



THE VOICE of ELIJAH

What's the Rule of Truth?

The rule of truth which we hold, is, that there is one God Almighty, who made all things by His Word, and fashioned and formed, out of that which had no existence, all things which exist.

Thus saith the Scripture, to that effect: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens established, and all the might of them, by the spirit of His mouth."

And again, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was nothing made."

There is no exception or deduction stated; but the Father made all things by Him, whether visible or invisible, objects of sense or of intelligence, temporal, on account of a certain character given them, or eternal; and these eternal things He did not make by angels, or by any powers separated from His Essence.

For God needs none of all these things, but is He who, by His Word and Spirit, makes, and disposes, and governs all things, and commands all things into existence,

- He who formed the world (for the world is of all),
- He who fashioned man,
- He [who] is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, above whom there is no other God, nor initial principle, nor power, nor pleroma,
- He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we shall prove.

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Holding, therefore, this rule, we shall easily show, notwithstanding the great variety and multitude of their opinions, that these men have deviated from the truth; for almost all the different sects of heretics admit that there is one God; but then, by their pernicious doctrines, they change [this truth into error], even as the Gentiles do through idolatry, thus proving themselves ungrateful to Him that created them.

Moreover, they despise the workmanship of God, speaking against their own salvation, becoming their own bitterest accusers, and being false witnesses [against themselves].

Yet, reluctant as they may be, these men shall one day rise again in the flesh, to confess the power of Him who raises them from the dead; but they shall not be numbered among the righteous on account of their unbelief.

Since, therefore, it is a complex and multiform task to detect and convict all the heretics, and since our design is to reply to them all according to their special characters, we have judged it necessary, first of all, to give an account of their source and root, in order that, by getting a knowledge of their most exalted Bythus, thou mayest understand the nature of the tree which has produced such fruits.

Irenæus, "Against Heresies," Book i, Chap. xxii, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1867), Vol. 1, p. 347.

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A Note From the Editor

In the twenty-two years I have been a Christian, I have participated in my fair share of Bible studies. Although each one was supposed to help me gain greater knowledge and understanding of the Bible, I now “see” that the vast majority of things I learned (and sometimes taught) in these classes didn’t help me at all. However, I can honestly tell you all the effort I put into my studies was not a waste of time. I learned some important things from each and every course I took (although in some cases, I’m hard-pressed to tell you what). Ironically, the one course that probably benefited me the most was a class that didn’t try to explain the Bible. Instead, it focused on (among other things) how to become a more inquisitive student of the Bible and how to be more observant of the “little” things stated in the biblical text.

The course was basically a condensed version of the Bible study techniques and methodology taught to students (most of whom were studying to become pastors) at a major theological seminary. While I have no doubt that many of the things taught in this course were flawed, I also know I learned several pertinent things about how to study the Bible. One of the most important things I learned is how easy it is for us to overlook what the Bible actually says simply because we assume we already know what it says. Because of our assumptions (which are generally based on our traditional beliefs), we tend to skim the biblical text in a superficial manner, rather than carefully scrutinizing it with an open and inquisitive mind.

The typical “Christian” approach to Bible study is like that of a slipshod detective who has a complex crime to solve. He’s got more than enough evidence available to piece together the facts of the case and get at the truth, but he pays little attention to detail. Consequently, he tends to overlook any evidence that challenges what he already believes. That’s because he has already decided what he wants to believe. Since his beliefs and assumptions are “facts” in his own mind, he treats any piece of evidence that challenges his version of the “truth” with indifference and immediately rejects it as unimportant. He either explains it away or mentally discards it as irrelevant. Yet, at the same time, he continues to smugly assume things he shouldn’t.

It is easy to see that this hypothetical detective has no earnest desire to find the truth. The fact that he would turn a blind eye to evidence that runs contrary to his point of view testifies to the fact that he is not really interested in the truth. His only interest is protecting the lie that tells him he already knows the truth. Sadly, the same must also be said about the vast majority of “Christians” in the Church today. Most “Christians” have a distinct tendency to overlook, explain away, or mentally discard any passage of Scripture that contradicts what they

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want to believe. If you can't see that, you certainly have blinders on. In that, you are just like the vast majority of other "Christians." They feign a love for the Truth, but in reality they only want "to have their ears tickled... in accordance to their own desires" (2 Tim. 4:3).

We're Not Looking for "Blind" Followers

I realize that leveling such accusations at Pretenders in the Church today probably seems mean-spirited to some, especially those who want to go on believing what they already believe. I also realize that one can easily make similar accusations against those who believe what *The Voice of Elijah*® teaches. To be quite honest, you have good reason to be wary of us and the things we say. We all know charlatans are rampant in the Church today. That's why everybody is leery of cults and cultic beliefs. Consequently, our claim that we know the Truth should not be accepted simply because we say so. But that is just as true of the things you have heard others teach. So if you have an honest desire to know the Truth, I suggest you carefully examine everything you hear taught in the Church (by us or anyone else).

Contrary to what you may think, *The Voice of Elijah*® is not looking for "blind" followers who will take our word that what we say is true. We are looking for True Believers, people who want to know the Truth and thus are willing to consider any and all evidence. We certainly don't expect, nor do we want, anyone to blindly accept the things we teach. All we've ever asked anyone to do is examine the biblical and extrabiblical evidence we present, and consider our explanation of how that evidence fits together. Then we ask that you thoroughly study your Bible with that evidence in mind to see if the case we present agrees with Scripture. We don't seek to "prove" anything to you. But we are certainly going to continue to present evidence along with a compelling interpretation of that evidence. Ultimately, you must "prove" to your own satisfaction whether our conclusions are valid.

Basically, you must be like a juror at a trial. If you do your job well, you will put aside any biases and assumptions you may already have so that you can reach a verdict based strictly on the evidence presented. In this case, the two sides presenting evidence and seeking to convince you of what that evidence means are *The Voice of Elijah*® and all the other teachers in the Church.

The fact that you have believed one version of the "truth" up to this point does not mean that version is true. It only means you've heard but one side of the story. The question that remains is whether you are now willing to listen while the other side—*The Voice of Elijah*®—presents its case in defense of the historic tenets of the Christian faith which the Early Church knew and believed.

Assuming you are willing to listen, there is one final thing you must be willing to do. You must be willing to admit the Truth when you finally "see" it. Then you must discard any lie you previously believed in your ignorance. Paul's encouragement to the Ephesian Believers is still good advice today for those who seek to rid themselves of the "ignorance" (belief in lies) that is in them.

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 4:17–24)

The evidence *The Voice of Elijah*® has presented, and will continue to present, discloses that the Church abandoned the Truth of The Apostolic Teaching a long time ago. Consequently, most True Believers today are still “walking” in the futility of their own ignorant thoughts, in spite of the fact that they have already believed the Truth of the Gospel. They don’t know that the Gospel is nothing more than the salvation message concerning redemption that one must believe in order to be born again. The Apostolic Teaching is much more than that. It is the totality of the Truth that True Believers need to believe in order to “learn Christ” and thereby be renewed in their mind so that they have the same knowledge of the Truth in them that was in Jesus Christ.

We realize most “Christians” in the Church today will never admit that they are “walking” in the ignorance of their own way. That’s because most Church leaders over the centuries have been nothing more than blind guides of the blind. Instead of questioning whether the oral tradition they received from prior generations made perfect sense according to the evidence they found in Scripture, they foolishly accepted what they were taught without scrutiny. They did so because it “tickled their ears” and was easy to live by.

Have You Checked Your “Foundation” for Cracks Lately?

Although most “Christians” will deny it, the average “Christian” today lives by the simple credo that as long as you “know Jesus Christ as your personal savior,” anything you don’t know about the Bible can’t hurt you. (How else could they possibly believe “once saved, always saved” if they didn’t believe this? Think about it.) By contrast, *The Voice of Elijah*® contends that what you don’t know about the Scriptures can, and will, hurt you. That’s because your lack of knowledge will cause you to walk in the ignorance and futility of your mind just as Paul said (Eph. 4:17–18).

Most “Christians” will readily admit there are things in the Bible they don’t understand. So how can they be certain the information they don’t

understand would not greatly alter their understanding of the things they claim to understand? In other words, how do they know that what they don’t know doesn’t matter when they don’t know what they don’t know? To be specific, how can they be so certain that the information hidden in the Old Testament would not radically change their understanding of the New Testament?

If you can “see” any evidence whatsoever (and there is plenty of it) that convinces you Church leaders do not completely understand the Truth of the Scriptures, you would be wise to consider the fact that even what they claim to understand may be wrong as well. Truth must be based on an accurate understanding of ALL the evidence. Yet most Church leaders readily concede the fact that there is a good deal of evidence in the Old Testament they don’t understand. So how can they be certain the “foundation” of “truth” on which they are “building” is not seriously flawed? Stated differently, how can they be absolutely certain that their knowledge of the New Testament is reliable when that knowledge must be founded on an accurate understanding of the Old Testament mysteries, about which they can only speculate?

The fact is, if you don’t know all there is to know about the Bible, you would be wise to remain open-minded about what it might be saying. You never know when some previously unknown fact will surface and totally undermine what you think you already know.

Truth Begets Truth, and Error Begets Error

The Truth of the Bible is intricately woven together into a unified whole. Therefore, any misunderstanding of the Truth in one place is going to result in misunderstanding somewhere else. That will, in turn, result in misunderstanding somewhere else, and so on. Unfortunately, when a false doctrine is accepted as fact, it becomes the “foundation” on which other false doctrines are “built.” This “building” process occurs naturally. When we believe something is true when it isn’t, we intuitively make other deductions based on the premise that

we started out with a truthful concept. Of course, if our “foundation” is false, we end up multiplying our error and moving further away from the Truth, rather than closer. Over time, what we accept as “truth” becomes so far removed from the Truth that the Truth appears to be heretical.

A classic example of this is all the false doctrines in the Church today related to Israel and the End Times. Eschatology “experts” have concocted all sorts of goofy beliefs about the End Times over the past one hundred years. While all these End Time theories disagree with each other, each and every one of them is “built” on the almost universally accepted belief that the Jews are still God’s chosen people. That is, their “foundation” is the false doctrine that God still views the Jews as Israel.

Therefore, when the book *Not All Israel Is Israel* challenges the traditional view by stating that God does not consider the unbelieving Jews living in Palestine to be Israel, it challenges every other traditional belief that has been “built” on this “foundation.” However, if a person is able to see the Truth that Israel is the Church (i.e., True Believers in the Body of Christ), it is then possible for them to see through other related misconceptions. I’m talking about false beliefs associated with the final “week of years,” the Rapture, the Antichrist, the Day of the Lord, the Second Coming of Christ, and so forth.

Would You Know a Delusion if You Saw It?

“Christians” today believe a multitude of abhorrent lies only because Satan has succeeded in fabricating an abundance of counterfeit “truths.” Especially over the past century and a half, leaders in the Church have failed to hold those counterfeit “truths” up to “The Light” that would have exposed them as bogus. Therefore, various lies have become foundational doctrines. However, all these false doctrines have found their way into the Church only because God has allowed it. He has granted Satan permission to fabricate lies and “plant” them in Israel (the Church) as a test to see who really has a “love of the truth” here at the End. While Paul

briefly alludes to this fact in 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12, it should be noted that he got his insight from what the Prophets of Israel said about the future of Israel. Therefore, if you don’t know where Paul got his information from in the Old Testament, you would be wise to do whatever is necessary to find out.

No doubt many of you will question whether 2 Thessalonians 2:8–12 actually refers to the situation we face in the Church today. Yet I know that is exactly what Paul had in mind. How can I be so sure? Because over the past four years I have heard the overwhelming evidence with my own ears and have seen it with my own eyes. Like the unbiased, impartial juror we should all seek to be, I have examined the evidence presented by all sides in the case, and I can now see that “Christian” leaders are guilty of withholding vital facts from me simply because those facts did not support their view.

The Voice of Elijah® did not “prove” anything to me. It simply presented evidence I had not seen before and explained how that evidence fit together in a way that made sense. Because of the Holy Spirit within me, I was eventually able to see that The Teaching presented by *The Voice of Elijah*® is true. But even with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, I probably would have continued to have doubts had I not been able to study the Scriptures for myself. Which brings me back to the importance of being attentive to detail when you study the Scriptures.

Earlier, I mentioned the fact that some years ago I learned a few things which have helped me to better read and study the Bible for myself. I began this editorial intending to share a couple of those things with you because I thought they might help you as they have me. I hope to do that in the next issue. Until then, I trust you will give serious thought and consideration to the things I have written here.

Allen Fries

God Did a Job on Job, Didn't He?

The Book of Job is one of the best known, yet least understood, books of the Bible. So before we go any further, let me say I don't expect very many to accept my understanding of it. Nonetheless, it is imperative that True Believers understand what the Prophet who wrote the book has told us about the God we serve. So I'll risk provoking the ire of all those who love their inane "theology of success" delusion and explain the book for the benefit of those who have ears to hear.

The Book of Job is essentially a parable. I say "essentially" only because there is a lot more to the Book of Job than parable. But that is its essence. Every parable draws a comparison. So does this one. The Prophet wants us to see Job as a *parabolic image* that represents anyone who is, as he describes Job on three occasions, "blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil" (Job 1:1,8; 2:3). In short, the Prophet uses Job as an example to tell us what we should expect in our own relationship with God. We should expect to be smelted, refined, and tested.

However, the Prophet has also told us how we should respond when we encounter unpleasant circumstances like those that befell Job. That's his main point. You see, Job did not fail when he was tested; but neither did he excel. He just sort of muddled through. The Prophet would prefer that his reader not respond the way Job did, but in the way that God desires. That's why he wrote the book. As he plainly states in the first verse of his book, God held nothing at all against Job. Look at what he says:

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job, and that man was blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil.
(Job 1:1)

The Prophet writes that because he wants us to know Job did not suffer because of his sin, he suffered because he was "blameless, upright, fearing God, and turning away from evil." But did you notice anything strange about that description? The strangeness lies not in what the Prophet has told us, but in what he has not told us. He has not told us Job was righteous. He said he was "blameless and upright." That is indeed strange, considering the fact that the Hebrew Scriptures repeatedly *make a distinction between* the Righteous and the Wicked. For example, they tell us God spared Noah and Lot because they were righteous (Gen. 6:9; 18:25 ff.), not because they were "blameless and upright." However, the Prophet's refusal to describe Job as righteous is made even stranger still by what Job says about himself:

"Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; Though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty."
(Job 9:20)

"I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. My heart does not reproach any of my days."
(Job 27:6)

Just to make sure we get the point, however, the Prophet tells us exactly how Job felt about himself:

Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.
(Job 32:1)

You see, the point of the Book of Job has to do with righteousness—how you get it and how you keep it. Specifically, the Prophet wants to explain the

connection between wisdom, righteousness, and testing (suffering). That is why he tells us Job's relationship to God was the reason for his suffering. In a nutshell, the Prophet has told us somewhat the same thing as the Apostle Paul told Timothy:

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
(2 Timothy 3:12)

So why do you think God would allow a "blameless and upright" person like Job to suffer? Better yet, why would He allow anyone who serves Him to suffer? Well, the Prophet plainly tells us He does it because He wants to prove that the person tested is the person he appears to be. He begins by saying this:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil."
(Job 1:6-8)

So now we have no doubt about Job. Even the Lord was boasting about him, using him to rub Satan's nose in the dirt. He even calls him "My servant Job." That was more than Satan could take. So he accused the Lord of stacking the deck in His favor. And just for good measure, he taunted Him, challenging Him to remove His *blessing* from Job. Only then would the Lord see who Job actually was:

Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face."
(Job 1:9-11)

That little exchange between the Lord and the Idiot was the beginning of Job's difficulty. But it was

only the beginning. In order to prove Satan wrong, the Lord turned everything Job had over to him:

Then the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, all that he has is in your power, only do not put forth your hand on him." So Satan departed from the presence of the LORD.
(Job 1:12)

Does that sound like the God of the Bible? Sure it does. If you make a practice of reading your Bible, you already know God acts like that. But if the only time you ever spend with your Bible is on Sunday morning when you use it as a prop for your charade, I doubt you have any idea God would ever do such a thing. And if your haven of rest is the goofy god of unconditional grace preached by most today, I doubt that you believe it even now.

The fact is, most folks prefer the theology of the Early Church heretic Marcion over the Truth. Marcion didn't like the idea that God was a God of wrath. So he tossed out the Hebrew Scriptures completely and rewrote the Gospel of Luke (which was the only Gospel he was willing to accept) so that it made no mention of the fact that the Old Testament God of wrath was the Father of Jesus Christ. That way, he could interpret the writings of Paul (which were the only other New Testament writings he accepted) in a way more to his liking.

It's kind of difficult for Pretenders today to do what Marcion did, seeing as how the Christian Bible already comes with the New Testament and Old Testament bound together. But they do basically the same thing anyway. They just ignore the things that don't agree with their view of God as a god of unconditional love. That includes most of the Old Testament and any verse in the New Testament where God is described as a God of wrath. Although, now that I think about it, I have seen some folks carrying around a copy of just the New Testament. I wonder what good that information is going to do them if they don't know what Moses and the Prophets have said.

Forgive me. I got a little sidetracked there. I tend to get worked up when I think about the stupidity of all those among us who ignore the obvious. Hell is not a myth or a figure of speech. It exists because God is a God of wrath, a God Who is completely consumed with an awesome, burning hatred for the Wicked. Jesus Himself warned us we should strive continually

to avoid their fate. Yet the idiotic agents of Satan go on shepherding millions into that fiery pit, ignorantly assuring them they have nothing to fear. It's a classic case of "what you don't know can get you killed." And there is a lot those ignorant folks don't know about the message of the Scriptures.

Immediately after Satan left the presence of the Lord with title to Job's possessions in his hand, he sent out his repo man to confiscate what God had given him. First, he sent robbers into Job's downtown Miami headquarters. They killed all his employees and stripped the building of all the computers, every stick of furniture, and all the office supplies, right down to the last plastic paper clip. Next, lightning struck Job's work crew while they were on the job upstate, killing them all and destroying their equipment. Shortly after that, another gang hit his warehouse in the suburbs. They killed everybody there and took every bit of rolling stock that Job owned. Finally, a hurricane ripped across the Florida peninsula, killing every one of Job's kids. When Job got word of what happened on the worst day of his life—at least to that point—he reacted the way we all know we should. He grieved over his kids, affirmed his faith in God, and got on with his life. That's when he made this well-known statement:

*"Naked I came from my mother's womb,
And naked I shall return there.
The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away.
Blessed be the name of the LORD."
(Job 1:21b)*

That's a commendable attitude, isn't it? The Lord thought so too. That's why the Prophet says this:

*Through all this Job did not sin nor did he blame God.
(Job 1:22)*

Now if the story ended there, it would be nothing more than a nice little anecdote about a man who lived for God in spite of adversity. But it doesn't end there. We still have forty-one more chapters of adversity to go. So the Prophet must have something else he wants us to understand. But first he wants to firmly fix in our minds that Job was a man with whom the Lord was well pleased. So he tells us the Lord went right back to His same old nasty habits, bragging to Satan about Job:

*Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the LORD. And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth, and walking around on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man fearing God and turning away from evil. And he still holds fast his integrity, although you incited Me against him, to ruin him without cause."
(Job 2:1-3)*

Did you notice how the Lord tweaked Satan's nose? He said exactly the same thing He said before, except this time He really rubbed it in. He reminded Satan that Job still held fast to Him in spite of all that Satan had done. That made the Idiot furious! He let the Lord know in no uncertain terms that Job remained faithful only because the playing field was not yet level. God still had everything in His favor. After all, we all know that "when you've got your health, you've got just about everything." So Satan told it the way he saw it:

*And Satan answered the LORD and said, "Skin for skin! Yes, all that a man has he will give for his life. However, put forth Thy hand, now, and touch his bone and his flesh; he will curse Thee to Thy face." So the LORD said to Satan, "Behold, he is in your power, only spare his life."
(Job 2:4-6)*

I don't know about you, but that conversation makes me think maybe I shouldn't strive for perfection. It sounds like being Goody Two-Shoes might be bad for my health. Maybe I would be better off holding back just a little. Then the Lord wouldn't have any reason to go bragging all over high Heaven about me. But to stow the sarcasm and get on with the story, after the Lord went spouting off to Satan again, Job's life took a distinct turn for the worse. The Prophet describes that turn this way:

*Then Satan went out from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes.
(Job 2:7-8)*

That's it! I'm through trying to please the Lord. It's minimum requirement all the way for me from here on! So would somebody please tell me what's the least I can do and still get through the Pearly Gates? Can I smoke? Can I drink? Can I chew? Can I do anything I want to do?

Enough cynicism. Job has a problem. Actually he has several problems. But the Prophet has only told us about the one. Now he is going to introduce us to Job's wife and three friends. There is no doubt that Job's wife *was* a problem. She was certainly one of those women you would never want to spend much time around, much less be married to. That's probably why the Prophet dismisses her with a rather cursory acknowledgement:

Then his wife said to him, "Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!"
(Job 2:9)

The woman does sound like a sunny, sympathetic sort, doesn't she? But Job must have had a fairly large life insurance policy, seeing as how he was a wealthy man before the Lord started talking him up. That probably had something to do with her pleasant disposition. Job, however, knew what an airhead she was, so he rejected her advice immediately:

But he said to her, "You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God and not accept adversity?" In all this Job did not sin with his lips.
(Job 2:10)

Again the Prophet confirms that the source of Job's suffering was not sin. It's obvious that a large part of his suffering up to that time was due to his wife. However, she was certainly not the worst of his problems at the moment. At least she knew how to speak her mind and then keep her mouth shut. Fortunately for Job, her mind was rather small, so she didn't have much to say. But Job had three friends who were an entirely different matter. They had lots to say and, believe me, they could hardly wait to say it. But cultural expectations at the time evidently demanded that they squirm in the dirt for seven days, waiting for Job to speak. Then each in turn could let Job have it under the guise of providing comfort:

Now when Job's three friends heard of all this adversity that had come upon him, they came each one from his own place, Eliphaz the Temanite, Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite; and they made an appointment together to come to sympathize with him and comfort him. And when they lifted up their eyes at a distance, and did not recognize him, they raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe, and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that {his} pain was very great. Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his {birth.}
(Job 2:11–3:1)

I like that last verse. Job's wife told him to curse God and be done with it. Instead, Job cursed the day of his birth. Actually, the original text does not say "the day of his birth," it merely says "his day." But unless you are totally contentious or just want to look stupid, you probably wouldn't contest that translation. I say that because the minute Job opens his mouth he laments the fact that he was ever born. As soon as Job finishes his lament, the first of his friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, timidly approaches the subject of Job's sin. He sort of dances around the edge of it, however, because he isn't exactly sure how Job will respond. In his comments he *talks about* the relationship between wisdom, knowledge, reproof, and discipline. The Prophet's purpose in recording what Eliphaz said is to let you know that Job and his friends understand *The Teaching*. In other words, like Abraham, they understood salvation is by faith in *the promise* of God.

Job responds immediately to Eliphaz, and categorically denies the charge that he is suffering because he has sin in his life. But his response emphasizes the fact that he knows sin is always the result of what we believe:

*"But it is still my consolation,
And I rejoice in unsparing pain,
That I have not denied the words of the Holy One."*
(Job 6:10)

Job is *talking about* the fact that he has never denied *The Teaching* concerning Jesus Christ. He knows his faith in *the promise* of God is all that God requires of him. He also knows his faith makes him

righteous. That's why he says he has not denied any of the Truth he has heard. Therefore, he is certain that God is treating him unfairly. So he says this:

*"What is man that Thou dost magnify him,
And that Thou art concerned about him,
That Thou dost examine him every morning,
And try him every moment?
Wilt Thou never turn Thy gaze away from me,
Nor let me alone until I swallow my spittle?
Have I sinned? What have I done to Thee,
O watcher of men?
Why hast Thou set me as Thy target,
So that I am a burden to myself?
Why then dost Thou not pardon my transgression
And take away my iniquity?
For now I will lie down in the dust;
And Thou wilt seek me, but I will not be."
(Job 7:17–21)*

After Job has lashed out at the Lord to make himself feel better, Bildad the Shuhite comes to the Lord's defense. He appeals to Job's understanding of *The Teaching*. Although he misrepresents *The Teaching* ever so slightly, he is right in using it to make Job back off from accusing the Lord of injustice. He implores Job to remember the things that have been *handed down* to them by earlier generations. Then he uses a series of *parabolic images* to speak concerning the fate of the Wicked. Finally, he says this concerning "The Way":

*"Behold, this is the joy of His way;
And out of the dust others will spring.
Lo, God will not reject {a man of} integrity,
Nor will He support the evildoers.
He will yet fill your mouth with laughter,
And your lips with shouting.
Those who hate you will be clothed with shame;
And the tent of the wicked will be no more."
(Job 8:19–22)*

Bildad is *talking about* the hope of the Resurrection. Job knows that, and he readily agrees that only a knowledge of the Truth will ensure the Resurrection of the Righteous. He even mentions a few of the things they both know to be part of *The Teaching*. But he insists he has done nothing for which God should discipline him harshly. Then he expresses the one thing that has

evidently gotten his hackles up: God can do what He wants, and Job has no say in the matter:

*"For {He is} not a man as I am that I may answer Him,
That we may go to court together.
There is no umpire between us,
Who may lay his hand upon us both.
Let Him remove His rod from me,
And let not dread of Him terrify me.
{Then} I would speak and not fear Him;
But I am not like that in myself."
(Job 9:32–35)*

Having said this, Job then goes back to lamenting the fact that he was ever born. After he has talked himself out, Zophar the Naamathite takes up the assault:

*"Shall a multitude of words go unanswered,
And a talkative man be acquitted?
Shall your boasts silence men?
And shall you scoff and none rebuke?
For you have said, 'My teaching is pure,
And I am innocent in your eyes.'
But would that God might speak,
And open His lips against you,
And show you the secrets of wisdom!
For sound wisdom has two sides.
Know then that God forgets a part of your iniquity."
(Job 11:2–6)*

Zophar's words reveal he has heard, but does not fully understand, *The Teaching*. He indicts Job for believing the Lord would allow him to suffer when he has done nothing wrong. His reference to Job saying "my teaching" tells us Job has been teaching others the Truth he understands. It also explains why Job has been claiming all along that he has not wandered away from *The Teaching*.

Zophar allows the possibility that Job might be righteous. But he tells Job that if God were to show him everything He has hidden, Job would see just how trivial the things he already understands are. He then tells Job that rather than complaining, he would do better to realize he doesn't know everything. He should ask God for greater understanding. Zophar's rebuke is key, so keep it in mind. The Prophet will come back to it later. The rebuke really riles Job. But instead of accepting it, he says this:

*"Truly then you are the people,
And with you wisdom will die!
But I have intelligence as well as you;
I am not inferior to you.
And who does not know such things as these?
I am a joke to my friends.
The one who called on God, and He answered him;
The just {and} blameless {man} is a joke."
(Job 12:2-4)*

Job is treading on extremely thin ice. Instead of admitting there might be things in *The Teaching* he is unaware of, he insists he has just as much insight as his friends. He has heard *The Teaching*. He knows Who God is and what He has done. He doesn't need them to tell him what he already knows. That's why he says:

*"Behold, my eye has seen all {this,}
My ear has heard and understood it.
What you know I also know.
I am not inferior to you."
(Job 13:1-2)*

Having put his friends in their place, Job then tells them exactly what he would say if he could meet the Lord face to face. The Prophet is telling us Job is now standing in Satan's snare. Rather than considering the fact that there might be something more he could learn about *The Teaching*, Job remains firmly convinced he is suffering unjustly. He knows he hasn't strayed from "The Way." Therefore, he is certain he is righteous. So he tells Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar he wants to "argue" his case with God.

The Hebrew literally says Job wants to "reprove God," but I'll accept "argue." Either translation makes the Prophet's point: Job has stepped over the line. He thinks his knowledge of *The Teaching* is the determining factor in his relationship to God. Keep in mind what started Job's tirade: Zophar told him he might not know everything he needed to know. He recommended Job go to God asking for greater understanding. The Prophet is merely setting the stage. The Lord is going to tell Job the same thing later on—that he does not realize how little he actually knows.

Job tells his friends he would walk right up to the Lord, head held high in righteousness, and tell Him He is allowing him to suffer unjustly. Listen to how he would talk to the Lord:

*"How many are my iniquities and sins?
Make known to me my rebellion and my sin.
Why dost Thou hide Thy face,
And consider me Thine enemy?"
(Job 13:23-24)*

Job goes on rambling for awhile about things that are part of *The Teaching*. When he runs out of steam, Eliphaz starts up again. Now Eliphaz doesn't believe a word of what Job has said about his being righteous. He still thinks he is hiding sin. Furthermore, Job's rejection of admonishment and his taking God to task strikes Eliphaz as particularly suspicious. That probably explains why he seconds the recommendation that Job seek wisdom rather than focusing on his righteousness:

*"Are the consolations of God too small for you,
Even the word {spoken} gently with you?
Why does your heart carry you away?
And why do your eyes flash,
That you should turn your spirit against God,
And allow {such} words to go out of your mouth?
What is man, that he should be pure,
Or he who is born of a woman,
that he should be righteous?"
(Job 15:11-14)*

That is the second time someone has asked the question "What is man?" Job said this earlier:

*"What is man that Thou dost magnify him,
And that Thou art concerned about him?"
(Job 7:17)*

The Prophet wants us to understand that both Job and Eliphaz understood *The Teaching*. Consequently, they knew God saw nothing special in man that motivated Him to provide a way of salvation. However, Job asked the question to lament the fact that he was suffering only because God had fixed His attention on mankind. Eliphaz asked it because he wanted Job to rethink his position on the incredible Truth that belief in a specific body of information could ever make one righteous.

Job heard, and immediately rejected, what Eliphaz said. He wants nothing to do with seeking greater wisdom. His knowledge of *The Teaching* tells him he is already righteous. Therefore, he is firmly convinced God

has no legitimate reason for causing him to suffer. So, having shaken his fist at God and challenged Him to point out his sin, Job lapses into self-pity:

*"If I speak, my pain is not lessened,
And if I hold back, what has left me?
But now He has exhausted me;
Thou hast laid waste all my company.
And Thou hast shriveled me up,
It has become a witness;
And my leanness rises up against me,
It testifies to my face.
His anger has torn me and hunted me down,
He has gnashed at me with His teeth;
My adversary glares at me."
(Job 16:6–9)*

Bildad the Shuhite is amazed that Job remains so adamant in rejecting Zophar's suggestion that maybe there is something he doesn't know, that maybe he should ask God for additional knowledge. That's why he indignantly asks Job if he thinks he is the only one with the ability to understand *The Teaching*:

*"How long will you hunt for words?
Show understanding and then we can talk.
Why are we regarded as beasts,
As stupid in your eyes?
O you who tear yourself in your anger—
For your sake is the earth to be abandoned,
Or the rock to be moved from its place?"
(Job 18:2–4)*

After that sharp rebuke, Bildad then succinctly states his own understanding of the fate of all those who fail to believe *The Teaching*. But Job will have none of Bildad's admonishment. He remains completely mired in self-pity, insisting that God must be wrong for subjecting him to such suffering:

*"How long will you torment me,
And crush me with words?
These ten times you have insulted me,
You are not ashamed to wrong me.
Even if I have truly erred,
My error lodges with me.
If indeed you vaunt yourselves against me,
And prove my disgrace to me,*

*Know then that God has wronged me,
And has closed His net around me."
(Job 19:2–6)*

Job's three friends can plainly see, as can we, that Job is stubbornly maintaining God is unjust in making him suffer. The Prophet wants us to understand that Satan has Job completely convinced of his lie. Job knows he is righteous. But that is precisely his problem. He knows he is righteous, but he doesn't know why he is suffering. So he assumes God is in the wrong. The Prophet is making a point. Since Job does not understand why he is suffering, he should consider the possibility that God might have something more for him to understand. Therefore, he should not adamantly refuse to ask for understanding.

Instead of seeking additional knowledge, however, Job blindly clings to his faith in what *The Teaching* has told him concerning the Return of Jesus Christ:

*"Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
That with an iron stylus and lead
They were engraved in the rock forever!
And as for me, I know that my Redeemer lives,
And at the last He will take His stand on the earth.
Even after my skin is destroyed,
Yet from my flesh I shall see God;
Whom I myself shall behold,
And whom my eyes shall see and not another.
My heart faints within me.
If you say, 'How shall we persecute him?'
And 'What pretext for a case against him can we find?'
{Then} be afraid of the sword for yourselves,
For wrath {brings} the punishment of the sword,
So that you may know there is judgment."
(Job 19:23–29)*

Did you notice Job completely ignored what Bildad said about the fate of the Wicked? Instead of heeding the warning and considering the fact that he might need to learn something more, he steadfastly affirms his faith in "my Redeemer" whom he believes will deliver him "at the last." That is more stubbornness than Zophar can endure. Therefore, he picks up Bildad's train of thought, insisting that Job should consider the fate of the Wicked and turn to God in humility. He asks Job:

"Do you know this from of old,
 From the establishment of man on earth,
 That the triumphing of the wicked is short,
 And the joy of the godless momentary?
 Though his loftiness reaches the heavens,
 And his head touches the clouds,
 He perishes forever like his refuse;
 Those who have seen him will say, 'Where is he?'
 He flies away like a dream, and they cannot find him;
 Even like a vision of the night he is chased away.
 The eye which saw him sees him no more,
 And his place no longer beholds him.
 His sons favor the poor,
 And his hands give back his wealth.
 His bones are full of his youthful vigor,
 But it lies down with him in the dust."
 (Job 20:4–11)

Job responds by comparing his own circumstances to those of the Wicked. He says he would not even be suffering if he were wicked. The Wicked prosper, live happy lives with their children, and have perfect health, in spite of their rejection of the Truth of *The Teaching*. He, by contrast, has none of the things the Wicked enjoy:

"Look at me, and be astonished,
 And put {your} hand over {your} mouth.
 Even when I remember, I am disturbed,
 And horror takes hold of my flesh.
 Why do the wicked {still} live,
 Continue on, also become very powerful?
 Their descendants are established with them in their sight,
 And their offspring before their eyes,
 Their houses are safe from fear,
 Neither is the rod of God on them.
 His ox mates without fail;
 His cow calves and does not abort.
 They send forth their little ones like the flock,
 And their children skip about.
 They sing to the timbrel and harp
 And rejoice at the sound of the flute.
 They spend their days in prosperity,
 And suddenly they go down to Sheol.
And they say to God, 'Depart from us!
We do not even desire the knowledge of Thy ways.
 Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him,
 And what would we gain if we entreat Him?
 Behold, their prosperity is not in their hand;

The counsel of the wicked is far from me."
 (Job 21:5–16)

Eliphaz immediately takes offense at the notion that the source of Job's suffering could ever be his relationship to God. He remains certain that Job must have sinned. So when Job is through speaking, he goes back to accusing him of sin:

"Can a vigorous man be of use to God,
 Or a wise man be useful to himself?
 Is there any pleasure to the Almighty if you are righteous,
 Or profit if you make your ways perfect?
**Is it because of your reverence that He reproves you,
 That He enters into judgment against you?**
**Is not your wickedness great,
 And your iniquities without end?**
 For you have taken pledges of your brothers without cause,
 And stripped men naked.
 To the weary you have given no water to drink,
 And from the hungry you have withheld bread.
 But the earth belongs to the mighty man,
 And the honorable man dwells in it.
 You have sent widows away empty,
 And the strength of the orphans has been crushed.
 Therefore snares surround you,
 And sudden dread terrifies you,
 Or darkness, so that you cannot see,
 And an abundance of water covers you."
 (Job 22:2–11)

No matter how insistent Eliphaz is, Job remains confident he is righteous because he has held fast to the Truth. So after again expressing the desire to argue his case before God, Job rebukes his friends with this:

"Behold, I go forward but He is not {there,}
 And backward, but I cannot perceive Him;
 When He acts on the left, I cannot behold {Him;}
 He turns on the right, I cannot see Him.
But He knows the way I take;
{When} He has tried me, I shall come forth as gold.
My foot has held fast to His path;
I have kept His way and not turned aside.
I have not departed from the command of His lips;
I have treasured the words of His mouth
more than my necessary food."
 (Job 23:8–12)

In that passage, the Prophet is telling us Job understands the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* concerning trials and testing. His purpose is to make sure we understand Job's problem was not necessarily that he lacked sufficient knowledge of the Truth, but rather that he lacked a burning desire to attain a greater knowledge of the Truth. He is going to make that point in no uncertain terms in the final chapters of his work. But before he does that, he feels compelled to give us a glimpse of what Job and his friends understood about *The Teaching*. That is why he attributes these *parabolic statements* to Job:

*"Others have been with those who rebel against the light;
They do not want to know its ways,
Nor abide in its paths.
The murderer arises at dawn;
He kills the poor and the needy,
And at night he is as a thief.
And the eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight,
Saying, 'No eye will see me.'
And he disguises his face.
In the dark they dig into houses,
They shut themselves up by day;
They do not know the light.
For the morning is the same to him as thick darkness,
For he is familiar with the terrors of thick darkness."
(Job 24:13–17)*

Job's certainty that his belief in *The Teaching* makes him righteous before God provokes Bildad to question whether it is even possible for a person to be righteous. As you read the following passage, keep in mind the fact that the word translated "just" is from the same root the translator has translated "righteous" elsewhere:

*"Dominion and awe belong to Him
Who establishes peace in His heights.
Is there any number to His troops?
And upon whom does His light not rise?
How then can a man be just with God?
Or how can he be clean who is born of woman?"
(Job 25:2–4)*

Job responds with a scathing denunciation. He asks Bildad how he could possibly teach others when he doesn't understand the concept of righteousness by

faith himself. He even implies that God's Spirit may not be the spirit ministering through him:

*"What a help you are to the weak!
How you have saved the arm without strength!
What counsel you have given to {one} without wisdom!
What helpful insight you have abundantly provided!
To whom have you uttered words?
And whose spirit was expressed through you?"
(Job 26:2–4)*

After giving Bildad a summary of various other things that are described *parabolically* in *The Teaching*, Job then discloses just how tenaciously he is holding to the things he has heard. He asserts he is absolutely confident that his belief in those things provides him a covering of righteousness:

*"As God lives, who has taken away my right,
And the Almighty, who has embittered my soul,
For as long as life is in me,
And the breath of God is in my nostrils,
My lips certainly will not speak unjustly,
Nor will my tongue mutter deceit.
Far be it from me that I should declare you right;
Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.
I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go.
My heart does not reproach any of my days."
(Job 27:2–6)*

Then, because Bildad made such a ridiculous statement when he should have known better, Job proceeds to set the record straight. He tells the three men:

*"I will instruct you in the power of God;
What is with the Almighty I will not conceal.
Behold, all of you have seen {it;}
Why then do you act foolishly?"
(Job 27:11–12)*

Job goes on to explain *The Teaching*. First, he describes the coming of the Antichrist. Then, after *talk- ing about* how diligently men go prospecting for and mining valuable minerals from the earth, he asks:

*"But where can wisdom be found?
And where is the place of understanding?"
(Job 28:12)*

After comparing the value of wisdom to that of still other precious metals and gemstones, Job asks the same question again and answers it himself immediately. The Prophet wants to make sure we know just how much Job understood. So throughout this section, he has Job speaking in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*. In Job's monologue, therefore, one can clearly see that Job understood the Truth:

*"Where then does wisdom come from?
And where is the place of understanding?
Thus it is hidden from the eyes of all living,
And concealed from the birds of the sky.
Abaddon and Death say,
'With our ears we have heard a report of it.'
God understands its way;
And He knows its place.
For He looks to the ends of the earth,
And sees everything under the heavens.
When He imparted weight to the wind,
And meted out the waters by measure,
When He set a limit for the rain,
And a course for the thunderbolt,
Then He saw it and declared it;
He established it and also searched it out.
And to man He said,
'Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom;
And to depart from evil is understanding.'"
(Job 28:20–28)*

Having had his say, Job immediately goes back to lamenting his condition. He says he longs for the days when he rejoiced in his knowledge of the Truth. Finally, Job lists a series of sins, saying God should afflict him even more if he has done any of them. The first of his conditional statements is directed at the heart of the matter. Using the *parabolic image* of *The Teaching* as "The Way," Job insists he has never allowed anything to corrupt his understanding of the Truth:

*"If I have walked with falsehood,
And my foot has hastened after deceit,
Let Him weigh me with accurate scales,
And let God know my integrity.
If my step has turned from the way,
Or my heart followed my eyes,
Or if any spot has stuck to my hands,
Let me sow and another eat,*

*And let my crops be uprooted."
(Job 31:5–8)*

With that, Job's three friends give up trying to convince him he is not righteous. However, the Prophet now informs us a younger man is also present, and he is angry because of all the nonsense he has heard:

*Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes. But the anger of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram burned; against Job his anger burned, because he justified himself before God. And his anger burned against his three friends because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job. Now Elihu had waited to speak to Job because they were years older than he. And when Elihu saw that there was no answer in the mouth of the three men his anger burned.
(Job 32:1–5)*

So in spite of his youth, Elihu decides to have his say as well. He begins by apologizing for speaking, but tells the older men he feels he must say something because nobody has pointed out why Job is suffering. After informing Job that he understands *The Teaching* as well, he admonishes him by telling him he is not right in accusing God of injustice:

*"Surely you have spoken in my hearing,
And I have heard the sound of {your} words:
'I am pure, without transgression;
I am innocent and there is no guilt in me.
Behold, He invents pretexts against me;
He counts me as His enemy.
He puts my feet in the stocks;
He watches all my paths.'
Behold, let me tell you, you are not right in this,
For God is greater than man."
(Job 33:8–12)*

Next, Elihu tells Job how God deals with those who respond to *The Teaching*: He speaks to them in dreams and visions. He rebukes them with sickness. He uses angels to turn them back from destructive behavior. Having succinctly stated how God uses these three things, Elihu concludes by telling Job to listen to him because he is going to make him righteous ("justify" him) by telling him the Truth:

*"Behold, God does all these oftentimes with men,
To bring back his soul from the pit,
That he may be enlightened with the light of life.
Pay attention, O Job, listen to me;
Keep silent and let me speak.
{Then} if you have anything to say, answer me;
Speak, for I desire to justify you.
If not, listen to me;
Keep silent, and I will teach you wisdom."
(Job 33:29–33)*

Job keeps his mouth shut in spite of the young man's affront because he knows that some of what he has said is true. Sensing that Job is not going to respond to him, Elihu then turns to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar and uses Job's own words to indict him:

*"Hear my words, you wise men,
And listen to me, you who know.
For the ear tests words,
As the palate tastes food.
Let us choose for ourselves what is right;
Let us know among ourselves what is good.
For Job has said, 'I am righteous,
But God has taken away my right;
Should I lie concerning my right?
My wound is incurable, {though I am} without transgression.'
What man is like Job,
Who drinks up derision like water,
Who goes in company with the workers of iniquity,
And walks with wicked men?
For he has said, 'It profits a man nothing
When he is pleased with God.'"
(Job 34:2–9)*

Then, after saying a few things in defense of the Lord's honor, Elihu continues by insisting the Lord would never cause anyone to suffer if they had not sinned. Finally, he lambastes Job for claiming he is suffering because the Lord is trying and testing him:

*"For has anyone said to God,
'I have borne {chastisement};
I will not offend {anymore};
Teach Thou me what I do not see;
If I have done iniquity, I will do it no more?'
Shall He recompense on your terms,
because you have rejected {it?}*

*For you must choose, and not I;
Therefore declare what you know.
Men of understanding will say to me,
And a wise man who hears me,
'Job speaks without knowledge,
And his words are without wisdom.
Job ought to be tried to the limit,
Because he answers like wicked men.
For he adds rebellion to his sin;
He claps his hands among us,
And multiplies his words against God.'"
(Job 34:31–37)*

The young man finally hits his stride. He first rejects Job's statement that he is suffering in spite of his righteousness; therefore, his righteousness has not benefited him. Amazingly, the things Elihu says are all from *The Teaching*. But since Elihu does not know Job is suffering for no reason other than the Lord's desire to prove him, he concludes by falsely saying:

*"So Job opens his mouth empty;
He multiplies words without knowledge."
(Job 35:16)*

After rudely insulting a suffering old man, the young fellow next has the audacity to take the essence of *The Teaching* that Job believes and fire it right back at him. Although he understands the Truth somewhat, Elihu still does not know why Job is suffering:

*"Wait for me a little, and I will show you
That there is yet more to be said in God's behalf.
I will fetch my knowledge from afar,
And I will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.
For truly my words are not false;
One who is perfect in knowledge is with you.
Behold, God is mighty but does not despise {any;}
{He is} mighty in strength of understanding.
He does not keep the wicked alive,
But gives justice to the afflicted.
He does not withdraw His eyes from the righteous;
But with kings on the throne
He has seated them forever, and they are exalted.
And if they are bound in fetters,
And are caught in the cords of affliction,
Then He declares to them their work
And their transgressions,*

*that they have magnified themselves.
And He opens their ear to instruction,
And commands that they return from evil.
If they hear and serve {Him,}
They shall end their days in prosperity,
And their years in pleasures.
But if they do not hear, they shall perish by the sword,
And they shall die without knowledge."
(Job 36:2-12)*

In case you missed it, that last is a description of the Holy Spirit convicting someone. The Spirit of the Lord was doing that long before the Lord Himself was resurrected. The only thing different after the Resurrection was the Spirit coming to life in the Believer. But I suppose you already knew that. You can't teach some folks anything they don't already know. You probably also know why Elihu said this:

*"Behold, God is exalted in His power;
Who is a teacher like Him?
Who has appointed Him His way,
And who has said, 'Thou hast done wrong'?"
(Job 36:22-23)*

He is *talking about* the fact that God has taught men "The Way," which is His Way, that is, what He thinks. Nobody can tell Him things aren't "The Way" He says they are. His Way is "The only Way" just because He said so. Elihu had heard that. That's why he goes on to *talk about* all the magnificent things God has done before concluding with this insightful comment:

*"Therefore men fear Him;
He does not regard any who are wise of heart."
(Job 37:24)*

Try telling that to our generation. Very few believe God is a God to be feared. Fewer still are willing to accept the fact that the reverberation of Satan's lies in the vacant space behind their eyes doesn't count for anything at all. Like all the others, Elihu had heard the Truth. But he didn't understand how Job could be righteous and still suffer. That's why the Lord appears suddenly in a whirlwind. He pointedly ignores Elihu and his sanctimonious statements by addressing Himself only to Job. He begins by asking him just who he thinks he is:

*"Who is this that darkens counsel
By words without knowledge?"
(Job 38:2)*

Then, in no uncertain terms, the Lord lets Job know exactly how He feels about the situation. He first tells him to get ready because He has a few things He wants Job to teach Him:

*"Now gird up your loins like a man,
And I will ask you, and you instruct Me!"
(Job 38:3)*

Following that brief introduction, the Lord asks Job a series of questions that Job can answer only by saying "No" or "I don't know." There is a short pause, and the Lord concludes by asking one simple question that only Job can answer because he is the only "fault-finder" the Lord had in mind:

*"Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty?
Let him who reproves God answer it."
(Job 40:2)*

Suddenly faced with an opportunity to "argue" with the Lord, Job finds he has nothing to "argue" about. That's when he responds as he should have all along:

*"Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee?
I lay my hand on my mouth.
Once I have spoken, and I will not answer;
Even twice, and I will add no more."
(Job 40:4-5)*

But the Lord isn't finished with "the faultfinder" yet. Not by a long shot. He tells Job to get ready again:

*"Now gird up your loins like a man;
I will ask you, and you instruct Me."
(Job 40:7)*

The Lord next asks Job a couple of questions that Job probably would have preferred not to hear:

*"Will you really annul My judgment?
Will you condemn Me that you may be justified?
Or do you have an arm like God,*

And can you thunder with a voice like His?"
(Job 40:8-9)

The Lord follows up that question with another long series of questions. But this time He compares Himself to Job, showing Job how completely insignificant he is. He even describes Satan under the *parabolic image* of Leviathan, asking Job whether he thinks he can take on such an individual all by himself. After the Lord has spoken His mind, Job responds just as Zophar recommended all along. He admits he should have sought a greater understanding of why the Lord was making him suffer. Moreover, he weaves into his response two things the Lord has already said to him. Those evidently cut him to the core:

*"I know that Thou canst do all things,
And that no purpose of Thine can be thwarted.
'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?'
Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand,
Things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
'Hear, now, and I will speak;
I will ask Thee, and do Thou instruct me.'
I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear;
But now my eye sees Thee;
Therefore I retract,
And I repent in dust and ashes."
(Job 42:2-6)*

The Lord obviously forgave Job's stubbornness as soon as he repented. That is evident when He turns His attention to Job's three friends. He denounces them for misrepresenting the things *The Teaching* has to say concerning sin, suffering, and righteousness:

*And it came about after the LORD had spoken these words to Job, that the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "My wrath is kindled against you and against your two friends, because you have not spoken of Me what is right as My servant Job has. Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, and go to My servant Job, and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves, and My servant Job will pray for you. For I will accept him so that I may not do with you {according to your} folly, because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has."
(Job 42:7-8)*

The Lord's rebuke is interesting. He ignores Elihu completely because he distorted *The Teaching* to make it serve his own ends. The only thing the other three men did wrong was challenge Job's contention that he was righteous. But that was because they did not understand what Job understood: Righteousness comes by belief in the Truth. So Job was right. They were dead wrong. All five men had heard that same Truth. However, none but Job actually understood what he had heard. And even he had difficulty accepting the fact that God would test him exactly as He said He would.

Job had heard someone teach the concept that God has *promised* to subject every True Believer to testing. He could even verbalize that Truth. However, he could not accept the reality of it. Like a lot of ignorant folks today, he preferred to believe the Lord should repay his faithfulness with abundant blessing. He rejected that stupid notion only after the Lord showed him just how foolish he was.

The Prophet intends Job's experience to be a lesson for the Righteous. Our belief in the Truth is our righteousness. If we believe, God will do with us as He sees fit. Our only goal is to prove our faith. Job did that, and so can you, provided you hear and believe *The Teaching*. But remember this: The Lord removed Job's affliction only after Job admitted there were things he didn't understand. Then He *blessed* Job even more than he had before:

*And the LORD restored the fortunes of Job when he prayed for his friends, and the LORD increased all that Job had twofold.
(Job 42:10)*

Let me ask you a few questions: Have you ever responded to the Truth of the Gospel message? Did you totally commit your life to Jesus Christ so that you were willing to do whatever God required of you? Are you currently suffering in spite of the fact that you have held to that commitment? If so, you are probably sitting in the same ash heap where Job sat. Don't be foolish. That can only *mean* there are things you don't know that God would have you understand. For those of you whose life is currently nothing but roses and jasmine, let me offer a bit of advice: Consider the Lord's servant Job and remember. The repo man comes around at all hours of the day and night. ■

Praise the Lord! I'm Free at Last!

[Editor: We have included the following "testimony" in this issue to introduce you to Bonnie Harper, a newborn Believer in the Lord. In upcoming issues, we plan to provide you the "testimony" of others to give you a bit more insight into the people who bring you this newsletter each month.]

I was born on November 16, 1949, in Danville, Pennsylvania. I have one brother, who is five years older than I. I grew up in a home where there was never any shortage of money. We traveled a lot, received the latest things for Christmas every year, wore the newest style of clothes, shopped at only the finest stores, etc. About the only things we didn't have were self-discipline, love, and respect for each other. We especially didn't have an understanding of what it means to be born again.

I'm sure I was a difficult child to raise. I was spoiled rotten, completely selfish, and I lied a lot so that I could do what I wanted to do. To make things worse, my brother was exactly the opposite. He was a child who always did what he was told. Since my parents were pleased by how well he behaved, they talked about it quite often—in my presence. That set up the perfect scenario for the good child/bad child syndrome. So during my formative years I learned to see myself as the kid who always failed at everything. I just assumed that if there was a choice where I had to do the right thing or the wrong thing, I would naturally pick the wrong thing to do.

My family was extremely religious. We went to church every Sunday morning and Sunday night without fail. We seldom missed Wednesday night services either. On Saturdays we went to Youth for Christ. We were Baptists, so I was taught legalism to

an extreme. Being a "Christian" meant we didn't go to movies, dance, drink, etc. Another message that came through loud and clear was that we were always to make sure our every action was acceptable to others.

My parents never cared what God thought of what they did. All they cared about was how they appeared to others. For example, when my brother wanted to wash the car on Sunday, he was told he couldn't do that because a Christian shouldn't work on Sunday. When he told my parents that washing the car was fun, not work, they said, "But what will the neighbors think?" They were not concerned about how God would feel. Everything was done for the eyes of man.

We did attend revivals and tent meetings that were held in the area. At these services I heard the Truth of the Gospel message—that I was a sinner and needed to be saved. There were plenty of lies mixed in about how God loved me unconditionally, but when I heard that I was a sinner, I felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I stood through quite a few altar calls just waiting for them to end because I felt I should go forward and commit my life to Christ, but I could never bring myself to do it. One particular night I was under such conviction that I was fidgeting. I assume my parents saw that and knew what it meant. After the meeting they asked me if I wanted to be saved. I said yes, and we were off to our own pastor's house.

Now I don't remember this pastor ever teaching anything about salvation. He taught that God loves us unconditionally, one and all, and he assumed you were a "Christian" if you went to church regularly. So when we got to his house, all he did was take out a pamphlet entitled "The Four Spiritual Laws" and go over them with me. What was the result of my visit with our pastor? He assured me that I was saved once and for all time, and that I should never doubt it. He

didn't talk about the miracle of the new birth. He talked about being "saved." Satan's lie is amazing, isn't it? Now I could lie, cheat, and be vindictive to others; but God loved me and had a wonderful plan for my life, so I didn't have to worry.

One thing that surprises me even now is the fact that I have always had a fear of God. I find this unusual since I wasn't disciplined in a way which would teach me to fear authority. Nonetheless, I was definitely afraid of God's wrath. I distinctly remember one occasion when someone in front of me at a football game took the Lord's name in vain. I was afraid lightning would come down and strike us because she did that. Although I was unsaved, I apparently knew deep down inside that God is not Someone we can treat with disrespect and get away with it. So I tried to avoid anything sacrilegious.

When I was fourteen, I went away to high school—to a prestigious prep school in Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. Two completely different forces were competing for me during this time. In the summer I would go to Bible camp and tell myself I needed to "rededicate" my life because I was not reading the Bible and praying every day. (I had been taught that is what you must do if you have been saved.) During the winter at school, however, I was learning to be an "independent" person. This translated into me doing what I wanted to do and ignoring what my parents thought.

However, after my mother and father saw me doing things they didn't approve of, such as playing cards, they sent me to a very small "Christian" school in Florida. The teachers at this school believed exactly what my family believed. Consequently, we had to attend chapel twice a day and adhere to rules, rules, and more rules. Those who obeyed the rules with a sweet smile were asked to get up and give their testimony. The teachers believed they had been born again because they did all the right things.

This was a frustrating time for me. I had become extremely rebellious while attending prep school, so I hated having to obey all those rules. Furthermore, I saw how those sweet, smiling students acted in the privacy of their rooms when they showed their true colors. So I knew that nothing the teachers saw in them was real. They were just putting on an act.

While at this school in Florida, I read a book that talked about the Second Coming. That book terrified me. For some time after that, when I was out at night

(walking home from chapel), I would look up at the sky and think about Christ's Return, all the while feeling afraid of what was to come. I knew that Jesus Christ would return in wrath. However, I was just stupid enough to follow the Scarlett O'Hara routine—"I'll think about it tomorrow." I didn't know how to deal with my fear.

After I graduated from high school, I went on to Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. I majored in music theory; but because I lacked discipline, I never received my degree. During my last year, I decided I could not give a piano recital. Since that was required for a degree in music, I changed my major to elementary education with a minor in music. That meant that, to get my degree, I needed a few more hours than I could complete during my senior year. All I had to do to graduate that summer was complete these hours by correspondence. I did order the course materials. But I didn't have the gumption to complete the coursework. Therefore, in spite of the fact that my parents spent thousands of dollars on my college education, I have no college degree.

The Jesus movement began during my years at Bryan. That's when it became cool for kids to be a "Christian" and give the "one way" sign. From time to time, I hung around with people who did that, and I hated it. I felt that it made being a Christian synonymous with joining a club: "If I give the right sign, I'm in." I could tell these people weren't Christians by their words and actions. So I felt it was sacrilegious for them to give a sign that said they were. It's interesting to me now that even as an unbeliever, I knew that certain things were not characteristics of a truly born-again person. I don't know why it didn't occur to me that I was just as guilty of allowing people to believe the same lie about me even though I couldn't bring myself to give some sign.

One Sunday night I went to a local Pentecostal church with a group of students from the college. During the service, some of the guys sang "Amazing Grace" to the tune of "House of the Rising Sun." They thought it was funny because they were singing a hymn to the tune of a rock song with undesirable lyrics. They assumed Pentecostal Christians wouldn't know that. I guess it didn't occur to them that some of the people in the church probably listened to the same music they did. I didn't know what they had planned. But while they were singing, I was scared to death.

They were in a church service mocking people for being religious! After the service somebody asked us if we had "received the baptism of the Holy Spirit." One guy said, "Yes, I'm saved." Later that night, he laughed about how he had taken their question and answered it in a way that put down something they believed in. You could legitimately ask me why I associated with people who did these kinds of things when I hated what they did. Unfortunately, because of how my parents viewed me, I didn't think I was good enough to have better friends. So I continued doing things I knew I should not do, all the while afraid of God and His wrath.

During my junior year at college, I met Larry Harper. We were married the following year in spite of the fact that we were an unlikely combination from the start. Larry's only desire was to do what God had called him to do, and he told me that before we were married. I didn't care what we did; I only wanted to be happy. So I just assumed things would work out for us. That fall, we moved to Deerfield, Illinois, where Larry attended seminary. While we were there, our first son, Matthew, was born. Those were not the most enjoyable years of my life. I know they weren't for Larry either. He was carrying a full load at school and trying to come to an understanding of what God had called him to do. At the same time he had to deal with me being constantly contentious.

During this time, Larry was struggling to understand how I could act the way I did and still be born again. One night he confronted me and said he was unsure that I was saved. Since I didn't want to go to Hell, I prayed and asked God to save me. My motives? I felt guilty for the messed-up, unhappy life Larry and I had together. I wanted to be saved, but for all the wrong reasons.

At that time, I did not see my sins for what they were or feel any remorse at all for them. I certainly didn't see what Christ had done for me on the cross. I knew I deserved to go to Hell, but that was nothing more than a reflection of the negative view of myself that had been drilled into me as a child. My parents always thought I did the wrong thing. So I just naturally saw myself as a rotten person. I thought I didn't deserve anything better. Mostly, however, I was just feeling sorry for myself because I realized I was married to someone for the rest of my life; and we had nothing in common. I didn't realize that was because he was born again and I wasn't.

Larry and I attended various churches during the time he was in seminary. Looking back now I realize that, in all the churches I've attended over the years, everyone automatically assumes that if you are attending church regularly and appear to have the proper attitude, you are saved. Yet in the three years I spent in Illinois, I never once heard the salvation message preached in church.

At the church that we attended for most of the time we were in Illinois, I played the piano every Sunday and literally basked in the praise I received. I also attended a few ladies' luncheons where I began my indoctrination in how to become one of the "valuable women" in the church. That training continued even after we moved to California, where Larry continued his graduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley. That's when I got my first job. I quickly discovered that if I did good work, I would receive praise. I thrived on praise, so I actually did quite well. I began as a teller at Wells Fargo Bank and quickly worked my way up to the level of assistant manager. I remember thinking that if Larry couldn't appreciate who I was, at least someone did.

During most of our time in California, we attended a church that was very much like the church I attended as a child. Everything was appearances. We looked attractive, were friendly to everyone, and participated in church activities; so we were accepted as a fine "Christian" couple. The truth was, only one of us had ever been born again. But I can see now that most of the people at that church weren't born again themselves. So they wouldn't have had any way of knowing I wasn't.

In California, I lived for the social activities of the church. At church functions I could be the center of attention. I had learned how to be sociable at Sunday School parties as a child. So I found it easy to do things so that everyone would laugh and have a good time. In addition, I played the piano for the choir and received a lot of public recognition for that. I was having a great time being a "Christian."

During the late '70s I began to attend women's Bible study groups. You know the kind—where everybody pools their ignorance. Here, as in the churches I had attended as a child, there was never any talk about the Truth of the Gospel and the need to be born again. I was taught that you should feel free to state whatever you thought the Bible was saying on some

particular topic. There was no wrong answer because no one believed there was any such thing as absolute Truth to be found in the Scriptures. The Bible means whatever it says to you.

In 1982, I became dissatisfied with my circumstances at the bank and quit to take a job with less pay at Chevron Corporation. The next year, our second son, Jonathan, was born. Then in 1985, we moved to Dallas so that Larry could do what he felt God wanted him to do. I stayed home taking care of Jonathan, managing my brother-in-law's rental properties, and helping Larry while he bought and fixed up investment property. When it was time for Jonathan to enter kindergarten, we moved to our current home so that we would be in a better school district.

On a couple of occasions in California, and again shortly before we moved to Texas, Larry told me that I could do whatever I wanted to do. What I did was not going to matter to him any longer because he was going to do what he felt God wanted him to do. If that didn't fit in with my plans, that was fine. He was not going to allow what I wanted to sway him. Basically, he was doing his best to keep me from interfering with the decisions he felt he had to make to fulfill his calling. Unfortunately, I had been doing that for years just to be contentious.

Since I cared about Larry and wanted to please him more than anyone else, I did try to refrain from questioning everything he did. This effort to keep peace between us helped our relationship a little. In 1988, however, while Larry was out of town on business, I became frustrated to the point where I thought I could not stand it anymore. When I talked to him on the phone, he questioned me again about whether I had ever been born again. After that phone call I knelt down and told God I just couldn't stand my miserable life anymore. Therefore, I was going to turn it over to Him. Does that sound familiar? It probably does. I hear it preached on television all the time. Do you have problems you can't solve? Go to the problem solver. God is like some magic potion that will make everything all right when we can't take it anymore.

I realize now that my "salvation" experience in 1988 was nothing more than emotion. It did not include any kind of repentance or submission to God on my part because there was no content to my "faith." I was not responding to the Truth of the Gospel message. I was responding to the frustration I felt because I no

longer had any control over my own circumstances. Nevertheless, I did feel better for awhile afterward because I had honestly asked God to forgive some obvious sins that I knew I had committed. So I thought I had been "born again." I didn't realize I had not felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. I had only confessed the obvious sins, things that Larry had pointed out to me.

I now know that, although I saw some of my sins in 1988, I did not see myself as God saw me. And I certainly wasn't about to allow God to have the final say in everything I did. I was just trying to get some relief from the frustration I felt. I was like a kid trying to get out of trouble without admitting anything more than was absolutely necessary. I knew the sins Larry saw in me were there, but I wasn't about to admit anything else.

I suppose my confession of sin also had some therapeutic value. It allowed me to "get a few things off my chest." But I was still constantly vacillating between stubbornly wanting what I wanted and trying to be willing to do what Larry thought best. I realize now that I continued to approach life the way my parents had taught me. I saw everything in terms of what others would think. I was not interested in the Truth or in pleasing God, so it was foolish for me to even think that I was a child of God. Nonetheless, I continued on thinking I had been born again.

I did feel a great relief when I prayed in 1988. I thought I had just turned all my problems over to God. Yet what I interpreted as giving up everything and wanting God alone was nothing more than an expression of my same old desire to be happy. I didn't want to face the fact that I was lost, so even after I began to experience the same frustrations (God didn't magically remove them), I still held on to the belief that I had been born again.

In 1994, however, it became apparent to me and everybody around me that I was still a Pretender. I had desperately tried to avoid facing that fact. This time, however, I wasn't sure what to do. So I spent a lot of time in the bathroom praying. I would pray, then wait for God to do something. But nothing ever happened. That was because I didn't understand that salvation comes by faith in the Gospel. I didn't know there is a very specific content that one must believe in order to be born again. So I went on for several weeks wanting to be saved, expecting God to do something for me instead of me just believing the Truth. I felt

completely depressed. I wanted God to do some miracle, to give me a warm feeling, or to write on the wall "Bonnie, you are saved." But there was nothing He could do, because I didn't know what I needed to believe.

Larry was in a unique position all this time. He knew that God had called him as a Teacher with responsibility for teaching True Believers. He also understood a lot of what he was supposed to teach. But he had not been called as an Evangelist, so he had nothing he could tell me that I needed to hear. Yet there he was, forced to deal with me and a bunch of other people who had never been born again. He did the best he could. He told us to go read what the Evangelist Charles Finney wrote.

Out of desperation, I followed Larry's advice. First, I read Charles Finney's testimony in the January 1992 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®. Then I started reading some of his other writings. That's when I began to see my sins as God sees my sins. As I read what Finney wrote, I remember thinking: "That's me. That's me."

While talking to Larry one day, I realized I had never believed God would forgive me. After seeing my unbelief, I accepted the fact that God would forgive me if I confessed my sins. Then I started confessing my sins to God, and for the first time in my life I realized that I didn't deserve forgiveness. I saw that I wasn't a loser; I was a sinner. I was completely undeserving of salvation because of who I was, not what I did. That's when I could finally understand the concept of God's forgiveness. So for quite a long period of time afterward, I prayed daily, confessing my sins and asking to be saved. This went on for some weeks, and I felt a huge relief at being forgiven. I was still unable to understand why I didn't see a big change in my life. But I thought that if I questioned why that was I would not be believing God had forgiven me. I realize now that Satan uses a variety of things to keep us from believing the Truth. He certainly had me confused. I had heard the Gospel preached when I was a child. Yet I spent my entire life believing Satan's lies.

During September and October of 1994, I was able to clearly see my pride, my selfishness, and my stubbornness in being unwilling to do what I knew I should do. I reviewed everything that had happened in my life to see how those things had affected me. I saw that, in my eyes, the world was supposed to revolve around me. The only thing that mattered was

what I thought—my wants and desires. My parents had raised me to believe that the way my family did things was the only correct way. That meant anyone who did anything differently than the way we did it was doing it the "wrong" way. I saw how, because of that attitude, I had been a detriment to Larry and had hindered him by continually demanding that things be done the way I thought they should be done.

I know now that it must have been frustrating to him to be dragging someone along who wasn't interested in his calling or in knowing the Truth. I was always wanting things and making him miserable by expressing my constant dissatisfaction with the circumstances of my life. Yet when he tried to talk to me about our relationship (and he did quite often), I would withdraw and become defensive because I felt hurt that he didn't "understand" and accept me as I was. The truth is, he did understand me—a whole lot better than I understood myself!

The worst sin I saw in myself was selfishness. I saw that a lot of my other sins were an outgrowth of that one sin. Selfishness was like a catalyst. It drove me into sin. Being selfish meant I could only get what I wanted by being stubborn, demanding, and uncaring for others and their needs. It also meant I had to lie a lot, or at least misrepresent the truth.

During the time that the Holy Spirit was convicting me, my confession of sin always followed the same pattern. I would see my sin and immediately pray for forgiveness. Although I would cry and feel emotionally relieved, I always realized that I was no different afterward than before. I certainly knew nothing had changed inside of me. To tell the truth, I never expected anything to change, at least not in the way it did when I was finally born again. All I was worried about (selfishly) was that I would be saved. I was concerned about me and the fact that I didn't want to go to Hell. Only now I knew that I was completely sinful in God's eyes, and that He hated the sinner I was.

My reason for confessing my sin and asking God's forgiveness was that I wanted to be saved. And after a few weeks of confessing sin, I honestly felt I had been. But I didn't understand the part of the Gospel that talks about how you must accept Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life. So I naturally assumed I had done all I needed to do to be born again. I was not trying to be dishonest when I said I was saved. I just knew that I had confessed my sins and felt forgiven. I

had done what I had heard taught throughout all my years in church, what I had always understood a person needed to do to be born again. Therefore, I assumed I had been born again.

The problem was, I wasn't born again even after I confessed my sins. That was because I had not submitted myself to the lordship of Jesus Christ. The only change I felt after repenting was nothing more than me thinking that I should act a certain way because I had been "born again." So, when I found myself committing the same sins as before, I would tell myself I shouldn't be doing this or that because I was saved. I didn't realize I was now trying to save myself through my own actions! Without the power of the Holy Spirit within me, I was still the same person. Only now I was legalistically trying to make myself into a different person.

I didn't know it at the time, but Larry had been looking for someone that he felt God had actually called as an Evangelist. But he wanted someone who had not seriously distorted the Gospel message. He found just such a man in July of 1995. He took several of us to hear the man explain the message of the cross on August 13.

The Gospel this man preached was a message I had never heard in its totality before! The man made Christ's sacrifice real to me. As I listened to him, I couldn't believe what I was hearing! I became completely ashamed of the life I had led. When he spoke about Jesus dying on the cross for my sins, I saw the reality of that for the first time in my life. I didn't see Christ dying for the sins of the whole world, I saw him dying for my sins. I understood that I was the reason He died.

This man also explained the one part of the Gospel I had never heard anyone explain—that I had to make Jesus Christ the Lord of my life. As he explained how the relationship God demanded was one of employee to boss, or slave to master, I realized I had never submitted myself to Jesus Christ. I hadn't even realized that God wanted, much less required, that type of relationship with His Children. I sat there overwhelmed, seeing for the first time exactly what God required of me for salvation. No one had ever explained this to me before.

After the Evangelist finished speaking, he asked each one of us if we were ready to pray for salvation. Because of an earlier conversation he had with Larry,

however, he assumed I had already been born again. So when it came my turn, he asked me if I wanted to "recommit my life to Christ." I was caught off guard when he asked me that because I had expected him to ask me if I wanted to be born again. I was prepared to say yes to that question. Instead, I said yes, that I wanted to rededicate my life. That was a lie. I now know that God does not respond where there is a lie of any kind. I could not recommit myself to something I had never committed myself to in the first place. What went through my mind was, "This man was called as an Evangelist, so he must know what he is doing." He didn't. And because of that, Satan was able to keep me from being born again that day.

To be completely honest, however, I did have a second opportunity to be born again at that time. After the Evangelist prayed with us, Larry asked each one of us in turn if we were certain that we were born again. He warned us not to accept Satan's imitation but to be sure that we knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that we had been born again. When he asked me if I was certain I had been born again, I said yes. I should have admitted that I was confused. But I still did not understand that I would not have any doubt when I had been born again.

I realize now that Satan was right there, lying to me as he had been all along. The confusion I felt inside should have alerted me to where I stood with God, but I ignored it. I told myself I didn't want to be one of those people I had seen in my grandparents' church as a child. They seemed to go forward every week to be saved or were always requesting prayer. But I know now that if someone has any doubt at all as to whether he has been born again, he hasn't been.

The next night, August 14, Larry confronted me after he heard me say something that told him I had probably not been born again. The Holy Spirit immediately convicted me because I knew I had not spoken up when I should have. Toward morning, I kept seeing myself over and over at the time when Larry asked us if we were sure we had been born again. I knew I had not been certain about my salvation experience, yet I had not spoken up and said so. It was like I was dreaming, and in the dream I was desperately trying to open my mouth but I couldn't. When I finally woke up, I was afraid I had missed my opportunity. All I wanted was to return to the Evangelist and have him pray with me. Larry was asleep, and I didn't want to

wake him, so I paced the floor and worried instead. I wanted to leave as soon as possible, because it would be a four-hour drive. I even called the airlines to find out the cost of a plane ticket on the off-chance that I could fly there.

When Larry got up, we discussed my concerns and made arrangements for someone to drive me down the next day. In spite of Larry's assurances, I wanted to go immediately. What if I waited too long? What if God stopped convicting me? I was terrified that perhaps I had gone one step too far. I remember wringing my hands and being unable to think of anything else. I now know that, through conviction, the Holy Spirit was finally overcoming the lies of Satan.

The wonderful, wonderful news is that I finally became a Child of God on August 16, 1995. God allowed me to hear exactly what I needed to hear in order to respond to His offer of salvation. After I talked with the Evangelist about what had happened a few days before, I prayed again. But I didn't feel any different than before. I was disappointed because I had already asked God to forgive me of my sins, and now I had asked Him to be my Lord and Master. I was willing, even anxious, to do anything and everything He wanted me to do. But I knew that I had not been changed. I also knew that was because I had not heard and believed what I needed to hear.

The Evangelist explained to me again the things that are necessary for one to be born again. But as he was speaking, I heard him say something he had not said before. He said I had to accept God's gift of salvation. That was exactly what I needed to hear! I stopped him mid-sentence and asked if we could pray again. When I prayed this time, I knew that God had been waiting all along for me to accept His gift.

The minute I prayed, accepting salvation, I heard laughter coming out of my mouth. My eyes were suddenly wide open; I was so surprised. I looked up at those who were present, absolutely astounded. I had been praying desperately for salvation, and now I had nothing but joy bubbling up within me. I stopped myself in shock, but then it started again. It wasn't a "Ha! Ha!" kind of laughter. It was more like light, happy bubbles coming out of my mouth. It wasn't something that controlled me, either. I was able to stop it, but then it would start again. It was just a joy I had never known before, coming from deep down within me.

It is hard for me to describe the change that I experienced that day. I knew that I was a new person immediately. Things I had felt before were suddenly gone. I didn't have to think about how I felt or what was going on in my life. The thought that went through my mind while I was laughing was, "He did it!" I could easily have had what I have heard some call "a shouting spell" except it didn't seem like the appropriate time or place. I can understand why the revivals that occurred a century or so ago produced "holy rollers." I was incredibly excited and filled with praise for what God had done in my life. I felt completely free—free from sin, free from fear, and free from all doubt.

As we left for the drive home, the person who had driven me down asked me if I was sure I had been born again. I said, "Yes." He asked me again and I said, "Yes" even louder. He asked me a third time and I said, "Yes, yes, yes!" I felt like shouting it. I was so confident of what had happened that I couldn't wait to get going and do whatever God wanted me to do. The whole way home I was rejoicing in my spirit, praising God for what He had done. It was wonderful to finally know for certain that I was God's Child.

I wish I could describe the miracle of the new birth better, but all I can tell you is this: Don't let anyone talk you into settling for anything less. I know from personal experience that "Christians" in our day are just like they were in the days of Charles Finney. He saw thousands of Pretenders experience the miracle of the new birth. Just like me, they all thought they had been "saved" until they heard the Gospel he preached. Until then, they had never believed the Truth of the Gospel. They had only believed Satan's lie. I realize that most "Christians" today don't have any idea at all of what it means to be born again. I also know that, when God responds to you, you will know it immediately, because it is just like Paul said:

Therefore if any man is in Christ, {he is} a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

I have thought several times since I was born again that the reason God responded to me that day was because I wanted what He had to offer more than I wanted anything else. On August 13, I heard an Evangelist preach the Gospel, and I wanted to be

saved. But did I want that more than anything else? I don't think so. Was I willing to give up everything for it? Evidently not. If it were otherwise, I would have spoken up concerning my confusion. I say this because, since I was born again on August 16, I have wanted to know everything I need to know about what God has said in the Scriptures. I am willing to do anything that I believe God wants me to do. All I ask is that He not let Satan blind me to the Truth and take away the confidence I have in Him.

I do know that I was more than willing to submit to God on the day that I was born again. I would have readily walked the five hundred miles down and back if I could just have the same opportunity to become God's Child that I had three days before. I understood then that God isn't playing games. I finally realized He means exactly what He has said, that He is filled with rage towards sinners and is going to destroy them. And I was fully aware that I had done more than my share of things to flame the fire of His wrath.

My life is completely different now. Just knowing what God has done for me fills me with love for Him. So I don't just say I want to please God, I do. When I am tempted to do something I know that I shouldn't, a verse is right there and I know what God desires. I love it when I need to make a decision and a verse or two of Scripture comes to my mind. There is a real freedom in not looking for anything in this world. I know we will never find satisfaction here anyway.

I can hardly believe God has given me an incredible opportunity to know the Truth so that I can be ready for the final test when the Antichrist appears. That is something I could never have imagined before. For twenty-two years I heard Larry talk about his calling, being born again, and his desire to do what God had called him to do. Yet I could never understand what he saw in the Scriptures that made him so determined to go on year after year, struggling to understand the Truth. Now, when I hear him teach the things he understands in the Scriptures, I am absolutely amazed. It all makes so much sense. And the more he teaches me, the more I see how the message of the Scriptures fits together perfectly.

I realize we are only just beginning to do the things God has called Larry to do. And I know there is a lot more that he must do to put everything together so that it can be available to anyone who wants to hear. I am also confident they will hear because I now know

just how compassionate God really is. If He weren't, why would He have allowed me, of all people, to be born again so that I might hear and understand such absolutely astounding things?

For a long time after I was born again, I kept using the word *amazing* to describe what had happened to me. I was amazed at the change in my life, just as amazed as when I suddenly felt laughter bubbling up out of my mouth. I remember talking to another new Believer about our common experience and saying repeatedly, "All I can say is it is amazing." Then the other night I was reading in Acts, Chapters 2 and 3, about how the early Christians were filled with a sense of awe and amazement at what God was doing among them. I noticed that the words *amazed* and *amazement* were used several times in that passage. I thought to myself, "I know exactly how they felt." I felt the same way when God worked His incredible miracle in me.

When I read things in the Bible now, they speak directly to me. And when I hear Larry teach the things he has been called to teach, I feel like someone who has finally arrived home. I've experienced the indescribable joy of God's immediate answer to prayer. I've also felt the heavy conviction of the Holy Spirit expressing His displeasure when I failed a test. But that has always been followed by the complete freedom of His forgiveness when I realize what I have done and confess my sin.

The praise of God is constantly within me now. I enjoy singing (or listening to) songs that praise Him. Expressing praise through music and prayer helps keep me where I know I should be. It makes everything else around me seem unimportant. I have learned that, if I start to praise God the minute I wake up in the morning, it makes all the difference in the world. So I have my alarm set to wake me with a song of praise. Larry has said that the Lord should be the first thing on our minds in the morning and the last thing on our minds at night. Now I understand what he meant. God is the focus of my attention now. I don't have to struggle to focus on Him because He is always there.

All my life I have ridden an emotional roller coaster. Enjoying myself and being happy used to be my top priority. But the highs were always followed immediately by the lows. I am free from all that now. The unrest has been replaced by a feeling of constant peace and satisfaction. For the first time in my life I am not only willing to face the truth about myself, I want

to know it. If God finds something in me that is displeasing, I welcome His conviction. I am through hiding my head in the sand and pretending that things are fine when they aren't.

While living a life of continual ups and downs, I seldom had any peace inside. I was always looking ahead to the next "fun" time, living for the good feeling I got when I did something I enjoyed. I would often imagine some future event so I could enjoy how great it would be. Of course, when the real thing came along, it never lived up to my expectations. That's when the roller coaster went soaring down another steep incline.

Life with the Holy Spirit is not like that. The craving and churning are gone. I have peace instead. That is an incredibly big change for me. I lived nearly forty-six years with a constant unrest. I couldn't stand quietness, so the radio or television were almost always on. I lived for the evenings, when I could just relax and watch "Late Night with David Letterman." With Dave I could escape from reality completely. This was my time. I told myself I deserved it.

After being born again, I immediately noticed the difference within me. I no longer had to have the television or radio on all the time. I didn't need to be distracted so that I could escape my surroundings. I suddenly found that reading my Bible was tremendously relaxing. I remember laying down at night to read and feeling total contentment. I was amazed! That was certainly a big change from how I felt before! I now have a wonderful freedom to watch something on television because I want to see that particular program, rather than being controlled by it.

I am still a baby in the Lord, but I look forward to maturing. And I know there are a lot of things I still need to learn. One of the things I have learned already is to watch what I say. Like nearly everybody I know, I always found it easy to lie when the truth was unpleasant. Since being born again, I have found that being truthful means I must not only check to make sure that each and every statement I make is true but also to ensure that any implication it gives is true as well. It also means I have to be careful that my actions don't mislead someone. Another thing I've seen is how easy it is to go on believing some lie that I learned from a false teacher in the Church. So I am well aware that I must continually question everything I heard taught before I understood the Truth of the Gospel.

Twenty-three years ago, I received a study Bible as a gift. After I was saved, it bothered me that I had made comments in it because I no longer believed the things I had written. So one of the first things I did was buy a new Bible. I wanted to know that the comments I made were based on the Truth of my new life in Christ rather than the lies I believed before. Knowing that just one lie will lead to sin, I don't want to take a chance on believing something I heard before that isn't true.

I know Satan is waging war against the Spirit of God in this world. It is obvious to me now that he is doing everything he possibly can to make us all believe something that contradicts God's Truth. So I know that diligence on my part is absolutely essential. Yet diligence is not a characteristic I have ever had. Therefore, I am especially wary of getting lax. Wanting things is something else I have always had trouble with. I can see that Satan works hard to slip that in as well. I also know that I must endure testing. But I can see how that is just an opportunity to prove myself faithful to God. I am well aware there is no guarantee that I'll be found a good and faithful servant at the Judgment. However, I know now that all God requires of me is to go on believing the Truth.

There is a battle going on for our souls. In the mercy of God, I was able to see the Truth and switch sides. I am God's Child now, and by His power I will overcome. I'm ashamed of the things I've done in the past, but that is all behind me now. The person who did those things died on August 16, 1995. I hope that this account of my death may help someone else see that they are still standing where I stood. There is so much that remains to be done to publish the Truth for others. I thank God daily that He has allowed me to be involved in His work. I'll be ecstatic when this life is over and I can finally kneel in His presence, praising Him for all He has done for me.

—Bonnie Harper



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: As you know, The Voice of Elijah® recently completed a mailing campaign designed to reach more True Believers with the Truth. As typically happens when we conduct a mailing, we received letters from a variety of individuals shortly thereafter. Some of the letters were filled with a virulent animosity and let us know in no uncertain terms that they didn't care to hear the things we had to say. Others contained the thoughts of those who wanted to "show what they know" while, at the same time, telling us how little we know. Still others were so erratic and incoherent that it was apparent the author was incapable of giving any rational thought to what we had said. Finally, there were letters laced with questions and observations. Some of these were cynical in nature, but some were quite sincere. If you don't mind, I'd like to ask you a few questions regarding these letters and the people who wrote them.

First, would you talk a little bit about the psychological makeup of those individuals who write us venomous, hostile letters after they receive our mailer? If they totally disagree with what we say, why don't they just throw our mailer in the trash and be done with it? What triggers the hostility in them that compels them to write a nasty letter?

Elijah: I'm not a psychiatrist. I am, at best, an arm-chair psychologist. By that I mean I am familiar with

the behavioral training concepts of Skinner and the basic technique involved in Rogerian therapy. But that's about all I remember from my psychology and counseling classes. So when it comes to sorting out what drives people to do irrational things, all I can do is sit back and listen. However, the Prophet Isaiah made some interesting comments concerning those who find it impossible to "live and let live." He said this:

*But the wicked are like the tossing sea,
For it cannot be quiet,
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.
"There is no peace," says my God, "for the wicked."
(Isaiah 57:20-21)*

I think I can safely leave it at that. If someone can't refrain from tossing up "refuse and mud," it is only because they are one of those whom Isaiah calls "the wicked." All they need to do to change their circumstances, however, is repent and believe the Gospel. Then they would no longer be one of "the Wicked." They would be one of those the Scriptures call "the Righteous." Listen to what the messenger of the Lord told the Prophet Daniel about the situation these two groups of people would face here at the End:

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase." Then I, Daniel, looked and behold, two others were standing, one on this bank of the river, and the other on that bank of the river. And one said to the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, "How long {will it be} until the end of {these} wonders?" And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who

lives forever that it would be for a time, times, and half {a time;} and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these {events} will be completed. As for me, I heard but could not understand; so I said, "My lord, what {will be} the outcome of these {events?}" And he said, "Go {your way,} Daniel, for {these} words are concealed and sealed up until the end time. Many will be purged, purified and refined; but the wicked will act wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand, but those who have insight will understand."

(Daniel 12:1-10)

One could make the case that "none of the wicked will understand" because they are too busy tossing up "refuse and mud." That analysis is a little too simplistic, but it is obvious these folks have little interest in what anyone else has to say. To tell you the Truth, however, I have little interest in what they have to say. I have seen so many incredible things fall into place in the Scriptures over the past year that the activities of "the Wicked" don't concern me much anymore. Let them do what they will. Come Hell or high water, God is going to accomplish what He set out to accomplish when He created Heaven and Earth.

Mankind has long since forgotten what Moses, the Prophets, Jesus Christ, and the Apostles told them about God's plans. But God hasn't, and He fully intends to do exactly what He said He would do. So people here at the End can believe the things He has craftily hidden in the Scriptures if they care to, or they can disbelieve them if they dare to, because those are the only two things that anyone can do. I like what the psalmist said in that regard:

*Why are the nations in an uproar,
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed:
"Let us tear their fetters apart,
And cast away their cords from us!"
He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury:
"But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.*

*I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, 'Thou art My Son,
Today I have begotten Thee.
Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as
Thine inheritance,
And the {very} ends of the earth as Thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.'"
(Psalm 2:1-9)*

I quoted that psalm only to mock the stupidity of those "Christians" who think they already understand what the psalmist is saying. I could see the *parabolic imagery* in that psalm nearly twenty years ago, but I could never understand the author's train of thought or what he was *talking about* until just this past year. I realize now that he is speaking *parabolically* about the same "time of distress" that Daniel mentions in Daniel 12:1. So I suggest you get ready for the terror God has planned because it is already on its way. And only "those who have insight will understand."

Editor: Would you also comment on the people who write to us because they want to "show what they know"? These people are not only eager to strut their great "knowledge," some of them evidently want to engage us in debate. They encourage us to write back and comment on what they said in their letters. What's your take on this type of individual?

Elijah: The Apostle Paul succinctly stated the case concerning contentious, argumentative people in his first letter to Timothy. Listen to what he said:

*As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than {furthering} the administration of God which is by faith. But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. For some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.
(1 Timothy 1:3-7)*

That passage makes me chuckle every time I read it. I especially like to read the part where Paul says “some men, straying from these things, have turned aside to fruitless discussion, wanting to be teachers of the Law, even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.” It invariably makes me think about all the Pretenders who can quote Scripture like well-trained parrots and even cite chapter and verse without missing a beat. They have no idea at all that Moses and the Prophets used Hebrew idioms and *mythological images* to speak *parabolically* concerning Jesus Christ.

Perhaps I react the way I do because of all the “fruitless discussion” I endured while I was still struggling to understand my calling, but I’m sure that’s only part of it. I have an intense yearning to see the Church be what God intended it to be, and I know that the reason it isn’t what God intended is because idiots who have not been called to teach get up in front of others and teach “even though they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions.”

I realize that when the Early Church lost *The Apostolic Teaching*, Church leaders had little recourse but to go back to what Paul calls “speculation” and “fruitless discussion.” And the leaders of the Church have been doing that ever since. However, since Paul warned us not to argue over the *meaning* of the Scriptures, I have no desire to engage in their idiocy. But you specifically asked me my “take” on this particular type of individual. I “take” him to be the ignorant individual that he is. If he had ever been born again, he would already know that a relationship to God is not based on anything he came up with on his own. It is based on his repenting of his sins because he *received* the Truth of the Gospel from a representative of the Church. In that regard, the Apostle Paul has already put the matter much more succinctly than I ever could:

But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, “DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, ‘WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?’ (that is, to bring Christ down), or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” But what does it say? “THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart”—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus {as} Lord, and believe in

your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, “WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.” For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same {Lord} is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for “WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!” However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, “LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?” So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

(Romans 10:6–17)

The lamebrains among us ignore the fact that Paul says we must hear “the word of Christ” from a messenger that God has sent before we can be saved. They think they can just read the Bible and figure out what they need to know to be saved on their own. They would do well to read the account of the Ethiopian eunuch [Editor: Acts 8:26–39]. He obviously understood a whole lot more than they do. He knew he couldn’t figure anything out on his own. Neither can any other unbeliever. That’s why the Spirit of God put Philip on the Orient Express and sent him down to the desert to talk to the eunuch. There was no other way the fellow could be saved.

The issue of salvation being possible only after one hears the Gospel from a legitimate representative of God’s Church brings to mind another characteristic of people who like to “show what they know.” Those people end up starting cults. If it weren’t for the despicable things they do to other people, such imbeciles would be an amusement. As it is, their confidence in the lies they believe provides an ideal opportunity for Satan to confuse people.

Speaking of cults and amusing things, I am amused to hear people assail “the Church” or *talk about* the need to “come out of the Church” because it is so fouled up. Although withdrawing from an organization that is obviously corrupted beyond measure may seem like a

pious thing to do, where do these folks think they are going to go? Do they plan to start their own little "Church," hoping they will thereby be more acceptable to God? Furthermore, when they "come out of the Church," what are they going to do with all the information they *received* from the Church? Are they going to leave the Gospel message behind? If they don't, they haven't actually "come out of the Church." They have merely changed the position of a few physical bodies. The only way for anyone to "come out of the Church" is to reject the Gospel. Then they will no longer be a part of the Church, and they will not be saved.

People who rail against the Church fail to understand the Church is not the problem. The Church is God's Church. It always has been God's Church, and it always will be God's Church. And God is going to accomplish in and through His Church exactly what He has always intended. The major problem with the Church today is the same problem the Church has had since it lost *The Apostolic Teaching*: Pretenders have taken up roost in the Church so that Satan can use them to deceive True Believers. Now those folks don't know it, but God has special plans for them over the next several years. He is eventually going to separate them from His Church. But unfortunately, they won't understand how He is going to do that until it is too late for them to do anything about it.

Editor: I also mentioned the letters we get from individuals who ask cynical questions or make snide comments that suggest they don't really believe the Bible is without error. They like to emphasize the "contradictions" that exist in the Bible. For example, someone mentioned the "contradiction" between 2 Kings 2:11 where Elijah "went up by a whirlwind to heaven" and John 3:13 where Jesus said, "No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven." You've already explained things on The Next Step tapes that tell me how that apparent contradiction can be resolved. But the writer's point is that these two passages appear to contradict one another. Therefore, he contends the Bible is not without error. I know you have specific thoughts related to the apparent contradictions that exist in Scripture. Would you mind relating those thoughts to our readers?

Elijah: Not at all. But since I don't yet have access to the totality of the seven messages God has hidden in

the Hebrew Scriptures, I can't tell you whether or not the Scriptures contain any contradictions. Actually, I'm just being facetious. It amuses me to hear "learned" scholars *talk about* the contradictions they see in the Scriptures when they have no understanding of the message of the Scriptures in the first place.

The Early Church Father Tertullian hit the nail on the head when he argued, like the lawyer he was, that the unbeliever's view of the Scriptures would not even be admitted as evidence in a Roman court of law. His point was somewhat (although not exactly) the same as saying that courts today can only accept the evidence of "expert witnesses." He was merely saying that you have to know what you are *talking about* before you start offering opinions. You can get some idea of what Tertullian *meant* if you consider what would happen if we allowed toddlers to testify as "expert witnesses" in product liability cases.

When I think about all the ignorant explanations of the Scriptures that the uninformed teach the unsuspecting, I'm always reminded of how Paul described the Last Days:

But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Timothy 3:1-7)

You can't fully appreciate what Paul said about people "always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" until you understand the Truth. Then you realize that the "contradictions" people point out are actually nothing more than a mirage that hovers over the surface of the text because Satan has lied and fools have believed him.

Whenever I encounter anything stated in the Scriptures that seems to contradict something else stated in the Scriptures, my assumption is I don't yet understand everything I need to understand about

the message of the Scriptures. In other words, I assume I am still believing a lie of Satan that prevents me from seeing God's Truth. Although I can't always immediately see through Satan's lie, I, nonetheless, keep the verse I have seen in mind because I realize Satan saw something in it important enough that he felt he had to lie and confuse people. I didn't actually come up with that practice on my own. I modified a technique recommended by the Academic Dean of the seminary I attended over twenty years ago. But his advice has proven to be amazingly effective. It is surprising to me, even after all these years, how many seemingly contradictory things in the Scriptures can suddenly come together when another piece of the puzzle falls into place.

As I recently explained to those who are participating in The Next Step program, I have known for well over fifteen years that in the Pentateuch, Moses refers to Jesus Christ as "the Man." But I could never understand why he did that. And I knew translators weren't even aware of what he was doing because they had translated the phrase all sorts of ways. I knew there had to be a lie of Satan that prevented me from seeing why Moses spoke of Jesus Christ that way, but I had no idea what that lie was. Finally, a year ago last January, I understood the one passage of Scripture that told me why Moses did what he did. Sure enough, an incredible Truth lay concealed behind Satan's lie. It just so happened that, in this case, the lie Satan has everyone believing is an absolute doozy.

Editor: *The apparent contradictions in Scripture are one thing, but the individual who wrote us about "contradictions" also wrote this:*

Why, if God took such pains to preserve an inerrant text for posterity, did the Holy Spirit not provide for the preservation of original copies of the Gospels? The oldest surviving copies of the Gospels date from about 175 years after the death of Jesus, and no two copies are precisely alike. All hand-made {sic} manuscripts have almost always been "corrected" here and there, often by more than one hand.... So we will never be able to claim certain knowledge of exactly what the original text of any biblical writing was.

Can you give us a little history lesson on the origin of the Bible as we know it today, and tell us what you know about the "original" manuscripts that the Bible is based upon? How old are these various manuscripts? Do they sometimes vary slightly in what they say? [Verses like Matt. 18:11; 23:14; Mark 7:16; 9:44, 46; 15:28 (and others) suggest that they do.] Do any of these slight variations really make any difference in the meaning of the biblical text? Don't variations in the manuscripts present more of a problem with the New Testament writings than with the Old? And if so, why?

Elijah: You asked me earlier about people who like to "show what they know." Well, this person is an excellent example. And, as those people so often do, he has not so much shown what he knows as what he doesn't know. His question is the rhetorical introduction of an idiot who is going to tell you something about which he knows next to nothing. His statements concerning the Gospels have some merit. But to put it mildly, he has revealed his ignorance in extrapolating from that to challenge the present condition of the entire biblical text.

Any scholar actively working in the area of textual criticism can tell you the vast majority of the biblical text shows little evidence of any kind of corruption. That's why Satan's agents moved out of that area long ago and created a whole new field of study called "literary criticism." Then they went on from there to do what used to be called "redaction criticism." I have no idea what they call such nonsense today. I call it goofiness merely because only goofy people engage in it. The folks doing literary criticism and redaction criticism are the ones engaged in the idiotic "quest for the historical Jesus" that the media goes out of their way to hype every year about this time. These pseudoscholars settled on the Gospels and the Book of Acts because that's the part of Scripture where most of the "significant" variations occur.

Unfortunately, the vacuum chamber that sits between the ears of each and every "scholar" engaged in the "quest for the historical Jesus" has accumulated quite a tidy sum of trash in recent years. Knowing nothing whatsoever about the message of the Scriptures, they, nevertheless, find it immensely gratifying to publish lengthy treatises on the Man that Moses *parabolically* described in perfect detail some 1500 years before He was even born.

But you asked me for a “little history lesson” on the transmission of the biblical text. To be perfectly honest, it has been so long since I’ve done any study in the area of textual criticism that I’ve probably forgotten more than I ever knew in the first place. But I’ll tell you what I can. I assume your readers can accept the fact that Moses wrote the first book of the Bible some 3500 years ago, and the Apostle John wrote the last book of the Bible nearly 2000 years ago. The history of how those and all the other books of the Bible were collected and *handed down* to us is the “little history” you asked for.

That’s not a little;

That’s a lot.

But I’ll talk about the middle;

‘Cause that’s all I’ve got.

Any book, even a papyrus scroll, wears out when you use it; so it didn’t take ancient folks long to realize they had to make a new copy of the Scriptures before the old one became unreadable. However, since they didn’t have copy machines back then, they had to make copies by hand. Anybody who has ever written or typed a copy of anything can tell you how easy it is to make a mistake and leave something out. And anyone who has ever read a text with obvious errors is familiar with the urge to correct bad grammar and poor spelling.

My point is, when the Scriptures were copied, things sometimes got left out that should have been put in, and things got put in that should have been left out. That happened more frequently in the Gospels and the Book of Acts than in other parts of the Scriptures. But all of Scripture is affected to one degree or another. So we have thousands of manuscripts of the Bible today, and no two of those manuscripts have exactly the same contents. That’s why some scholars devote their entire life to an area of study known as “textual criticism.” They study all the extant manuscripts and “criticize” the text of the Scriptures.

First of all, let me tell you this: Textual criticism is a highly specialized discipline and produces some tremendously helpful study aids to assist anyone who is interested in the Truth. For example, I have in my library a book titled *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* by Bruce M. Metzger. It is a compendium of 2040 of the most significant variant readings that

occur in the various manuscripts of the Greek New Testament. However, those 2040 variant readings include 600 that were not significant enough to be included in the footnotes to the third edition of the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament.

Therefore, the remaining 1440 variant readings that the committee did include in the footnotes to their published Greek text are, I assume, the only ones where a substantial change in *meaning* would result if one variant reading were accepted over another. That averages out to be less than six significant variant readings for each of the 259 chapters in the New Testament. However, a quarter to a third of the 2040 variant readings Metzger lists in his commentary occur in the Book of Acts. That is important only because that book is a historical book, not a doctrinal one as is every one of the epistles of Paul.

Besides all that, I’ve looked at the variant readings the committee thought were the most significant. Most of the time they involve such an unimportant change in *meaning* as to be laughable. That indicates to me that the variant readings the committee left out of their publication must be completely insignificant. So I know for a fact that your “show what he knows” fellow is way off base. If he had talked to a scholar of any note, he would not have even bothered writing. Scholars working in the field agree that although the variant readings in the Greek manuscripts of the New Testament create some theological questions that may never be answered, none of them have any impact at all on the substance of Christian doctrine.

Now I’ve rambled on for quite awhile now, and I still don’t feel I’ve actually gotten into your “little history lesson.” So let me tell you what I can about the transmission of the biblical text. As you suggested in your question, the Hebrew text has fewer variant readings than the Greek New Testament. However, the information it contains is also more valuable, so I’ll *talk about* it.

I am not completely certain as to the details of everything I’m going to tell you right now because I haven’t had the time to look into it as much as I would like. But I do know that up to the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, the priests of Israel had what appears to have been an undisputed responsibility for making sure the sons of Israel observed the religious rituals God had given Moses. It is only logical that their responsibility included making new copies of the

Scriptures. So at least some of the priests would have been trained as scribes. The Hebrew Scriptures clearly tell us Ezra was just such a priest [Editor: Ezra 7:6, 11, 12, 21]. My point is that as long as the Scriptures were in the sole possession of the priesthood, it seems highly unlikely that they would have been exposed to any kind of corruption caused by gross negligence or intentional distortion.

As the Jewish Rabbis pointed out long ago, the word *scribe* comes from a Hebrew root that *means* "to count." That's because the scribes did a lot of counting. They counted letters. They counted words. They counted duplicate passages. They even counted the number of times a certain form of a word occurred in the Hebrew text! They protected the entire text of Scripture by counting; but they especially protected the *Torah*, which is made up of the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures, what we Christians call the Pentateuch.

Around 170 B.C., however, the priests of Israel began to fight among themselves over who should be the High Priest. Finally, one of them asked Antiochus Epiphanes to come up to Jerusalem to help him enforce his claim as High Priest. When Antiochus intervened on behalf of one side against the other, the more religious Jews rebelled against him; and Israel became an independent state.

When the Jews began to rebel, Antiochus set out to destroy Judaism. He realized that to do that he had to get rid of the Scriptures. So he destroyed every copy he could find in the Temple. But there were obviously a few copies that eluded him. So he made it a capital crime for anyone to even have a copy in his possession. Now I ask you: Who do you suppose would have tried to protect and preserve the Scriptures? You got it! The priests! To be more specific, the priestly scribes who made copies of the scrolls! That's why the scribes sided with the Maccabees in their revolt against Antiochus.

That much of the "little history" of the Hebrew Scriptures is fairly clear. What happened to the text of the Scriptures immediately after the Maccabean revolt is not quite as clear. However, that has no real importance in this regard because we have evidence that tells us the text of the Hebrew Scriptures in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes was essentially the same as the text we have today. I'm sure you have heard about the Dead Sea Scrolls. Well, scholars have

determined that some of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written at about the time of the Maccabean revolt. So some of the sectarians who lived at Qumran may well have been scribes involved in the Jewish struggle to preserve the text of Scripture. I don't know that to be a fact. I do know that some of the Dead Sea Scrolls contain portions of the Scriptures. In fact, large segments of the Books of Exodus, Leviticus, Samuel, Isaiah, and Habakkuk are still in readable condition. Therefore, the Dead Sea Scrolls provide an excellent witness concerning the state of the biblical text as it existed at that time.

Guess what? Scholars prefer not to talk in terms of "variant readings" in the Old Testament texts found at Qumran. Instead, they *talk about* "textual divergence." Why do they do that? Because most of the "divergences" in the Dead Sea Scrolls involve single letters being added to the text to clarify *meaning*. For example, in one of the Isaiah scrolls a copyist consistently added a consonant that was *meant* to indicate the presence of a specific vowel. That hardly qualifies those instances as "variant readings" since the present text of Hebrew Scriptures contains examples of the same defective and fully written forms.

However, there are some places where the Dead Sea Scrolls provide grounds for changing the text of the Hebrew Scriptures *handed down* to us by the Jewish Massorettes. For example, the Revised Standard Version changed its translation of the Book of Isaiah in thirteen places strictly on the basis of the Dead Sea Scrolls. That's not anything greatly earth-shaking, but it does reveal that the Hebrew text we got from the Massorettes may not be as pristine as it could be.

It is important for True Believers to realize, however, that the only part of the Hebrew Scriptures that one needs in order to be able to understand *The Teaching* is the *Torah*. The rest of the biblical text is merely a historical description of how God accomplished the things He told Moses He was going to do. And the text of the *Torah* has been protected to one degree or another since the time of Moses, first by the priestly scribes who made copies of it in the Temple, and then by the Jewish Massorettes after the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70.

It is highly unlikely that a huge number of errors would be able to creep into the Hebrew text as long as a professional class of people was committed to its protection. And the Jewish scribes were certainly just

as professional as they were committed. The historical evidence indicates the Jews eventually reached a state in which protection of the text of Scripture became an obsession. The important thing to note, however, is that the Jews not only protected the text of Scripture during the Intertestamental Period, they continued to protect it long after the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is something for which True Believers living here at the End of the Age owe them a tremendous debt of gratitude. The wrath of God may burn brightly against them because they rejected the Messiah Jesus Christ. That does not *mean* He has not continued to use them in somewhat the same way He used the Church after she turned away from His Truth.

I feel like I still haven't actually given you the "little history" you asked for. There is so much that could be said that I can't tell you because I am uncertain of the facts. If your readers are interested, they should be able to find books on the subject in a theological library. They need to check the credentials of anyone they read, however. There are more "loose cannons" putting their views in print today than ever before. Fools who have never done an ounce of homework have a variety of opinions on every topic. As far as the transmission of the Greek New Testament is concerned, anything Bruce Metzger has written should be reliable. He wrote a book titled *The Text of the New Testament* nearly thirty years ago. I doubt it is still in print, but it should still be in theological libraries.

Editor: While we're talking about things related to Church history, I might as well bring up another issue which I believe needs to be addressed. The question relates primarily to Martin Luther, but to a lesser degree it applies to other Protestant Reformers as well. In the mailers we send out for our mailing campaigns, we speak of Martin Luther as one who was "called" by God to "restore" the doctrine of salvation by faith. Several individuals who received our mailer took umbrage with that and wrote to ask how any man could write the kind of hateful, antisemitic things Martin Luther did about the Jews and still be viewed as a man "called" by God. I know you don't look at individuals through "rose-colored glasses," so what's your take on Martin Luther? Why do you see him as a man "called" by God? How do you explain his attitude toward the Jews? How do you explain the fact that

many Reformers turned a "blind eye" to atrocities being committed by their own kind?

Elijah: That mailer is based on things I said in *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar. I made that statement in that seminar, which is one reason why I hesitate to speak off the cuff anymore. I edited the mailer, and I was supposed to catch anything in it that misrepresents what I actually believe. In this case, I failed. If I have ever stated flatly in one of the articles I have written for the newsletter that Martin Luther was called of God, I made a mistake. I erred not in saying he was called when he actually wasn't, but in making the statement in the first place. What I have tried to do in print is say things like, "Martin Luther was *apparently* called of God," or "John Calvin *seems to have been* called of God."

My contractual agreement with *The Voice of Elijah*® makes me responsible for the accuracy of everything that goes out. So it bothers me that I saw that statement and didn't change it. I can still recollect the point at which I chose to believe the lie of Satan that since I was not the one making the statement, I was not responsible for its accuracy. That's why I left it unchanged. I didn't realize at the time I had made the statement myself in the seminar. I assume the issue is coming up now because I need to be reminded that I have to be more careful how I state things.

I am not aware of anything that convinces me beyond all doubt that Martin Luther was called of God. But I would have to say the same thing about John Wesley, Charles Finney, and Billy Graham. The fact that I don't know God called these men doesn't *mean* He didn't. It merely *means* I cannot truthfully state that I know they were called.

Now, as to the issue of how a man called of God could act the way Martin Luther acted toward the Jews... I don't know how Martin Luther acted, but I'll take their word for it that he acted the way they say he did. It seems credible because I know how John Calvin acted in regard to the execution of Anabaptists. But Luther's actions in that regard don't amount to a hill of beans insofar as determining whether or not he was called of God. The only thing that matters is what he actually accomplished for God.

The folks who wrote you that letter obviously haven't read Paul's description of how he confronted the Apostle Peter at Antioch when Peter started doing

exactly the same kind of thing that James warns us not to do [Editor: Gal. 2:11–21; James 2:1–9]. Do the Apostle Peter's actions and attitude *mean* he was not called of God? I don't think so. Furthermore, I doubt the self-righteous dirt-diggers who assail Martin Luther have ever noticed that the Scriptures plainly describe an occasion on which a Prophet of God lied and thereby got his newfound friend killed [Editor: 1 Kin. 13]. Does that *mean* that Prophet had not been called? I don't think so. And unless you want to end up looking like an idiot at the Judgment, you should not either. The text plainly tells you he was.

I have to tell you that ignorant people who start from an ignorant premise will always come to an ignorant conclusion. In their case, it is almost a foregone conclusion. What we don't know will always show us to be an asinine dolt when the Truth finally comes out. That has never been more true than here at the End because the Truth that God has hidden in the Scriptures is finally going to come out, no matter what Satan does to discredit it. Yet fools, being what they are, will go rushing headlong into Hell, all the while wondering why lamebrains like you and I don't see things the way they do.

Was Martin Luther called of God? I don't know. But do his personal actions have any bearing on the issue of whether or not he was called of God? None whatsoever. His personal actions relate only to his own salvation. That's because we are all going to be judged on the basis of our actions. I didn't say that. The Apostle Paul did [Editor: Rom. 2:5–8]. So, if Martin Luther, because of ignorance, held a hatred for the Jews, he may well suffer the pains of Hell because of his ignorance. That says nothing at all about whether or not God called him and used him to accomplish His Own divine purpose. Furthermore, if the idiots who asked that asinine question can't see through their own ignorance, they will suffer right along with Martin Luther, provided he did things worthy of death.

Editor: Your statement that the Truth God has hidden in the Scriptures is finally going to come out here at the End in spite of everything that Satan can do to discredit it leads into this next question. We recently received a letter from a prisoner who has apparently been given a false impression of our ministry. He says several other prisoners "are making your organization out to be a cult and

they say all your information is secret and you have to do certain things to get the information and that they can only give it out to those that they choose as special people and are willing to follow them." This individual goes on to say that this sounded "fishy" to him, which is why he wrote to us asking for clarification and information. Would you respond to this person's concern and clarify the issue regarding the "secret" aspects of our ministry?

Elijah: If people are indeed doing what this fellow claims, I am amazed at Satan's stupidity. I told you several years ago that he would try to smear us with the "cult" label. [Editor: See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1992.] It may well be he is already well on his way. But if so, it is only because he has not yet understood what God has called me to do. Not knowing what God has planned, he has assumed all along that the "cult" label would work in his favor. It won't. But he's too dumb to understand that.

Let me explain what God has called me to do. Then maybe you will better understand how Satan is being a dolt by driving people to do stupid things in his effort to discredit the Truth. And perhaps Satan will understand just how big a fool he has been. I have been called to publish the Truth. Now did I say, "publish the Truth and distribute it only to certain people"? No. I said, "publish the Truth." Nothing more. The totality of God's Truth will eventually be available to anyone who wants to hear it.

However, I am planning to accomplish my calling according to God's timetable, and in a variety of ways. Every one of those ways will require funding to make it happen. So somebody is going to have to put up the funding necessary for me to publish the things I understand. I certainly don't have the resources necessary to do that all by myself.

To this point in time, the contributors to *The Voice of Elijah*® have been providing the money required to publish the things I produce. However, there are three entirely different groups of contributors contributing money to *The Voice of Elijah*®. Therefore, I provide information to these contributors on three different levels. The subscribers to the newsletter contribute \$24 annually and receive *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletter quarterly. Monthly Contributors contribute at least \$25 monthly and receive both *The Voice of Elijah*® and *The Voice of Elijah*® Update. Those who participate in The Next Step program contribute at

least \$200 monthly and receive even more information each month.

Is any of that information secret? None whatsoever. Those who contribute at these three levels are well aware of what I have written and recorded. However, those who contribute yearly don't receive the same amount of information as those who contribute monthly. So I guess the additional information those folks receive is in some sense "secret" as far as others are concerned. But others could contribute at a higher level if they chose to. Then the information would not be "secret." However, it is their choice as to what information they have available to them. My point is, *The Voice of Elijah*[®] does not select people. They select themselves.

Now I have just answered the question as to whether any of the information I provide is "secret." It is not. But the better question is, "Can the participants in The Next Step program share with others the information they receive on audio and videotape?" The answer is, "No, they cannot, at least not without proving themselves liars." I require everyone who participates in The Next Step program to sign a Non-disclosure Agreement that states they will not reveal to others the things I teach on those tapes. So all those folks have told me they will not disclose that information to anyone outside of their immediate family.

But the Non-disclosure Agreement has nothing to do with any information being "secret." I have told The Next Step participants all along that I am not going to explain any deep, dark secret to them that others cannot hear. I have also told them that everything I teach on those tapes will eventually be published in book form and made available to anyone who is interested in reading it.

So why do I require participants in The Next Step to sign a Non-disclosure Agreement? Well, there are a variety of reasons for that. I explain my primary reason in a letter I send out to everyone who participates in the program. As I state in that letter, I do not feel confident that I can prove that the things I explain on The Next Step tapes originated with me until I have published them in book form. My reason for concern lies in the fact that I know Satan is going to try to discredit the Truth in any way he can. He is evidently already using the "cultic" approach. So I assume he will eventually try to show that the concepts I teach did not actually originate with me but with someone else.

I'm certain that Satan is going to use lamebrains to argue that God has done nothing unique in hiding the Truth in the Scriptures. I say that because Isaiah essentially says as much in statements he makes concerning our generation. However, after seeing what Moses has said about "The Man," I seriously doubt that Satan can let a whole lot of the cat out of the bag himself without seriously jeopardizing the lies he is seeking to maintain. I don't know all that Satan intends to do, however, so I have to establish safeguards wherever I can. That's what the Non-disclosure Agreement is for.

There is, however, another reason why I do not want people disclosing the things I teach on The Next Step tapes. I explain things a bit too haphazardly on those tapes. I mention a few things in one place and a few related things in another. I intend to eventually bring all those things together in a book that explains how everything fits together. There is, after all, a reason why God gave the written Scriptures along with the *oral tradition* he gave Moses. Both have a specific place and a specific purpose. The same holds true for my explanation of the Truth here at the End.

I intend to back up everything I teach on videotape with a coherent written explanation. But until I can produce that coherent written explanation, the things I teach verbally are going to remain exactly what they are right now. They are going to remain reserved for the ears of those who are willing to make a substantial monthly contribution so that everything I teach can eventually be made available to everyone. In reality, however, the issue of who knows what and when they know it is exactly the same old issue it always has been whenever God is involved. It's an issue of timing. It is part of His plan that some folks know things now, and some folks know things later. But, like I said before, I don't select the people who know things now. They select themselves. And there is nothing "secret" now that will not be made known eventually. I didn't say that. Jesus did:

"Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, in order that those who come in may see the light. For nothing is hidden that shall not become evident, nor {anything} secret that shall not be known and come to light. Therefore take care how you listen; for whoever has, to him shall {more} be given;

and whoever does not have, even what he thinks he has shall be taken away from him.”
(Luke 8:16–18)

He was *talking about “The Light” of His Teaching* and the fact that, shortly before the Judgment, God will make known the standard by which we will all be judged. But that’s another matter. Let me *talk specifically about* the situation the prisoner mentioned in his letter. I know of only three prisoners in that particular prison who receive information from *The Voice of Elijah*®. There may be more. I’m just saying those are the only ones I am aware of. Those prisoners certainly weren’t selected in any way. The only thing they had to do was write and ask for the information provided by *The Voice of Elijah*®.

As I understand it, the prisoner who wrote the letter you mentioned automatically received a free subscription to the newsletter. If he wants more information, all he has to do is ask. He certainly doesn’t have to go through some selection process or follow some “cultic” representative around, bowing and scraping, hoping to be tossed a few tidbits. All of *The Voice of Elijah*® materials are free to prisoners.

I have been told that the prisoners at that particular facility are not supposed to share personal items like books and newsletters with others in the first place. If that is the case, anyone who is sharing materials they received from *The Voice of Elijah*® obviously has no regard for authority. However, if they are sharing with some and not with others, they remind me of the idiots Paul mentions in his Epistle to the Galatians:

They eagerly seek you, not commendably, but they wish to shut you out, in order that you may seek them.
(Galatians 4:17)

There are other possibilities in this regard that I find informative. Most of the prisoners at that facility can’t have audio cassette players. However, a few of them can. A couple of years ago, one of the prisoners with greater privileges volunteered to transcribe *The Way, The Truth, The Life* tapes so The Elijah Project could publish them in printed form. He transcribed the first three tapes and, I assume, has a printed copy of his transcription. Perhaps that is the “secret” information your prisoner had in mind. However, nobody ever told the prisoner who transcribed those tapes that

he could not share that information with others. *The Way, The Truth, The Life* tapes are already available without cost to any prisoner who has an audiotape player, so why would his transcription contain any “secret” information?

The next part of this story gets a bit more interesting, and it may show just how stupid Satan can be. After The Next Step program began, two prisoners at that facility requested permission to participate. Since my primary concern in that regard has always been the “secrecy” required by the Non-disclosure Agreement, The Elijah Project waived the \$200 per month contribution requirement. The two men were only required to sign the Non-disclosure Agreement before receiving transcripts of the tapes. After a few months, however, an incident occurred that suggested perhaps one or the other of them was sharing The Next Step information with others. Therefore, I informed the two men they could not continue to receive transcripts of those tapes. They still have transcripts of the first few tapes, so perhaps that is the “secret” information to which your prisoner refers. If it is, it certainly isn’t supposed to be used for cultic recruiting. The Non-disclosure Agreement they signed prohibits sharing that information with anyone outside of their immediate family.

In any case, if the activity mentioned by the prisoner who wrote is actually occurring as he described it, it certainly doesn’t involve any “secret” information that someone has been told they can share only with selected people. Satan is just being stupid. Satan will be Satan, and Satan will always be stupid.

Let me say one more thing about *The Voice of Elijah*® being a “cult” and me being a “cult leader.” I realized several years ago that Satan would try to make the “cult” label stick. And it will stick in the addled brains of folks who don’t care enough about the Truth to bother searching out the facts for themselves. However, I am not overly concerned about what people think about me or my calling. Let them believe Satan’s lie if they are that stupid. If some fool is moronic enough to believe that I am some wild-eyed “cult leader” just because I don’t teach the same “pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by” pabulum they hear taught by some in the Church, they deserve their fate.

The Truth is, I don’t have time to spend dealing with morons who want to follow me around, waiting for me to tell them what to do and how to do it. And that is exactly the way I view cults and the idiotic

people who join them. Those people are not looking for Truth. They are looking for some way to avoid responsibility for their own actions by letting someone else tell them what to do. The Lord taught me that by making me deal with Pretenders for several years before He let me see how rock-solid True Believers are in what they already believe and yet how positively they respond to more of the Truth.

The massive amount of work I have sitting on my desk right now tells me I am going to be spending ten to twelve hours a day in my claustrophobia-inducing study for several years to come. That doesn't leave me a whole lot of free time to "lead" anybody anywhere. So Satan may as well take his "cultic" approach and throw it out the window. God is already way ahead of him on that one.

Editor: I don't know if you want to answer this last question, but I'd like to ask you something specific about your calling. I know that God has recently impressed upon you that, rather than hanging back, you need to get out on the "front line" and face the "slings and arrows" that are being, or will be, thrown your way by unbelievers. Would you elaborate on why you have tended to hang back to this point and what you intend to do to change that?

Elijah: I hesitate to *talk about* that, but only because I'm not exactly sure what, if anything, I need to do differently. I've already been doing what I can to stir up anger in the unbelievers who read what I write. That's part of what I've been called to do. So, in that respect, I guess I'm already "out on the front line." But you are referring to one of those little "spiritual" experiences every true Child of God has from time to time. It's nothing more than the Spirit impressing on us the need to deal with an area of our life where we already know we have a problem.

In my case, it just so happens I have, for as long as I can remember, suffered from what I call "Saul's Syndrome." I'm referring to King Saul and his tendency to hang back and let somebody else take the lead. Then when he did take the lead, he didn't have sense enough to act within the limits Samuel had given him. That just about describes me to a "T." I didn't choose to do what I'm doing; God called me to it. If there were any way I could get out of doing it without displeasing God, I would be gone in a

minute. I don't look forward to facing the hostility and hatred that I know Pretenders in the Church are going to focus on me when they hear the totality of the message I have to *deliver*.

My problem used to be an inability to accept the fact that, since God had called me, I had no choice in the matter. So, for a long time I dillydallied around, complaining to myself that I didn't want to do what God had called me to do. That just made me miserable. Then, not too long after I finally began to see the full depth of the Truth that is hidden in the Scriptures and I honestly tried to do what I felt God had called me to do, I fell for Satan's ruse and neglected to do certain things I already knew I should do. Now, by the grace of God, I'm just coming out of that stage in my life, and I realize I still haven't completely rid myself of "Saul's Syndrome." But I will. Believe me, I will.

To be quite honest about it, when I *talk about* the characteristics of idiots, imbeciles, dolts, lamebrains, etc., I'm *talking about* things the Lord has allowed me to see in myself. Idiots, imbeciles, dolts, and lamebrains may well think those things apply to me alone. That's why they remain the idiots, imbeciles, dolts, and lamebrains that they are. I know I've mentioned Socrates and his little insight concerning wisdom more times than you probably care to remember. But it actually is true. Real wisdom begins with the ability to see just how stupid we all are. Only then can we truly appreciate what God has done by both concealing and revealing the Truth of *The Teaching* in the Scriptures.

You said that was the last question, so let me share with you a bit about something that keeps me going. When I saw how you responded to the Truth several years ago, I knew then that is the way it is supposed to be when a True Believer has an opportunity to hear the Truth. They will be skeptical at first. Then they will begin to see the Truth. Eventually, the weight of the evidence will convince them, and they will want to know everything they can. Finally, they will feel the conviction of the Holy Spirit within them as the Lord begins to draw them back to Himself. I know the work that God has called me to do is going to be a constant struggle against the lies and deception of Satan, but it's a struggle that Satan can never win. If he's too stupid not to have figured that out by now, it's obvious he's stupid to the core. ■