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Counterfeiters, Con Artists (and the Consummate Consumer)

If you were a counterfeiter, wouldn't you love to ply your trade in a country where there was so much counterfeit currency in circulation that nobody knew how to distinguish between the real and the fake? Anybody with a bare minimum of artistic ability could print up a bundle in the morning and shop all day. I wonder how long it would be before money was not worth much. What do you think? Would you readily accept a dollar in ex-

change for a full day's work if you knew there was a good possibility it was fake? I guess if you weren't all that concerned with ethical issues, it wouldn't matter to you, would it?

After all, if everybody was readily accepting fake currency, you could just pass it along to the next guy. Not a bad deal, huh? You might even get into counterfeiting yourself. Why not? Nobody knows for sure what's genuine, and

they're all willing to accept a reasonably close facsimile. Everybody else is doing it. Why not jump right in?

But what would you do if the word was out that the government was going to start calling in the old currency and replacing it with a completely new issue? Would that make a difference? I guess that would depend on whether you actually believed the government was going to act, and that in turn might depend on how long the government had allowed the current situation to exist. Maybe you would just continue accepting and passing bad currency. But then again, it might be smart to start checking to make sure the currency you had was genuine.

By the way, have you taken a look at your religious beliefs lately? Are you certain some essential theological doctrine isn't either completely missing or irreparably damaged? How would you know if it was? You wouldn't? Now don't tell me you're pinning your eternal welfare on some certain set of beliefs and you have no way of knowing whether or not they are seriously flawed, maybe even completely false?

Did it ever occur to you that your religious beliefs might be a shade off to the side of half-truth or lie? *I mean*, did you ever consider that you might be hanging your hopes of eternal bliss on something as phony as a three dollar bill? How would you know for sure?

Plant 'em Six Feet Under

Have you heard the one about the immigrant who came to America intending to become the "biggest chicken farmer in the world"? After he had gone through two sets of a thousand chicks from the hatchery with unfortunate results and had returned for yet a third, his supplier asked him what went wrong with the first two. His response: "I don't know. I must be buryin' 'em too deep or waterin' 'em too much."

That's a ludicrous anecdote. Its humor stems from the outrageous premise that one could be so ignorant. Yet when it comes to the spiritual growth of new Believers, the mentality of that immigrant is not far removed from the reality that exists in the Church today. Everybody goes around "winning souls for Jesus," then they bring them into the Church where they heap mounds of confusion on them and leave them to somehow "grow in the Lord." Nobody seems to understand how that growth is supposed to occur or why new Christians lose their spiritual vitality after a short while and become "pew-potatoes" just like the rest. (I forget. How long do they say it takes new Christians to lose it? Three months? Three years? Probably months.)

Have you ever considered that God may not have intended it to be that way? What if He originally called Believers "out of darkness into His marvelous light" just as the Apostle Peter said (1 Pet. 2:9), but the Church gave up most of that "light" soon after the Apostles died? (See "Did You Mean That Literally?" and

See *Plant 'em* on Page 17

See *Counterfeiters* on Page 4



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Letters to the Editor

Another quarter has passed us by, and as usual it has been packed full with activity. Over the past three months we have continued to gain new subscribers at a rapid rate. As a result, *The Voice of Elijah's*

subscriber base has just hit an all-time high. Since outreach is what this ministry is all about, it is encouraging to see the number of people who have opportunity to hear *The Teaching* grow so quickly. What's even more exciting is that the number of subscribers who contribute monthly to this ministry has also continued to grow. Thanks to the contributions we have received from these individuals, we have been able to increase our outreach efforts over the past few months. It still costs us \$15 over and above the \$24 subscription rate to bring one new subscriber on board, so needless to say, those monthly contributions are crucial if we ever hope to reach all of the True Believers who are out there.

An Update

Since I brought up the subject of our Monthly Contributors, I want to take a moment to share with you some of what has been going on with them over the last quarter. In June, The Elijah Project began registering Monthly Contributors for its first seminar to be held October 16th and 17th in Dallas, Texas. That means it won't be long before *The Voice of Elijah* will be able to offer videotapes of that seminar series to all our subscribers. Of course, we still have to raise \$5,000 toward that project before October in order to produce quality videotapes. I mention this goal because I know those of you who are anxious to see this video project bear fruit will be eager to help us reach it. We certainly thank those who have already contributed funds toward the project. I truly believe the videos that come out of this project will be a key to reaching others with the Truth of *The Teaching*.

Remember how, when you were in school, you could read a chapter in a book, and it would make partial sense, yet there was still something missing in your grasp of the subject? And it wasn't until you were in class and the teacher went over it with you that everything began to gel? I know that was the way it was for me. There is just something about the spoken word that allows for greater understanding of any subject. I believe the videotapes of The Elijah Project's seminars will work in the same way with regard to *The Teaching*. That's why I feel it is so important we produce a quality video series.

Many of our Monthly Contributors have commented on how anxious they are to attend and how much they are looking forward to the opportunity to learn more of *The Teaching*. In the meantime, I am sure they will have plenty of food for thought. I know they have certainly been given a plateful over the past two months. Many of you began receiving insight into the Hebrew idiom "build a house" in the April issue. It *talked about* the parable of the wise man who "built his house upon the rock" and the foolish man who "built his house upon the sand." It also pointed out passages in the New Testament that show the Apostles understood the *parabolic* "builder" of God's "House" is Jesus Christ. Well, the information didn't stop there. Over the past two months, in *The Voice of Elijah Update*, our Monthly Contributors have learned how it is that we, as True Believers, can *parabolically* participate in the "building" of God's "house" and what God requires from us if we wish to take part in that "building" process. As if that's not enough, our Monthly Contributors also began to learn how Jesus Christ is the Son/House that God "built" for David—the Pharisees never could

explain how that was. (See Matthew 22:41–46 and “Jesus Talks About the Mystery,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) It has definitely made for some eye-opening reading.

I just realized I’ve been going on and on about our Monthly Contributors and what they have read in *The Update* without considering how you, our subscribers, might feel. Does the information our Monthly Contributors are receiving interest you? If it does, I invite you to join them. For a monthly contribution of just \$25, you can have the same opportunity.

If you believe what you have read in *The Voice of Elijah*, I know you will be interested in knowing there is a way to receive even more of *The Teaching*. Here’s a comment we received from one of our Monthly Contributors:

In reading your materials I keep getting a strange sensation that’s hard to describe, but the other day I read Proverbs 24:13, 14 which describes it all!

“Eat honey, my son, for it is good; honey from the comb is sweet to your taste. Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”

Faye C., Ashford, AL

Those of us working in this ministry can certainly identify with that. Can you? Is what you read in *The Voice of Elijah* valuable to you? If it is, then you need to know there is a whole lot more information you can have. All it takes is your decision to stand with this ministry by becoming a Monthly Contributor. It’s a simple process. Use the Order Form at the back of this issue to make your initial contribution, and you can begin receiving *The Voice of Elijah Update* next month.

A Good Question

Moving on, I realize that many of you reading this have not been with us for long, and for your benefit I want to address an issue that most people consider important—what we believe. As a matter of fact, we received a letter just the other day asking for more information about the people involved in this ministry—who we were affiliated with, where Larry Harper (the author) went to school, that sort of thing. The letter started me thinking, not because it was unusual, but rather because we have received many such letters over the years asking us what we believe. I think the question is a valid one and deserves an answer. I can’t give you an answer here. But I can tell you where you will find it.

As of this issue, we have three years’ worth of literature in print. All of it answers the question of who we are and what we believe in one way or another. Read it. Read the back issues of this newsletter. Read *Not All Israel Is Israel*.

Read *The AntiChrist*. I guarantee that after reading those publications you will understand what we believe in no uncertain terms. You may not agree with it, but you will know what we believe. I realize I’m asking you to invest time and money in discovering the answer to this question. However, I also realize that those who are not willing to invest anything in the pursuit of the Truth aren’t honestly looking for answers. They are probably only interested in determining whether what we believe agrees with what they have already decided is true. Obviously, our ministry has nothing to offer them.

We hope we will soon have yet another resource to help some of you answer this question. Mike Clay is currently researching the historical background of the creeds that came out of the Early Church councils and is putting those creeds together in a small pamphlet that will give you a brief overview of why each creed was written. Every one of the creeds of the Early Church remains valid today, so we felt that it would be nice to have them all together in one place for all to read. We haven’t discussed how to make the pamphlet available yet, but I will keep you posted as I know more.

Are You Interested?

The following letter is a reprint from the April 1993 issue.

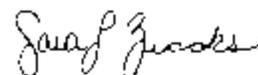
*I’m interested in meeting other Christians who are presently reading **The Voice of Elijah**. Is it possible to receive names of those in and around Wichita, KS who are reading the same material I am? If so, could you send me their names and addresses. Thank you.*

Allen F., Wichita, KS

As I stated in April, if you, like Allen, are interested in getting acquainted with other readers of *The Voice of Elijah*, write and let us know. We will then forward the information you provide to all who have expressed a similar interest.

Before I close, I want to point out that once again we have a new offering on the Order Form—George Marsden’s book *Fundamentalism and American Culture*. This is another Oxford Press release and, like *A History of Heresy*, is a wonderful resource for delving into the roots of some of our Christian “traditions.” Marsden focuses on the fundamentalist movement and traces its rise from the late 1800s into the early 1900s. That’s it for now. Until October. May the Lord’s work be done.

In Him,



Counterfeiters

From Page 1

Let me put it this way: Have you ever considered the fact that your soul might be well on its way to hell in a hand basket of Satan's own making? Oh, you haven't? What makes you so certain it isn't? Seems to me there are more versions of the "truth" out there than there are flavors of dirt. Jesus said "the Truth shall make you free" (John 8:32), but with everybody arguing in favor of this "truth" or that, how do you know for certain that what you believe is *the Truth*? Maybe you aren't really free; maybe you just *think* you are. How would you know for sure?

I've said this before, but I *think* it bears repeating. Salvation by faith is a valid doctrine only if *what* one believes is true. Faith in a half-truth or a lie has never, and will never, save anyone. Oh, I see, we have an objection from the peanut gallery. You don't think that's so, do you? Well then, I'll just choose to believe that Judas died for my sin and Jesus Christ was a traitor. Oh, now it seems the shoe is on the other foot. You won't buy that either. Well, logic is logic. You can't have it both ways. If I can't believe anything and everything and still be saved, there must be a certain amount of Truth that one must believe to be saved. That *means what* you believe does make a difference after all.

Oh, now you're saying that *what* we believe must be in accord with the message of Scripture. That's good. Now we're back to *talking about* Satan's hand basket. If *what* we believe must be in accord with the message of Scripture, we had all better make sure we understand the *true* message of Scripture, or our soul may very well be in that hand basket along with the souls of all the other heathen around the world. One other thing, just in case you forgot, the Scriptures include the Old Testament Scriptures as well as the New Testament Scriptures. Some people tend to forget that, so I thought I'd just make sure we're on common ground.

I assume that you also understand that *what* we believe to be saved must be the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Otherwise, there could be no salvation by faith because *what* we believe would

be a half-truth or a lie. (I didn't want you to think I was agreeing that some half-baked, half-truth was perfectly acceptable, or that two acceptable versions of the one Truth of Scripture could serve equally as well.) Excuse me for a moment. I just want to say good-bye to those dearly departed scoffers who left our discussion because they don't think any one Truth concerning the message of the Scriptures is attainable. I guess we know whose hand basket they're in, don't we?

Now that we've agreed salvation by faith has validity only if *what* we believe is true, let's *talk* a bit about the *what*—the content—of faith. Did you know theologians don't even consider the *what* of faith when they discuss this passage:

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for {their} body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, {being} by itself. But someone may {well} say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works." You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says,

"If what we believe must be in accord with the message of Scripture, we had all better make sure we understand the true message of Scripture."

"AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS," and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without {the} spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:14-26)

Isn't that amazing? Theologians argue back and forth about what James has said about faith and works, yet they miss the point entirely because they fail to comprehend James is *talking about what* Christians believe. You see, James began his discussion of faith and works at the end of the first chapter when he said this:

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. (James 1:21-22)

Did you understand what he said? He first exhorted his readers to "receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls." That's the essence of salvation by faith. We "receive the word" by believing it. But then he said those who *hear* "the word" and don't *do* "the word" "delude themselves." That makes me wonder what he *means* by "the word." Whatever he had in mind, it had to be *what* James believed and taught, not *what* somebody else before or since believed and taught. You know what I *mean*? "The word" certainly had to have a definite content, and only *what* James believed can qualify as the content of "the word" he had in mind.

Did you also notice what he said about people who "delude themselves"? Do you know what that *means*? It *means* they persuade themselves into believing something that isn't true, in this case, something that is not a part of "the word" James has referred to. How do I know that? Because the Greek term James uses here is the same Greek term that the

“Most people read the Scriptures as though they are a sequential series of ‘proof texts’ that can be taken out of context.”

Apostle Paul used when he wrote the following:

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and {attaining} to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, {resulting} in a true knowledge of God’s mystery, {that is}, Christ {Himself}, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument.

(Colossians 2:1–4)

It should be obvious James is *talking about* people who have heard “the word” yet “delude themselves” into believing something that isn’t true, something that isn’t a part of “the word” James believed and taught. I wonder what he had in mind. Wouldn’t it be something if he goes right on and explains what these people believe that isn’t true? That would be something, wouldn’t it? I mean, most people read the Scriptures as though they are a sequential series of “proof texts” that can be taken out of context when the Truth is, the writer of Scripture is always trying to say something that ties together with the rest of what he says and makes sense only in the total context of his work. We too often miss the point of the author because we’re too busy looking for one or two verses to “prove” what we want to believe. So let’s take it slow and easy and look closely at what James wrote immediately after he mentioned people who “delude themselves”:

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for {once} he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it,

not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his {own} heart, this man’s religion is worthless. This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of {our} God and Father, to visit orphans and widows in their distress, {and} to keep oneself unstained by the world.

(James 1:23–27)

“James says ‘pure and undefiled religion’ is ‘to keep oneself unstained by the world.’”

Isn’t that something? There it is right there, tucked away in that last verse. James says “pure and undefiled religion” is “to keep oneself unstained by the world.” I doubt you ever heard that part of that verse emphasized, did you? No, I don’t imagine you have. Most people are willing to *talk about* visiting orphans and widows. That’s not threatening to them because it’s an external behavior that can be taken as a fine example of the type of behavior expected of Christians. But that “unstained by the world” notion is a bit far out for some. It gets into “holy roller” talk. Yet it agrees with what James said when he began this section:

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

(James 1:21)

Now, imagine that! After telling us to “put aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness,” James has reminded us that if we have a “pure religion,” we’ll keep ourselves “unstained by the world.” That’s a far cry

from the “easy-believism” you hear preached from the pulpit today, isn’t it? Those “sleazy-believism” advocates are quick to tell you what we “should do” or “would do” if only we “could do” what God requires. Then they conclude by affirming it’s too bad we’re just human and have to keep on sinning, so God will have to settle for less than the ideal.

Christians don’t *talk much about* holiness any more, do they? Do you know why? Because everybody thinks (did you catch that? I said “everybody thinks”) all you have to *do* to be saved is believe. They forget that *what* you believe makes a whale of a difference in *what* you do. That’s what James is *talking about* here. He’s referring to people who have heard “the word” and then “deluded themselves” into believing they can get by with giving God less than He requires.

James knew what a lot of “Christians” today refuse to believe: God demands holiness—perfect holiness. But I don’t want to emphasize that too much. It might offend a few readers who want to deny that *what* you believe determines *what* you do. If they believed God demanded perfect obedience, they’d come up with it. However, I’m getting ahead of myself. James says that himself a little bit later.

Did you hear what James said about the person who “deceives his own heart?” He said “this man’s religion is worthless.” He was *talking about* the person who can’t control what he says. I’m sure he would have said the same thing about Christian folk today who just can’t quit fornicating, lying, cheating (on their taxes), stealing (from God and man), and a whole long list of other things that God must consider just as bad as, if not worse than, loose lips. You know the type of “Christians” I’m *talking about*? They can’t give up all the things Christians aren’t supposed to do, like gossiping about others.

But then maybe you don’t know anything about all those things that Christians aren’t supposed to do. I don’t doubt some of you haven’t heard. It’s not

fashionable to *talk about* sin nowadays. It's almost as if Christians don't have to worry about that little three-letter word. They just assume God knows and understands they were made to sin. What is it they say? "After all, we're only human." Far be it from most Christians to confess their sin and seek forgiveness. That's too archaic and unsophisticated for the modern mind.

It's obvious that gossip and other sins of the tongue can sometimes be extremely hurtful to others. But what James mentions next seems to be an even more benign sin. He wants to *talk about* "the sin" of showing partiality. Look at what he says:

My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ with [an attitude of] personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the fine clothes, and say, "You sit here in a good place," and you say to the poor man, "You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world [to be] rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man. Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? (James 2:1-7)

"If you don't act in accordance with what you say you believe, you don't believe what you say you believe."

There's an interesting bit of *parabolic imagery* behind his mention of "judges with evil motives." I explain the role of the judges of Israel in *The Mystery of Scripture*. Suffice it to say for now

that judging others fairly is a fundamental characteristic of a righteous person. James is just saying that, if you are a righteous person, you will treat people fairly and won't make distinctions based on social status. But then he goes further and makes a statement that is all too easy to overlook:

If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law, according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin [and] are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one [point], he has become guilty of all. (James 2:8-10)

It's rather difficult to get around his point-blank charge. He bluntly says, "if you show partiality, you are committing sin." Now doesn't that knock your socks off? I mean, he has the audacity to tell me that showering attention on some fat cat while at the same time making poor folks sit in the cheap seats is sin? My! My! How much more stringent could Christianity get? That must be why that statement has been ignored. If we claimed showing partiality was a sin, we would be getting into "legalism." And we all know that won't do, don't we?

In case some of you have been living on the moon, "legalism" is a code word "Christians" use to demean any view that can be taken to mean the opposite of salvation by faith alone. And for the benefit of you "trekkies" who have recently returned from an intergalactic mission, salvation by faith alone is today taken to mean you don't have to do anything to be saved; all you have to do is believe. In other words, "legalism" is usually taken to refer to any belief that God requires anything more than "faith."

The trouble with that understanding of the doctrine of salvation by faith, which is not addressed by its adherents, is quite simple. That's why we're discussing it here. (I can't deal with difficult topics in this short space.) *What you believe makes a big difference in what you do.*

What if "the word" James had in mind required the Christian to live a holy life? That would mean if you didn't believe Christians had to live a holy life,

you wouldn't be believing the same "word" that James believed, would you? Moreover, if salvation by faith is only valid *if you believe the Truth*, and "the word" James believed is the Truth, you would be on your way to hell right now, wouldn't you? Your faith would be as worthless as hair on a bowling ball, wouldn't it? And all because you believed a lie. What a waste!

"What you believe makes a big difference in what you do."

But doesn't that present us with a fine conundrum? If "the word" James believed requires us to do something and we don't do it, we must not really believe "the word" because we aren't living according to "the word" we say we believe. Does that sound strangely like what James says later about faith and works? It should. That is, in fact, precisely what he is saying.

Yet on the other side of the conundrum, if salvation is attained by faith—that is, belief in "the word" alone—and if the Truth of "the word" James has in mind requires Christians to do something to be saved, then salvation must not be by faith alone. Salvation must depend on both faith and works. That sounds serious! Salvation by faith alone is, according to Protestant theology at least, one of the most fundamental doctrines of Christianity. So any doctrine of salvation by faith that also requires the Believer to work for salvation just won't do.

We have to find some way out of this fine mess. Maybe this is too difficult a topic for this short space after all. What do you think? Think about it while I dig myself in a bit deeper.

The "sleazy-believism" view that faith (belief) alone is sufficient for salvation—that is, that the Christian doesn't have to measure up in any way by living a holy life—has already run smack into what James said about "pure religion." He said it *means* "to keep oneself unstained by the world," and anyone who doesn't do that has a "worthless" religion. But notice what he says next:

“Only by ‘remaining’ or ‘abiding’ within the limited confines of the Truth of The Apostolic Teaching is it possible to meet the stringent requirements God has set forth.”

For He who said, “DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY,” also said, “DO NOT COMMIT MURDER.” Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act, as those who are to be judged by {the} law of liberty. For judgment {will be} merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:11–13)

Don’t that beat all? Correct me if I’m wrong, but James apparently believed Christians were still obligated to keep the Ten Commandments. Come to think of it, Christians still believe that. At least I think so. Last time I checked, Christians still thought murder was a sin. However, as I remember, some considered adultery to be somewhere in between a sin and a foible. I don’t know exactly what to make of that. I thought black was black and white was white. Some seem to think everything is a shade of gray.

But I guess if Christians still think murder is a sin, there must be at least one thing you have to do to be saved. (Refraining from murder, that is.) If that be so, it sounds to me like those Christians must be into “legalism.” (That argument was lost on the “sleazy-believers.” Their response: “But God will save even serial killers if they believe.” Don’t bother telling them that’s not the point. They wouldn’t get it anyway.)

The Perfect Law of Liberty

Did you happen to notice James mentioned the “law of liberty” again? He talked about that “law” once before, in the first chapter (v. 25). There, he called it “the perfect law.” And he even said the Christian is supposed to “abide by it.” Actually, that isn’t what the Greek text says. It says simply “remain,” but the translator, not understanding what “perfect law” James had in mind, translated

the Greek text the best he knew how. James was talking about *The Apostolic Teaching*. He also calls it “the word” and says the one who hears “the word” and doesn’t do it “is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror.” Then, in completing the analogy, he says:

But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the {law} of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man shall be blessed in what he does. (James 1:25)

His point is one you would do well to remember. Only by “remaining” or “abiding” within the limited confines of the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* is it possible to meet the stringent requirements God has set forth. Why? Because, as I’ve said before, and as I will undoubtedly say time and time again, *what* you believe determines *what* you do. If you believe *The Teaching*, you will act in accordance with that *Teaching*. That’s what James was *talking about* when he wrote the following:

What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace, be warmed and be filled,” and yet you do not give them what is necessary for {their} body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, {being} by itself. But someone may {well} say, “You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was per-

fect; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of God. You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone. And in the same way was not Rahab the harlot also justified by works, when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way? For just as the body without {the} spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:14–26)

Did it ever occur to you that the “work” James mentions in this passage is a somewhat meager act of kindness? Not many would turn away someone in desperate need of food and clothing. So what’s his point? Just this: Talk is cheap. If you don’t act in accordance with what you say you believe, you don’t believe what you say you believe. Why? Because *what* we believe determines *what* we do. Refute that if you think you can. But when you do, don’t forget to notify the psychiatric profession. They need to know that the basis they use for counseling emotionally disturbed individuals is seriously flawed.

Did you know that Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, thought the above passage from the Book of James contradicted the notion of salvation by faith? He was so completely averse to anything that might be used to refute that essential doctrine that he called the Book of James “an epistle of straw.” He can be forgiven in that assessment. You must understand he was up against a Roman Catholic hierarchy whose only concession to faith was that you must believe that penance and indulgences could effect salvation—even for the dead. In the face of such a totally works-oriented Christianity, would you look kindly on something that could be interpreted to bolster that position?

Some today still view what James has said in much the same way as Martin Luther did. Isn’t that remarkable? They

“If the Spirit of the Living God resides within True Believers, they will know the Truth when they hear it, provided they are willing to live according to that Truth.”

do that because they still cling to the nebulous notion that Christians can believe anything and everything and still be saved. It should be obvious that isn't so, but who's to say? There are so many counterfeit Christian beliefs out there that people assume they are supposed to pick and choose as the fancy hits them. Under such circumstances, who could fault them for getting caught up in some ridiculous notion?

If what I wrote in the last issue of *The Voice of Elijah* is true, God will. [Editor: See “Mystics, Meatballs, and the Marvelous Works of God,” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1993.] If the Spirit of the Living God resides within True Believers, they will know the Truth when they hear it, *provided they are willing to live according to that Truth*. I didn't say that; Jesus did:

Jesus therefore answered them, and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or {whether} I speak from Myself. He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory; but He who is seeking the glory of the one who sent Him, He is true, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”
(John 7:16–18)

If that's true, it's going to be difficult for anyone to get past God, isn't it? What if you secretly decided to renege on the commitment you made to God when you were born again? You could just choose to believe one of those “easy-believism” versions of Christianity and be done with it, couldn't you? Then you could go on claiming to believe the Truth, all the

“If you're not sure you know the Truth, why are you teaching others?”

while spouting Christian clichés like everybody else, and not do anything that God requires.

Does that type of “Christian” sound familiar to you? Does that maybe even sound like you? That person is nothing but the consummate consumer. They don't want the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. They just want a reasonable facsimile that will allow them to hide from God, themselves, and others. I remind you that James said those who assume God requires nothing of them “delude themselves” and anyone who follows them in that belief “deceives his {own} heart.” He also said “this man's religion is worthless.”

James had in mind people who have heard “the word” yet still *choose* to believe the Truth of “the word” requires nothing of them. There are a lot of those folks around today, aren't there? Too bad for them.

Hindsight is 20/20

Contrary to those who tend to see a refutation of the doctrine of salvation by faith alone in the above passage, James was actually reinforcing that doctrine by stressing the fact that *what* one believes is the essential ingredient in the doctrine of salvation by faith. Do you know why it is the essential ingredient? Because “the true power of the Christian life resides in faith—not *faith* in the sense of *that* you believe, but *faith* in the sense of *what* you believe.” Does that quote look familiar to you? Probably not. It does to me. I took it out of one of the articles I wrote for the last issue of this newsletter. (See “Mystics, Meatballs, and the Marvelous Works of God,” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1993.) I just thought I should use this article to better explain what I *meant* when I wrote it. I also thought I might make it a permanent quote so that some of you get the point: *Faith* is Christian *faith* only if *what* you believe is in accord with the Truth of “the word” James had in mind. Here's another quote from that article:

Once The Teaching becomes a part of you, that is, once you firmly believe it, you will act accordingly—as an individual led by the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Now let me ask you a not-so-hypothetical question. What if “the word” James understood provided the one who believed it with the power to live a sinless life? Do you understand what I'm saying? If you believed “the word,” you would thereby be empowered to do what “the word” required. Would works even be an issue? Not at all. “Legalism” would not apply because there would be no effort necessary on the part of the Believer to meet the requirements of “the word.” In fact, the reverse would be the case. The person who didn't believe “the word” wouldn't do what “the word” required simply because he/she lacked the power.

On the other hand, the person who did believe “the word” would do what “the word” required because, through belief in “the word,” he/she would gain the power necessary to meet the requirements of “the word.” If that were the case, it would explain a lot about what James has said, wouldn't it? Looking at it that way, you can see that James knew the one who believed *The Apostolic Teaching* would demonstrate that belief by living the holy life *The Teaching* requires. He also knew that the one who did not believe *The Apostolic Teaching* would not (just because they could not) demonstrate their belief in “the word” by doing what “the word” requires. That's why he next mentions those who were responsible for teaching Believers *The Apostolic Teaching*:

Let not many {of you} become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.
(James 3:1)

His point? *What* you teach determines *what* the people you teach are going to do, provided they believe what you teach. Therefore, James has given

good advice for Christians today. So I ask you: If you're not sure you know the Truth, why are you teaching others? Do you want to "incur a stricter judgment"?

The Perfect Law

To round out this discussion of salvation by faith, I want to point out a passage that explains the True Believer's relationship to "the perfect law of liberty" at which James states we should "look intently." To better understand my explanation here, however, you should have at least a basic understanding of the corporate responsibility of all Israel that existed under the Old Covenant and how that responsibility changed to one of individual responsibility under the terms of the New Covenant. I have already provided that explanation in *Not All Israel Is Israel* (pp. 55–103, 131–155).

"To see yourself for what you are, you have to 'look intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty' that resides within you."

In that explanation, I included a couple of references to the following passage, although I did not quote the text in full. Interestingly, it is the longest single passage of the Old Testament quoted in the New Testament:

For if that first {covenant} had been faultless, there would have been no occasion sought for a second. For finding fault with them, He says,

*"BEHOLD, DAYS ARE COMING, SAYS THE LORD,
WHEN I WILL EFFECT A NEW COVENANT WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AND WITH THE HOUSE OF JUDAH;
NOT LIKE THE COVENANT WHICH I MADE WITH THEIR FATHERS
ON THE DAY WHEN I TOOK THEM BY THE HAND
TO LEAD THEM OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT;
FOR THEY DID NOT CONTINUE IN MY COVENANT,*

*AND I DID NOT CARE FOR THEM, SAYS THE LORD.
FOR THIS IS THE COVENANT THAT I WILL MAKE WITH THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL AFTER THOSE DAYS, SAYS THE LORD: I WILL PUT MY LAWS INTO THEIR MINDS,
AND I WILL WRITE THEM UPON THEIR HEARTS.
AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD,
AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.
AND THEY SHALL NOT TEACH EVERYONE HIS FELLOW CITIZEN,
AND EVERYONE HIS BROTHER, SAYING, 'KNOW THE LORD,'
FOR ALL SHALL KNOW ME,
FROM THE LEAST TO THE GREATEST OF THEM.
FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES,
AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE."*

*When He said, "A new {covenant}," He has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to disappear.
(Hebrews 8:7–13)*

It's obvious the writer of the Book of Hebrews would have us understand Jeremiah is *talking about* God's relationship with His People under the terms of the New Covenant. Since I've already explained "*The Way*" in which the New Covenant differed from the Old Covenant in *Not All Israel Is Israel*, I won't go into detail here. Just to summarize, however, the Prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel told us that under the terms of the New Covenant, instead of God dwelling **among** His People, He would dwell **in** each one of His People. They also said His dwelling place within the individual would be in a "new heart," in a "new spirit," as well as in the "law" of Moses "written on the heart."

As I explained in *Not All Israel Is Israel*, the "law" of Moses is the *Torah* of Moses, and the word *torah* means "teaching" (p. 154, n. 29). Therefore, in this particular passage Jeremiah is telling us that the dwelling place of God within the born-again Believer is going to be the *Torah* of Moses written on the heart—*meaning The Teaching of Moses* written on the heart. That's why he also says one will not have to teach the other how to "know the Lord" because each one will have the Lord

dwelling within them as *The Teaching*.

The point is, the "perfect law" that James mentioned in his discussion is the same "law" that Jeremiah has said the True Believer will have "written on the heart" under the terms of the New Covenant. That's why James says that those who don't do what they are supposed to do "delude themselves," and the one who thinks he is religious but isn't "deceives his own heart." He knows that, for a True Believer, belief in a lie begins with a failure to seek Truth no matter what the cost. In other words, an understanding of the Truth begins by doing exactly what James says. To see yourself for what you are, you have to "look intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty" that resides within you—provided you are a born-again Believer.

The Spirit residing in the first bit of Truth you believed when you were born again will always make your situation known to you, provided you are willing to accept the reality of your situation. Just don't turn away and immediately forget what kind of person you saw yourself to be. If you do that, you'll be one of those who James says "delude themselves."

How can it be that the Spirit of the *Living God* resides in *The Teaching* written on the heart of the Believer? Because the Spirit of Jesus Christ is a Word. Is that news to you? Perhaps you didn't hear what John said:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
(John 1:1–5)*

"For a True Believer, belief in a lie begins with a failure to seek Truth no matter what the cost."

“The Truth of The Apostolic Teaching was broken up—removed from its original framework of Hebrew idioms and parabolic imagery—so that it could be artificially set into the framework of Greek philosophy.”

Maybe you haven't fully understood how you came to be born again. I can tell you quickly: You heard the essential outlines of “the word of Truth” and it came to life in you because you believed it. At least that's what James says:

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.
(James 1:18)

But notice what James goes on to say:

{This} you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.
(James 1:19–21)

James obviously believed it was necessary not only to be “brought forth by the word of truth,” but also to continue to “receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.” Then he goes on after that to say all the things about people who “delude themselves” and the person who “deceives his {own} heart.”

What I said above bears repeating here: “The word implanted” that James refers to here is the same “law”—“teaching”—that Jeremiah understood would be “written on the heart.” The *parabolic imagery* is different, but the concept remains the same. You will be saved by faith (belief), but only by faith (belief) in the Truth and nothing but the Truth. Your faith (belief) in a lie is completely ineffectual, no matter how firmly you believe it. The Truth is what saves.

So I ask you: What if you had opportunity to hear the Truth and *chose* not to believe it? That would be something, wouldn't it? If what Jesus said about “knowing of the teaching” is true and

you choose to believe a lie, it is only because, as Isaiah said, you have *chosen* to make falsehood your refuge and have concealed yourself with deception (Is. 28:15b). (See “Watching Ducks Sashaying 'Round the CornerStone,” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1993.) Therefore, if you hear the Truth and believe a lie, you have nobody to blame but yourself, because the Holy Spirit within you will never confirm “the truth” of a lie.

How much Truth is Truth?

For James, “the word” he had in mind was the totality of *The Apostolic Teaching*. But as I explained in the articles written for the January 1993 issue, the Early Church gave up the idioms and *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* for good some time around A.D. 200. So what Truth have True Believers had during the 1,800 years since? That's an interesting question, isn't it?

“Your faith in a lie is completely ineffectual, no matter how firmly you believe it. The Truth is what saves.”

Consider this: Around A.D. 200, the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* was broken up—removed from its original framework of Hebrew idioms and *parabolic imagery*—so that it could be artificially set into the framework of Greek philosophy. Since that time, bits and pieces of Truth have been available in the vessels—logical categories of thought—provided by Greek philosophy.

Notice that I said, “Since that time, bits and pieces of Truth have been available.” Elements of the Truth have always been known to some in the Church. It's just that a coherent presentation of the

Truth has not been available. So I ask you: If we are going to be saved by faith (belief) in the Truth, how much Truth does it take to be saved? That's just another way of asking: How much Truth does it take to be Truth? The answer is obvious. You can be saved with only a bare minimum of the Truth. But that's not the issue.

You see, it's not even a question of whether you believe a lie. We all believe some things that aren't true. Our knowledge of the Truth is incomplete just as Paul said:

For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.
(1 Corinthians 13:12)

The only issue at stake is whether, when you hear the Truth, you reject it in order to believe a lie. That's because, as far as God is concerned, the single most important issue involved in salvation by faith has always been whether, when given opportunity, one rejects the Truth in favor of a lie.

Does that make sense? You can believe a lie and still be saved, *as long as you have not rejected the Truth in order to believe that lie*. That's the difficulty with believing the lie that says *The Teaching* requires nothing of you. You can't believe that lie and still believe the Truth because it flatly contradicts the essentials of God's Truth. The sole purpose of that lie is to allow you to hide from the Truth of God by “deluding yourself” and “deceiving your own heart.” That's why James confronts it head on.

So what are you going to do now? I'll tell you forthrightly: What you have read here is the Truth. However, you don't think it's possible to know the Truth today, do you? That's why you don't believe me, isn't it? Well, that's your choice. The sad fact is Isaiah said your refuge is going to be swept away (Is. 28:17). I've done my part; the ball is in your court. ■

Q & A nswers

The Voice of Elijah publishes articles based on the findings of The Elijah Project, a private research group headed by Larry D. Harper. In this column we seek answers to general-interest questions concerning the findings, purpose, and philosophy of this project.

Editor: *A lot of new subscribers have started reading since the January issue, some of them joining us with the April issue. They most likely don't understand the connection between The Elijah Project and The Voice of Elijah. For their information, would you mind answering a few basic questions about what you do?*

Elijah: I can try.

Editor: *You started writing articles for publication in this newsletter almost three years ago. Since then, in those articles, you have challenged basic assumptions Christians have about themselves, about other Christians, and about Christianity in general. Then just over a year ago, you began writing articles for another publication we put out, titled The Voice of Elijah Update, which goes out eight times a year to those subscribers who contribute a minimum of \$25 a month to this ministry. I assume they contribute because they agree with at least some of what they read in this newsletter and also because they want an opportunity to hear more. In that publication you have gotten into the parabolic imagery found in Early Christian literature, and now, in the last two issues, you have continued the explanation you began in the April issue of this newsletter, about how Jesus Christ "built the house" of God through His resurrection. Both of those issues have had almost as many pages as this newsletter. Now you're offering to teach, via a monthly audio cassette, those who stand with The Voice of Elijah by making even larger monthly contributions under a program we are calling The Next Step. I also know that you've managed to fi-*



nalize somewhere close to 150 pages of your next book, The Mystery of Scripture, since the last issue of the newsletter. So when do you sleep?

Elijah: Are you serious?

Editor: *Sure. I think some of our readers would like to know the amount of effort that goes into these publications.*

Elijah: I'd be sleeping between paragraphs if I didn't get at least eight to ten hours of sleep at night. I can't get by with less. I have a muscle disorder that goes absolutely berserk when I lose sleep. My back muscles cramp up, pull my back out, and I'm in pain for days. I've prayed about it. If God heals me, I'll work as long a day as I can. Until then, I'm learning to live with it, and I make sure I get the sleep I need.

Editor: *Does that make it difficult to get everything done? I mean, some people accomplish a lot because they can get by on six hours of sleep or less.*

Elijah: It shortens the day somewhat, but I normally get 10 to 12 hours of work done each day. Some days I get a bit more. I'm not sure I would be mentally alert enough to write if I got less sleep anyway. Writing demands a lot more of me than I would have ever imagined before I started.

Editor: *How's that?*

Elijah: It requires almost total concentration to make sure I've said what I *meant* to say. I find that concentration difficult to maintain. So I have good days writing, and I have bad days. Some days I can write 15 pages. Other days I can't write anything. I'm convinced some of the bad days have to do with God's timing, with slowing me down so the information doesn't come out any sooner than it is supposed to. I'm positive that's what's been happening with *The Mystery of Scripture*. I've known most of what I intend to put in that book for over a year, but I just can't seem to get it down on paper. Yet after I've struggled with some particular section for a while, suddenly some additional information comes to my attention, and everything falls into place

so I can write easily. On the other hand, I'm just as certain some of the bad days I have are the result of interruptions that break my train of thought. Life is life. You do what you have to do.

Editor: *You mentioned "additional information" that comes to your attention. Can you give us an example?*

Elijah: Sure. I go to the library about once every two or three weeks to pick up books I want to read on some topic. I keep a lengthy—and growing—bibliography of books and articles that I intend to read in a database on the computer. When I go to the library, I take a printout of the titles of the books and articles in the database so that I can immediately get the things that interest me. But normally while I'm there, I'll scan the shelves to pick up one or two books that appeal to me. I've had quite a few interesting experiences doing that. Last April or May, while I was researching the origins of Rabbinic Judaism, I had a book that, if I didn't know better, I would say jumped off the shelves at me.

Editor: *What do you mean? Are you talking about some kind of supernatural experience?*

Elijah: No. Nothing like that. I've thought about it several times, and I'm positive the book was just pulled out an inch or so from the rest of the books. But I wasn't looking for books to read. I was just walking through the stacks, already on my way to the front desk, when I saw this book sticking out from the rest of the books. The title caught my attention because it pertained to what I was working on at the time. So I took the book off the shelf and started scanning it for information. The amazing thing to me was how providential it was.

Right before I went to the library, I had been working on issues related to the Hebrew texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as other issues related to scholarly opinion concerning the origin of the Jewish sect at Qumran and the Pharisees. Consequently, I had all sorts of questions I needed to find answers to, but the topic was so broad that I didn't know where to begin looking. I had picked up several books on the subject, none of them in the same subject area as the book I had just by chance picked off the shelf, and none of them were entirely satisfactory for what I needed. But by the time I was through scanning this book, a lot of my questions had been answered, not by the argument of the author, but by information I found in the book. As a matter of fact, I disagreed with the basic premise the author was propounding, but the evidence he used in his arguments supported what I had essentially concluded from read-

ing what others had written. So, as far as I'm concerned, the book may as well have jumped off the shelf at me.

Editor: *You said "experiences." You've had others?*

Elijah: Enough that I've come to accept them as some sort of normal library experience. The last time was a month or so ago, and I still chuckle about that one every once in a while.

Editor: *Why's that?*

Elijah: Because I don't know if it was just me being mystical, or if it really was a providential experience. One time I take it one way, the next time I take it the other. Sometimes I think it was just my own sensitivity to the fact that those kinds of things have been happening when I go to the library. Other times I look at what happened and say it had to have been providence. You could take it either way, and I wouldn't disagree with you because I can't decide myself.

Editor: *What happened?*

Elijah: I was on my way out of the library after checking out the books I wanted when the thought came to me that nothing unusual had happened on that trip. Right behind it came the thought that I should go back to the periodical stacks and check the articles in one particular journal that I've gotten attached to over the years. With that urge came the feeling that it was important, that I simply had to check the latest issues of that periodical. I stopped dead in my tracks and started arguing with myself, telling myself that this was silly, that I was conjuring up some goofiness. But I couldn't bring myself to walk out the door without checking. What if it wasn't goofiness?

Editor: *So you checked the periodical?*

Elijah: Sure I did. I had no reason not to, except for the fact that I felt silly doing it.

Editor: *So? What did you find?*

Elijah: That's the amazing thing. I copied four articles from the last two issues of the journal. All four related to things I've been looking into, but two of them dealt with the Canaanite *marzeah*. That's a subject at the top of my list of research topics when I finally complete *The Mystery of Scripture*. I was surprised to find that both articles provided an overview of the current state of scholarly inquiry into that particular subject. I needed

that information so that I could catch up on things I've missed over the past year. One of them provided a lead on a source I'll need to get before I finish *The Mystery of Scripture*. In other words, I need the information now so I can be ready to get back into the research later on.

Editor: *What's a marzeah? And what does it have to do with anything?*

Elijah: Depending on whom you talk to, it might be this, it could be that. I'm not sure myself right now because I haven't looked at all the relevant material. That's where the source I mentioned becomes particularly important. It's an unpublished Ph.D. dissertation that has all the relevant texts listed. I can probably get a copy of that through a dissertation abstract service and be on my way rather quickly when I get back to reading next winter.

As far as what scholars think the Canaanite *marzeah* was, they're not sure. The evidence for its observance stretches all the way from 1300 B.C. to A.D. 600 and includes various cultures, so some argue against using later evidence to provide any insight into the earlier Canaanite observance. Some are absolutely convinced that, in its earliest attested form, it was a Canaanite feast celebrated in honor of the dead just as in later times. I tend to agree with them simply because that fits into what I see in the Scriptures. But what the *marzeah* was is not nearly as *significant* as *why* it was celebrated. By that I *mean*, what was the ancient mind-set that informed the ritual? And it was a ritual, perhaps a simple ritual, but one with solemn *significance* for the ancient Semitic peoples. I don't have all the information I need to answer all the questions I have right now. But the answers won't be hard to find when I have the time to start looking.

Editor: *How does that relate to the Scriptures?*

Elijah: Let me ask you this: Why do Christians practice the two rituals of baptism and the Lord's Supper?

Editor: *Because Jesus told us to.*

Elijah: Exactly. And *why* did He tell us to? I *mean*, what was the Early Christian mind-set that informed those two rituals?

Editor: *I can't answer that without giving you a "proof text" that probably has no relevance to anything.*

Elijah: Well then, let me ask you this: Do you think it's possible, just possible, that Jesus Christ, the One Who

the Gospel writers say spoke everything in parables, and the One Who conducted *parabolic pantomime* all the time as well, might, just might—that's all I ask—have given His followers two *parabolic pantomimes* to conduct on a regular basis to remind them of some certain part of *The Teaching*? What if baptism and the Lord's Supper were *meant* to be *parabolic pantomime* by which Jesus Christ intended His disciples to celebrate His death and resurrection through a mockery of the tenets of the ancient Canaanite religion from which the Prophets took the *parabolic imagery* of the Scriptures?

Before you answer that, you should know that the things I have written concerning Jesus Christ "building the house" of God pertain directly to the *marzeah*. The *marzeah* was a cultic meal in honor of the dead in the Canaanite religion. The Prophets of the Old Testament were constantly ridiculing the sons of Israel for practicing that religion. So this is not some off-the-wall, hypothetically possible connection. Jesus Christ said the Prophets spoke of Him, and their writings are laced with ridicule of the Canaanite religion. A primary ritual in that religion was the *marzeah*. That much I know for sure. I also know that a focal point in the Canaanite mythology was the "building" of Baal's "house" through his resurrection. Unless I'm terribly mistaken, the Canaanite *marzeah* was celebrated in remembrance of that event just as Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of the "house" that God "built" for Jesus Christ on resurrection morning.

I'm *talking about* the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the prophetic message of the Hebrew Scriptures. It's too easy for Christians today to read into the Scriptures whatever traditional beliefs they happen to adhere to. It's something else again to start trying to understand the Scriptures in terms of the mind-set of the day in which they were written. Theologians, at least conservative theologians, give lip service to the notion of "contextual exegesis." They even admit that the context of Scripture includes the historical-cultural context in which the Scriptures were written. But they won't admit we have long since lost access to a large part of that historical-cultural context because it vanished with the death of the people in whom it resided. So how are we ever going to be able to retrieve it?

Obviously, it's a debatable contention on my part, but I believe I have already shown your Monthly Contributors in the last two issues of *The Voice of Elijah Update* that it is possible to begin to think in the same terms the ancient Hebrews thought if you have an understanding of the *meaning* of the Hebrew idioms they used. All I have done in the last three months is show your readers the *meaning* of the Hebrew idiom "build a house" and how it is used in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New

Testament. However, that simple explanation can make a big difference in how you understand certain passages of Scripture, particularly passages in the Prophets. But more than that, it can change the way you think about eternal things. Now when I *talk about* Jesus Christ “building the house” of God, your Monthly Contributors, if they have accepted my explanation, have a certain mental image that informs that idiom.

Editor: *But the things you have written in The Update are not available to our regular subscribers.*

Elijah: Sure they are. Anyone who is interested in learning more of what I teach can become a Monthly Contributor to your ministry. They can then obtain everything I’ve written, including *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*. Also, everything I’ve summarized in the articles I’ve written for the last two issues of *The Update* will eventually be included in the book *House of Israel, Temple of God*. But with all that I have to do now, who knows when I’ll get that written?

Editor: *What you’ve said is true. I tend to think in terms of what each group receives as a matter of course. But you’re right, if they want to know more, it is available.*

Elijah: I want to go back for a moment to what I said about Baal’s “house” being “built.” The fact that God mocks that particular facet of the Canaanite religion is fascinating. Not only do biblical scholars have no idea as to the *significance* of the Hebrew idiom “build a house,” scholars who work with the Canaanite texts from Ugarit lack even the vaguest notion that the key to understanding the Baal and Anat cycle of Canaanite mythological texts also resides in an understanding of the *meaning* of that one Northwest Semitic idiom. It is clear from the biblical usage of the idiom as well as its use in the Canaanite texts that the basic nuance in every occurrence is the notion of death and resurrection.

Scholars have known for years that the Canaanites believed their god Baal died and was resurrected. They also know from the Baal and Anat cycle in the Canaanite mythological texts that his resurrection is somehow tied to the “building” of his “house.” Yet, not knowing the *meaning* of the biblical idiom, they can’t see past the ends of their noses as far as the *significance* of the Canaanite usage of the idiom is concerned. They won’t even admit that the Canaanite religion, just like the Egyptian religion from which it may well have derived the notion of resurrection, and to which it is certainly related, was a religion founded on the premise of a god who died and was resurrected.

I’ve asked myself repeatedly: Why won’t they simply admit the obvious? The Canaanites worshipped Baal, just as the Egyptians worshipped Osiris, because they somehow believed they could be resurrected “in him.” In some specific way that I have not yet completely deciphered (although I have a fairly good idea) the Canaanites evidently also believed they could become a part of Baal’s “house” in the resurrection. If all that is true, the parallels with New Testament Christianity are obvious. Some liberal scholars have even gone so far as to claim that the fundamental tenets of Christianity are based on one of the ancient Near Eastern religions in which resurrection was the focal point. However, apparently nobody has, even in their wildest imagination, considered the possibility that God explained everything about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to the Israelites—who were for all intents and purposes nothing more than Canaanites themselves—according to the terminology of the Canaanite religion they insisted on following. Yet He did, and He saw to it that the Hebrew Scriptures contain everything necessary to understand the idioms in which that message has been concealed. Enough said.

Editor: *That’s concise enough. Let’s move on to something else. Earlier in this interview you mentioned The Mystery of Scripture. How’s that book coming along?*

Elijah: Pretty well. I should be able to finish it later this year. I’m *talking about* the first volume. I’m going to complete the book in two stages. I’ll publish the first volume this year, then publish the second volume next year, or whenever it’s finished. I’m hoping the publication of the first volume will relieve some of the pressure on me to get something out to your readers. Some of them have been waiting a long time. But those who ordered the book early on will get more than just the saddle-stitched 70- or 80-page booklet we had planned back then. The combined set they will eventually receive will be at least 500 pages.

I’m pleased with what I’ve written for *The Mystery of Scripture* so far. That’s encouraging. At the same point in writing *Not All Israel Is Israel* I was still rearranging lines, paragraphs, and even entire chapters, trying to get a coherent train of thought out of a jumbled hodgepodge. The final form of that book suffered because the first draft was so absolutely mangled. Yet in spite of the difficulty I had getting it organized, the book says what I wanted to say. It just doesn’t say it well. I realize it’s a lot more difficult to read than it has to be. I’ve read parts of it recently that made me cringe. I made ambiguous statements and left

so much unsaid. However, I'm getting better at organizing my thoughts and putting them down on paper. At least now I have the process of writing down to the point where I can go directly from one point to the next without getting sidetracked on some interesting, but peripheral, issue. Knowing when to use footnotes has helped a lot in that regard. But then, I learned to use footnotes while trying to make sense out of the first draft of *Not All Israel Is Israel*. So what can you do? You have to start somewhere. I've been told by those who proofread my writing that it is improving, and I think *The Mystery of Scripture* reflects that. But I still find writing a book to be more difficult than writing articles.

Editor: *Why is that?*

Elijah: The articles are just to stir people up and get them to think about things they may or may not want to consider. I enjoy writing the articles because I can be more informal, more sarcastic, more flippant, more everything else in them. One purpose of the articles is to leave a paper trail people can follow to find out who I am, what I believe, and where I've been in my spiritual trek. That's not to say the articles aren't as relevant today as they were when I wrote them, because they are. They all contribute some part to the whole of what I teach. But, by and large, their basic purpose is just to challenge people to consider the validity of a different perspective, to appeal to those who can identify with what I write because they feel the same way.

The books have a completely different purpose. In *Not All Israel Is Israel*, and now again in *The Mystery of Scripture*, I've explained the meaning of a fundamental Hebrew idiom and used the understanding of that idiom to show how biblical history and scriptural statements come alive when viewed from that perspective. By the time the reader has finished reading one of the books, they will have been confronted with a series of choices: Are they going to accept the logic inherent in what they have found written, or are they going to reject it in order to hold to some traditional or personal view? If they reject what they find written, the only valid reason they could have for doing so is because they find flaws in my explanation. Most who reject what I have written in the books won't reject it on that basis. They'll reject it because it contradicts their traditional beliefs. That's why I've undermined the basis for traditional Christian beliefs in the articles in your newsletter. I'm leaving them nowhere to hide but in blind adherence to tradition or personal beliefs.

Those who don't find what I have written in the articles for the newsletter to be threatening and see some

basic logic in what I write, can find a more coherent explanation in the books. I'm going to keep on writing articles that challenge the faulty assumptions and presuppositions of Christians so that those who are looking for answers will stop to consider what I'm saying. Christianity is not what God intended it to be because the Early Church gave up its understanding of the Scriptures soon after the Apostles died.

Editor: *You get "fired up" when you start talking about that particular topic, and I sense we could have an interesting discussion if we pursued it further, but I want to go on talking about the different types of things you are doing for this ministry. By "this ministry," I mean The Voice of Elijah. Some of our readers may not be aware that you are not a part of the ministry of The Voice of Elijah, but that you only write and/or publish the things we distribute. And, I might add, you make no profit whatsoever from writing or publishing those materials. Do you find it difficult to coordinate the various things you are writing, and now the things you are teaching on audio cassette, so that you don't assume people have heard or read something they haven't? For example, you've mentioned things in this interview that will make complete sense only to those who have read the latest issue of The Update.*

Elijah: I don't think that is much of a problem. Those who read *The Voice of Elijah* newsletter have access to all the newsletter articles and all but one of the books I've written. As long as I reference one of those two sources when I appeal to something I've said, I'm okay. Your Monthly Contributors currently have additional access to my book, *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*, and to all the issues of *The Voice of Elijah Update*; so as long as I only reference those two sources and the two sources all your other subscribers have, I'll be okay. The problem for now is finding what I've already written when I want to reference it in something I write later on. I often remember I've mentioned something before, but I forget where I said it. The more time that passes, the more of a problem that becomes because there is just that much more material out there. However, that problem should be partially solved when you finally publish an index to the newsletters. Maybe then you can do one for *The Update*.

I do foresee a difficulty in connection with the material I present on the audio tapes for the benefit of those who participate in The Next Step. Written sources are basically random access material. By that I mean you can scan an article or book and randomly access anything in it. By contrast, audio tapes can only be accessed sequentially, and that takes time. I don't have the time to

go through three or four tapes listening for something I know I've said.

Editor: *But you've said you're going to transcribe those tapes and include the material from them in future publications. A transcription would make that information easily accessible.*

Elijah: That's true. But I don't have time to do that myself. One of the people involved in The Elijah Project will have to do the transcription, and right now all their free time is taken up helping you with the outreach of *The Voice of Elijah*. When you have only a limited amount of resources, you can't do everything. The people helping you now started out working as volunteers for The Elijah Project, and I look forward to the day when that's the way it is again. I assume sooner or later the contributions to *The Voice of Elijah* will increase to the point where you'll be able to support a full-time staff worker. After that, I can see a lot more getting done on both fronts. The Elijah Project has several things that have been in suspended animation for six or seven years. I'll get back to those when *The Voice of Elijah* starts paying its own way.

Editor: *You feel strongly about maintaining the distinction you just made between your ministry—The Elijah Project—and this ministry—The Voice of Elijah. Why is that?*

Elijah: Because I have a limited role to play in all this. I've been called as a Teacher, and that's all I intend to do. But there's a slight twist to how I intend to fulfill my calling. I'm going to produce articles, books, audio tapes, and videotapes that say all I intend to say. When I've done that, I'll have fulfilled my calling. By contrast, the ministry of your organization, *The Voice of Elijah*, is the distribution of that information. You don't need me to help you do that. With the exception of the seminars I offer your Monthly Contributors to provide opportunity for videotaping the things I have to say, I have no intention of getting involved in a "personal ministry" of any kind. I simply don't have the time to do much more than write. The books I have already promised to write will take years to complete at the current pace. And those are all in addition to writing the articles and fulfilling other commitments I've made to your contributors.

Editor: *It's hard to argue with that, but I sense a reluctance on your part to have any personal contact with the people who read what you write. Is that the case? And, if so, why?*

Elijah: I'm not enthralled with the idea of personal contact with your Monthly Contributors. But I've accepted it as a necessary part of the process because I want to gain feedback from them. But I admit that, if I had my way, I'd spend the rest of my days holed up in my study doing what I've been doing—blasting away at the lunacy of blindly accepting traditional beliefs, and strongly presenting the case for a logical alternative.

I've thought about how I feel concerning personal contact, and I'm not exactly sure why I feel the way I do. I've always had a tendency to stay out of the spotlight. That comes into play somewhat I'm sure. But I think the major reason I'm reluctant to get involved with people, even with your Monthly Contributors, has to do with the nature of my calling. I have not been called to spout the same old well-worn Christian clichés everybody uses. Nor have I been called to slavishly adhere to some particular theological system. I have been called to challenge, to point out contradictions, to question the norms.

Some people find that extremely offensive. Unfortunately, some of them love nothing better than to argue, to dispute, to create controversy. I want nothing to do with any of that, or with them. All I'm doing is exercising my right of free speech. If they find what I say is offensive to them, they should exercise their own right to free speech and tell others to ignore me. I have no problem with that, as long as they don't want to waste my time trying to convince me that what I firmly believe is not true. I'm certainly not going to try to convince them it is true. I've spent the past twenty-seven years getting to where I am today. I don't need some Johnny-come-lately to point out contradictions for me. He can do that for the "benefit" of others.

Editor: *Most people would say you are dogmatic and close-minded. How would you respond to that charge?*

Elijah: I wouldn't. If I can't add anything to my stature by thinking one way or the other, who are they to suppose they can detract from it by verbalizing what they think? [Editor: He's alluding to Matthew 6:27.] I learned a long time ago that what people think about you doesn't change who you are. As long as you can honestly evaluate yourself and give an adequate reason for believing what you believe, I see no reason to pay attention to what others say about you. If you do, there's a tendency to seek the praise of men. John seemed to think that's a serious mistake. [Editor: He's alluding to John 12:43.] I'm convinced he was right. So I'm content to wait for Judgment Day. Then we'll all see if I obtain praise from God, won't we? ■

Plant 'em

From Page 1

“The Origen of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1993.) If the Early Church lost an accurate understanding of the Old Testament Gospel message as I have explained, over the centuries since that time a lot of newborn Christians have had their spiritual lives unnecessarily snuffed out under a heap of confusion. Would that also explain why so many new Believers turn away from their “first love” and go back to their old ways? Could be.

Don't you know Origen has a whole passel of souls to answer for on Judgment Day? [Editor: He's alluding to what he has written in “The Origen of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1993.] I would not want to be in that boy's shoes when God calls him to account for what he taught. Yet I suppose there have been others since who have dogmatically taught the Church just as big a lie as the one Origen taught. Their day is coming. But that's not my concern here. I want to explain a bit about the Hebrew idiom and *parabolic imagery* that stand behind statements made by Jesus Christ and the Apostles in the New Testament concerning spiritual growth and how it occurs.

Raising More Than Cane

In the last issue, I showed how the New Testament reveals the Apostles continued to speak in terms of the Hebrew idiom “build a house” and the image of the eternal House of God that Jesus had used to speak *parabolically* concerning His resurrection from the dead. In the last two issues of *The Voice of Elijah Update*, I have followed up that explanation with additional background information that shows how the Prophets used the Hebrew idiom and its attendant *parabolic image*. Now I want to introduce you to another Hebrew idiom and its corresponding image that Jesus used in His parables to teach concerning the Believer's resurrection life in the Spirit.

As I have explained in the last two issues of *The Update*, the Hebrew idiom “build a house” means “to engender offspring,” specifically, to engender a male

offspring that will “carry the name” of the deceased. (See “The *Parabolic Pantomimes* of Jesus Christ,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1991.) I have also stated, but have not yet fully explained, that the basic nuance inherent in the ancients' understanding of that idiom is one of resurrection. This dual *significance* of the idiom is why the Prophets could use it to speak of how God “built a house” for David through the birth of Jesus Christ and, at the same time, also use it to speak of how Jesus Christ “built a house” for God through His resurrection. If you do not understand the ancient mind-set that informs the Hebrew idiom and its attendant *parabolic image*, however, you have no idea how the Prophets foretold any of this.

The Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed” has a *meaning* nearly synonymous with the idiom “build a house,” but it appeals to different *parabolic imagery*. The *parabolic imagery* in the Scriptures that is associated with this idiom is that of a seed-bearing plant that comes to life (in the resurrection) when a planted seed germinates. Although his explanation is routinely taken to be nothing more than the use of analogy, the Apostle Paul was actually using this particular part of the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* to explain his understanding of the resurrection:

But someone will say, “How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?” You fool! That which you sow does not come to life unless it dies; and that which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is {one flesh} of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the {glory} of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable {body}, it is raised an imperishable {body}; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it

is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual {body}. So also it is written, “The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL.” The last Adam {became} a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.
(1 Corinthians 15:35–49)

The *parabolic imagery* related to the sun, moon, and stars is also drawn from his understanding of *The Apostolic Teaching*. But an explanation of how that is will have to await some future opportunity. Here, I must restrict my focus to the topic at hand—the “Seed” that God “planted” in order to “raise up seed” (engender offspring) for David and the “Seed” that Jesus Christ “planted” in order to “raise up seed” (engender offspring) for God.

Concerning Seeds, Shoots, and Stumps

When Jesus spoke of Himself as the “Seed” that God had “planted,” He sometimes did so in *parabolic statements* that depicted Him as the Tree Israel, the Firstborn Son of God—the King Who is also in Himself the Kingdom of God. (See “The Image of the King as a Tree,” *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991):

And He said, “How shall we picture the kingdom of God, or by what parable shall we present it? {It is} like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the soil, though it is smaller than all the seeds that are upon the soil, yet when it is sown, grows up and becomes larger than all the garden plants and forms large branches; so that THE BIRDS OF THE AIR can NEST UNDER ITS SHADE.” And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining every-

thing privately to His own disciples.
(Mark 4:30–34)

Notice that Mark said Jesus taught “the word” publicly in parables and then explained it privately to His disciples. That proves beyond any doubt that “the word” was a rubric the Early Church used to refer to *The Teaching of Jesus Christ*. As I mentioned in the lead article in this issue [see “Counterfeiters, Con Artists (and the Consummate Consumer)”], “the word,” as the Apostle James used it, is a direct reference to *The Apostolic Teaching*. Perhaps after reading this article you will better understand the connection between the two *Teachings*. Notice also that Jesus has quoted phrases from Ezekiel 17:23 to let us know He understood that particular prophecy informed His statements here. You will understand what He has in mind a bit later.

As I indicated in *Not All Israel Is Israel* (pp. 198 ff.), the *parabolic image* of a tree/vine stands squarely behind the Hebrew idiom “cut off/cut off from.” I mentioned (p. 199, n. 16) that Jesus foretold His death in the following parable:

And He {began} telling this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree which had been planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and did not find any. And he said to the vineyard-keeper, ‘Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?’ And he answered and said to him, ‘Let it alone, sir, for this year too, until I dig around it and put in fertilizer; and if it bears fruit next year, {fine}; but if not, cut it down.’”
(Luke 13:6–9)

I did not mention the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed” in *Not All Israel Is Israel* because it had no direct relevance to the subject matter of that book. Neither did I tell you that this idiom ties into the same *parabolic imagery* of the tree/vine that informs the Hebrew idiom “cut off/cut off from” and contributes to a more complete understanding of that imagery. In the parable just quoted, Jesus has not only used the tree image to speak concerning the time of His crucifixion when He would be completely “cut off,” He has also used it

to allude to His baptism as the time when He had been “planted” three years before His death as *the Tree* in God’s “vineyard”—that is, in Israel. The Prophet Ezekiel foretold that event using somewhat the same *parabolic imagery*:

Thus says the LORD GOD, “I shall also take {a sprig} from the lofty top of the cedar and set {it} out; I shall pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I shall plant {it} on a high and lofty mountain. On the high mountain of Israel I shall plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches. And all the trees of the field will know that I am the LORD; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I am the LORD; I have spoken, and I will perform {it}.”
(Ezekiel 17:22–24)

The Prophets of God used the *parabolic imagery* of *the Tree* to mock the religious beliefs of their ancient Near Eastern neighbors. The type of tree these pagan people planted for the religious purposes they had in mind was relatively unimportant to them. Their only concern was that it be a lush green tree because they believed the spirits of their dead ancestors came back to life in the resurrection as a member of the god/goddess who lived in the tree. Obviously, those who had an ancestral tree that grew beside “living water”—that is beside a spring that flowed year round—were more blessed than those whose ancestral tree had to be carefully tended and watered to ensure that the spirit(s) within it continued to live. That is precisely the point the psalmist has made:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree {firmly} planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season, And its leaf does not wither;

And in whatever he does, he prospers.
(Psalm 1:1–3)

You can see from the above quotations that Jesus Christ was merely continuing the tradition of the Prophets of Israel when He used their *parabolic imagery* to speak concerning Himself. Jesus Christ was indeed *the Tree* in Whom the fullness of the Spirit of the Living God resided on this Earth after His (*parabolic*) descent at Jesus’ baptism. Yet He was also *the Tree* in Whom all Israel was resurrected after God had “cut off” Israel at the time of the crucifixion:

Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash; Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down, And those who are lofty will be abased. And He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an iron {axe}, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One. Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength, The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.
(Isaiah 10:33–11:4)

If you are especially keen on understanding the Scriptures’ use of this particular *parabolic imagery*, you have probably already noted that none of the

foregoing passages speak concerning the time when God “planted” some kind of “seed” in order to “raise up a seed” for David. They only tell us how Jesus (*parabolically*) became *the Tree* Israel in Which God resided when He dwelt on the Earth as a man and how He came to life in the resurrection as *the Tree* Israel, in Which God will reside forever.

We know from reading the Prophet Ezekiel that Jesus became *the Tree* Israel when God took Him from *the Tree* Israel as a “cutting” in order to grow a new tree. He came back to life in the resurrection as a “shoot” that grew out of the “stump” of *the Tree* Israel after that “tree” had been “cut off.” But when was He “planted”? The answer to that question, like every other question pertaining to the Scriptures, has a bit of a twist to its answer.

First, you must understand that, as I’ve said before in *Not All Israel Is Israel* (p. 75, n. 31), God the Father can have only one Firstborn son. That Firstborn has always been, and will always be, *Corporate* Israel (Ex 4:22).

Second, you must understand that Jesus Christ did not enter this realm as the Son of God. He was born the Son of David. I’ve said it before, and I’m sure I’ll say it again. God “gave a seed” to David through the Incarnation. To use another Hebrew idiom, He “built David’s house” through the Virgin Mary. So, according to the ancient Hebrew custom under which God gave His *promise* to David through Nathan (2 Sam. 7), Jesus Christ was not considered God’s Son at birth (Gen. 38:9). He did not become God’s Son, *Corporate* Israel, until He was baptized by John in the Jordan River (Matt. 3:13–17). At that time, because God had “cut off from” Israel all the Jews except Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ *became Corporate* Israel, the Firstborn Son of God, and God proclaimed that fact openly (v. 17). Thereafter, from His baptism until His death some three years later, Jesus Christ was the only surviving member of Israel.

Third, you must understand that God (*parabolically*) “planted” all Israel as *the Tree* in which He would reside as

God on this Earth. He did that at Mt. Sinai just as Moses and the sons of Israel stated He would in the song they sang after their escape from the Sea of Reeds:

“Thou wilt bring them and plant them in the mountain of Thine inheritance,

The place, O LORD, which Thou hast made for Thy dwelling, The sanctuary, O Lord, which Thy hands have established.

The LORD shall reign forever and ever.”

(Exodus 15:17–18)

Fourth, you must understand that, when Nathan told David that God intended to “build his house,” he also told him God intended to “plant” all Israel in “their own place” where they would never be disturbed again. (He was speaking *parabolically* concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, when God “planted” *Corporate* Israel for the final time):

“I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.”

(2 Samuel 7:10–11)

So that’s a brief history of *the Tree* in which God dwelt during His residence in this realm from the time it was “planted” until the time it was “cut off.” But, you say, God dwelt in this realm only during the brief lifetime of Jesus Christ. Not so—unless you discount the entire Old Testament as the heretic Marcion did, and as many in the Church today seem wont to do. (See “Did the Gnostics Really Know?” *The Voice of Elijah*, October 1991, and “The Origin of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*, January 1993.)

God took up residence in *Corporate* Israel while Israel remained camped at the foot of Mt. Sinai, dwelling in a Tabernacle (Ex. 40:34 ff.), then in the Temple that Solomon built (1 Kings 8:10–11). Jesus Christ was merely *the Heir of the promise* Who continued on in the same



The Egyptian artwork above depicts the goddess Isis watering plants growing in the “Sea of Reeds.” The man-headed hawk represents the soul of the resurrected Pharaoh—the god Osiris. According to the

mythology the Prophets ridiculed in their *parabolic statements*, the deceased Pharaoh came back to life in these plants. All who remained loyal subjects during his reign were somehow thought to be resurrected “in him.” □

relationship to God that *Corporate* Israel had been granted in the wilderness. That's why the Holy Spirit came down to resume its residence in *Corporate* Israel when Jesus was baptized by John (Matt. 3:13–17) in order to ratify the New Covenant. But that misses the point of the *parabolic image* of Israel as a tree.

What (*parabolic*) "Seed" did God "plant" at Mt. Sinai that "sprouted" and grew into the *Tree* Israel? Surely, if Israel was a *parabolic* "tree" in which God dwelt, some *parabolic* "Seed" had to first be "planted." So what was that "Seed"? The answer is made clear by the way Jesus used the imagery in His parables. Matthew 13 is one of the best examples of Jesus' use of the *parabolic imagery* that informs the idiom "raise up a seed":

On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some {seeds} fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear." (Matthew 13:1–9)

His statement, "He who has ears, let him hear," refers to the fact that everything He has said will be clear to the one who understands *The Mystery of Scripture* that is hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is intended to tell His listeners that He has not told them anything new. Everything can be found clearly explained (*parabolically*) in the writings of Moses and the Prophets. But, because Jesus had not yet been resurrected, He had not yet revealed *The Teaching* to His disciples. Consequently, they did not understand what He was *talking about*. So

He had to explain the parable to them privately:

"Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil {one} comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no {firm} root in himself, but is {only} temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty." (Matthew 13:18–23)

Did you hear what Jesus said? He said the "Seed" was "the word of the kingdom." Most people take that to mean "the Gospel." But they go further and automatically assume "the word of the kingdom" is "the Gospel" as they understand and teach it. That assumption can be deadly. "The word of the kingdom" can only be "the word" as Jesus understood and taught it, not as somebody before or since has understood and taught it. By that I mean it must be *The Teaching of Jesus*, not the teaching of someone else.

What if *The Teaching of Jesus* is the same "Seed"—*The Teaching of Moses*—that God "planted" at Mt. Sinai. What if it is the same "Seed" from which the *Tree* of Israel grew? What if Jesus Christ revealed that same "Seed" to His disciples after His resurrection as I have repeatedly contended? (See "Where Are Jesus' Disciples?" *The Voice of Elijah*, April 1991.) *The Teaching of Moses* would then be the same as *The Teaching of Jesus*, and *The Teaching of Jesus* would be the same as *The Apostolic Teaching*. All three would be precisely the same "word of the kingdom," wouldn't they?

If the Early Church leaders lost their understanding of *The Apostolic Teaching*, however, we have a serious problem. The only "word" that remains today can be nothing more than bits and pieces of "the word" that Jesus and the Apostles taught. That would explain why new Believers face so much confusion after their initial joyous reception of the essential outlines of "the word," i.e., the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. But none of that answers the question concerning the "seed" God "planted" in order to "raise up a seed" for David. That is the next *parabolic image* I want to explain.

You see, as I have explained in *The Voice of Elijah Update*, the Prophet Nathan promised David that God would one day "build a house" for David, that He would "raise up a seed" for David, should David ever need Him to be his "Redeemer" (2 Sam. 7:1 ff.). What "seed" do you suppose God "planted" in order to "raise up" that "seed of David"? Would it surprise you to discover it was the same "word" He "planted" at Mt. Sinai? That's what John, using the same *parabolic imagery*, says it was:

And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. John bore witness of Him, and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.'" For of His fulness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained {Him}. (John 1:14–18)

All John means is that everything contained in "the word of the kingdom" that Moses and the Prophets taught found complete expression in the Person of Jesus Christ. In other words, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of everything contained in "the word" God "planted" at Mt. Sinai. Not only did that "word" produce the *Tree* Israel in which God dwelt here on Earth, it also produced the "Seed of David"—that is, the physical flesh of Jesus

Christ—that God had *promised* He would one day “raise up” for David (2 Sam. 7). According to the same *parabolic imagery*, that “Seed” was “planted” in a tomb only to be “raised up” (according to the image) three days later.

The Resurrected Life

Did you know that “*The Way*” you come to be born again is through the same “Seed”—“the word of the kingdom”—that God “planted” so long ago, first at Mt. Sinai, then in the Virgin Mary, and again in Jesus Christ at His baptism? That’s what the Apostle John said right before he wrote what we read above:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man, sent from God, whose name was John. He came for a witness, that he might bear witness of the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but {came} that he might bear witness of the light. There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
(John 1:1–13)

John is *talking about* just two of the various *parabolic images* in *The Apostolic Teaching*—the “word” and the “light”—that convey Truth regarding the new birth. He clearly states here and elsewhere (John 8:12; 12:46; 14:6) that Jesus Christ is both *The Word (of Truth)* and *The Light*. When John says “as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God,” He is

referring to those who “*receive*” (believe) “the Word” that is (both mystically and *parabolically*) Jesus Christ. That’s why he goes on to clarify what he *means* by saying “to those who believe in His name.” He is cryptically referring to the *parabolic image* of “the Name” as “the Word” that Jesus Christ is. (A name is normally a word, isn’t it?)

I could at this point launch into an extended explanation of the third idiom—“raise up a name”—that Nathan used in his prophecy to David concerning the “Seed” He would “raise up” for David when He stepped in as his “Redeemer.” But here I am only discussing the *parabolic imagery* in which the Spirit of God is likened to (LIKE) a “seed,” that is, “the word of the kingdom” that is “planted” in new Believers so that they are born again—that is, so that they “sprout” in resurrected life as a “plant” of God.

The *parabolic imagery* of the “Seed” is key to an accurate understanding of what the Apostles have written concerning the new birth, because they understood that metaphysical reality only in terms of the *parabolic imagery* inherent in *The Apostolic Teaching*. According to that *Teaching*, “the word” “sprouts” within the Believer and produces a “plant” that is already alive in the resurrection. That’s what the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote:

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.
(Colossians 3:1–4)

Did you catch his use of the idiom “raise up a seed” in the expression “raised up with Christ.” He used the same Greek verb that Jesus did when He used the idiom; however Jesus combined it with the idiom “build a house”:

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, “De-

stroy 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)

You will find that same Greek verb used throughout the New Testament. It is often associated with the *parabolic imagery* of the birth of Jesus Christ or with the same image of the resurrection we are discussing here. For example, Zacharias used it to speak of the birth of Jesus as “raising up a horn” (Luke 1:69). That expression is a blending of “raise up a seed” with another Hebrew idiom the Prophets used—“make a horn sprout”—that has basically the same *meaning* as “build a house” and “raise up a seed,” although different *parabolic imagery* stands behind it. But that’s another story.

At times the Apostle Paul depicts the “plant” that comes to life in the resurrection as the dwelling place of the *Living Person* Jesus Christ, *The Word of God*. Even when he *talks about* the “inner man” (Eph. 3:16), or the “new self” (Eph. 4:24), he has in mind the “plant” growing from the “Seed” of *The Apostolic Teaching*—Jesus Christ, *The Word of God*.

In the New Testament writings, *The Teaching* is variously called “the word,” “the word of truth,” “the word of *promise*,” “the word of life,” “the word of Christ,” “the word of God,” etc. In every instance it refers to the Old Testament Gospel message that was fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and it has behind it the *parabolic imagery* of the Believer as a “plant” that is supposed to grow and “bear fruit” for God. Sometimes that *parabolic imagery* is brought to the fore and made explicit as it is in the letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians:

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which

you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as {it has been doing} in you also since the day you heard {of it} and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned {it} from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit.
(Colossians 1:3–8)

Don't you find that intriguing? Paul isn't using a simple analogy. He's speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*. That's made more evident by the fact that the Apostle Peter has used the same *parabolic imagery* (and combined it with another *parabolic image* related to the "table of the Lord") in order to exhort Believers to continue doing what is necessary to grow in their faith:

Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is}, through the living and abiding word of God. For,

"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER
OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES
FOREVER."

And this is the word which was preached to you. 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.
(1 Peter 1:22–2:3)

Peter may have been a simple fisherman, but he was certainly no slouch when it came to grasping and succinctly stating the crux of an issue. If you want to "abide forever," there is only one "Way" to accomplish that goal, because the only "plant" that will never die is *The Word of God*. First, you must "put aside" the

things you have been doing that you know to be wrong. Then you must "long for the pure milk of the word."

God is going to see to it that those two essentials condemn a whole bunch of people who think the Christian life is all "say" and no "do." What was it the Apostle Paul said? "They did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved" (2 Thess. 2:10). But I don't want to get sidetracked on that here. Let's press on.

I've already explained in the lead article for this issue [see "Counterfeiters, Con Artists (and the Consummate Consumer)"] that James said more or less the same thing as Peter said above:

In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures. {This} you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak {and} slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. Therefore putting aside all filthiness and {all} that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.
(James 1:18–22)

Now do you understand why James used the word "implanted"? He had in mind the *parabolic imagery* we are discussing here. According to the *parabolic imagery* of "the word" as a "seed," if "the word" has been "planted" in you, it will "sprout" and produce a new "plant." That "plant" is the same "plant" that grew from the "Seed" that God "planted" at Mt. Sinai. It is the same "plant" that God "rooted" at the baptism of Jesus. It is "the word of Christ." Not surprisingly, the Apostle Paul made clear that True Believers are expected to permit that "word" to "dwell within" them:

Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms {and} hymns {and} spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
(Colossians 3:16)

If a person allows "the word" to "dwell within" them, accepting and believing that "word" as the Truth according to which they must live, that "word" will "sprout" and grow. With proper care, *The Word* will then prove Himself to be a Spirit, a *Living Being*, fully able to overcome this present world:

And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted {it} not {as} the word of men, but {for} what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe.
(1 Thessalonians 2:13)

The simple act of the will whereby the Believer decides to "walk in the Spirit"—that is, meditate on "the word"—will provide all that is necessary to overcome the temptation to sin. Moreover, if the Believer continues to let *The Word* accomplish His work within, that eternally *Living "Plant"*—the Spirit of Jesus Christ—will produce certain "fruit" just as the Apostle Paul said:

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
(Galatians 5:16–26)

If the *parabolic* “Plant” of the Spirit, *The Word of God*, is to grow strong and healthy within the Believer so that it produces “fruit,” it must be tended. Its most necessary requirement is “water.” Can the “plant” of the Spirit “water” Himself? Of course not. He must be “watered” by someone whom God has appointed to accomplish that task. Would it surprise you to find that the “water” necessary for spiritual growth is *The Teaching*? I hope not. That is exactly what it is:

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. (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)

Paul's point in comparing his ministry with that of Apollos is that no matter how eloquently or ineloquently *The Teaching* is presented, the Teacher can claim no credit for what is accomplished in the Believer. That accomplishment must be attributed solely to the working of *The Word* within the Believer. If nothing is accomplished in the one who has opportunity to hear the Truth of *The Teaching*, however, the fault can only lie with the person who has heard. God will not hold that one guiltless:

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to re-

new them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (Hebrews 6:1-8)

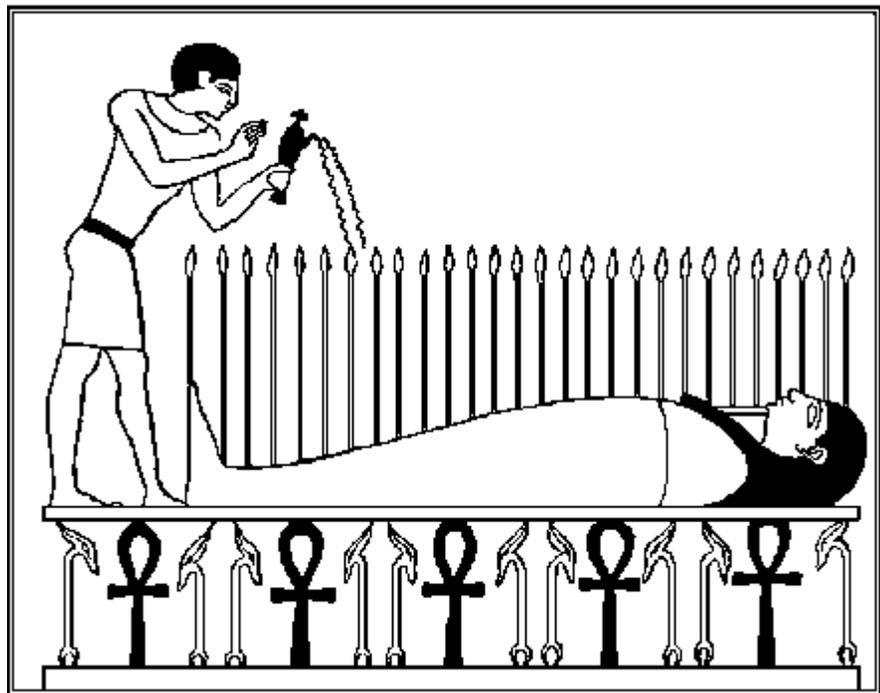
That's not a warning to be taken lightly. It is possible to hear the Truth and convince yourself and others that you believe, yet still be “ground” that produces “plants” that prove you did not believe at all. James has already warned you about saying and not doing. [See “Counterfeiters, Con Artists (and the Consummate Consumer)” in this issue.]

You can see then that spiritual growth occurs as the result of just one thing: hearing and believing the Truth of *The Teaching*—*The Word of God*, Jesus Christ. Will growth occur from hearing and believing a lie? Never. Will growth occur from a Believer “figuring out” things on his/her own? Hardly, but there will always be those fools who try.

God has always placed His divine call on the life of those whom He has sovereignly chosen to fill the various ministerial offices in the Church. One could hardly be stupid enough to believe everyone who claims to have the call of God today. Those who have no more to substantiate their “calling” than an inner “urge” to minister to others would do well to reconsider their situation. God will not judge lightly those who carry false credentials.

On the other hand, those who ignore the ministry of one whom God has appointed do so at their peril. They will ultimately find they have rejected the Truth in favor of a lie. In contrast to the True Believer who will “abide forever” in *The Word of God*, Jesus Christ, those fools will continue to wander forever “in the futility of their mind”:

And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure



The above depicts a faithful servant watering the plants in which the deceased Pharaoh—the god Osiris—came to life in the

resurrection. God appropriated the imagery and used it to speak *parabolically* concerning the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. □

of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
(Ephesians 4:11–24)

Did you hear what he said about “the truth” and those who “walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them”? He knew “the life of God” derives from “the truth.” And He’s *talk- ing about* people like those today who think the Truth can be one thing to one person and another thing to another person. People like that don’t care about the Truth. They are perfectly content believing whatever they *choose* to believe.

Did you understand what Paul meant when he said “you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus”? He has in mind

Jesus Christ as *The Word of God—The Teaching*. An understanding of that “word” is not something that God intended to be treated casually. It is something the True Believer should strive to attain. As the Apostle Peter has admonished us, we should all, “like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2).

How in the world do you suppose new Believers are going to grow in the Church today with all the idle speculation that goes on there? They aren’t. Most are going to die for lack of “water” in the “drought” that Amos predicted (Amos 8:11–12). But it’s not my responsibility to distribute the “Latter Rain” that will “water” the “plants” in God’s “garden.” If you are a True Believer and you’ve read what I’ve written, you must understand I’ve done my part. The obligation now lies with you. And the one who has ears to hear will hear.

Sow Tare Seeds You Get Tare Plants

There is another bit of a problem that “crops up” in regard to the “Planting of the Lord,” however. After the Apostles began “sowing the Seed” of *The Word*, Satan sent out his own agents to “sow seed”—his *own* “seed.” That “seed” was a “word” just as the “Seed” that Jesus “sowed” was *The Word*. Satan’s “seed” “sprouted” in those who believed it just as the “Seed” of *The Word* “sprouted” in those who believed it. And Satan’s “seed” produced “plants” that claimed to be the Lord’s “Planting” but weren’t. I thought it might interest you to read what the Early Church Father Ignatius, a contemporary of Polycarp, wrote to the Ephesians shortly before his martyrdom in the early second century:

“But I have learned that certain persons passed through you from yonder, bringing evil doctrine; whom ye suffered not to sow seed in you, for ye stopped your ears, so that ye might not receive the seed sown by them; forasmuch as ye are stones of a temple, which were prepared beforehand for a building of God the Father, being

hoisted up to the heights through the engine of Jesus Christ, which is the Cross, and using for a rope the Holy Spirit; while your faith is your windlass, and love is the way that leadeth up to God. So then ye are all companions in the way, carrying your God and your shrine, your Christ and your holy things, being arrayed from head to foot in the commandments of Jesus Christ.”
(St. Ignatius, *To the Ephesians*,
J.B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers*)

He goes on from there, but you can see he has packed an incredible amount of *parabolic imagery* in those few words: *The Seed, The House, The Tree, The Way, and The Robe*. My point is merely that the leaders of the Early Church continued speaking in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* long after the Apostles died. You can find it in the writings of all the extant Christian literature of the second century as well as in the Gnostic literature. Unfortunately the Church lost most of the information contained in that *Teaching* sometime around A.D. 200. So we have had to make do with the remnants for the past 1,800 years. For “the Many,” that is about to change.

Just as the “planting of the Lord” has continued to produce “seed” that yielded yet more “plants” down through the centuries, “plants” have also continued to “sprout” from the “seed” that Satan “planted.” Those noxious herbs have been around since the time of the Apostles, spouting the lies embodied in whatever “word” of Satan they believe. It has long been a situation in search of a remedy, but what could be done?

Interestingly enough, Jesus used the *parabolic imagery* associated with the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed” to speak concerning their situation also:

He presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field?’

How then does it have tares?’ And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slaves said to him, ‘Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?’ But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.”’”
(Matthew 13:24–30)

Later, He explained the parable to His disciples:

Then He left the multitudes, and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, “Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field.” And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, and the field is the world; and {as for} the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil {one}; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”
(Matthew 13:36–43)

That Satan! Isn't he just the most dastardly fellow you could ever imagine? I certainly wouldn't want to spend eternity with him, would you? He did something completely ridiculous just because he thought he could ruin a perfectly good crop. But did you notice Jesus said it again: “He who has ears, let him hear”? He knew the one who had insight into the Old Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ would understand when the time came. He has also alluded to Daniel 12:3. I wonder what that's all about? [Editor: He's alluding to things he has

written in past issues, particularly in the April 1992 issue.] Never mind. He who has ears, let him hear.

Although Jesus said Satan's objective will not be accomplished, how do you suppose anyone could ever distinguish between the “plants” that Satan “planted” and the “Plants” that grew from the “Seed” that Jesus “sowed”? Actually, it's fairly easy. Jesus said all you have to do is examine their “fruit”:

*“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. **You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn {bushes}, nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”***
(Matthew 7:15–23)

Did you hear what He said about “he who does the will of My Father”? That sounds a lot like what James said about being “doers of the word and not hearers only,” doesn't it? [See “Counterfeiters, Con Artists (and the Consummate Consumer)” in this issue.] But just think about it for a minute: Can you imagine what a shock it is going to be when those who have swallowed one of the “seeds” Satan has “sowed” stand before the Lord only to hear Him say, “I never knew you”?

But how would they know? They firmly believed a lie that told them they were God's favorite child when, in fact, they were headed for hell in a handbasket of Satan's own making. You know what? I'd almost guarantee they turned down an opportunity to hear the Truth

somewhere along “The Way.” Wouldn't that be something? Fools do that sort of thing, you know.

They haven't considered the fact that the Jesus they think is so harmless demonstrated (*parabolically*) a rather nasty attitude toward “trees” that don't “bear fruit”:

*And on the next day, when they had departed from Bethany, He became hungry. And seeing at a distance a fig tree in leaf, He went {to see} if perhaps He would find anything on it; and when He came to it, He found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And He answered and said to it, **“May no one ever eat fruit from you again!”** And His disciples were listening. And they came to Jerusalem. And He entered the temple and began to cast out those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who were selling doves; and He would not permit anyone to carry goods through the temple. And He {began} to teach and say to them, **“Is it not written, ‘MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS’?** But you have made it a **ROBBERS' DEN.**” And the chief priests and the scribes heard {this}, and {began} seeking how to destroy Him; for they were afraid of Him, for all the multitude was astonished at His teaching. And whenever evening came, they would go out of the city. And **as they were passing by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots {up}.** And being reminded, Peter said to Him, **“Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which You cursed has withered.”**
(Mark 11:12–21)*

It is nothing remarkable that Mark put these two accounts side by side, considering the fact that, in cursing the tree and in driving the moneychangers out of the Temple, Jesus was *parabolically pantomiming* His contempt for those “plants” in the “house” of God who refuse to “bear fruit” as they should. Therefore, I know the wise will make sure that is not the status of their relationship with Christ. I am equally as confident that the one who has ears to hear will hear. ■

Why Not?

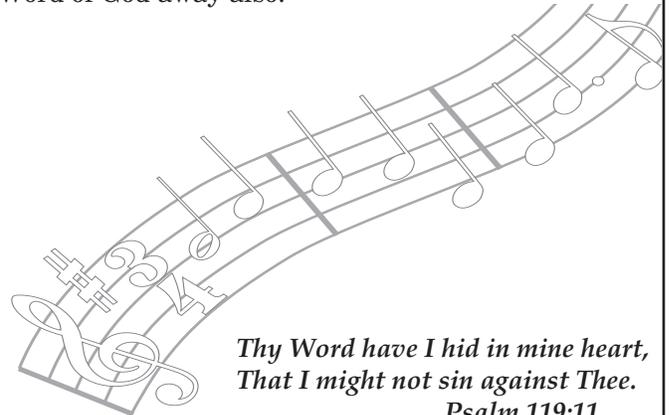
If you find *The Voice of Elijah* beneficial to you in your own walk with the Lord, won't you please join with us and make this ministry your own? Everybody can do something. Some can do more than others. Please do what you can:

- ☛ **Pray for our work.**
- ☛ **Tell others.**
- ☛ **Give a gift subscription to a friend.**
- ☛ **Give *Not All Israel Is Israel* to a friend.**
- ☛ **Give a one-time gift.**
- ☛ **Become a Monthly Contributor.**

Time is short. Much remains to be done. Please stand with us in this ministry. Contributions are tax-deductible. 100% of all contributions go to outreach. No salaries are paid.

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The Word of God is easier to memorize when it has been set to music. That's why *The Elijah Project* has taken key passages from the Prophets and the Psalms, combined them with catchy melodies, and produced *Scripture Songs, Volumes 1 & 2*. Not only will they keep a song in your heart, they will help you hide the Word of God away also.



*Thy Word have I hid in mine heart,
That I might not sin against Thee.*
Psalm 119:11

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What You Don't Know Can Sometimes Hurt You!

Did you know that for over one hundred and fifty years all the leaders of the Early Church understood there was but one correct understanding of the message of the Old Testament? Were you also aware that all Christians in the Early Church respected and recognized their leaders as having the God-given authority to teach the correct understanding of God's Word to His People? Can you believe none of these men interpreted Scripture for themselves?

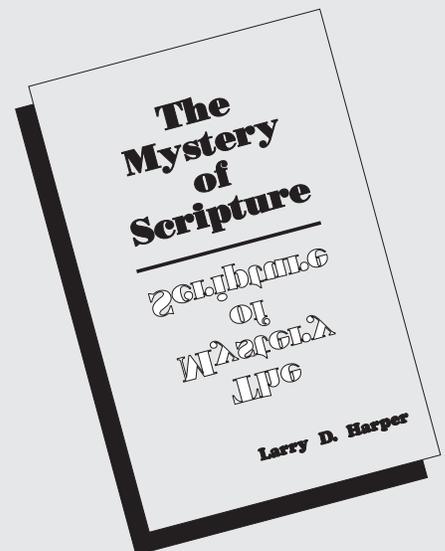
Obviously, that doesn't describe the Church today. With a church on every corner preaching a different interpretation of Scripture and believers picking and choosing as they deem fit, it doesn't seem possible it could have ever been otherwise, does it? Yet it was a reality in the Early Church for well over a century. So, what happened?

If you thrive on the constant bickering and fighting found in the Church of today, that question isn't even relevant. Obviously, you believe you can go right on arguing your way to the Truth. But some of us don't.

- **If you look around you in the Church today, and things just don't seem quite right, this book is for you.**
- **And if you believe the Scriptures should have but one clear message, this book is for you.**
- **And if you believe it only makes sense that the Church took a wrong turn somewhere along the way, this book is for you.**

Things aren't right in the Church today. And there is but one simple message to be found in the Bible. And the Church did take a wrong turn quite some time back.

Around A.D. 200, the Church did exactly what the Old Testament tells us Israel did before: It turned away from *The Apostolic Teaching*. So, if you want to know the Truth, this book is for you. Order your copy now. Why should *The Mystery of Scripture* remain a mystery any longer?

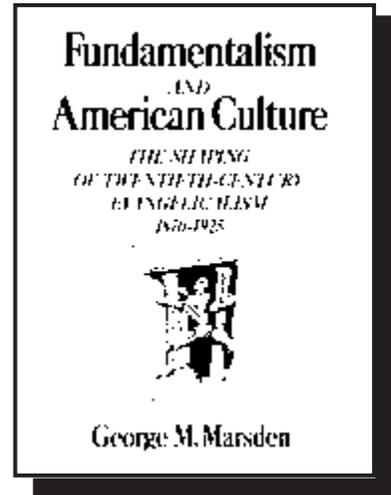


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Where Did That Come From?

- ❖ How did the novel notion that God loves everybody find its way into fundamentalist beliefs?
- ❖ Where did Dispensationalism originate?
- ❖ How did it come to be a part of fundamental doctrine?
- ❖ How did Fundamentalism become identified with ignorance and narrow-mindedness?
- ❖ What did William Jennings Bryan, former Democratic Party leader, presidential candidate, and Secretary of State for Woodrow Wilson, contribute to the fundamentalist image?

Do you consider yourself a Christian Fundamentalist? Have you ever wondered where some of the fundamentalist doctrines came from? Are you starting to think some of what you've been taught needs to be validated? If so, *Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism, 1870-1925* by George Marsden will answer many of the questions you might have about the roots of your beliefs.



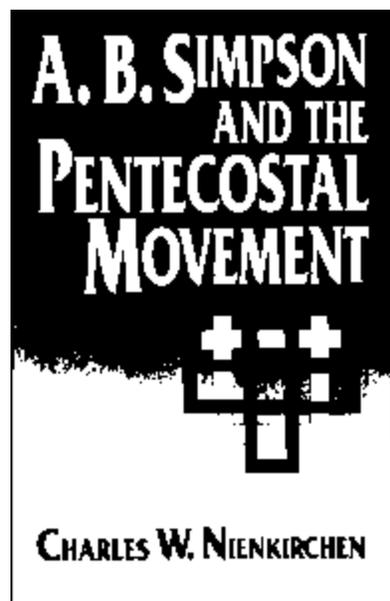
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Here Are a Couple of (Actually Three) Good Rules to Live By:

A. B. Simpson was a man who took his religious beliefs seriously. His personal diary reveals he lived his life in constant preparation to meet the One he knew and loved. At the age of eighty he was still seeking a closer walk with the Lord. But he was never one to argue about religion and dispute what others believed. He apparently felt Christian life was better spent worshipping and fellowshiping with other Believers who had the same love for the Lord that he had.

Life was much simpler in Simpson's day, but some things never change. So if you're looking for an example to follow in these Last Days, you couldn't do much better than A. B. Simpson. He was a well-known Christian leader around the turn of last century—when God's Spirit was working phenomenal wonders among Believers throughout the world. Never a Pentecostal himself, Simpson walked the high road at a time when Satan's agents were working night and day—both sides against the middle—to introduce controversy that would stop (or at least slow down) the mighty outpouring of God's Holy Spirit.

- 1. Never Argue About Religion Or Politics.**
- 2. Always Be Prepared To Die And Pay Taxes.**
- 3. Don't Traffic With People Who Break These Rules.**



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Who is Israel?

According to Scripture, Israel is the descendants of Jacob, heir to God's *promise* to the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But did you know that Scripture also says an individual could be "cut off from" Israel?

Today, the nation of Israel—the Jews living in the land occupied by biblical Israel—claim to be Israel, heirs to *the promises* God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. But are they really?



What if all Israel was “cut off?”

John the Baptist warned it could happen. (Matt. 3:10)
The Apostle Paul said it did happen. (Rom. 11:11–24)

Here for the first time ever, in simple, easy-to-read English, one book finally explains this intricate message of Scripture hidden for so long in the Hebrew idiom. Read and discover for yourself how *Not All Israel Is Israel*.

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