



# THE VOICE of ELIJAH

## Heard Any Good Lies Lately?

He taught by His commandment that we who have been set free should, when hungry, take that food which is given by God; and that, when placed in the exalted position of every grace [that can be received], we should not, either by trusting to works of righteousness, or when adorned with super-eminent [gifts of] ministrations, by any means be lifted up with pride, nor should we tempt God, but should feel humility in all things, and have ready to hand [this saying], "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

As also the apostle taught, saying, "Minding not high things, but consenting to things of low estate;" that we should neither be ensnared with riches, nor mundane glory, nor present fancy, but should know that we must "worship the LORD thy God, and serve Him alone," and give no heed to him who falsely promised things not his own, when he said, "All these will I give thee, if, falling down, thou wilt worship me."

For he himself confesses that to adore him, and to do his will, is to fall from the glory of God. And in what thing either pleasant or good can that man who has fallen participate? Or what else can such a person hope for or expect, except death? For death is next neighbour to him who has fallen. Hence also it follows that he will not give what he has promised. For how can he make grants to him who has fallen?

Moreover, since God rules over men and him too, and without the will of our Father in heaven not even a sparrow falls to the ground, it follows that his declaration, "All these things are delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give them," proceeds from him when puffed up with pride. For the creation is not subjected to his power, since indeed he is himself but one among created things. Nor shall he give away the rule over men to men; but both all other things, and all human affairs, are arranged according to God the Father's disposal.

Besides, the Lord declares that "the devil is a liar from the beginning, and the truth is not in him." If then he be a liar, and the truth be not in him, he certainly did not speak truth, but a lie, when he said, "For all these things are delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give them."

Continued on back cover

He had indeed been already accustomed to lie against God, for the purpose of leading men astray. For at the beginning, when God had given to man a variety of things for food, while He commanded him not to eat of one tree only, as the Scripture tells us that God said to Adam: "From every tree which is in the garden thou shalt eat food; but from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, from this ye shall not eat: for in the day that ye shall eat of it, ye shall die by death;" he then, lying against the Lord, tempted man, as the Scripture says that the serpent said to the woman: "Has God indeed said this, Ye shall not eat from every tree of the garden?"

And when she had exposed the falsehood, and simply related the command, as He had said, "From every tree of the garden we shall eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die:" when he had [thus] learned from the woman the command of God, having brought his cunning into play, he finally deceived her by a falsehood, saying, "Ye shall not die by death; for God knew that in the day ye shall eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

In the first place, then, in the garden of God he disputed about God, as if God was not there, for he was ignorant of the greatness of God; and then, in the next place, after he had learned from the woman that God had said that they should die if they tasted the aforesaid tree, opening his mouth, he uttered the third falsehood, "Ye shall not die by death."

But that God was true, and the serpent a liar, was proved by the result, death having passed upon them who had eaten. For along with the fruit they did also fall under the power of death, because they did eat in disobedience; and disobedience to God entails death. Wherefore, as they became forfeit to death, from that [moment] they were handed over to it.

Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," Book 6, Chaps. xxii-xxiii, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (1867), Vol. 1, pp. 550-551.

## Is It Time To Renew?

The Voice of Elijah  
P.O. Box 2257  
Rockwall, TX 75087-2257  
(972) 635-2021

Check the mailing label below. If it says, "TIME TO RENEW," your subscription expires with this issue. Don't miss a single issue! Use the order form in this issue to renew your subscription now.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

**BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
MESQUITE, TX  
PERMIT NO. 0038**



Published Quarterly by  
Voice of Elijah, Inc.

Allen Friess, Executive Editor  
Susan Clay, Managing Editor

Volume 7  
Number 1  
January 1996

All correspondence  
should be addressed to:

Voice of Elijah, Inc.  
P.O. Box 2257  
Rockwall, TX 75087-2257

Subscription rates:  
(1 year, U.S. Funds)

U.S. \$24.00  
Canada \$30.00  
Abroad \$50.00

Articles published by permission of  
Larry D. Harper  
(dba The Elijah Project).

Except when otherwise noted,  
Scripture taken from the  
New American Standard Bible,  
© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971,  
1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988.  
The Lockman Foundation.  
Used by permission.

Bolded Scripture reflects  
the emphasis of the author.

Copyright © 1996, 2018  
by Voice of Elijah, Inc.  
[voiceofelijah.org](http://voiceofelijah.org)  
[facebook.com/voiceofelijahinc](https://facebook.com/voiceofelijahinc)

## *A Note From the Editor*

With 1996 already upon us, it's hard to believe how quickly 1995 zoomed by. When there's lots to do and little time to do it, time passes fast. Since taking over as President and Executive Editor of *The Voice of Elijah*® eight months ago, I have had to deal with the reality of how quickly deadlines arrive. I barely complete one task before another deadline is staring me in the face. Yet because of the urgent nature of the work I believe God would have us accomplish here at *The Voice of Elijah*®, I, along with everyone else involved with this ministry, keep plugging away, striving to do all that needs to be done.

If you haven't been with us very long, you may be wondering what *The Voice of Elijah*® is trying to accomplish. To state our mission according to the parabolic imagery of the Scriptures: We are a voice "crying in the wilderness" (Matt. 3:3), entreating God's People to return to "the way of the Lord." For those of you who don't understand what Isaiah meant by that cryptic parabolic statement, I'll tell you simply that our ministry exists for the purpose of finding True Believers, warning them of the impending wrath of God, and then teaching "The Many" who heed our warning the things they need to know to avoid God's wrath. Sadly, our mission of "crying in the wilderness" is disheartening at times because so few people are willing to believe that God's wrath is headed straight for them unless they change their "way." We realize, however, that God has not yet begun to "pour out His Spirit on all mankind" (Joel 2:28) in the full measure that He eventually will, so we are waiting patiently for that day.

Although there are lots of reasons why most "Christians" choose not to believe "The Way" that we believe, one of the primary reasons is this: It's hard for them to believe what seems impossible to believe. And most "Christians" find it difficult to believe that God is not the mythological god of unconditional love they have been told He is. They will not believe He is a God of wrath Who seeks to instill fear in sinners so that they might be motivated to humble themselves before Him and repent. They also find it hard to believe that God actually expects repentant sinners to confess their sins, totally subordinate their lives to Him, and strive to be holy by overcoming sin in their life.

If you find all these things impossible to believe, it should be easy for you to see why so few other "Christians" actually believe us. Yet I have not stated one thing that is contrary to the historic tenets of Protestant Christianity. Evangelical Christians living a century and a half ago still understood and believed these things. They also understood, just as we have stated many times, that what you believe determines what you do.

Therefore, we believe, like our Protestant forebearers, that those who actually believe the Truth will respond appropriately to it and

*Continued on page 28*

*Continued from inside front cover*

seek to live as they should before God. We also believe that those who don't believe the Truth will undoubtedly go on living in whatever "way" their version of the "truth" tells them they can. Sadly, we know the vast majority of "Christians" who overflow the pews every Sunday morning are presently living in accordance with some false version of the Truth. We do not believe that the lies they believe will save them. We know that salvation comes by faith. Yet we also know that faith is nothing more than belief in a particular body of information. A large part of what most "Christians" believe today is not true. Therefore, their faith in those things cannot save them.

If you think it's ludicrous for us to believe that the vast majority of "Christians" are wrong in what they believe, I merely remind you that Jesus said most people travel the broad way "that leads to destruction" (Matt. 7:13). You may find it nearly impossible to believe that most "Christians" today are in that category, but that doesn't mean it's not true.

If history has anything to teach us, it's the fact that the seemingly impossible is sometimes very much possible. Do you think the Jews of Christ's Own day ever dreamed they would crucify their long-awaited Messiah? Of course not. To their "way" of thinking, such a thought was totally ridiculous. Only a fool would have believed such a far-fetched notion. Yet it was the "wise" of that day who ultimately proved their ignorance by failing to believe the Truth of Who Jesus Christ was. Much the same thing is happening in our own day.

### *Are You "Foolish" or "Wise"?*

Contrary to what one might like to think, it's sometimes wise to be "foolish" and foolish to be "wise." Paul's thoughts on that subject are especially appropriate.

*For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,*

*"I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE,  
AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER  
I WILL SET ASIDE."*

*Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not {come to} know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For indeed Jews ask for signs, and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

*(1 Corinthians 1:18–25)*

*But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.*

*(1 Corinthians 2:14)*

*Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness before God. For it is written, "{He is} THE ONE WHO CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR CRAFTINESS"; and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE REASONINGS of the wise, THAT THEY ARE USELESS."*

*(1 Corinthians 3:18–20)*

The "wise" that Paul mentions in these passages are those in his day who refused to believe "the foolishness of the message" (the Gospel) that God delivered to the Apostles

through Jesus Christ. On the other hand, the “foolish” are those who chose to believe “The Way” the Apostles did. The “wise” Paul had in mind are those who are “wise in their own eyes.” They are the “wise and intelligent” that Jesus referred to when He said this:

*“I praise Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou didst hide these things from {the} wise and intelligent and didst reveal them to babes. Yes, Father, for thus it was well-pleasing in Thy sight.”*

*(Matthew 11:25b–26)*

In reading the passages above you may have picked up on the fact that God seems to find immense pleasure in making fools out of the “wise” of this world. He is still doing the same thing today. And He is certainly going to make fools of all those “wise in their own eyes” who have jumped on the bandwagon created by the modern “Christian” theology of God’s unconditional love.

These are not normal times. These are the Last Days. Just as the First Advent of Jesus Christ was a unique time in history, so also His Second Advent will be a unique time as well. Satan worked for centuries prior to Christ’s first coming to lay a foundation that would cause most people to reject “the word of the cross” when Christ came. He has been working for centuries to do the same in our own day. Consequently, you can count on the majority of “Christians” in the Church today rejecting as pure foolishness “The Way” *The Voice of Elijah*® teaches. These individuals consider themselves much wiser than the pious Pharisees who did exactly the same thing. They will never stop to consider that they are just as blind as the Pharisees. Instead, they will label our message heretical and claim that only a fool would believe such nonsense.

There is obviously a lot of nonsense being taught by self-proclaimed “teachers” in the Church today, and we all know that one must

be extremely careful what one chooses to believe. Consequently, I’m not asking anyone to believe our message simply because we claim it’s true. I’m merely asking you to use the intellectual powers of reason that God gave you. Scrutinize what we say carefully. But also bear in mind that those who are “wise in their own eyes” will ultimately prove to be far too “intelligent” for their own good.

Sadly, the false teaching perpetuated by Church leaders today has already deluded the average “Christian.” Consequently, nothing *The Voice of Elijah*® has to say will make a bit of difference to them. That fact has often saddened me and caused me to lament in much the same way as Christ lamented the unbelief of Israel in His Own day (Matt. 23:37). However, I have recently come to understand that lamenting does nothing to dispel the unbelief of others. So I am learning to concentrate on believing what I need to know for my own benefit.

God Himself will see to it that those who have ears to hear have opportunity to hear what we believe. Therefore, if you see me as a fool for believing “The Way” I do, I have but one thing more to say: We’ll see who the fool is in the end. We’ll just see.

*Allen Friend*

# Who's Gonna Tell the Fool He's Hell-Bent and Hidebound?

*The following article contains a sermon taken from Charles Finney's Sermons on the Way of Salvation (published posthumously in 1891). I have bolded selected portions of the text for the purpose of emphasis. I have also included my own comments before and after the text.*

Have you taken a good look at all the goings-on in the Church recently? Are you aware of just how much of Satan's nonsense masquerades as God's Truth today? Come on! Don't tell me you actually believe that every one of those "Christian" folks knows what one needs to know in order to be saved? Surely you aren't that stupid! Some "Christians" don't even accept the fact that Jesus Christ was God in the flesh. What about them? You and I know the Apostle John said that anyone who denies the deity of Christ doesn't stand a snowball's chance in Hell of ever making it into Heaven. So what makes you think there aren't a few other crucial doctrines out there that folks need to believe in order to be saved?

"Christians" have been living in complete denial for centuries. They still are. The Church has always had more than its fair share of morons. And every cackling idiot who has ever taken up roost in the Church has had no concern at all for the Truth, yet he has still considered his particular roost "right" and everybody else's "wrong." So that circumstance is nothing new. The only new thing today is the extent to which some fools have carried the spontaneous fabrication of lies. These brainless beings take to the pulpit with nary a thought concerning what they intend to say or, worse yet, what they might actually say. The problem with that is, the lies they so glibly tell do nothing more than conceal the Truth from anyone

who might sincerely want to know what God has said in the Scriptures.

The weary seeker of Truth today finds a church building on every corner and at least one, maybe two, down the block. All claim to stand for something different, yet the sad Truth is most stand for nothing at all. Consider this: Twenty-five years ago, the drive-in church was pretty much the only unusual offering on an otherwise quite standard church menu. Today, specialty churches have become the norm. There are mega-churches in every metropolitan area for those who prefer anonymity, "evangelical" churches that cater to gays and lesbians with a religious bent, still others that appeal to country music fans. Next thing you know, we'll have comedy club churches for folks who want to die laughing. Now that I think about it, the latest "revival" may have already accomplished that. Unfortunately, the Master of the Church doesn't find much humor in the current situation.

Now consider this: If the evangelical wing of the Church could change so drastically in just a few short years, isn't it possible that the Church today isn't anything at all like it was a century or so ago? The Truth is, that is not only possible, that is what is. The goofiness that masquerades as "evangelical" Christianity today has little in common with the evangelical churches of a hundred and fifty years ago.

Evangelical folks today are transfixed by the notion that faith is some supposedly mystical/experiential "knowledge of God." I've already *talked about* that bit of nonsense. They got it from the idiot savant Søren Kierkegaard ("Satan's Fools Are Satan's Tools," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994). A century and a half ago Evangelicals still emphasized faith in a knowledge of the Truth they understood God had revealed in the Scriptures. Evangelical folks back then were

convinced that what they believed the Scriptures said was "right." So I ask you: If what they believed back then was "right," why did it need to change? Right is right. There is no such thing as "more right." Conversely, if the evangelical wing of the Church was not "right" back then, what makes anyone think it is "right" now? I'm not saying that it ever was or is or ever will be, "right." I'm just posing the question. Where in God's "Name" can the Truth be found today among all the nonsense going on?

Perhaps you haven't noticed, but every nook and cranny of the evangelical wing of the Church today is preaching basically the same message. Evangelical "Christians" are suddenly the most ardent advocates of the mythological god of unconditional love. These folks no longer need a solid knowledge of the Bible to bolster their "faith." All they need is a touchy-feely, syrupy-sweet ability to enthusiastically encourage others that their ignorance of what God has said in the Scriptures will carry them through. That should tell you something about who their god is. He is the one who allows them to be what they always have been—sinners who hide their heads in a cloud of ignorance and go on doing what they want to do. In case your brain lacks a few crucial dendrites, let me state it plainly. The god of unconditional love is not the God one finds described in the Scriptures.

How did the Church sink to such a low estate? It was actually quite easy. Over the past century, the leaders of the evangelical wing of the Church mindlessly followed the leading of the Lord of Darkness. By enticing evangelical preachers into accommodating Pretenders instead of converting them, Satan has finally reduced the Church to its lowest common denominator—the sinner who sits in the front row and avidly pretends to be one of the chosen few. Consequently, the universal "Christian" norm has now become the patting of one another on the back and assuring each other that God will accept us all no matter what we do. Don't be misled. The folks who believe that nonsense are not following the Master Who made them. They are following the monster who rose up out of the Sea.

Most evangelical "Christians" today don't know where the Church came from and, to be quite honest about it, they don't really care. As long as the Church serves some useful social purpose in their life right now, that's all that matters. However, their rather

shortsighted perspective on the Church that God created to serve His Own purpose may, in time, prove to be somewhat hazardous to their health. Knowing where the Church came from and what God intended it to be could serve a much more useful purpose, provided they were willing to listen to someone explain it for them. But who am I to tell others what they need to know? To each his or her own, and that includes an eternal destiny.

Speaking of where things come from and where they go to, however, it occurred to me that I should probably point out a few things stated in the Scriptures concerning the "tares" Satan has successfully "sowed" in God's Church. Maybe that information will open the eyes of a few who haven't yet been able to see the current situation in the Church for what it is. This is the parable of Jesus to which I refer:

*He presented another parable to them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' And the slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn."'"*

(Matthew 13:24–30)

A bit later Jesus explained the *meaning* of that parable to His disciples. This is how Matthew relates what He said:

*All these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He did not speak to them without a parable, so that what was spoken through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying,*

**"I WILL OPEN MY MOUTH IN PARABLES;**

**I WILL UTTER THINGS HIDDEN**

**SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD."**

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

(Matthew 13:34-43)

Did you notice Matthew said Jesus spoke in parables because He was *talking about* HIDDEN THINGS? The Truth is, most of the things Jesus *talked about* in His parables are still HIDDEN. That's why the Parable of the Tares isn't understood at all by the "tares" that Satan has "sowed" in God's "field." Unfortunately for them, however, all the HIDDEN THINGS that Jesus taught are going to be understood by those who have the "insight" the messenger promised Daniel they would have in "the end time" (Dan. 12:9-10). Those are the "seed" Jesus had in mind when He intentionally paraphrased the Septuagint translation of Daniel 12:3, mixing it with imagery from Malachi 4:2. He knew a time would come when Satan's "tares" would be separated from the "seed" of the Father so the "tares" could be "burned."

Those of you who understand a bit about the *parabolic imagery* of the Scriptures already know the fires of Hell are just a *parabolic image* that depicts the horrifying wrath of God. The Wicked don't know anything at all about that because they refuse to believe God could ever be angry with them. Instead they go on ignorantly proclaiming the unconditional love of God for all His Children. Can you believe it? Satan actually has unregenerate sinners believing they are a part of God's family! Consequently, they fail to understand what Malachi said about God sparing none but His Own Son in the great day of His wrath:

Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, and the LORD gave attention and heard {it,} and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. "And they will be Mine," says the LORD of hosts, "on the day that I prepare {My} own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him. For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says the LORD of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear My name the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall. And you will tread down the wicked, for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says the LORD of hosts.

(Malachi 3:16-4:3)

Did you see that Malachi mentioned all the same things that Jesus did in His parable? That's because Jesus had in mind the same events that Malachi describes. Jesus plainly said He was describing events that would occur "at the end of the age." He was *talking about* events that immediately precede the Return of Jesus Christ. Everybody knows conservative "Christians" believe the Second Coming is imminent. So I'm not saying anything new. I'm just echoing generally held beliefs. If you believe these are the Last Days, however, you really should begin to make sure you are ready for what lies ahead.

You can believe what I tell you if you care to. You can disbelieve it if you dare to. Whether or not you choose to believe what I teach is not going to change things one way or the other. The Truth will still be just as true. Satan's lies will still be just as false. But I can tell you there is absolutely no doubt in my mind that these are the days of which Malachi was speaking. How can I be so sure of that? Well, I've already seen a few of the HIDDEN THINGS that Jesus *talked about* in His parables. Therefore, I know that the only thing left for True Believers now is to gain the "insight" necessary for them to be able to "again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him." Once we have done that



to God's eternal satisfaction, all of God's evidence against the Wicked will be in and the great Judgment Day of God can begin.

Let me take a quick reality check for all the fools who somehow found their way into this discussion. Doesn't everything I've just said sound absolutely ridiculous? I sometimes look at myself from your perspective, and I have to admit I wouldn't believe me either. As a matter of fact, I'd most likely stand back a bit and wait to see whether I hadn't happened upon a raving maniac. But the sad fact is, God doesn't look at things from your perspective. He doesn't care all that much for my perspective either, for that matter. I've learned that the hard way over the years. So I would not wish the "school of hard knocks" on anyone who wants to learn the Truth that God would have His Children understand in these Last Days. It would be much better for all concerned if they would only accept a bit of formal instruction. But what can I do when someone refuses to believe?

Enough said. Now I'm going to show you what Charles Finney said about the wrath of God. Why so? Well, it just so happens Finney was the single most effective Evangelist of the nineteenth century. That is, he led thousands to the reality of the new-birth experience. Although he labored under a burden of ignorance because of many of the things he believed, his understanding of the Gospel message was sufficient for most of those who sought God's salvation as a result of his preaching. I tell you that, however, only so that you might have some reason to pay close attention to what he has to say about God's wrath.

## *God's Anger Against The Wicked*

*"God is angry with the wicked every day."*

*—Psalms vii. 11.*

In speaking from this text I design to show briefly:

- I. Who are "wicked" in the scripture sense of this term;*
- II. That God is angry with them;*
- III. The nature of this anger;*
- IV. The reasons for it;*
- V. Its degree;*
- VI. Its duration;*
- VII. The terrible condition of sinners under it.*

*I. The Bible divides all the human race into two classes only,—the righteous and the wicked.* Those are righteous who have true faith in Christ, whose spirit is consecrated to God, who live a heavenly life on earth, and who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost. Their original selfishness is subdued and slain, and they live a new life through the ever-present grace of Christ Jesus.

Right over against them in character are the wicked, who have not been renewed in heart; who live in selfishness, under the dominion of appetite in some of its forms,—and it matters not in which, out of all possible forms, it may be, but self is the great and only ultimate end of their life. These are, in the scriptural sense, the wicked.

*II. God is angry with the wicked.* Our text explicitly affirms this. The same truth is affirmed and implied in numerous other passages. Let the sinner remember that this is the testimony of God Himself. Who should better know the feelings of God towards sinners than God Himself does? Who on this point can gainsay what God affirms?

But this truth is also taught by reason. Every man in the exercise of his reason knows it ought to be true. If God were not opposed to the wicked, He would be wicked Himself for not opposing them. What would you think of a judge who did not hate and oppose law-breakers? Would you think him an honest man if he did not take sides against transgressors? Everybody knows that this is the dictate of reason and of common sense. Sinners know this, and always assume it in their practical judgments. They know that God is angry with them, and ought to be—though they may not realize it. Sinners know many things which they do not realize. For instance, you who are in sin know that you must die; but you have more reason to be assured that God is angry with you than you have to be sure that you must die; for it is not necessarily so certain that you will die as it is that God is angry with you for your sin. God may possibly translate you from this world to another without your death, as He has some others; but there never was, and never can be, any exception to the universal law of his anger against all the wicked. You know this, therefore, with an absolute certainty, which precludes all possibility of rational doubt.

Sinners do know this, as I have said, and always assume it in their practical judgments. Else why are they afraid to die? why afraid to meet God face to face in the world of retribution? Would they have this fear if they did not know that God is angry with them for their sin? It would be gratuitous, therefore, to prove this truth to the sinner. He already knows it, knows it not only as a thing that is, but as what *ought* to be.

*III. The nature of this anger demands our attention.*

On this point it is important to notice negatively,

1. It is not a malicious anger. God is never malicious; never has a disposition to do any wrong in any way to any being. He is infinitely far from such feelings, and from any such developments of anger.

2. His anger is not passion in the sense in which men are wont to exhibit passion in anger. You may often have seen men whose sensibility is lashed into fury under an excitement of anger; their very souls seem to be boiling with fermentation, so intense is their excitement. Reason for the time is displaced, and passion reigns. Now God is never angry in such a way. His anger against the wicked involves no such excitement of passion.

3. God's anger cannot be in any sense a selfish anger; for God is not selfish in the least degree, but infinitely the reverse of it. Of course his anger against the wicked must be entirely devoid of selfishness.

But positively his anger against the wicked implies,

1. An entire disapprobation of their conduct and character. He disapproves most intensely and utterly every thing in either their heart or their life. He loathes the wicked with infinite loathing.

2. He feels the strongest opposition of will to their character. It is so utterly opposed to His own character and to His own views of right that his will arrays itself in the strongest form of opposition against it.

3. God's anger involves also strong opposition of feeling against sinners. Undoubtedly God must have feelings of anger against the wicked. We cannot suppose it possible that God should behold sin without feelings of anger.

In our attempts to conceive of the mental faculties of the divine mind, we are under a sort of necessity of reasoning analogically from our own minds. Revelation has told us that we are "made in the image

of God." Of course the mind of God is the antitype from which ours was cast. The great constituent elements of mind, we must suppose, are therefore alike in both the infinite and the finite. As we have intellect, sensibility, and will, so has God.

From our own minds, moreover, we infer not only what the faculties of the divine mind are, but also the laws under which they act. We know that in the presence of certain objects we naturally feel strong opposition. Those objects are so related to our sensibility that anger and indignation are the natural result. We could not act according to the fixed laws of our own minds if we did not utterly disapprove wrong-doing and if our disapproval of it, moreover, did not awaken some real *sensibility* in the form of displeasure and indignation against the wrong-doer.

Some suppose that these results of the excited sensibility against wrong would not develop themselves if our hearts were right. This is a great mistake. The nearer right our hearts are, the more certainly shall we disapprove wrong, the more intensely shall we feel opposed to it, and the greater will be our displeasure against the wrong-doer. Hence we must not only suppose that God is angry in the sense of a will opposed to sin, but in the further sense of a sensibility enkindled against it. This must be the case if God is truly a moral agent.

4. God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have labored hard to set up this ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin, yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme nonsense. The sin has no moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event—the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the *doer himself*. It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under his government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of his anger.

So the Bible shows. God is angry with the wicked, not with the abstract sin. If the wicked turn not, God will whet his sword,—he hath bent his bow

and made it ready,—not to shoot the *sin*, however, but the *sinner*—the wicked man who has done the abominable thing. This is the only doctrine of either the Bible or of common sense on this subject.

5. The anger of God against the wicked implies all that properly belongs to anger when it exists *with good reason*. We know by our own experience that when we are angry with good reason, we have strong opposition of will, and also strong feelings of displeasure and disapprobation, against wrong-doers. Hence we may infer that under the same circumstances the same is true of God.

*IV. The REASONS of God's anger against the wicked next demand our attention.* His anger is never excited without good reasons. Causeless anger is always sinful. "Whoever is angry with his brother without a cause is in danger of the judgment." God never Himself violates his own laws—founded as they are in infinite right and justice. Hence God's anger always has good reasons.

Good reasons exist for his anger, and He is angry for those reasons. It is not uncommon for persons to be angry, under circumstances, too, which are good reasons for anger, but still they are not angry for those good reasons, but for other reasons which are not good. For example, every sinner has good reasons for being angry with every other sinner for his wickedness against God. But sinners are not angry against other sinners for those reasons. Although these reasons actually exist, yet when angry at sinners, it is not for these good reasons, but for some selfish reasons, which are not good. This is a common case. You see persons angry, and if you reprove them for their anger as sinful, they seek to justify themselves by affirming that they are angry with the man for his sins—for his wrong-doing against God. Now this is indeed a good and sufficient reason for anger, and the justification would be a good one if the anger were really excited by this cause. But often, although this reason exists, and is pleaded by the man as his excuse for anger, yet it is no excuse, for, in fact, he is not angry for this cause, but has some selfish reason for his anger. Not so with God. God is angry with the wicked, not irrespective of his sins, but for his sins.

1. Wicked men are entirely unreasonable. Their conduct is at war with all reason and with all right. God has given them intelligence and conscience; but

they act in opposition to both. God has given them a pure and good law, yet this they recklessly violate. Hence their conduct is in every point of view utterly unreasonable.

Now we all know that, by a fixed law of our being, nothing can be a greater temptation to anger than to see persons act unreasonably. This is one of the greatest trials that can occur, and one of the strongest incentives to anger. So when God looks at the unreasonable conduct of sinners, he feels the strongest indignation and displeasure. If they were not rational beings endowed with reason, no anger would be awakened and called forth. But since God knows them to be endowed with reason, and to be capable of true and noble-hearted obedience, he cannot fail of being displeased with their transgression.

2. The course of the wicked is utterly ruinous. No thanks to the sinner if his influence does not ruin the whole world. By the very laws of mind, the sin of any one man tends to influence other men to sin, and they spread far and wide the dreadful contagion of his example. It may truly be said that the sinner does the worst thing possible to him to ruin the universe. He sets the example of rebellion against the supreme government of all worlds. And what influence can be more potent than that of example? What worse thing, therefore, can the sinner do to destroy all good than he is doing by his sin? No thanks to him if every man who sees his sin does not imitate it to his own ruin, and throw the power of his own example broadcast over all his associates. No thanks to any sinner if his own influence for ruin does not run like fire on the prairies, over all the world, and then over every other world of moral beings in the universe of God.

Think of the father of a family, living in his sins and exerting his great influence over his household to make them all as wicked as himself. Who can estimate the power of his influence over his wife and his children? Does he pray with them and seek to lead them to God? No; his example is prayerless. It proclaims every day to his family, "You have no occasion at all to pray. You see I can live without prayer." Does he read the Bible to them or with them? No; his constant example before them sets the Bible at naught, and continually suggests that they will be as well off without reading the Bible as with. His whole influence, therefore, is ruinous to the souls of his family. No thanks to him, if they do not all go down to hell along

with himself. If they do not scream around him with yells of mingled imprecation and despair, cursing him as the guilty author of their ruin, he will have other agencies to thank besides his own. Surely he has done what he well could do to secure results so dreadful as these.

Has not God good reason to be angry with him? Why not? Would not you feel that you have good reasons to be angry with a man who should come into your family to destroy its peace—to seduce your wife and daughters, and to entice your sons into some pathway of crime and ruin? Certainly you would. Now, do not all families belong to God in a far higher sense than any man's family belong to him? Why, then, has not God as good reasons for anger against a wicked father as you could have against a villain who should plot and seek to effect the mischief and ruin of your family? Is it wonderful to you that God should be angry with every wicked father? Just consider what that father is doing by his bare example—even supposing that his words are well-guarded and not particularly liable to objection. Who does not know that example is the very highest and strongest moral power? It does not need the help of teaching to make its power felt for terrible mischief. The prayerless husband and father! The devil could not do worse, nay, more, not so bad; for the devil never had mercy offered him, never stood related as this wicked father does, to offered pardon and to the glorious gospel. If, then, God would have good reason to be angry at the devil, much more has he for anger against this wicked father. The same substantially is true of other classes of sinners. **It is essential to their very course as sinners, that they are in rebellion against God, and are doing the very worst thing in the universe by drawing other moral beings into sin.**

3. Again, God is so good and sinners are so wicked, He cannot help being angry at them. If He were not angry at the wicked, He would be as much worse than they as He is wiser than they. Since, in his wisdom and knowledge, He knows more fully than they do the great evil of sin, by so much the more is He under obligation to be displeased with sin and angry at the sinner. We sometimes hear men say, "God is too good to be angry at sinners." What do men mean by this language? Do they mean that God is too good to be opposed to all evil? too good to be displeased with all evil-doers? This were indeed a

strange goodness! God too good to hate sin—too good to oppose sinners! What sort of goodness can this be?

I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, he would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy, but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. The amount of its logic is that God would be himself wicked if He should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer!! Pray, who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God Himself?

Really there is no force, no plausibility even, in this language about the wrong of God's being angry at sinners, except what arises from misconceiving and misrepresenting the true idea of the divine anger in this case. If God's anger were in itself sinful—as is the case often with man's anger—then, of course, nothing more can be said in its vindication. But since his anger is never sinful, never selfish, never malicious, never unholy or wrong in any degree whatever, nothing can be more false, nothing more sophisticated, nothing more ungenerous and vile and Satanic, than to imply that it is. But this is just what men do when they say that for God to be angry at sinners is to be Himself wicked.

The true view of this case is not by any means abstruse or difficult of apprehension. Who does not know that good men are, by virtue of their goodness, opposed to wicked men? Surely all wicked men know this well enough. Else why the fear they have of good and law-abiding men? Why do all horse-thieves and counterfeits keep dark from good men,—dread their presence,—commonly feel a strong dislike to them, and always dread their influence as hostile to their own wicked schemes?

So wicked men feel towards God. They know that his goodness places Him in hostile array against themselves. This fact seems to be implied in the Psalmist's expostulation, "Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God endureth continually." God is always good; how can you be proud of your wickedness? God is too good and too constantly good to afford you any scope for sin, any ground of hope for peace with Him in your iniquity.

V. *The degree of God's anger against sin should be next considered.* It is plain that the degree of God's anger against the wicked ought to be equal to the degree of their wickedness, and must be if God is what He should be. The times of heathen ignorance and darkness "God winked at;" the degree of their guilt being less, by as much as their light is less, than that of such cities as Chorazin and Bethsaida. God does not hold them innocent absolutely; but relatively they might almost be called innocent, compared with the great guilt of sinners in gospel lands. Against those who sin amidst the clearest light, his anger must burn most intensely; for example, against sinners in this place and congregation. You may be outwardly a decent and moral man, respected and beloved by your friends; but if you are a selfish, impenitent sinner, the pure and holy God loathes and abhors you. He sees more real guilt in you than in ten thousand of those dark-minded heathen who are bowing down to idol gods, and whose crimes you read of with loathing and disgust. Think of it. God may be more angry against you for your great wickedness than against a nation of idolaters whose ignorance He winks at, while He measures your light and consequent guilt in the balances of his own eternal justice. Oh! are you living here amid the blazing sunlight of truth; knowing your duty every day and every day refusing to do it; do you not know that in the eyes of God you are one of the wickedest beings out of hell, or in hell, either, and that God's hatred against your sin is equal to your great guilt? But you say perhaps, Am I not moral and honest? Suppose you are moral. For whose sake are you moral, and for what reason? Is it not for your reputation's sake only? The devil might be as moral for such a purpose as you are. Mark it is not for God's sake,—not for Christ's sake—that you are a moral man, but because you love yourself. You might be just as moral if there were no God, or if you were an atheist. Of course if so, you are saying in your heart, Let there be no fear of God before my eyes, no love of God in my heart. Let me live and have my own way, as if there were no God. And all this you do, not under the darkness of heathenism, but amid the broadest sunlight of heaven's truth blazing all around you. Do you still ask, What have I done? You have arrayed yourself against God, rejected the gospel of his Son, and done despite to the Spirit of his grace. What heathen has ever done this,

or anything that could compare with this in guilt? The vilest heathen people that ever wallowed in the filth of their own abominations are pure compared with you. Do you start back and rebel against this view of your case? Then let us ask again, By what rule are we to estimate guilt? You pass along the street and you see the lower animals doing what you would be horrified to see human beings do, but you never think of them as guilty. You see those dogs try to tear each other to pieces; you will perhaps try to part them; but you will not think of feeling moral indignation or moral displeasure against them; and why? Because you instinctively judge of their guilt by their light and by their capacity for governing themselves by light and reason. On nearly the same principle you might see the heathen reeking in their abominations, quarrelling, and practicing the most loathsome forms of vice and selfishness; but their guilt is only a glimmering taper compared with yours, and therefore you cannot but estimate their guilt as by so much less than your own as their light is less! Your reason demands that you should estimate guilt on this principle, and you know that you cannot rightly estimate it on any other. For the very same reason you must conclude that God estimates guilt on the same principles, and that his anger against sin is in proportion to the sinner's guilt, estimated in view of the light he enjoys and sins against. The degree of God's anger against the wicked is not measured by their outward conduct, but by their real guilt as seen by Him whose eye is on the heart.

VI. *As to the duration of God's anger against the wicked,* it manifestly must continue as long as the wickedness itself continues. As long as wicked men continue wicked, so long must God be angry at them every day. If they turn not, there can be no abatement, no cessation, of his anger. This is so plain that everybody must know it.

VII. *The terrible condition of the sinner against whom God is angry.* This dreadful truth that God is angry with the wicked every day, sinners know, but do not realize. Yet it were well for you who are sinners to apprehend and estimate this just as it is.

Look then at the attributes of God. Who and what is God? Is He not a Being whose wrath against you is to be dreaded? You often feel that it is a terrible

thing to incur the displeasure of some men. Children are often exceedingly afraid of the anger of their parents. Any child has reason to feel that it is a terrible state of things, when he has done wrong and knows it must come to the knowledge of his father and his mother, and must arouse their keenest displeasure against himself—this is terrible, and no wonder a child should dread it. How much more has the sinner reason to fear and tremble when by his sin he has made the Almighty God his enemy! Think of his state! Think of the case of the sinner's exposing himself to the indignation of the great and dreadful God! Look at God's natural attributes. Who can measure the extent of his power? Who or what can resist his will? He taketh up the isles as a very little thing, and the nations before Him are only as the small dust of the balance. When his wrath is kindled, who can stand before it, or stay its dreadful fury?

Think also of his omniscience. He knows all you have done. Every act has passed underneath his eye; and not every external act, merely, but, what is far more dreadful to you, every motive lying back of every act—all the most hidden workings of your heart. Oh, if you were only dealing with some one whom you could deceive, how would you set yourself at work to plan some deep scheme of deception! But all in vain here, for God knows it all. If it were a case between yourself and some human tribunal, you might cover up many things; you might perjure yourself; or might smuggle away the dreaded witnesses; but before God, no such measures can avail you for one moment. The whole truth will come out, dread its disclosure as much as you may. The darkness and the light are both alike to Him, and nothing can be hidden from his eye.

Again, not only does God know every thing you have done, and not only is He abundantly able to punish you, but He is as much disposed as He is able, or omniscient. You will find He has no disposition to overlook your guilt. He is so good that He never can let sin unrepented of pass unnoticed and unpunished. It would be an infinite wrong to the universe if He should! If He were to do it, He would at once cease to be a good and holy God!

O sinner! do you ever think of God's perfect holiness, the infinite purity of his heart? Do you ever think how intensely strong must be his opposition to your sin? to those sins of yours, which are so bad even

in your own view that you cannot bear to have many of your fellow-men know them? How do you suppose your guilty soul appears in the eye of the pure and holy God?

You often hear of God's mercy. You hope for some good to yourself, perhaps, from this attribute of his nature. Ah! if you had not spurned it, and trampled it under your feet; if you had not slighted and abused its manifestations to you, it might befriend you in your day of need. But ah, how can you meet insulted mercy! What can you say for yourself in defence for having sinned against the richest mercy the world ever saw? Can you hope that God's injured mercy will befriend you? Nay, verily; God has not one attribute which is not armed against you. Such is his nature, and such his character, that you have nothing to hope, but everything to fear. His dreadful anger against you must be expressed. He may withhold its expression for a season, to give the utmost scope for efforts to reclaim and save you. But when these efforts shall have failed, then will not justice take her course? Will not insulted Majesty utter her awful voice? Will not the infinite God arise in his awful purity, and proclaim, "I hate all wickedness, my anger burns against the sinner to the lowest hell"? Will not Jehovah take measures to make his true position towards sinners known?

#### REMARKS

1. God is much more opposed to sinners than Satan is. Doubtless this must be so, for Satan has no special reason for being opposed to sinners. They are doing his work very much as he would have them. We have no evidence that Satan is displeased with their course. But God is displeased with them, and for the best of reasons.

Men sometimes say, If God is angry with the wicked, He is worse than Satan. They seem to think that Satan is a liberal, generous-hearted being. They are rather disposed to commend him as, on the whole, very charitable and noble-hearted. They may think that Satan is bad enough, but they cannot be reconciled to it that God should be so hard on sinners.

Now the facts are that God is too good to be otherwise than angry with sinners. The devil is so bad himself that he finds no difficulty in being well enough pleased with their vileness: it does not offend

him. Hence, from his very nature, God must hate the sinner infinitely more than Satan does.

2. If God were not angry with sinners, he would not be worthy of confidence. What would you think of a civil governor who should manifest no indignation against transgressors of the law? You would say, of course, that he had not the good of the community at heart, and you could have no confidence in him.

3. God's anger with sinners is not inconsistent with his happiness. Why should it be, if it is not inconsistent with his holiness? If there were anything wrong about it, then it would indeed destroy all his happiness; but if it be intrinsically right, then it not only cannot destroy his happiness, but He could not be happy without anger against the wicked. His happiness must be conditioned upon his acting and feeling in accordance with the reality of things. Hence, if God did not hate sin and did not manifest his hatred in all proper ways, He could not respect Himself; He could not retire within the great deep of his own nature, and enjoy eternal bliss in the consciousness of infinite rectitude.

4. God's opposition to sinners is his glory. It is all-glorious to God to manifest his anger towards wicked men and devils. Is not this the fact with all good rulers? Do they not seize every opportunity to manifest their opposition to the wicked, and is not this their real glory? Do we not account it their glory to be zealous and efficient in detecting crime? Most certainly. They can have no other real glory. But suppose a ruler should sympathize with murderers, thieves, robbers. We should execrate his very name!

5. Saints love God for his opposition to sinners, not excepting even his opposition to their *own sins*. They could not have confidence in Him if He did not oppose their own sins, and it is not in their hearts to ask Him to favor even their own iniquities. No; where they come near Him, and see how He is opposed to their own sins, and to them on account of them, they honor Him and adore Him the more. They do not want any being in the universe to connive at their own sins, or to take any other stand toward themselves as sinners, than that of opposition.

6. This text is to be understood as it reads. Its language is to be taken in its obvious sense. Some have supposed that God is not really angry with sinners, but uses this language in accommodation to our understandings.

This is an unwarrantable latitude of interpretation. Suppose we should apply the same principle to what is said of God's love. When we read, "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son," suppose we say, this cannot mean real love, such as we feel for each other—no, nothing like this; the language is only used by way of accommodation, and really has no particular sense whatever. This sort of interpretation would destroy the Bible, or any other book ever written.

The only sound view of this matter is that God speaks as sensible men do—to be understood by the reader and hearer, and of course uses language in its most obvious sense. If He says He is angry against the wicked, we must suppose that He really is.

It is indeed true that we are to qualify the language, as I have already shown, by what we absolutely know of his real character, and therefore hence infer that this language cannot imply malicious anger, or selfish anger, or any forms of anger inconsistent with infinite benevolence. But having made the necessary qualifications, there are no more to be made, and the cardinal idea of anger still remains—a *fixed eternal displeasure and opposition against all sinners because of their great guilt*.

7. God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love—real, compassionate love; not, however, the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a *sinner*, but the love for him as a sentient being, who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.

The sinner sometimes says, It cannot be that God is angry with me, for He watches over me day by day; He feeds me from his table, and regales me with his bounties. Ah, sinner! you may be greatly mistaken in this matter. Don't deceive yourself! God is slow to anger indeed; that is, He is slow to *give expression* to His anger, and Himself assigns the reason, because He is long-suffering towards sinners, "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." But take care that you do not misconceive his real feeling towards you. Beware, lest you misinterpret his

great forbearance. He waits, I know; but the storm of vengeance is gathering. How soon He may come forth out of his place and unlock suddenly all the whirlwinds of his vengeance! Ah, sinner! this once done, they will sleep no more.

8. It is plain that sinners do not realize God's anger, though they know it. If they do both know and realize it, they manifest a degree of hardihood in iniquity which is dreadful. But the fact is, they keep the thought of God's anger from their minds. They are reckless about it, and treat it as they do death. Sinners know they must die, but they do not realize this fact. They do not love to sit down and commune with death—thinking how soon it may come, how certainly it will come; how the grave-worms will gnaw the flesh from their cheek-bones, and consume those eyes now bright and sparkling. These young ladies don't love to commune with such thoughts as these, and realize how soon these scenes will be realities.

So you don't love to think of God's anger against sin, of his reasons for his anger, and of his great provocations. You probably don't like to hear me preach about it, and yet I preach as mildly as I can. You can't bear to hear the subject brought forward and pressed upon your attention. Tell me, are you in the habit of sitting down and considering this subject attentively? If you were to do so, you could not condemn God and treat Him as if you had no care for Him.

9. Are you aware, sinner, that you have made God your enemy, and have you thought how terrible a thing this is? Do you consider how impotent you are to withstand God? If you were in any measure dependent on any one of your fellow-men, you would not like to make him your enemy. The student in this college is careful not to make the faculty, or any one of them, his enemy. The child has the same solicitude in regard to his parent. Now consider what you are doing towards God—that God who holds your breath in his hands, your very life in his power. Let Him only withdraw his hand, and you sink to hell by your own gravity. On a slippery steep you stand, and the billows of damnation roll below! O sinner! are you aware that when you lie down at night with your weapons of rebellion against God in your very hands, his blazing eye is on you? Are you well aware of this?

You may recollect the case of a Mr. H., once a student here. For a considerable time he had been

rebellious against the truth of God as presented here to his mind, and this spirit of rebellion rose gradually to a higher and yet higher pitch. It seemed to have made about as much head as he could well bear, and in this state he retired to bed, and extinguished his light. All at once his room seemed full of dazzling splendor; he gazed around; there stood before him a glorious form—with eyes of unearthly and most searching power; gradually all else disappeared save one eye, which shone with indescribable brilliancy and seemed to search him through and through. The impression made on his mind was awful. Oh! said he, I could not have lived under it many minutes if I had not yielded and bowed in submission to the will of God.

Sinner, have you ever considered that God's searching eye is on *you*? Do you think of it whenever you lie down at night? If you should live so long and should lie down again on your bed, think of it then.

Write it down on a little card, and hang it where it will most often catch your eye, "*Thou God seest me.*" Do this; and then realize that God's eye is penetrating your very heart. Oh that searching, awful eye! You close your eyes to sleep—still God's eye is on you. It closes not for the darkness of night. Do you say, "I shall sleep as usual—I am not the sinner who will be kept awake through fear of God's wrath. Why should I be afraid of God? What have I to fear? I know indeed that God says 'Give me thy heart,' but I have no thought of doing it. I have disobeyed him many years and see no flaming wrath yet. I expect He will feed me still and fill my cup with every form of blessings"?

O sinner! for these very reasons have you the more cause to dread his burning wrath. You have abused his mercy well-nigh to the last moment of endurance. Oh, how soon will his wrath break forth against thee! and no arm in all the universe can stay its whelming floods of ruin. And if you don't believe it, its coming will be all the more sure, speedy, and awful!

## Comments

Do these statements, made as they were by the most effective evangelical Christian Evangelist of the nineteenth century, surprise you? If you claim to be a born-again Believer, they shouldn't. Every True



Believer is aware of the wrath of God on one level or another. Even if you have never heard that Truth stated explicitly, you sense it to be true because God made it known to you through the conviction of the Holy Spirit when you repented. Therefore, anyone who denies the fact that God is angry with sinners is, by definition, a Pretender. They have no understanding of the wrath of God because they have never experienced His mercy. Moreover, their lack of understanding prevents them from coming to God on His terms.

Pretenders assume God accepts them as they are because they accept themselves as they are. Like the Pharisee that Jesus mentioned, they see nothing so seriously wrong that it needs correction:

*And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."*

(Luke 18:9-14)

If you were paying close attention as you read what Finney wrote concerning the wrath of God, you may have noticed a few places where his logic did not hold up. That's not surprising. The only thing that will stand up under close scrutiny is the Truth. And there are more than a few places where Finney advocates something that does not precisely agree with the Truth of the Scriptures. In most of those cases, however, he is not far removed from it. That's why he was so effective. He preached sufficient Truth for people to be born again.

In some cases, however, Finney states something that stands out as not being completely in agreement with what he has stated elsewhere. That sort of thing bothers me because it reveals a lack of

clarity in thinking. And I've been running the rat race long enough to know you can find Satan working the angles anywhere that True Believers have anything less than absolute clarity of thought. So I thought I should point out where even the great Evangelist Charles Finney had unwittingly been influenced by the very lie he sought to refute. Perhaps you noticed it as well. Take a look at what he said early on:

*God is not angry merely against the sin abstracted from the sinner, but against the sinner himself. Some persons have labored hard to set up this ridiculous and absurd abstraction, and would fain make it appear that God is angry at the sin, yet not at the sinner. He hates the theft but loves the thief. He abhors adultery, but is pleased with the adulterer. Now this is supreme nonsense. The sin has no moral character apart from the sinner. The act is nothing apart from the actor. **The very thing that God hates and disapproves is not the mere event—the thing done in distinction from the doer; but it is the doer himself.** It grieves and displeases Him that a rational moral agent, under his government, should array himself against his own God and Father, against all that is right and just in the universe. This is the thing that offends God. The sinner himself is the direct and the only object of his anger.*

He says essentially the same thing a bit later:

*I have sometimes heard men say that if God should be angry with sinners, he would be as bad as the devil himself. Now this is not only horrible language on the score of its blasphemy, but it is monstrous absurdity on the score of its logic. **The amount of its logic is that God would be himself wicked if He should be displeased at wickedness. So wrong it must be to hate the wrong-doer!!** Pray, who is it that holds such doctrine? Is it not possible that they feel some interest in sustaining wrong-doers even against God Himself?*

Isn't it amazing that the greatest Evangelist of the entire nineteenth century would tell us God hates the sinner? That is nothing if not pure heresy in the eyes of evangelical "Christians" today. Yet the psalmist states it plainly in another psalm:

*The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked,  
And the one who loves violence His soul hates.*

*Upon the wicked He will rain snares;  
Fire and brimstone and burning wind  
will be the portion of their cup.  
(Psalm 11:5-6)*

Finney was refuting the ordinary view of someone who is a Christian in name only. It is the same theological goofiness the liberal wing of the Church has been spouting for the past two hundred years. The only reason the Truth concerning God's hatred for sinners is no longer preached in evangelical churches today is because Satan has been able to substitute the liberals' lie for the Truth that Evangelicals used to believe. You can get some idea of how easily he could do that just by looking at the ambivalent way that Finney approaches the subject of God's wrath. In the two passages above he obviously equates the wrath of God with the fact that God hates the sinner himself. That much is true. But notice what he says in this passage:

*God's anger against the sinner does not exclude love—real, compassionate love; not, however, the love of complacency, but the love of well-wishing and good-willing; not the love of him as a sinner, but the love for him as a sentient being, who might be infinitely happy in obedience to his God. This is undoubtedly the true view to be taken of God's attitude towards sinners. What parent does not know what this is? You have felt the kindlings of indignation against the wickedness of your child, but blended with this you have also felt all the compassionate tenderness of a parent's heart.*

Finney's comments indicate the idiocy propped up by the agents of Satan had already made serious inroads into the evangelical churches by the second half of the nineteenth century. That idiocy is the lie that God could never be anything other than a god of unconditional love. Look at it logically. God must either hate the individual sinner or he must love him. He cannot do both. Anybody with an ounce of common sense can see that love and hate are mutually exclusive emotions. The only reason Finney would seek to reconcile the two was because the lie that God loves sinners unconditionally had already gained ground among the Evangelicals to whom he was preaching. By that I mean Finney was undoubtedly trying to accommodate the view of the man in the

pew. Unfortunately, his remarks merely clouded the issue.

The one thing Finney overlooked completely was the Truth concerning the nature of God's love for sinners. God does not love the individual sinner with the love that a father feels toward his child. That should be easy enough for even an imbecile to understand. The new birth alone makes one a Child of God. Therefore, an individual sinner cannot experience the love that God has for His Children until he has been born again. Notice I said "individual sinner." The Truth is, God does love SINNERS—as a *corporate* body. That is why you will ALWAYS find that the object of God's love is stated as "US" or "WE." "US" and "WE" are used to denote a collective body.

John 3:16 plainly says, "God so loved the WORLD that He gave His only begotten Son." However, you will normally hear that verse used to affirm that God loves individual sinners. That's because Satan has distorted the Truth of what Jesus said by concealing the fact that the Greek term *κοσμος* ("world") always designates a collective body, a totality, the sum of all created beings. The Truth is, God loves the totality of all created beings, but He hates individual sinners within that collective body. He has offered the individual sinner an opportunity to be saved only because He loves the Creation He has made. He fully intends to save some to preserve the "world" He created.

Now I am not so naïve as to believe that what I have just stated will be accepted by everyone. Satan has invested a considerable amount of time in creating the delusion related to the unconditional love of God. So he is unlikely to allow folks to give it up without a fight. In that regard, I can only say this: Your success as one individual struggling against the stupor created by Satan's lies holds no *significance* one way or the other in the grand scheme of things. The *corporate* body of True Believers for whom Jesus Christ died will overcome sin through their rejection of Satan's lies. Your participation in the salvation of the Body of Jesus Christ depends on what you choose to believe. After all, salvation is by faith. That's faith in the sense of *WHAT you believe*, not faith in the sense of *THAT you believe*. Everybody believes something about God. Yet only those who believe the Truth about God will be saved. Now that I've told you that, it's up to you as to whether or not you choose to believe it. ■



**T**he 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: In the "Questions & Answers" section of the last newsletter you said some specific things about the different types of literature found in the Bible. One thing in particular was helpful to me in my own Bible study. I found it instructional that you said a book which contains historical narrative, such as the Book of Acts, is the least likely place to find statements which can be used to formulate sound doctrine. It occurred to me after reading your comments that True Believers are seldom given firm guidelines to follow when it comes to studying the Bible. Would you have any additional information you could pass along that might help True Believers better "see" the Truth when they study the Scriptures?*

**Elijah:** Sure. I can explain a few basic hermeneutical principles you should keep in mind as you read the Scriptures. But I'm certain that, in so doing, I'll incite a few idiot mystics who illogically argue that all anyone has to do is read the Scriptures and allow the "Spirit" to speak to them as they read. That asinine perspective doesn't even deserve recognition, except for the fact that it seems nearly everybody today has adopted some variation of it as an easy way out of the scriptural maze.

The principles I am going to give you here are nothing more than a specific subset of those that everybody subconsciously uses on a daily basis when they listen to what someone says or read what someone has

written. The Truth is, you must apply the same hermeneutical principles to the Scriptures that you apply to every other kind of human communication. If you don't do that, you can only end up with opinions and "best guesses." Therefore, those who refuse to concede that these principles pertain to the Scriptures do so only because they want to continue fabricating things as they go along. To put it bluntly, they want to continue lying about what the God of Truth has said.

The basic difficulty facing anyone reading the Scriptures is this: How in the world are they *meant* to be understood? I'll address that issue here only in a general sense. It would take several weeks to treat it in detail. That is due, in no small part, to the fact that one must have a fairly good understanding of the rituals of the ancient mystery religions before they can understand the *parabolic imagery* God has used in the Scriptures. I've already explained some of that imagery on The Next Step tapes. I plan to eventually explain everything in The Resurrection Theology Series. Eventually. But it's beginning to look like that may take a lot longer than I expected when I began.

In the last issue I mentioned that when we read the Bible, we are sometimes reading what someone has written, but as often as not we are at the same time reading what someone has said. So, although everything in the Scriptures exists only in written form, we still have to pay close attention to who the author or speaker of a statement is. That becomes extremely important when the author or speaker is an Apostle, Prophet, or Jesus Christ, because those folks were authorized to speak for God Himself.

However, the mere fact that a statement occurs in Scripture carries an importance in its own right. The Scriptures themselves are *objective revelation*—immediately presenting the divinely inspired words of God for the benefit of anyone who can read them *with understanding*. Therefore, no matter how mundane a statement may appear to be, we must strive to make sure that we actually *understand* what the author or speaker is trying to tell us. The reason for that will become apparent when I begin to explain the first of the seven messages in the Hebrew Scriptures. You will then see how God has hidden some of the most important details to be found in all the Hebrew Scriptures in what appear to be insignificant extraneous comments.

The first thing you need to get firmly fixed in your mind if you ever intend to understand the

message of the Scriptures is the fact that *meaning resides only in people*. Words are nothing more than symbols that carry the meaning they have been assigned by the person who uses them. If that were not so, there could never be more than one language because, if *meaning* resided in words, any given word could only *mean* one thing, and could never *mean* anything other than that one thing. That is an issue over which the ancient Greek philosophers agonized for quite some time, some arguing one way, some arguing the other. Yet it cannot logically be any other way. There are thousands of words and sounds that are the same in hundreds of different languages spoken around the world. Yet those words and sounds convey a variety of different *meanings*. Therefore, it is obvious that *meaning* does not reside in the words themselves. It continues to reside only in the person who uses those words as symbols to convey *meaning*.

The second thing you should remember when you read the Scriptures is something that is closely related to what I just said. Since *meaning* resides only in people, and words are nothing more than symbols that carry *meaning*, *a statement can never have more than one valid meaning*. That one valid *meaning* is the *meaning intended by the one who made the statement*. Even when the *meaning* is a double entendre, that double *meaning* is, in fact, nothing more than the one valid *meaning* intended by the author or speaker.

Because of the idiocy first propounded by Origen, a lot of folks in the Church today think the Scriptures have some sort of double *meaning*. That is, they think the human author *meant* one thing and God had a “higher meaning” in mind. Those who go for that bit of Satan’s bait believe they can say whatever they want to say and then claim it is the “higher meaning” God intended.

Anyone who believes that nonsense has no hope of ever coming to an accurate understanding of the *meaning* of the Scriptures. Instead, that person finds himself with no logical way to verify the *meaning* that God intended. All he has to rely on is a warm fuzzy feeling that God *meant* this or that. Satan has a field day with folks who follow the leading of warm fuzzy feelings. He is the master of those things. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to understand that the statements made in Scripture have only one valid *meaning*. That is because, through the inspiration God gave the authors of Scripture, He has used the words of Scripture to convey

the precise *meaning* He intended us to understand. However, it is just as important to keep in mind the fact that the *meaning* God intended does not reside in the words we find written in Scripture. Not at all. *That meaning continues to reside in God*. Therefore, it is our individual responsibility to determine what we believe to be the *meaning* God intended us to understand when we read the words of Scripture. We can do that only if we pay close attention to what we find written there.

If we accurately understand the statements made by the men who wrote the Scriptures, those statements have the power to evoke the same *meaning* in us that they have in God. If we don’t understand the statements we find in the Scriptures, however, their power completely eludes us, and we may as well be reading the story about Mother Goose for all the good it does us.

Under the conditions I have just outlined, you can easily see that it is possible for a person to say things that others could never understand. If you don’t believe that, just ask a cryptographer to explain what he does for a living. Folks like him can hide *meaning* so deep that it can only be deciphered by someone who has been given the “keys.” That brings up the third thing you should keep in mind when reading the Scriptures.

In order to communicate so that one’s intended *meaning* can be readily understood, *one must follow the accepted grammatical conventions in whatever language one happens to be using*. Simply put, that *means* one has not said anything intelligible unless one has stated things as others would normally expect such things to be stated. To put that same principle more mildly, one cannot deviate from accepted grammatical norms without creating ambiguity. That is never more important to keep in mind than in connection with the statements made in the Scriptures. God made sure the statements found in the Scriptures would always be ambiguous to anyone who has not been granted insight into their *meaning*. Yet the Scriptures always adhere to accepted grammatical conventions so that they can be readily understood.

In many cases, the Prophets made statements that were so ambiguous they were not understood even by the people of their own generation who heard what they said. However, that was not because the Prophets failed to use accepted grammatical conventions when they spoke. Not at all. It was because the people to whom the Prophets spoke did not

understand what the Prophets were *talking about!* To a certain extent, that accounts for the lack of insight in our own generation.

The message of the Scriptures is not understood today because *religious folks today do not understand what the Scriptures are talking about.* That's why, in *The Next Step*, I do not usually explain the *meaning* of specific statements made in the Scriptures; I merely explain what this or that passage is *talking about.* That is normally enough for a True Believer to grasp the *meaning* of a text on his own, provided the translation he is reading hasn't put a weird spin on the original *meaning* of the text.

If the Lord is willing, I'll eventually get around to explaining the *meaning* of the biblical text in greater detail. Someday. That's when I'll tell you what this or that text is actually saying. But there's no immediate need for that right now. True Believers must first be coaxed into giving up the helter-skelter, hocus-pocus approach to reading the Scriptures that Satan has foisted off on the Church. Then we can talk specifics.

To get back to what I was saying, the Scriptures were *meant* to be understood in terms of the accepted grammatical conventions of three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Those are the languages in which they were written. A copy of the Scriptures in any other language is just a translation of those three original languages.

That brings us to the fourth thing you should remember when you read the Scriptures: *Any translation of the Scriptures is, by definition, an interpretation.* In every case, the translator has given us a translation that *he believed* would best convey what *he believed* to be the *meaning* God intended the original text to convey. Anyone who argues otherwise is merely trying to fill up the vacant space between his ears.

It is crucially important to realize that every translation of the Scriptures is, at heart, an interpretation. That is, a translator must always interpret the biblical text before he can translate it. That being the case, a translation can convey the *meaning* God originally intended only to the extent that the translator *actually understood* what God *meant* for the reader to understand in the first place. Obviously, a translator cannot do that unless he has thoroughly mastered the accepted grammatical conventions of the Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek of the original text.

Linguistic skills vary from one translator to the next. Some translators are masters of the original languages of the Bible, others mere apprentices. Yet I can tell you with absolute confidence that every translation of the Scriptures available today has misrepresented the *meaning* of the original text to one degree or another. That's not because the translators did not understand the grammatical conventions of the original language, however. It's because they did not understand what the Scriptures are *talking about!*

That leads me to the fifth principle you should keep in mind as you read the Scriptures: *Every statement made in the Scriptures must be understood in terms of the total context in which it was made.* That total context includes much more than just the immediate literary context. In other words, it is not enough to understand the author's purpose in writing. The total context of the Scriptures includes such things as the historical and cultural environment in which a statement was made, the social setting in which the author or speaker lived, the immediate purpose of the author or speaker in making the statement, and the type of literature in which the statement occurs.

Most importantly, the total context includes the overall purpose God had in mind when He inspired different people to write the various parts of the Scriptures. That's where a knowledge of the ancient mystery religions becomes paramount. Without an understanding of how God has spoken *parabolically* in the Scriptures in terms of imagery He appropriated from these religions, one is again left groping for *meaning* on the basis of little more than a "best guess" or intuition. I don't know about you, but I tend to shy away from folks who put much confidence in those kinds of things.

This is what the principle of interpreting every statement according to its total context *means* in practical terms: If you want to understand any one part of the Scriptures, you must first understand God's purpose in inspiring the entirety of the Scriptures. In other words, the context of any one passage of Scripture includes its literary context as a part of the cumulative Scriptures. Therefore, to understand any one passage, you must pay especially close attention to what the Scriptures have told you happened prior to the part you want to understand.

To put it rather bluntly, if you don't fully understand *WHAT* has been said before, you certainly don't

know WHAT is being said now. And to compound that difficulty, if you don't understand WHAT is said later, you have no idea WHY something is being said now. That's nothing more than the same old issue of understanding both the *meaning* and the *significance* of a statement. I have already explained all that in *Not All Israel Is Israel* [Editor: See *Not All Israel Is Israel*, pp. 111 ff.] and *The Way, The Truth, The Life*.

Now that I've given you five basic hermeneutical principles you should keep in mind when reading the Scriptures, let me tie them all together in one tidy little package. As I said before, the words you find written in the Scriptures are intended to *convey but one meaning*. That *meaning* is the Truth. It is the Word of God. However, *the Word of God does not reside in the words you find written in the text of Scripture. It resides in God as the Living Word of God*. It also resides in Jesus Christ, Who is Himself the *Living Word of God*—the visible manifestation of God Himself in this realm.

That being the case, if you *understand and believe* the precise *meaning* that God intended the words of Scripture to convey to you, *those written words can evoke the same meaning in you that they have in God and in Jesus Christ*. Thereafter, the same *Living Word of God* that resides in God will also reside in you.

In case you missed it, I have just described the supernatural event that is described in the Scriptures as the "new birth." The new birth is nothing more than a transference—from God to you—of an accurate insight into the *meaning* of the *Living Word of God*. That insight is what the ancient Greeks called a "spirit." The transference of the *Living Word of God* from God to you can only occur under very narrowly defined circumstances, however. You must first hear and understand the Truth of the simple Gospel message of salvation. Then you must demonstrate your belief in that message by repenting and submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord. When you fully meet those requirements, you will be born again in a sudden flash of insight into the basic Truth that the Scriptures seek to convey. But take note: The new birth begins with the preaching of the Truth of the Gospel. If you hear a twisted or distorted version of the Gospel message, you cannot—and will not—be born again.

The new birth is a miracle. It is an incredibly life-transforming experience. It is not anything at all like the work-it-up, make-it-up, think-so, maybe-so experience it has been made out to be in the Church

today. The person who has been born again doesn't "think" they have been born again. They know. That's because they experience an internal change. I should tell you, however, that I'm not saying anything new in regard to the new birth. I'm just telling you what most evangelical Christians understood a century or so ago. That Truth has somehow gotten mangled along the way, however, so I thought I should remind "evangelical" folks of their Christian heritage. Maybe then a few will be able to see through Satan's lie.

The miracle of the new birth happened all the time in the evangelical wing of the Church one hundred and fifty years ago. Contrary to what the agents of Satan would have you believe, however, it seldom happens at all in the Church today. People just pretend that it does. That's because, contrary to what folks are being told, not everybody who goes through some mumbo jumbo ritual of asking God to forgive them is going to be born again.

An understanding of God's requirements and a completely honest desire to submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ are absolutely essential on the part of anyone who comes to the Lord seeking salvation. Not many fit that bill. The greatest Evangelist of the nineteenth century, Charles Finney, understood all that a century and a half ago. He even wrote several books on the subject. But his insight has either been ignored or else forgotten by most of those who call themselves "evangelists" today.

There are still some Evangelists who are faithfully preaching the Truth of the Gospel. Unfortunately, there are not nearly as many today as there were three or four decades ago. But there are still a few. So I'm not saying there are not a lot of born-again Believers in the Church. I'm just saying there are not all that many being added today. That's because, over the past half century, evangelical "Christians" have gradually corrupted the salvation message to the point where the Truth is no longer as readily available as it used to be. Therefore, the Truth of the Gospel that God provided is not often understood even by those who want to know the Truth. Again, that's only because God has been setting the stage so that Pretenders would readily accept the delusion of the Antichrist when he appears.

It is not enough just to be born again, however. Anyone who believes the new birth is the be-all-to-end-all experience has fallen victim to another of Satan's lies. The new birth merely gives True Believers

the ability to recognize the Truth when they hear it. It does not impart to them an understanding of the totality of God's Truth. If it did, True Believers would not even need to read the Scriptures! They would already know the Truth! So it is obvious God expects His Children to go on to attain a greater knowledge of His Truth after they have been born again. The question is, How are they supposed to do that? The obvious answer is, by seeking to understand what He has said in the Scriptures.

If a True Believer ever expects to understand what God intends him to understand when he reads the Scriptures, however, he must either be able to read the Scriptures in the original languages or else rely on somebody else to interpret the Scriptures for him. That's because *the Scriptures can only be understood in terms of the grammatical conventions of the language in which they were originally written*. Lacking the ability to read the Scriptures in the languages in which they were originally written, the True Believer is restricted to reading a translation. That has some rather serious ramifications.

We have already determined that every translation is, by definition, an interpretation of God's Word. That *means* anyone who reads a translation of the Scriptures rather than the original text is depending on the translator to interpret the original text for him. Therefore, he has already admitted he needs a Teacher who can tell him what the Scriptures have to say. I did not say he needed a Teacher. He did. Nonetheless, I agree. Every True Believer needs a Teacher to tell him what God would have him understand. That's why Paul said what he did in the fourth chapter of the Book of Ephesians, where he tells us the Teacher is one of the "gifts" God gave for "building" the Church.

Paul was speaking in terms of the *parabolic image* of the Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, and Teachers "building a house" for God. You can see that for yourself if you read what he went on to say about the "foundation" of "The House" at the end of the chapter. My point here is this: if God didn't expect True Believers to listen to what His divinely appointed Teachers taught, He never would have commissioned them to help the Apostles, Prophets, and Evangelists "build" His "house." But I guess most folks already knew that. You can't teach some people anything they don't already know.

Now let me explain why an understanding of the total context of the Scriptures is so important to understanding individual statements made in the Scriptures. Let's say you are one of thousands of attendees who have been invited to attend a week-long conference to receive a briefing concerning your participation in a new building project. On the first day, the attendees are apprised of the nature and purpose of the project. Over the next four days, they receive an in-depth explanation of all the details related to the project.

In your case, you show up on the fifth day right after the conference has ended. All that you are provided is a summary of events which includes various statements made during the conference. Nowhere in the summary can you find a concise explanation of all that was explained to the attendees over the course of the entire conference. Therefore, it is obvious to you that you can only learn the details concerning what was said by asking someone who attended the conference to explain it for you. Lacking that, you will have to piece the information together from comments made in the written summary.

Lest you think my illustration entirely inappropriate, that's exactly what the Scriptures are: a written summary of how God explained His building project to those responsible for "building." To be more specific, the Scriptures explain *parabolically* how God has gone about "building His house" down through the Ages. Instead of covering a week, however, the written summary you find in the Scriptures covers thousands of years. You see, God began "building His house" at the same time that He began explaining all the details related to the project. However, He has continued "building His house" for nearly two thousand years after He said all that He had to say.

God explained the project in detail to those who attended the conference while it was in session, but the only information we have now concerning what He said is what we find recorded in the Scriptures. Since all of those who attended the conference have long since died and gone on to their eternal reward, we are left to put those things together on our own.

In case you missed it, I have just told you *what the Scriptures are*. They are a summary of historical events. They tell us what happened at various points in time and space as God explained how He has "built a house" in which He will dwell for all eternity.

However, in telling you that, I have not told you anything at all about *what God's purpose was in inspiring the authors of Scripture to write what they wrote*. That is a completely separate issue. Lacking knowledge of God's ultimate purpose in the Scriptures, you will still not be able to understand specific statements made in them.

If you don't understand that the Scriptures are describing how *the promise of God* made its way from the One Who is the Beginning back to the One Who is the End, you certainly don't understand much at all about the overall context in which all the statements of Scripture occur. Not understanding that, you undoubtedly don't understand the *significance* of most of the statements made in the Hebrew Scriptures either. I'm sure you understand a lot of things in the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures just because they are stated generally. But I am just as certain that you don't know how all those things fit together into one unified whole.

I am confident that you do not understand the message of the Hebrew Scriptures because I know that *nobody* today understands the totality of the message God intended the words of Scripture to convey. It's been that way since the Church walked away from *The Apostolic Teaching* some eighteen hundred years ago. Moreover, that's exactly the way God intended it to be all along. He planned it so that only those who have an absolute *love for the Truth* would ever gain and retain the insight necessary to avoid Satan's delusion. He knew that all others would show themselves to be unworthy of eternal life by rejecting the Truth when they had opportunity to hear it. It's been that way for the past 3500 years at least.

**Editor:** *You mentioned translations. Can you tell us what you believe to be the best English translation of the Bible available today and why that is?*

**Elijah:** Sure. Provided you understand I'm just giving you my opinion. In my opinion, opinions are a dime a dozen. Everybody has one. In this case, mine is probably worth a little less than that because I don't normally work with an English translation unless I'm explaining something in the text to others. I usually work with a copy of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures on the computer. So I may not be the "best" person to answer the question you just asked.

The question is "best" for what? I prefer the King James Version for memorization because I find it easier to memorize. At my age, I need all the help I can get. However, I prefer the New American Standard version as a study Bible because its stated purpose is to give the reader a literal translation of the original text. I teach from that translation because the Hebrew idioms in the original text are normally translated literally. That makes it easier for me to point them out when I teach.

To tell you the truth, however, there may be a "better" literal translation than the NASB. I haven't bothered to look at any of the newer translations. I have thousands of hours worth of notes scribbled all over my New American Standard Bible, and I could never transfer some of those things to another translation. That's because I have most of them tied mentally to the specific point in time when I made them. Since most of my notes go back twenty years and more, I haven't been in the market for a "better" translation.

In general, however, I would say that the more literal a translation is, the better it is for study purposes. Even the New American Standard Bible is sometimes disappointing in that regard. Once in a while I find the translator has translated a Hebrew idiom by giving what he assumed to be its English equivalent. Sometimes he missed the mark completely. That complicates my task by making me resurrect the original before I can explain what the text is *talking about*. I would rather not do that to begin with. But even after I explain what is in the original text, the reader still doesn't have a literal translation in front of him. That's why I've been working on my own translation of the biblical text for more than fifteen years. But I wouldn't recommend it as the "best" for anything. My intention is that it will eventually provide a literal translation along the lines of the New American Standard version that I can copyright along with my own commentary on the biblical text.

As you know, I've been distributing the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs to The Next Step participants for well over a year now. Before long, I'll start distributing the first few chapters of the Book of Genesis as well. There's nothing "better" about my translation of either passage. It's just that I find it easier to point out certain things that are stated in the biblical text when certain Hebrew words and phrases have been translated consistently throughout.



*Editor: Another question related to the issue of Bible study is the importance of a good exhaustive Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek concordance. To be quite truthful, I'm not sure I would have believed all the things you've taught me over the years if it weren't for my concordance. That allowed me to "check you out" to see if what you said concerning the actual meaning of words in the original language was accurate. Can you explain why a concordance is a valuable tool for a True Believer to use if they hope to have confidence that what you teach (or anyone teaches) is true?*

*Elijah:* (chuckling) I'm not surprised to hear you admit you have had difficulty believing all the things I've taught. Nor am I surprised that you've been checking things out in a concordance. I've gotten questions from several of those who are participating in The Next Step program, asking why they couldn't find this or that in their concordance. That merely points out the fact that those who have "a love for the truth" are not going to blindly accept anything I have to say. They are going to check it out for themselves. And if they actually believe what I have taught them concerning Satan's true nature as the father of all lies, they are probably going to check out the things I say even more assiduously before they choose to believe them.

On the issue of concordances, I certainly recommend that folks learn how to use one if they ever intend to understand the Truth. However, about all I know about biblical concordances in English is that *Young's* and *Strong's* are still available. I'm certainly not the "best" person to ask for recommendations as to which one is "better." I've heard people say that *Strong's* is. That's probably because its every entry is cross-referenced to a Hebrew or Greek word in an abridged Hebrew or Greek lexicon at the back.

On the subject of how to use a concordance, about all I know is how I've used them. I worked with concordances in the original languages all the time until I got a copy of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures on the computer a few years back. I used to spend days looking up all the passages where one or two Hebrew words occurred in the Hebrew Scriptures. Then I would track the usage of those terms through the Greek Septuagint and into the New Testament. By the time I had done the same thing with all the related words I uncovered during that search, however, I would sometimes have spent several weeks going

back and forth in the Scriptures, looking up verses in the Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and English text. Now, with the computer, I can do the same thing in a few hours. So the only thing I miss about the "old days" is all the notes I used to make in my Bible.

I still have an old copy of *Young's Concordance* that I bought nearly thirty years ago. I used to use it when I wanted to find a specific text in the King James Bible. But now that it only takes me a second or two to get a complete listing of all the passages in which any given word occurs in one of the original languages or in one of several different English translations, I've pretty much gotten away from the time-consuming task of looking something up in a book.

The only time I check a concordance now is when I find a word in the computer text that I think has been categorized incorrectly. Then I look it up in an exhaustive concordance in the original language. I've found a few words that have been tagged as something else in the software that I use so, needless to say, I'm not quick to recommend the program to others. But it works for me. That's why I haven't bothered looking for something "better." For the most part, I'm not interested in any exhaustive treatment of specific words anyway. I have more than enough evidence to demonstrate my point any time I run a list.

I noticed recently that the software I use for cutting and pasting text from the New American Standard Bible has a utility that allows it to be used in conjunction with *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*. If you know the number of an entry in *Strong's*, the software will bring up the NASB translation of all the verses where that word occurs in the original text. I haven't used the utility myself because I don't have a copy of *Strong's Concordance*. But for someone working only with the English, that may be the easiest way to go. The software is available for both Macintosh and Windows. [Editor: For information call American Bible Sales at 1-800-535-5131.]

I've also noticed that Parson's Technology offers quite a bit of Bible study software for those using a PC with Windows. They have software for accessing *Strong's Concordance* as well as something they call *The New American Standard Exhaustive Concordance*. I have no idea how useful either of those two programs are. But anything on computer has got to be better than nothing at all. I saw that Parson's also has a program on CD-ROM called *Hebrew Tutor* for those folks who

want to learn Biblical Hebrew. I've considered evaluating that program to see if you could offer it through *The Voice of Elijah*® newsletter, or at least recommend it to your readers. [Editor: You can call Parson's Technology at 1-800-223-6925.] I'm sure there must be something available for learning Koine Greek as well.

Being able to get around in the original languages would be the ideal for anyone who wants to know whether or not what I teach is true. If people can do nothing more than recognize Hebrew or Greek words, they can always pick one particular word out of a list and bring up an interlinear text in which each verse in the original language appears with an English translation. I do that all the time with the software I use to access the Hebrew and Greek text. That provides me the equivalent of a concordance, and it saves me an incredible amount of time when I'm doing research. If all the Hebrew and Greek words in the software I use were categorized correctly, the system would be perfect. But even the best concordance has a few words out of place, so I'm not complaining.

*Editor: You mentioned Satan earlier, and just now you mentioned saving time. I know it continues to be a struggle for you to find the time you need to do all that you believe God would have you do. Obviously, if you have truly been called by God to restore The Apostolic Teaching, Satan is no doubt doing his best to keep you from finding the time you need. For the sake of instructing our readers, can you provide us a little insight into some of the tactics Satan has used on you personally so that True Believers might better recognize how Satan is likely working in their lives as well?*

*Elijah:* That's something I'd love to do. I have an unmitigated hatred for that fool, not just because he kept me in the dark for so long, but also because he is such an abject coward that he can't stand for anyone to see who he actually is. To be able to thwart Satan's "tactics," True Believers must first understand who he is and what he is seeking to accomplish in their lives. Without that, they may as well be shooting a popgun at a Sherman tank.

In regard to Satan's true identity, let me say this: Jesus said somewhere in the Gospel of John that Satan is a liar and the father of all lies. He also implied that Satan is the father of all those who choose to believe his lies. I'll let your readers look up that passage in

their concordance. It'll be good practice for them. [Editor: It's John 8:44.] Jesus' point is, Satan is the source of all lies. My point is, Satan makes up his lies in order to deceive people, to get them to believe something that is not true.

Please listen carefully to what I am saying. The fundamental objective that Satan seeks to achieve in everyone's life is to get them to firmly believe some lie that contradicts God's Truth. That's why he lies. But it is essential to understand why every other "tactic" he uses is merely contributory to this particular one.

Contrary to what Satan would have you believe, his greatest power is not to be found in white magic, black magic, voodoo magic, or any other kind of magic. It's not even to be found in demon possession, the occult, or haunted houses. Satan just wants you to think of him in those terms. His greatest power is the power to make you believe something other than God's Truth. Therefore, he will lie to you about anything and everything. That includes lying to you about who he actually is—an individual who will lie to you about anything and everything, including who he actually is.

The Truth is, Satan controls people through the lies that he is able to get them to believe. He lies to us about all sorts of things because he knows he can get us to do and say the things he wants us to do and say. The important thing to understand, however, is that the lie is to Satan what the writer of the Book of Hebrews calls the "power of death" [Editor: Heb. 2:14]. Consequently, you will find that he has crafted some incredibly shrewd lies concerning what God has said in the Scriptures. He knows that the Truth of the *Living Word* of God, that is, the true *meaning* of the Scriptures, holds the "power of life." Satan also knows that if he can get you to believe something that contradicts God's Truth, you will remain in his bondage. That's why Jesus said what He did about Himself being the Truth and the Truth being able to set you free [Editor: John 14:6; 8:32]. He was *talking about* Himself as the "Spirit" of Truth that resides in God.

If you check your concordance, you will find Jesus said "the truth shall make you free" in the context of *talking about* Satan as the father of all lies. That's because the battle that rages between the forces of good and the forces of evil is a battle for control of the minds of men. Paul had that in mind when he said the goal of the Christian "walk" is to destroy speculations

that contradict the Truth God has provided in the Scriptures:

*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. {We are} destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and {we are} taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.  
(2 Corinthians 10:3–5)*

Paul knew that only belief in the Truth will save you. Believing a lie that contradicts certain parts of God's Truth will gain you nothing more than a one-way ticket to Hell. On one occasion, Jesus plainly told His disciples that His words held the power to give them life [Editor: John 6:63]. Yet nobody in the Church today seems to be paying much attention to the fact that knowledge of the Truth is as vitally important as it actually is. Instead, they remain firmly convinced as to the "truth" of one of Satan's most effective lies—that some mystical "new-birth" experience provides them the only "knowledge" of God that they need. That is because most who claim to be "Christians" today are Pretenders. Pretenders don't care whether or not what they believe is true. Their only concern is that it makes them feel secure. You and I know they have a vested interest in continuing to believe Satan's lies. Otherwise, they would have to admit who they actually are. They can't do that because they are liars, and liars always find it easier to lie than to face the Truth.

Although the liars in the Church will probably deny it, Satan controls anyone who believes his lies in the same way that God controls anyone who believes the Truth. That's just another way of saying what I've been saying all along: We all act in accordance with what we believe. I've said it before, but I'll say it again, not because I want to be monotonous but because it is true: The most effective lie is the one that comes closest to being true. You can deceive anyone if you tell them a lie that contains just enough Truth to sound plausible.

Now you know why Satan's agents continually fabricate lies that are nothing more than a slight distortion of the Gospel message. You and I have both seen "evangelists" preach the Gospel perfectly, only

to come up short at the end. In so doing, they do little more than herd a few more Pretenders into the conservative churches. Some of those Pretenders will go on to become leaders in those churches. As agents of Satan, the goal of their "ministry" will be deceiving people into believing some lie that tells them they have been born again. So tell me now, what part of the Church do you think Satan is seeking to rule with an iron hand here at the End?

Peter couldn't have stated the Truth more clearly than he did when he said the power of God has granted us life through the knowledge of Him [Editor: 2 Pet. 1:3]. He wasn't *talking about* all the mystical and experiential "feel good" nonsense you hear the agents of Satan doling out today to the unsuspecting. He had in mind a rock-solid understanding of specific things that he knew were stated in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus Christ revealed the *meaning* of those things to Peter and the other Apostles immediately after His Resurrection [Editor: Luke 24:27–45; Acts 1:3].

Luke doesn't tell us what Jesus taught His disciples over the forty days He spent with them after His Resurrection. But anyone who understands the first of the seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures can plainly see that it included an explanation of the plan and purpose of God in "building a house" in this Creation. That much is obvious since Peter gives us a summary statement regarding that particular *parabolic* message in his first epistle [Editor: 1 Pet. 1:22–2:10].

I know that we as humans tend to think of lying in terms of making up things that we know are not true. God doesn't look at it that way. You see, God knows that Satan normally uses one individual to craft a lie that contradicts His Truth and then uses other individuals to spread it. Therefore, He sometimes considers people to be lying when they are merely repeating something they have heard someone else say. However, God also knows that not everyone is intentionally spreading lies that contradict His Word. That's why He *makes a distinction* based on the condition of a person's "heart." If a person wants to know the Truth but is bound by one of Satan's lies, God considers him innocent in spite of the fact that he believes and perhaps even unwittingly spreads a lie. If a person doesn't actually want to know the Truth, however, God knows that he is using

Satan's lies as a convenient way to hide from the Truth. Therefore, He judges him guilty.

You have often heard me refer to what the Apostle Paul wrote in the fourth chapter of the Book of Ephesians. I know I've mentioned it on *The Way, The Truth, The Life* tapes and several times on The Next Step tapes, but let me read the passage for you one more time, not so much for you as for me. Every time I read this passage I marvel at the succinct way Paul stated the marvelous reality that a knowledge of the Truth brings to the True Believer:

*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)

I absolutely love that passage, not just because it states the facts of the matter so cogently, but also because it tells me what I must avoid—the “lusts of deceit.” “Deceit” is just another way of saying “lies.” I read that passage to you, however, because the phrase “lusts of deceit” brings up a second “tactic” that Satan uses to control people.

When Satan cannot get you to readily believe a lie that contradicts some essential part of God's Truth, or when he wants to make sure that you firmly believe a lie on which you are currently wavering, he will invariably resort to a tactic that quite often succeeds when all else fails. He will play directly on what the Apostles called the “lusts of the flesh.” Before you can understand how Satan works on a person using the “lusts of deceit,” you must first understand what the “lusts of the flesh” are.

The word that is most often translated “lust” in the New Testament is actually just a word (ἐπιθυμία) that means “desire.” It does not have an inherently negative connotation in and of itself. Jesus even used the verbal form of the term when He told His disciples He *desired* to eat the Passover meal with them [Editor: Luke 22:15]. The negative connotation *lust* comes from the use of the term in conjunction with the term *flesh*. On top of that, however, Satan has also ensured that the English term *lust* has picked up a specifically sexual nuance along the way. He has done that to make sure that few would ever stop to consider the broad spectrum of things that are actually covered under the rubric “lusts of the flesh.”

I don't even use the term *lust* when I am referring to the “lusts of the flesh” mentioned in the New Testament. Instead, I speak in terms of “wants.” That allows me to include all the things the Apostles were referring to when they spoke in terms of the “lusts of the flesh.” The Truth is, anything you “want” can become a “lust” if you allow the desire for it to control you. That includes doing all the right things—if you “want” to do them for the wrong reason.

Satan can easily leverage the “wants” of the flesh because the person who “wants” something—no matter what—will more readily believe any lie that will allow them to have what they “want.” You can see, then, that the person who “wants” something—anything at all—is a prime candidate for Satan's deception. The stronger the “want,” the stronger will be the depth of Satan's deception. That's why I tell people to back away from “wanting” anything.

Look at it this way: The person who “wants” something must be somewhat discontent with what he already has. That's why the verse I quote most often when I teach people counter-tactics they can use against Satan is what the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy:

*But godliness with contentment is great gain.*  
(1 Timothy 6:6) —KJV

The things I have explained are two of Satan's most potent “tactics.” They are fairly obvious to see and not all that difficult to understand. But you know, now that I think about it, I seriously doubt that many “Christians” even think twice when they read what Paul said about the “schemes of the devil”:

*Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual {forces} of wickedness in the heavenly {places.}*  
(Ephesians 6:11–12)

I've heard preachers dance glibly past those two verses and jump right into the list of things that Paul gives as the "armor" a True Believer can use against Satan. They should spend a bit more time trying to determine what the "schemes of Satan" actually are. If they understood that "darkness" is a *parabolic image* for ignorance of God's Truth—an ignorance produced by believing Satan's lies—maybe then they would better understand why Paul lists the various pieces of "armor" that he does. But even then they would not understand how Paul could so confidently tell the Corinthians "we are not ignorant of his schemes":

*But whom you forgive anything, I {forgive} also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, {I did it} for your sakes in the presence of Christ, in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.*  
(2 Corinthians 2:10–11)

In that passage, Paul is *talking about* the fact that Satan loves to drive people into some hole in hopes that they will find it impossible to get out. The specific hole Paul mentioned to the Corinthians is the one associated with not forgiving others. That's one of Satan's more obvious "schemes." He knows that God will not forgive anyone who refuses to forgive someone else.

The Apostle Paul knew that Satan places a top priority on deceiving anyone who has been born again. He also knew that it is not all that difficult for the unwary Believer to fall into unbelief. He mentions those things time and time again in his epistles. Yet most folks today don't even know what he is *talking about*. Why? Because they believe some lie of Satan that prevents them from seeing and believing the Truth. They should be concerned with making sure they still believe the same Truth they heard and believed when they were born again. Unfortunately, many of them have already given up that Truth.

I could go on for hours *talking about* the "tactics" Satan uses and the counter-tactics True Believers can use to shut him down instantly. For example, I could explain all about the "winds" and how they "whisper" to us continually from the time we are children, training us to view things from their warped perspective. I could even explain how Satan uses "vectors" to accomplish his specific objectives in this realm—what I call his "one person, one place, one time" tactic. But none of that would do you any good at all if you don't understand the things I have explained in The Next Step tapes over the past couple of years. A house is not built in a day, so you certainly shouldn't expect God's "house" to be any different. Everything will come in its own time.

Without a solid "foundation" to support it, the product of a lot of hard work can come crashing down in an instant. That's all I've been doing up to this point—establishing a "foundation" on which you can "build" an understanding of all the things I have yet to show you from the Hebrew Scriptures. When I finally begin to explain those things, you will understand why the "foundation" has taken so long to "build."

*Editor: Speaking of the "foundation" you have "built" over the past five years, it has become somewhat of a tradition here at The Voice of Elijah® to ask you each year at this time to survey the past year and comment on one or two significant events that meant something special to you. Before I do that, I'm going to dig a little deeper and ask you if there are one or two events over the past five years that stand above the rest as being especially significant or gratifying to you personally. To help you with your memory and to also better inform recent subscribers (and remind long-time ones) of the things which have happened in this ministry in the past, let me list some highlights of the past five years that I see as significant.*

*In October of 1990 the premier issue of The Voice of Elijah® newsletter appeared and this ministry was off and running. In late 1991, you completed your first book in The Resurrection Theology Series, Not All Israel Is Israel. Then, in early 1992, you uncovered some phenomenal information pertaining to the Early Church's understanding of the advent of the Antichrist, so you put together the book The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist.*

*At that time you became understandably excited because you finally understood why God had called you in 1966 to do what you are now doing—restoring The Apostolic Teaching. Then, in June of 1992, you began producing The Voice of Elijah® Update as a supplement to the newsletter for those who were willing to help support our ministry by becoming regular Monthly Contributors. A year later, in June of 1993, you started producing monthly audiotapes (in addition to the newsletters and Updates) to instruct True Believers on a higher level if they would take The Next Step and make the ministry of The Voice of Elijah® their own by providing even greater financial support.*

*In October 1993, you taught a two-day seminar that became the basis for the audiotape series The Way, The Truth, The Life. Finally, over the past year you have also gotten closer to ridding yourself of the proverbial “monkey on your back” through your ongoing efforts to complete the first volume of The Mystery of Scripture. In addition to all these things, and in large part because of these things, I know that you are personally continuing to grow in your own knowledge and understanding of The Apostolic Teaching. So, with all these things being a part of the past five years, can you pick one or two that really stand out above the rest as being special to you?*

**Elijah:** That would be coming across the things I included in *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*. That was one of the most gratifying things I had experienced up to that point in time. I’ve known for nearly thirty years, since August 17, 1966, that God called me to do something different than what others in the Church were doing. I had no idea what that was for nearly fifteen years, and even then an understanding of my calling came to me gradually over the span of several more years. But that’s probably only because I’ve always had a tendency to stand around, wasting time, waiting for someone to tell me exactly what they want me to do. God has never dealt with me that way, and I don’t expect Him to start now. But as I look back over the years since God called me, the only regret I have is that I have wasted so much time because I didn’t understand everything He wanted me to understand. Yet I can clearly see the fault has been all mine in that regard.

I’ve known since April 1974 that I could see a lot of the same things in the Hebrew Scriptures that Jesus

Christ and the Apostles *talk about* in the New Testament—things that scholars don’t even know are hidden there. I’ve known since May 1981 that God called me to *restore* the Truth the Apostles taught the Early Church and teach it to True Believers. I have also understood a lot of things related to the *parabolic image* of Elijah and the “latter rain” since that time.

But it wasn’t until April 1992, when I uncovered the Truth concerning the Antichrist, that I finally understood why God had called me to do what I’ve been trying to do for the past twenty-five years. Being able to understand those things after so long a time was an immense relief to me. In some ways, it was sort of like hearing that “other shoe” drop. In other ways, knowing where the Antichrist would appear and what he would do to True Believers put an entirely different light on my ministry. I’m still not exactly sure what to do with what I understand about all that. I haven’t done much of anything yet, which is—now that I think about it—probably the wisest thing I’ve done in a long time. I have certainly fouled things up royally any time I’ve done something without first having a firm conviction that God would have me do it.

*Editor: Since you were nice enough to answer the last question, would you mind doing the same thing with regard to this past year? Would you comment on one or two significant events that meant something special to you?*

**Elijah:** Certainly. I can state unequivocally that the entirety of this past year has been the most incredible time of my life. I have seen things in the Scriptures, in myself, and in others that have completely transformed the way I look at life, at myself, and at everybody around me. I know I’ve mentioned some of what has happened to me in the things I’ve written and said over the past year. But I can summarize a few of those things quickly here.

Phenomenal things began to happen in late January when I finally was able to see where Satan had kept me deceived in one particular area of my life for nearly fifteen years. Immediately after I saw how I had believed Satan’s lie, God began working and He hasn’t stopped since. That is evident in the fact that He continues to answer prayers for all sorts of things, in some cases immediately.

I can look back now at some of the things I have written over the past year and see how Satan was desperately trying to find a way to keep me deceived even while God was working to make sure that I would finally see the Truth. For example, until God stepped in last August and gave me a couple of new-born Believers to teach, I had never witnessed the miracle of the new birth up close and personal. So I had next to nothing to go on when someone told me they had been pretending but now they had suddenly been born again. How was I to know whether or not that was true? All I could do was wait and see what sort of evidence they provided one way or the other. I certainly didn't have the experience of an Evangelist like Charles Finney. He saw thousands of people experience the new birth under his preaching. Yet he mentions over and over in his books that he knew many who responded to his preaching were not born again even though they said they were. I had no idea how he knew that.

Like you, I knew what had happened in my own life when I was born again, but I had to give the benefit of the doubt to anyone who confessed they had been a Pretender and then claimed to have been born again. Although I knew the new birth had completely transformed my own life, I didn't realize that anyone who experiences the same phenomenal transformation that you and I did when we were born again will be a different person *immediately*. They don't have to work it up, make it up, or imagine anything. *They are completely different than they were just a few seconds before, and they know it.* Consequently, they show it. *Immediately*. You don't have to wait for a newborn Believer to "grow in the Lord" or demonstrate anything. You can tell they have been born again just by talking to them.

The spiritual birth of two people within just a few days of each other was one of the most phenomenal things I have ever witnessed. I knew those two people as well as anyone can know another person. I had watched them both respond to the everyday circumstances of life for nearly fifteen years. I could almost predict their reaction to any and every circumstance. Suddenly, the day after they were born again I found myself scrambling to catch up with them because they had a completely different perspective on a whole host of things. I'm still caught off guard when they respond one way and I'm expecting a

completely different response. It is a constant reminder to me that God is the One in charge and not a whole lot worthwhile is going to be accomplished in my ministry until His Spirit moves to "build the house" according to His plan. The psalmist understood that, but I sometimes need to be reminded:

*Unless the LORD builds the house,  
They labor in vain who build it.  
(Psalm 127:1a)*

I realize apologizing and self-abasement are not good homiletical practices. But since I'm not preaching, I'll just apologize in advance for belittling myself. I have a distinct tendency to be "pure dumb and absolute stupid" when I don't have someone giving me detailed instructions and reminding me of what I should already know. I've proven that far too many times in my walk with the Lord over the past thirty-five years. I can readily admit that now, however, only because I know that anyone who thinks they aren't every bit as "pure dumb and absolute stupid" as I have been is even more so than I ever was. Socrates may have been a pretentious intellectual air-head, but he had at least that much right. Wisdom certainly does begin with humility.

I should also mention one other event that occurred this year. It is, of all the experiences I have ever had in my walk with the Lord, by far the most incredible. I continually survey the past twenty-one years, recalling how I first came to understand the various things I have seen in the Hebrew Scriptures. I remember how excited I was when I first saw that Jesus Christ became *Corporate* Israel through the divine process of "cutting off" individual members "from" Israel. I can still vividly remember how, while sitting in the Bucknell University library and scanning a book on ancient Roman Law, I confirmed that Jesus Christ had transferred *the promise* to the *heirs of the promise* by means of an oral will. The same holds true for the day that I thought I heard a voice behind me say, "'Build a house' means 'raise up a name.'" Those things are as vivid in my mind as the things that happened to me when God called me in 1966.

I have had sudden bursts of insight into the Gospel message of Jesus Christ that is hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures time and time again over the past twenty-one years. And every time that I have seen

just a little bit more of the Truth God has hidden there, I have gotten all stirred up inside, wanting to know even more. But this past January I had a sudden burst of insight that left me completely astounded. I babbled on about what I had seen for several days because I simply could not believe that anything of that magnitude could be hidden so well, yet be so easy to understand and make so much sense when put together with everything else I have seen. So let me tell you a bit about what I saw.

I've mentioned before that Jesus Christ has already removed the seals from the first four messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. Those four messages are "The House," "The Way," "The Light," and "The Name." Every one of those messages explains Who Jesus Christ is and what God has done in terms of a different *parabolic image*. I understood all that prior to last January. But one afternoon in late January it suddenly became clear to me that the apparent contradictions in the Creation Account of Genesis 1–3 had been put there intentionally to mock anyone who would be stupid enough to try to reconcile them in any way other than what God intended. That's when the creation of man in God's "image" and the *parabolic image* of the "Sabbath rest" came sharply into focus. I was stunned!

By that time, I had already explained some of the *parabolic imagery* related to the Passover and the eternal Sabbath on The Next Step tapes. Yet when I was able to see through what appeared to be contradictions in the Creation Account, the things I saw there immediately came together with the things I had taught on The Next Step tapes as well as with a lot of other things I have never taught anyone. Together, they formed one amazing *parabolic image* that describes God's purpose in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ in incredible detail!

I have seen bits and pieces of the scriptural puzzle come together haphazardly over the past twenty-one years. But I have never—and I do *mean* never—seen anything fit together as neatly as what I saw fall into place in January. I have a hunch the *parabolic imagery* related to the creation of man in God's "image" and the "Sabbath rest" is all part of the fourth message, which describes Jesus Christ as "The Name," but I'm not sure. Yet, I won't be sure until I have time to track down all the leads I have right now. And it doesn't look like that will happen any time soon.

*Editor: While you're talking about this past year, is there anything in particular that has been a great disappointment to you in 1995? Also, is there any one thing from the past five years that has been, or continues to be, a disappointment to you?*

*Elijah:* It's interesting that you should ask that question. I was asked somewhat the same thing nearly twenty-eight years ago. At that time I responded with a whole long list of negative things. Consequently, I received the first of many immediate and stern admonishments from the Lord. So thanks for reminding me about what I learned way back then. I sometimes need someone to jog my memory.

The Truth is, God has done so many incredible things over this past year that I would have to be the greatest of all fools to dwell on the negative. I won't deny that Satan has worked through this or that unpleasant circumstance to distract me. But all those things pale in comparison with the fact that I now understand so much more than I did at this time last year.

All in all, the year has been a terrific one for God's Truth, a terrible one for Satan's deception. Jesus said "the truth shall make you free," and I have certainly found that to be true in my own life. I am now free from a deception that Satan has used to keep me hemmed in for nearly ten years. I can see through the pretense of Pretenders who have been listening to what I teach for the past fifteen years. Those folks are now free to accept God's salvation on His terms instead of the goofy "feel-good" terms you hear preached in the Church today. Two of them already have. Finally, I am free from the constant confusion that Satan has been able to use against me because I chose to believe one of his lies nearly fifteen years ago.

To tell you the Truth, I don't look back nearly as often as I used to. I've been too busy. But I have started looking forward to what I know is yet to come. I have seen God do some incredibly phenomenal things in just the past eleven months. If this past year is any indication, the years to come are going to be absolutely fantastic! My only prayer is that God would pour out His Spirit of Truth on other True Believers in the same measure as He has poured it out on me this past year. And a part of that Truth is, the "latter rain" has only just begun. ■