact that they were ignorant of modern physiology. They knew nothing of the interaction of a sperm with an egg. They were obviously aware that semen was a seed of some kind. And they surmised that a male could “plant” that “seed” in a female and thereby “raise up a seed.” But from their perspective, a woman was like the ground in which they planted every other kind of seed. She merely incubated the seed of the man until it sprouted.

There are, as a matter of fact, ancient pornographic texts related to the practice of sacred prostitution in which the virgin goddess seeks to seduce her next lover. She invites him to “plough my furrow.” That language is not merely metaphorical. It reflects the way these people thought. So the “seed” a man “planted” in a woman remained his “seed” unless he specifically stipulated otherwise. That is, unless he used a woman to “give a seed” to someone else. Barring that, his “seed” belonged to him alone.

The women who helped “build the house” of a man fell into one of three categories. There were, first of all, free women. Then there were concubines and, finally, the class of women known as the *zonah*. Free women voluntarily gave up their position in the house of their father and “entered” the house of another man. Circumstances varied from house to house, of course, but cultural norms still considered these women to be inferior to the “master” or “lord” of the house they had entered. Although they enjoyed greater respect than women in the other two categories, they were still expected to see that the house of their man was built, no matter what that entailed. Therefore, we find that Sarai, when it became obvious that she was past the age of bearing children, urged Abram to “enter” her maid Hagar so that he would have a son. Look at what she said:

*Now Sarai, Abram’s woman, had not borne for him; but she had an Egyptian maid and her name was Hagar. So Sarai said to Abram, “Look! The Lord has kept me from bearing. Please enter my maid. **Perhaps I will BE BUILT from her.**” And Abram listened to Sarai’s voice. So Sarai, Abram’s woman, took Hagar the Egyptian—her maid—at the end of Abram dwelling ten years in the land of Canaan, and she gave her to Abram, her man—to him—as a woman.*

(Genesis 16:1–3) —my translation

There’s that verb *build* again. Did you see it? Sarai wanted to “be built” through Hagar. That’s interesting, isn’t it? She must have thought Hagar’s child would be her own. According to ancient Canaanite custom, she was right. That’s why Moses mentions the fact that Abram had lived in Canaan for ten years. He wants us to know Abram was willing to do what Sarai suggested only because he had been exposed to the Canaanite practice. Ishmael, the son of a slave, would have been the firstborn son of Abram and Sarai had Hagar not poisoned the water in that well by acting like a total idiot. Consequently, Abram and Sarai backed out of the deal, and Hagar’s son ended up with nothing to show for the opportunity he would have had to *inherit the promise* of God.

Two other women in exactly the same situation displayed a bit more humility and wound up retaining their position in respect to *the promise*. As a matter of fact, they even helped “build the house” of Israel. But

they never got any credit for it. Do you remember Bilhah and Zilpah? They were slaves of Rachel and Leah. Together they bore four of the twelve sons of Jacob. Look at what Rachel said when she gave Bilhah to Jacob just as Sarai gave Hagar to Abram:

When Rachel saw that she was not bearing for Jacob, Rachel was jealous of her sister and she said to Jacob, "Give me sons! If not, I'm going to die!" Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Is it I instead of God who have withheld the fruit of the womb from you?" So she said, "Look! My handmaid Bilhah! Enter her so that she can bear on my knees, so that I, even I, may BE BUILT from her." Then she gave Bilhah, her maid, to him as a woman, and Jacob entered her. When Bilhah conceived and bore a son for Jacob, Rachel said, "God has judged me {innocent}! He has indeed heard my voice and given me a son!" Therefore, she called his name Dan. Then she—{that is}, Bilhah, Rachel's maid—conceived again and bore a second son for Jacob. And Rachel said, "I have plaited the plaitings of God with my sister! Indeed, I am able!" So she called his name Naphtali. (Genesis 30:1–8) —my translation

If you compare my translation of that passage to other translations, it should be obvious that I believe scholars have misunderstood a few things. That is because they don't know why Rachel felt she had to provide Jacob a son even if she had to use the womb of a surrogate. I'll eventually explain her mind-set to you. It's reflected in her enigmatic statement concerning what she did with her sister. Did she "wrestle" with her as scholars would have you believe? Or did she acquire two sons ("plaitings") who were added to the four sons Leah had already "plaited" into Jacob's "cord"? To understand what Rachel said, you have to understand why she specifically says she wants sons, not daughters, and why she says she is going to die if she doesn't get them. We are, after all, talking about a mentality in which eternal life was supposedly gained by "building" an eternal "house."

Did you see the verb *build* in that passage? Rachel, like Sarai, used a slave woman so that she could "be built." And when Dan was born, Rachel claimed him as her own. That's why Bilhah and Zilpah get no credit for "building the house" of Israel in Ruth 4:11–12. The children they bore were credited to Rachel and Leah. Do you know what that tells us? It

tells us these people lived in a culture where it was acceptable for one woman to "give a seed" to another woman. Now, if women could do that, why should we think it unusual that a man could "give a seed" to another man? We shouldn't. They did it all the time. That's the point of the Book of Ruth. But the woman a Canaanite man used to "raise up a seed" or "build a house" for another man was the *zonah*. Remember her? She was the sacred prostitute. We'll have a whole lot more to say about her next time.

Before I conclude this segment, let me tell you where this is leading. In the virgin birth of Christ, God mocks the asinine notion that eternal life could be attained by sacrificing a son of god born to a virgin. In God's *parabolic pantomime*, the virgin Mary was a *zonah* that God "entered" to "raise up a seed" for David—a sacred prostitute He "took" so as to "build a house" for His "name." Now, before some fool objects that "prostitute" is too crass a term to apply to Mary, I should probably tell you it doesn't. The only part of the *parabolic image* that applies to Mary is that of the virgin. That's what she was. The goddess part applies to Israel, the sacred prostitute (*zonah*) that Ezekiel denounces for her licentiousness. God merely dressed Mary in the guise of the virgin goddess.

You see, Ezekiel tells us that when Israel sinned against God, she became a *zonah*. That meant she made herself available to anyone, God included, who desired to use her to "build a house." In the wisdom of God, however, the burden of bearing Israel's obligation as a sacred prostitute fell on Mary, the mother of Jesus. How could that be? Actually, it was quite simple. I have already explained the process whereby Mary became Israel. (See my explanation of the idiom "cut off from Israel" in the book *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) When God finished His work of lopping off "branches," Mary alone remained as the Remnant of Israel. But that's just one example of God orchestrating an elaborate *parabolic pantomime* to mock the stupidity of men. I'll tell you all about several others before I am through explaining *The House*. ■