



Hark! Is That an Invisible Image I See?

The Only-begotten of God, therefore, through whom, as the previous course of the discussion has shown, all things were made, visible and invisible, according to the view of Scripture, both made all things, and loves what He made. For since He is Himself the invisible image of the invisible God, He conveyed invisibly a share in Himself to all His rational creatures, so that each one obtained a part of Him exactly proportioned to the amount of affection with which he regarded Him.

But since, agreeably to the faculty of free-will, variety and diversity characterized the individual souls, so that one was attached with a warmer love to the Author of its being, and another with a feebler and weaker regard, that soul (anima) regarding which Jesus said, "No one shall take my life (animam) from me," inhering, from the beginning of the creation, and afterwards, inseparably and indissolubly in Him, as being the Wisdom and Word of God, and the Truth and the true Light, and receiving Him wholly, and passing into His light and splendour, was made with Him in a pre-eminent degree one spirit, according to the promise of the apostle to those who ought to imitate it, that "he who is joined in the Lord is one spirit."

This substance of a soul, then, being intermediate between God and the flesh—it being impossible for the nature of God to intermingle with a body without an intermediate instrument—the God-man is born, as we have said, that substance being the intermediary to whose nature it was not contrary to assume a body. But neither, on the other hand, was it opposed to the nature of that soul, as a rational existence, to receive God, into whom,

Continued on back cover

Continued from front cover

as stated above, as into the Word, and the Wisdom, and the Truth, it had already wholly entered. And therefore deservedly is it also called, along with the flesh which it had assumed, the Son of God, and the Flower of God, the Christ, and the Wisdom of God, either because it was wholly in the Son of God, or because it received the Son of God wholly into itself.

And again, the Son of God, through whom all things were created, is named Jesus Christ and the Son of man. For the Son of God also is said to have died—in reference, viz., to that nature which could admit of death; and He is called the Son of man, who is announced as about to come in the glory of God the Father, with the holy angels. And for this reason, throughout the whole of Scripture, not only is the divine nature spoken of in human words, but the human nature is adorned by appellations of divine dignity.

More truly indeed of this than of any other can the statement be affirmed, “They shall both be in one flesh, and are no longer two, but one flesh.” For the Word of God is to be considered as being more in one flesh with the soul than a man with his wife. But to whom is it more becoming to be also one spirit with God, than to this soul which has so joined itself to God by love as that it may justly be said to be one spirit with Him?

Origen, “*De Principiis*,” Book ii, Chap. vi, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1885), Vol. 4, p. 282.

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

NON PROFIT ORG.
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 8
Number 1
January 1997

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 © 1997, 2018
by Voice of Elijah, Inc.
voiceofelijah.org
facebook.com/voiceofelijahinc

A Note From the Editor

In the past three newsletters, I have talked about the importance of paying close attention to detail when reading and studying the Bible. Close inspection is crucial because every detail in Scripture is a part of the vast amount of evidence (i.e., information) that comprises the whole Truth. Since everything in Scripture was written for a purpose, it stands to reason that everything must have relevance in the overall scheme of things.

I have stated repeatedly that you will never be able to piece all the evidence together into a coherent whole unless a Teacher called by God explains it to you. God established the role of the Teacher in the Church for the express purpose of teaching born-again Believers the Truth they need to know. Don't buy the lie that says True Believers can read the Scriptures and readily ascertain the complete Truth on their own. Face the facts: If the Truth could be readily deduced by everyone who picks up a Bible, God would not have instituted the office of the Teacher in the Church.

If you are a born-again Believer, the Holy Spirit within you and the Bible are all you have that can testify as to whether or not a Teacher is speaking the Truth. The more attentive you are to details in Scripture, however, the more powerful the testimony of the Bible and the Holy Spirit will be. Therefore, you would be wise to imitate the Berean Jews who were "examining the Scriptures daily" to see if The Teaching presented by the Apostle Paul was true (Acts 17:11). They knew false teachers abounded, so they scrutinized everything Paul taught by holding it up to the Scriptures. That's the way it should be.

The challenge True Believers have faced since the time of the Apostles has been in determining which Teachers have legitimately been called by God and which are only Pretenders. Contrary to what you may think, distinguishing between true Teachers and false teachers is not always easy. That's because Satan and his "servants" are still masquerading as angels (messengers) of light (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

Don't kid yourself. False teachers are as rampant today as they were in the Early Church, if not more so. And I'm not just talking about the obvious charlatans you can see on television at all hours of the day. You need to be wary of everyone—the pastor(s) of your church, those on "Christian" radio, those who author "Christian" books, your Sunday School teacher, and yes, even *The Voice of Elijah*®.

You certainly should not believe someone's teaching merely because he claims to know the Truth, or because everybody else believes he knows the Truth, or because he is sincere and appears trustworthy, or whatever. The Bereans didn't cut the Apostle Paul any slack when it came to these issues, and you shouldn't either when scrutinizing today's teachers.

Continued on page 25

Continued from inside front cover

If you are a born-again Believer, it is within your power to distinguish between one who speaks the Truth and one who speaks half-truths, which are whole lies. Or as Malachi states it, you have the ability in these Last Days to “distinguish ... between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him” (Mal. 3:18). But if you think you can make that determination by merely listening to some little voice in your head, you are already deceived.

The Bible is the only tangible thing you have to verify the truthfulness of a teacher’s word. The Holy Spirit can, and will, help confirm the Truth for you (assuming you have heard the Truth), but the Holy Spirit is not a physical object that can be touched and read like the Bible can. Your ability to “see” the Truth with the spiritual “eyes of your heart” (Eph. 1:18) begins with your ability to see with your physical eyes what is written in Scripture. If you can see tangible evidence that says something is true, then you have good reason to believe it. But your faith should never be based on assumptions or wishful thinking, or even on a “good feeling” that something sounds right. It should be based on solid biblical evidence that convinces you beyond any doubt that the Word you have heard is true.

Two Things to Keep in Mind

The Bible study technique I have explained in the past three newsletters revolves around two basic activities: (1) looking for specific types of information (who, what, when, why, how, etc.) as you read the Bible; and (2) looking for key words and phrases that point to this specific information. The important thing to remember with this technique is that key words and phrases mean nothing in and of themselves. What they do, however, is signal you that specific information is near at hand—information that may help you corroborate, or possibly refute, what you have been taught. Ultimately, what you are looking for are as many clear-cut explanations, answers, and facts as the Bible will give you.

In previous newsletters, I told you the first specific thing you should look for when reading Scripture is a stated reason that explains *why* something is true or false. I pointed out that the word *because* is a key word to watch for *because* it lets you know that a reason for something is being stated. I also pointed out other key words and phrases you should watch for as well, but I won’t take the time and space to repeat them here. You can review the last several issues should you need to refresh your memory. [If you don’t have the July 1996 and October 1996 newsletters, you can order them by using the Order Form in this issue.]

How Things Are Accomplished

The second specific indicator you should look for when reading Scripture is a word that tells you the means by which something is accomplished. In other words, look for *how* something is achieved, obtained, or brought to fruition. The Scriptures have a lot to say about how various things have been, are, or will be accomplished. It is important that you watch for these things because any time Scripture offers insight into *how* spiritual results are obtained or achieved, you need to take notice.

There are two key terms that can help you in this endeavor. They are the words *by* and *through*. Like the other key terms I have shown you, the context in which these two words occur determines how they should be understood. They sometimes have nothing to do with denoting *how* something is achieved or accomplished. Yet most often they denote the specific *means by which*, or *how*, something has been, is, or will be accomplished. Therefore, you must always study the context to determine how these two words are being used before drawing any conclusions.

Here is a classic statement from Scripture where the words *by* and *through* are used in a context that tells us how something is achieved:

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8–9)

Do you see how *by* and *through* are used here? They tell us how a person is saved—*by* grace, *through* faith. Of course, the significant words are actually *grace* and *faith*. They provide insight into *how* one is saved. The words *by* and *through* don't tell us anything about that process in and of themselves. They simply let us know we are being told *how* something is accomplished. In this case, we have been given general information on *how* to be saved. I say "general information" because the Apostle Paul has not actually disclosed what the specific content of saving faith is. He assumes his readers already know much of that content, so he simply reminds them of the general principle that salvation is by faith in what they have heard.

The point I'm making is that the writers of the Scriptures often make general statements about *how* something is accomplished without giving specific details. Actually, that's not totally true. They often do get specific in what they say, but they do so in a veiled manner by making parabolic statements or using precise terminology that conveys specific information to those who already understand The Apostolic Teaching.

Let's Get Specific

The Truth is, you cannot understand much at all on your own about what the Old Testament is saying. You can more easily understand statements made in the New Testament if you first understand The Apostolic Teaching that stands behind the terminology the Apostles used. In case you haven't figured it out yet, this is why you need a Teacher to explain what the Hebrew Scriptures are saying.

Just because you know that salvation is by faith does not mean you know what the content of saving faith is. So, on the one hand, knowing that you are saved by faith tells you a lot. On the other hand, it really doesn't tell you much at all. This happens a lot in Scripture. The author makes a general statement regarding *how* something is accomplished (or for that matter, *why* something is true), yet the statement is so enigmatic or ambiguous that crucial information remains hidden from you.

Here's an example of a Scripture passage that provides pertinent information related to *how* God does something, yet the specific details of *how* He does it remain obscure and hard to understand:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.
(1 Peter 1:1-2)

This seemingly benign opening to Peter's first letter seems to shed light on a theological question that scholars have wrestled with for centuries: Does God choose those who are saved; and if He does, *how* does He go about choosing them? According to Peter, the group of Believers he was writing to were "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *by* the sanctifying work of the Spirit." Peter is obviously saying that God knew in advance (that's foreknowledge, isn't it?) who His Chosen would be. But he says those people "are chosen ... *by* the sanctifying work of the Spirit."

If God goes about choosing the Elect "*by* the sanctifying work of the Spirit," then some logical questions come to mind: What is "the sanctifying work of the Spirit"? How is this "sanctifying work" accomplished? And who is ultimately responsible for the choice that is made? Is it God or the individual Believer? Since Peter doesn't answer these questions in the text, I won't attempt to either. That's an explanation that needs to come from a legitimate Teacher called by God, and I'm not one. However, I will tell you that if you continue on with *The Voice of Elijah*®, you will eventually hear all of this explained.

The reason I brought this particular passage of Scripture to your attention is because it helped me confirm the accuracy of something I was recently taught in The Next Step program. Don't misunderstand what I said. This Scripture did not explain the Truth to me. It merely helped me to confirm the accuracy of something that had already been

explained to me. I never would have made sense of this passage if I had not first received insight from a Teacher whom God called. That's why it's imperative that every True Believer be taught by a Teacher called of God.

As I have stated repeatedly, however, finding a legitimate Teacher to teach you is one of the greatest challenges you face in these Last Days. Since the Church is filled with so many Pretenders who talk a good line, yet have practically no understanding of the Truth, you need to be extremely careful who you listen to. That's why validating the things you hear taught is crucial and paying close attention to details and key words in Scripture is so important.

Some Verses for Practice

Let's get back to our examination of the key words *by* and *through*. Read the following passages of Scripture and watch for these two words. Each time you see one, ask the same question: How, or by what means, is something being achieved or accomplished? Then try to answer it. Here are a few examples of what I'm talking about:

*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed **by** the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*
(Romans 12:2)

Q: *How is it possible to be transformed and not be conformed to this world?*

A: *By the renewing of your mind.*

*They profess to know God, but **by** {their} deeds they deny {Him}, being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed.*
(Titus 1:16)

Q: *How do those (unbelievers) who profess to know God actually deny Him?*

A: *By their deeds.*

*For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,} **through** the living and abiding word of God.*
(1 Peter 1:23)

Q: *How is one born again?*

A: *Through the living and abiding word of God.*

Now that you have the gist of this, carefully read the remaining Scripture passages and see if you can figure out how various things are, have been, will be, or in some cases will not be, accomplished. (It might help if you circle each usage of *by* and *through* you see.) Bear in mind that you may still need further explanation of *what* the author is talking about before you can fully understand the specific details of *how* something is accomplished or achieved.

*For the unbelieving husband is sanctified **through** his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified **through** her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy.*
(1 Corinthians 7:14)

*For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} **through** a revelation of Jesus Christ.*
(Galatians 1:12)

*This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit **by** the works of the Law, or **by** hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun **by** the Spirit, are you now being perfected **by** the flesh?*
(Galatians 3:2-3)

*For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham **by** means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained **through** angels **by** the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.*
(Galatians 3:18-19)

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there **by** waves, and carried about **by** every wind of doctrine, **by** the trickery of men, **by** craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all {aspects} into Him, who is the head, {even} Christ.
(Ephesians 4:14–15)

See to it that no one takes you captive **through** philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.
(Colossians 2:8)

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation **through** sanctification **by** the Spirit and faith in the truth. And it was for this He called you **through** our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.
(2 Thessalonians 2:13–14)

But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed **by** his own lust.
(James 1:14)

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

Was not Abraham our father justified **by** works, when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? ... You see that a man is justified **by** works, and not **by** faith alone.
(James 2:21, 24)

For such is the will of God that **by** doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men.
(1 Peter 2:15)

I could easily go on citing verses like these because there are literally hundreds that provide some degree of insight into how spiritual things work or are accomplished. I encourage you to continue looking for confirmation in your Bible of the

things you are being taught by *The Voice of Elijah*®. You need to do this so you can be certain of what you believe and, as Paul says, not be “carried about **by** every wind of doctrine, **by** the trickery of men, **by** craftiness in deceitful scheming” (Eph. 4:14b).

Final Thoughts

When I began writing this series, I intended to keep everything short, sweet, and to the point. I know I haven’t kept it short, and I doubt I have made it sweet, but I hope I have made at least a few points that benefit you. I also thought I would be finished explaining all of this by now, but the more I think about what to say, the more I find to say. I know I have repeated some things many times over, but I have done so because I know from personal experience that the best way to learn something is to hear it again and again. If you have been involved in the Church for any length of time at all, I’m sure you have heard many of the same things stated repeatedly. That’s why the lies you currently believe are hard for you to see for what they are. You have heard them so many times over such a long period of time that they are firmly rooted in your mind.

Rooting out the lies you currently believe begins with hearing the Truth over and over again. If repetition is how those lies became firmly planted in your mind in the first place, then repetition of the Truth is an important key to getting rid of them. Again, I speak from personal experience when I say this.

I don’t know how much longer it will take me to complete my meager comments on how to study the Bible, but I’m going to take as long as I feel is necessary. I have only gone through two items thus far on the list of things I mentioned you should look for as you read and study the Bible. (That list was printed in the last two issues of the newsletter.) In the next issue, I want to discuss the third item on that list: conditions which must be met according to Scripture.

Allen Fries

Blessed Assurance, Jesus Is Mine!

Did you hear about the miracle that occurred on August 13, 1995, in Tomball, Texas? You didn't? Peter Jennings, Tom Brokaw, and Dan Rather started their newscasts with some other story? Incredible. The Creator of the universe performs a miracle; and the world keeps on turning, doing its own thing, as if God is distant, or worse yet, nonexistent. But I guess it's not so incredible that His miracles would not be highly regarded in the eyes of the world. Before that date, I was pretty unconcerned with what He was doing myself.

The events of my life in the years leading up to the miracle of my conversion experience aren't nearly as interesting as the seventeen months since, but for background's sake I'll fill in a few details. My name is Marcia Woody. I was born in Northern California, my parents' second (and last) child. I have one brother, who is a couple of years older than I. Together we were raised in a Presbyterian churchgoing family, where voices weren't raised, the neighbors' opinions of us were held in high regard, and being agreeable and pleasant at all times (no matter what) was a virtue. I learned early on how to gain my parents' approval, and I constantly strove to attain it. I would say all the "right" things, behave appropriately in each and every circumstance, and make sure that other people thought well of me. This is what was expected of me—so this is what I did. It made my parents happy.

The San Francisco Bay Area was, and still is, a very liberal place. In the course of daily events, it was not unusual for me to encounter Hari Krishnas, hippies, anti-war protesters, Black Panthers, or gay rights activists. You name it; the Bay Area has them all. But tolerance and acceptance of one another's differences

was the mind-set I grew up with. The motto in my family was "live and let live." None of these folks were considered odd; they just didn't act or think like "we" did. But they were okay just the same.

We considered ourselves "good people" because we went to church regularly. Yet the Presbyterian church services I attended while growing up were little more than weekly social events. Rarely did the Sunday morning sermons cross over into anything remotely scriptural. As I recall, the message usually contained tips for living a "good Christian life." It was as if being "Christian" was like being a citizen of the United States just because you were born here. If your parents were "Christian," so were you. I can't recall ever hearing any mention in our church of the necessity of being born again, living a life dedicated to God, working out salvation with fear and trembling, the fate of sinners, or the fact that God might have some say in the matter of who gets in to Heaven.

I credit my parents for the discipline they gave me and for instilling fear in me as a child. Even though I don't recall hearing fear of the Lord preached, I do remember at a very young age feeling that I was deserving of eternal damnation. I certainly knew that I didn't deserve God's love and that I wasn't bound for Heaven. I remember wishing on more than one occasion that I were an inanimate object—like a comic book or a rock—rather than a person. That way, I wouldn't have to suffer when the end of the world came.

When I was about twelve, a Billy Graham Crusade came to the Oakland Coliseum. My Baptist aunt and uncle came from out of town to attend the Crusade, so our family packed up, and we all went

together. I don't remember all that much about his message that night, but one thing Billy Graham said prompted me to respond by going forward for salvation. He concluded his sermon by saying, "The decision you make tonight may well determine where you will be one hundred years from tonight." I did not know much about God's offer of salvation, but I knew without doubt that I was headed for Hell, and I knew I didn't want to go there. I felt that by going forward I could avoid that fate. I don't have any recollection of asking that my sins be forgiven or of committing my life to the Lord. I only remember thinking that I wouldn't be condemned to Hell if I responded; so I did. But the Lord knew my heart; I was not born again that night. My fear subsided for a time, but it soon returned because what happened to me was not a conversion experience. That is, it was not a completely life-altering event. Before too long, my life went on as it had before.

I had a good childhood in terms of being loved and cared for. I enjoyed a stable home life—so stable, in fact, that my friends would often refer to my family as "the Cleavers." I guess that shows that our efforts to portray our family in the best possible light accomplished its intended goal. We were seen as the ideal "All-American family." Consequently, during my teen years, I perfected the art of keeping the outside of the cup clean (Matt. 23:25). I may not have been a scribe or a Pharisee, but I was most definitely a hypocrite. I had never acknowledged, even to myself, what was inside the cup.

I certainly didn't know who I was or what I believed. I felt that I was only a shell, an extension of my parents' dreams and ideals. Fear of disappointing them stayed with me well into my adult years. As a result, I felt I had no identity. I remember thinking there was no "Marcia" inside me. Since I didn't know who I was, I didn't know what I wanted from life. I went to college only because it was expected of me. Finally, when I was twenty-one, I dropped out of college to work full-time, in spite of my parents' disapproval. That was the first time I ever made a decision without first consulting them, and it was not easy.

During my late teens and early twenties, I visited a couple of different churches. I also attended Campus Crusade for Christ meetings while in college. One time, I even went forward in church to "become a Christian," but all I really wanted was to win back a boyfriend

who had just "become a Christian." Again, the Lord knew my heart; I was not born again that day either.

I eventually started attending a church close to my home. The pastor actually preached from the Bible, which was a new experience for me. The people in the congregation even carried their Bibles to church with them. I had never seen that before either. They had adult Bible study classes on Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings. This was quite new to me as well. But I felt good going to this church. These were "good people," or so I thought. So, lonely and heartbroken over losing "Mr. Right," I began attending every Sunday and started making new "Christian" friends. Before long, I felt good about myself again because I was hanging around the "right" people.

In November 1980, I met the man who eventually would become my husband. He and his cousin often brought their guitars and sang Christian songs for us at the Wednesday night Bible study. I was really taken with him. He was handsome, had a great sense of humor, a terrific voice, and seemed to be a really good "Christian." Everybody else thought so too. What more could I ask for? We dated for only a few weeks before he popped the question. I accepted in a heartbeat. My parents disapproved, but I went ahead anyway. I considered him to be quite a catch, and to my way of thinking, I was already an old maid at twenty-five. We were married in October 1981.

My husband had been a close personal friend of Larry Harper for several years prior to the time I met him. Larry had been teaching him the things he saw in the Bible. On our first date, he explained in detail something he'd learned from Larry. He showed me the promise God had given David in 2 Samuel 7 regarding "building his house," and he explained the parabolic imagery of "The House" message.

He was obviously all worked up about the significance of this particular idiomatic phrase. I didn't get it, but I politely listened anyway. I had no idea that this information wasn't being taught anywhere else; and to be honest, I didn't much care. Unlike some of you, I was not looking for the Truth or salvation; and I certainly was not living for the Lord. I had never really thought about the fact that there could only be one Truth. My thinking at the time was: "We won't discuss our differences of opinion. Whatever you believe is fine for you. I won't impose my beliefs on you, and we'll get along just fine." That nonconfrontational philosophy had

served me well enough up to that point. I was sure it would continue to do so.

My husband and I were among the Pretenders that Larry has mentioned teaching over the years. We both attended Larry's original Bible study meetings and helped him out in the early days with what is now The Elijah Project. My husband was involved mainly in the production of music while I did word-processing on a computer. We spent a lot of time with Larry and Bonnie socially and attended Bible study sessions a couple of nights a week.

In 1985, the Harpers suddenly decided to move to Texas. I was shocked when I heard they were moving. I couldn't understand why they would want to move. I considered them to be our best friends. Bonnie and I were pregnant about the same time, and we gave birth to boys six months apart. I provided day-care for them. Bonnie and I took them to infant swimming lessons together. From my point of view, we were close friends and everything was great. Then, one day, they were gone.

In the years that followed, I kept in touch with Bonnie by phone and even flew out to Dallas to visit a time or two. We would occasionally receive audiotapes of Bible study lessons that Larry had taught in Dallas. Then, in 1988, my husband decided he didn't want to be involved with The Teaching any longer, so he packed his bags and left me. It was a hard pill for me to swallow, but I was suddenly a single parent with a four-year-old child to raise. I considered myself a Believer of the Truth that I'd been learning, and I wanted to be with my fellow "Believers" in Dallas—in part because I thought that was what I should do and in part because I was afraid not to. My son and I moved to Dallas a month later.

I have been listening to Larry explain the images and idioms of The Teaching since 1981. Over the years, I occasionally wondered whether or not I'd ever been born again. My inability to see that I had not been was rooted in the lie that I thought I understood and believed what I heard Larry teach. I actually had nothing more than a conceptual understanding of the Truth, but I thought I did. Therefore, I assumed I must be born again. But what if I wasn't? On several occasions I asked God to "save" me and told Him that I hoped I wasn't a Pretender. At times, I even worked myself up into an emotional frenzy. After I'd pray, I'd feel relief from the anxiety of my self-induced panic.

But the uncertainty would inevitably return. I now know that was because, although I wanted to be rid of the confusion and settle the issue once and for all, I still didn't want what God had to offer. Consequently, the assurance of salvation was never mine. Instead, I continued to ride an emotional roller coaster because Satan was able to foist one lie after another off on me.

The last time I was deceived was in September 1994. For quite a few weeks, I had been wrestling with the issue of how I could be sure that I'd been born again. I felt certain I believed The Teaching that I'd been hearing Larry teach for some thirteen years. It all made so much sense to me, but the uncertainty I felt regarding being born again continued to come and go. I wanted to know for sure that God's Holy Spirit dwelled within me. How could I know I was born again and was not just being deceived into thinking I was? Why were certain passages in Scripture still unsettling to me (especially Matthew 25:1–12)? Yet when doubts came, I would choose to believe the lie that everything was okay. I knew I had a conceptual knowledge of the Truth, and I knew I believed it. Did that mean God's Spirit dwelled in me? I didn't know. I certainly had more questions than I had answers.

While listening to The Next Step Tape 16, I finally became convinced that I was, in fact, a Pretender. On that tape, Larry talked about the witness of the Holy Spirit within the Believer. I could not honestly say that I could sense the resonance of the Holy Spirit within me when I heard or read the Truth. Nor could I honestly say that I had a relationship with God. What I did have was a lifestyle in which I felt good listening to teaching tapes, proofreading, and editing articles and books for The Elijah Project—all at their scheduled times. But where was the love of the Truth that Paul mentions in 2 Thessalonians 2:10? I didn't even know what the "love of the Truth" was. How could I have it if I wasn't even sure what it was?

On Tape 16, Larry also talked about the ways that True Believers will be able to identify Pretenders. I immediately recognized myself in what he said. I had tried to see myself in his description of how True Believers can know that they have experienced the new birth, but I could not. When he talked about the characteristics of Pretenders, I knew without doubt that I was still pretending. I had lived my entire life making sure that I was seen in the "right" way rather than making sure I was right with God.

By that time, the Spirit was convicting me to the point that I no longer cared what those around me thought of me. I was tied up in knots. I wanted my sins to be forgiven so that I could become a Child of God. I could not, and did not want to, pretend any longer. So in prayer that night, in the presence of people whose opinions of me had mattered a great deal, I admitted to the Lord that I had been a Pretender, and I begged His forgiveness for my sins. Afterwards, the relief and calm were wonderful. The anxiety, confusion, and panic were no more ... at least temporarily. That's why, for the next eleven months, I was willing to claim that as my born-again experience. Although I now know that repentance is required to be born again, at that time I did not know that *it is not all that is required*. Once again, the Lord knew my heart; I was not born again that night either.

Thanks to Larry's prompting on several of The Next Step tapes, I continued to examine my life, my reactions, my "dedication" to God, etc., to ensure I had actually been born again and was not just believing Satan's lie. But when I saw my life wasn't measuring up to what I knew it should be, I was still willing to rationalize and say that my being a young Christian was the reason. My excuse was, when I matured in the Lord, then I'd see changes. I now know Satan had pulled the wool over my eyes again, and I was comfortable accepting his lie. Consequently, I continued to believe that I had a valid salvation experience in September 1994. At that time, I had felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit; I had recognized I was unsaved, and I had asked God for salvation. Yet I wasn't sure beyond any doubt that I had been born again.

It wasn't long before the doubts crept back in. In the months that followed, I asked God to help me know whether or not I had been saved, but I wasn't willing to accept the Truth (if the Truth was I had not been born again). So when the scales started tipping to the side of "unsaved," I'd crank up the TV and think about something else, something distant and more comfortable, anything but the fact that maybe I hadn't yet been born again. I was unwilling to face the possibility that I might still be unregenerate.

In August 1995, just before school was to start, my son and I went along with the Harpers and several others on a three-day weekend trip to the beach at Galveston. Larry mentioned that, while everybody else went to the beach, he was planning to visit a man

who had been his instructor in Bible school nearly thirty years earlier. He had read a short biography that made him suspect this man had been supernaturally called by God as an Evangelist, and he wanted to talk to him about his calling. If Larry determined that the man had, in fact, been called as an Evangelist, I hoped to talk with him as well and have him assure me that my "new-birth" experience was valid. I intended to get his phone number after I got back home to Dallas and give him a call sometime the following week. I didn't even consider seeing him that weekend because we were taking the kids to the beach for some fun. That's what I intended to do—have fun.

On Saturday, August 12, Larry visited the Evangelist. When he returned, one of the boys we were vacationing with told him that he wanted the Evangelist to tell him how to be saved. He had been under the conviction of the Holy Spirit all day while we were at the beach. So Larry took him to speak with the Evangelist that night. Shortly after they left, I began thinking I should have gone along. I wanted to have this man validate my "conversion experience" from the previous September and put an end to the uncertainty I was feeling. As the evening wore on, I felt more and more strongly that I should have joined them. That's when the conviction of the Holy Spirit came over me. I began to feel a heavy dread that I had just missed the boat, and there was nothing I could do to change it.

After spending an exhausting day in the sun, I was looking forward to a good night's sleep. However, it didn't turn out that way. Although I went to bed around 11:00 Saturday night, I didn't go to sleep until 4:00 Sunday morning. I tried to, but I was prevented from doing so. While lying in bed trying to fall asleep, the Truth about who I really was started coming to me. It was obvious from the beginning that I was not the One initiating these thoughts; the Holy Spirit was. The first thing I saw was my selfishness and my lack of appreciation for what others did for me. But it didn't stop there. I also saw my vanity, my pretense, my short temper, my unwillingness to yield to His earlier conviction, my lying, and my self-indulgence.

Before long, I began to pray that the Lord would continue to show me my sin because I was afraid I wouldn't be able to see it on my own. Hour after hour, I kept asking Him to show me everything; and He did. There was plenty for Him to show. None of it was

pleasant, but I wanted to see it all. Every sin became clear to me. I could suddenly see with undeniable clarity the contents of the cup I'd spent forty years hiding.

The conviction of the Holy Spirit continued into the early morning hours. At one point, I thought about my September 1994 "conversion" experience and realized that I had not honestly repented of my sins at that time. I had known all along that I was a sinner, but I could never articulate what specific sin there was in my life. Therefore, I hadn't been able to see and acknowledge the Truth about who I was. What I was experiencing this night was something I had never experienced before. As the conviction of the Holy Spirit continued long into the night, my heart would at times begin beating rapidly, and I would become short of breath. That's when I thought it best to try to sleep. Yet try as I might, I could not keep my eyes closed and go to sleep. God was not finished showing me what I needed to see.

Even after being under conviction for five long hours, I was still willing to put off settling the issue of being born again. I started thinking: "I'll bet someone will drive down from Dallas next weekend to talk to this Evangelist. I'll see if I can join them." "School starts Monday for the kids, so we really don't have the time to stop and talk with the Evangelist tomorrow. We'll get back home too late for the kids." "Being Sunday, he probably won't have the time to talk to me anyway." Satan was pulling every last trick out of his hat to keep me from responding to the conviction I was under. Fortunately for me, the conviction was so strong that he finally lost the battle.

Toward the end, I started feeling that I had completely missed my opportunity to repent—that I had pushed God too far. I'd been listening to The Teaching since 1981 and hadn't yet responded to God in a way that was acceptable to Him. How could He ever forgive me? Finally around 4:00 Sunday morning, after being under conviction for most of the night, I admitted to myself and to God that I was unsaved. I promised God that I would speak to the Evangelist on Sunday morning and see if he would pray with me so that I could be born again. Some time shortly thereafter, I fell asleep.

As soon as I got up the next morning, I called the Evangelist. I was disappointed when he told me he was busy until about 4:00 that afternoon. I had to wait until 4:00! I wasn't sure I could stand waiting that

long, but I gratefully agreed to meet with him then. There was nothing in this world that was going to keep me from talking to him that day. In all of my previous "conversion experiences" I had never felt the desperation I felt at that time. Nor did I have a complete knowledge of who I was or the absolute resolve to come to God and beg His forgiveness.

I knew we had a long drive back to Dallas. The kids were starting school the next morning, and because of me, we'd get home past their bedtime. Yet none of these things mattered to me in the least. I knew without doubt that I had never been born again, and salvation was the only thing on my mind. I wasn't happy about inconveniencing everyone else that I was traveling with, but I didn't much care that I was putting them out. They could have left me there and driven back to Dallas without me. I honestly didn't care. I was prepared to do whatever it took to hear someone tell me how I could be saved. I was desperate to hear the message the Evangelist had been called to deliver to sinners just like me.

We arrived at the Evangelist's church at about 3:45 p.m. He hadn't returned from his afternoon errand. I watched with relief when he and his wife finally drove into the driveway a short time later. Those of us who hadn't yet met him introduced ourselves and exchanged pleasantries for a few minutes. Then he unlocked the church, and we followed him in. There were nine of us seated in the pews. My son was wiggling at my left side; the Evangelist's wife was doing distracting things at my right. But the moment the Evangelist started preaching the Gospel, I blocked out everything around me.

I heard the Word of the Cross that day for the very first time. I hung on every word, not wanting to miss anything. The Gospel message was so overpowering that my tears started flowing and didn't stop. The Evangelist told me that I was already judged guilty because of my sin; and that the penalty of my sin, apart from the Lord, was eternal destruction. He went on to explain what Jesus Christ did to provide salvation for all who would believe the Truth of the Gospel message.

As the Evangelist described how Jesus suffered for my sin, I felt a sense of shame and sorrow that is beyond description. But then he explained how Jesus is the sacrifice for my sins, and he talked about God's free gift of salvation. Finally, he began to explain what

it means to serve Jesus as the Lord and Master of my life, putting Him first in all things. I was completely absorbed in the message I was hearing. It was simple and crystal-clear to me, and I was eager to do whatever God required.

Finally, the Evangelist asked us to come forward and kneel at the altar at the front of the church. He then prayed with each one of us in turn. With his hand on my head, I began to pray. I confessed my sins, asked for and accepted God's forgiveness, and agreed to serve Jesus Christ as my Lord all the days of my life. Then I asked Him for the new birth. The Lord knew my heart; I was born again that day!

I can tell you almost to the minute when I was born again—where I was, what message I heard, and exactly how I felt. It was not a nebulous experience that I could later reflect on and doubt, as I had all my false conversion experiences. In an instant, I knew I had been changed. The Holy Spirit took up residence within me, and I was renewed completely. There was no doubt that God had forgiven me of my past sins. I knew the Word I had heard was true. I knew I had been granted the new birth. From that moment on I was ready to do whatever the Lord would have me do.

During the drive from Houston back to Dallas Bonnie told me I was "glowing." I remember that comment because I like the image. I had just been touched by the "Light of the world," and "glowing" seemed an appropriate description of how I felt. In an instant, God delivered me from darkness, hiding, and blindness. I received eyes to see the Truth of The Teaching, ears to hear and understand it, an identity in Christ, and a solid relationship to the God Who is. That is not something I take lightly.

I urge you not to settle for anything less than the absolute certainty that you have been born again. Satan will try to persuade you that not everyone can have an undeniable assurance of salvation. That is a lie. I know, because, as you've just read, I had several false conversions before I experienced the real thing. You will know when the Living Word of God takes up residence within you. You will be changed immediately, and there will be no doubt. It is exactly as John says it is:

*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.
(1 John 4:13)*

I like the following passage from Finney's sermon "The Salvation of Sinners Impossible" because it mentions people like me, who are converted after age forty.

If you will now consent to give your heart to God, you can be saved. No election will hinder you. The doctrine of election is simply the fact that God sends forth his Spirit to save as many as by the best system of influences He wisely can save; and surely this never can hinder any sinner from repenting and gaining salvation, for the very good reason that this plan contemplates saving and not damning men, as its object, and is in fact the sinner's only hope.

Come then, repent and believe the gospel, if you would be saved. No election will hinder you, and neither will it save you without your own repentance unto life.

*How then shall the case turn with you? Almost all who are ever converted are brought in, early in life. **Not one in a hundred is converted after the age of forty. The old among the converts are always few—only one among a host—one in a long space of time; like scattering beacon lights upon the mountain tops, that the aged may not quite despair of salvation.** (Charles Finney, Sermons on the Way of Salvation [Oberlin, Ohio: 1891], p. 161)*

I consider myself to be what Charles Finney calls "only one among a host." I spent forty years, three months, and nine days walking in darkness. Yet the Word of Truth instantly delivered me from death and darkness. I spent forty years assessing every situation, and doing whatever I thought was the "right" thing to do. I wanted to be seen as a "good person," nice, likable, and pleasant to be around. I now know all that pretense isn't worth a thing in God's eyes. Until I admitted and repented of a lifetime of sin, I was not acceptable to God because I was not believing the Truth—the Truth about myself, Jesus Christ, and the Gospel message.

It doesn't matter how well we try to cover it up, we are all selfish, stubborn, conceited, proud, liars, and cheaters in our unregenerate state. As sinners, none of us is any better or worse than anybody else. We are all condemned to death.

*The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.*

*The LORD has looked down from heaven
upon the sons of men,
To see if there are any who understand,
Who seek after God.
They have all turned aside;
together they have become corrupt;
There is no one who does good, not even one.*
(Psalm 14:1–3)

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
(Romans 3:23)

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is
eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*
(Romans 6:23)

All these things are true. Yet God offers salvation freely to all those who hear and believe the Truth of the Gospel message, honestly repent of their sins, ask for forgiveness and the reality of the new birth, and commit themselves to serve the Lord from that moment on. In God's mercy, He offers salvation to all who will believe.

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count
slowness, but is patient toward you, **not wishing for
any to perish but for all to come to repentance.***
(2 Peter 3:9)

I urge you to examine your new-birth experience. I lived under Satan's delusion for years, believing one time after another that I had been born again. But I now know just how true it is that Satan is the master of deception. He will tell you whatever it takes to get you to do what he wants. Don't believe him. Only you can determine whether or not you have been born again, whether your conversion experience more closely aligns with my many false conversions or with my new-birth experience. And you alone can decide whether you will go on being deceived by Satan's lie.

If you have ever doubted the validity of your new-birth experience, I ask you to carefully consider what the Evangelist Charles Finney has to say concerning true and false converts. Examine the motives of the "true saints" and the Pretenders. Keep this question in mind while reading the following excerpts from two of his sermons: Where can I identify myself in what Charles Finney has said?

*Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass {your-
selves} about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire,
and in the sparks {that} ye have kindled. This shall ye
have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.*
(Isaiah 50:11) —KJV

It is clear from these words in the chapter that the prophet was addressing those who professed to be religious, and who flattered themselves that they were in a state of salvation. But, in fact, their hope was a fire of their own kindling, and sparks created by themselves.

Before I proceed with the subject of the nature of true and false conversion, let me warn you that it will be of no use unless you will be honest in applying it to yourself. If you mean to profit by the discourse, you must resolve to apply it faithfully to yourself, just as scrupulously as if you thought you were now going to the solemn judgment. If you will do this, I hope to be able to lead you to discover your true state, and if you are now deceived, direct you in the true path to salvation. If you will not do this, I shall preach—and you will hear—in vain....

True conversion demands a change in the final goal, and not merely a change in the means of attaining that goal. It is not true that the converted and the unconverted differ only in the means they use, while both are aiming at the same end. It is not true that Gabriel and Satan are pursuing the same end—their own happiness—only pursuing a different way. Gabriel does not obey God for the sake of promoting his own happiness....

The true saint will glorify God because he loves to see God glorified, and the deceived person because he knows that is the way to be saved. The true convert has his heart set on the glory of God, and His great end, and he desires to glorify God as an end, for its own sake. The other desires it as a means to his own ends, benefitting himself alone.

With regard to repentance, the true convert abhors sin on account of its hateful nature, because it dishonors God. Therefore he desires to repent of it. The other desires to repent, because he knows that unless he does repent he will be damned.

With respect to believing in Jesus Christ, the true saint wants his belief to glorify God, because he loves the truth for its own sake. The other desires to believe, that he may have a stronger hope of heaven.

With regard to obeying God, the true saint hopes to increase in holiness; the false professor because he

desires the rewards of obedience. They may agree not only in their desires, but in their resolutions. They may both resolve to give up sin, to obey God, to lay themselves out in promoting Christianity and building up the kingdom of Christ. They may both resolve it with great strength of purpose, but with different motives.

They may also agree in their intentions. They may both really intend to glorify God, to convert men, to extend the kingdom of Christ, and to have the world converted. But the true saint does this from love to God and holiness, the other for the sake of securing his own happiness. One chooses it as an end, the other as a means to promote a selfish end.

They may both strive to be truly holy; the true saint because he loves holiness, and the deceived person because he knows that he can be happy no other way.

They may agree not only in their desires, resolutions and intentions, but also in their affection toward many objects. They may both love the Bible: the true saint delights in it, and feasts his soul on it because it is God's truth; the other loves it because he thinks it is to his best advantage to do so.

They may both love God; one because he sees God's character to be supremely excellent and lovely in itself and he loves it for its own sake; the other because he thinks God is his particular friend, who is going to make him happy forever: he connects the idea of God with his own interests....

They may both hate sin; the true convert because it is odious to God, and the deceived person because it is injurious to himself. Cases have occurred where an individual has hated his own sins and yet not forsaken them. How often the drunkard, as he looks back at what he once was and contrasts his present degradation with what he might have been, abhors his drink—not for its own sake, but because it has ruined him. And he still loves his cups, and continues to drink—although, when he looks at their effects, he feels indignation....

Both may love the society of the saints; the true convert because his soul enjoys their spiritual conversation, the other because he hopes to derive some advantage from their company. The first enjoys it because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh; the other because he loves to talk about the great interest he feels in religion, and the hope he has of going to heaven....

They may be equally liberal in giving to benevolent societies. Two men may give equal sums to a benevolent object, from totally different motives. One gives to do

good, and would be just as willing to give as not, if he knew that no other living person would give. The other gives for the credit of it, or to quiet his conscience, or because he hopes to purchase the favor of God....

They may both be willing to suffer martyrdom. Read the lives of the martyrs, and you will have no doubt that some were willing to suffer from a wrong idea of the rewards of martyrdom, and would rush upon their own destruction because they were persuaded it was the sure road to eternal life....

If in our dealings with people we are selfish, we are selfish in our dealings with God too. "For he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 4:20). Christianity is not merely love to God, but love to man also. And if our daily transactions show us to be selfish, we are unconverted. Disinterested benevolence is essential to Christian faith; a Christian loves his neighbor as himself....

If you are selfish in religion, your enjoyments will be chiefly from anticipation. The true saint already enjoys the peace of God, and the joy of heaven has begun in his soul. He has not merely the prospect of it, but eternal life has actually begun in him. He has that faith which is the very substance of things hoped for. He has the very feelings of heaven in him; he anticipates joys higher in degree, but the same in kind. He knows that he has heaven begun in him, and is not obliged to wait till he dies to taste the joys of eternal life. His enjoyment is in proportion to his holiness, and not in proportion to his hope....

The true saint ... really prefers and in his heart chooses obedience, and therefore he finds it easy to obey. The one has a purpose to obey, like that which Paul had before he was converted as he tells us in the seventh chapter of Romans. He had a strong purpose of obedience, but did not obey, because his heart was not in it. The true convert prefers obedience for its own sake; he actually chooses it and does it. The other purposes to be holy, because he knows that is the only way to be happy. The true saint chooses holiness for its own sake....

The true convert and the deceived person also differ in their faith. The true saint has a confidence in the general character of God that leads him to unqualified submission to Him....

Consider also that mankind is so besotted with sin that God cannot get their attention to consider His true character, and their reasons for loving Him, unless He appeals to their hopes and fears. But when they are

awakened, then He presents the gospel to them. When a minister has preached the terrors of the Lord until he has his hearers alarmed and aroused, so that they will give attention, then he has gone far enough in that line. Next, he ought to spread out all the character of God before them to engage their hearts to love Him for His own excellence.

Some also ask, "Did not Jesus say, 'Repent ye, and believe the gospel'" (Mark 1:15)? Yes, but **he requires true repentance; that is, to forsake sin because it is hateful in itself. True repentance does not forsake sin on condition of pardon. True repentance does not bargain, "I will be sorry for my sins, if you will forgive me." Jesus requires true faith and true submission; not conditional faith or partial submission. This is what the Bible insists on. It says we shall be saved, but on the condition of unconditional repentance and submission....**

(Charles G. Finney, Principles of Salvation, "True and False Conversion" [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989], pp. 57-70)

Submit yourselves therefore to God.
(James 4:7a) —KJV

If you are deceived, and have a false hope, you are in the utmost danger if you continue to cling to your old hope, whenever you are awakened to consider your condition. Commonly, after a season of anxiety and self-examination, such church members and professing Christians settle down again on the old foundation. The reason is, their habits of mind have become fixed in that channel; therefore, by the laws of the mind it is difficult to break into a new course. **If you ever mean to get right with God, you should see clearly that you have hitherto been wholly wrong, so that you need not multiply any more the kind of efforts that have deceived you up to now.**

(Charles G. Finney, Principles of Salvation, "True Submission" [Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1989], p. 71)

Satan will undoubtedly try to get you to believe otherwise; but the Truth is, we are all engendered by God in the same way. We must repent of our sins and believe in the Truth of the Gospel. That is an incredibly simple thing to do, but I know it is impossible for stubborn, selfish, arrogant individuals to come to God in "The Way," "The only Way," that is acceptable to

Him. I speak from personal experience. I also know the fate of Pretenders. That is why I can't urge you strongly enough to be brutally honest in assessing your born-again experience. The good news is this: God is still working among men. His Spirit continues to convict sinners of their sin. Although time is running out, there is still time for you to repent. Therefore, if you are unregenerate, I pray you will soon repent and experience the same miracle I experienced that Sunday afternoon in Tomball, Texas.

I know Satan will be right there enticing you into taking "comfort" in a less-than-valid born-again experience. Don't settle for anything less than complete and total confidence that you have been born again and that God's Spirit is dwelling within you. Anything less is a lie. The Holy Spirit makes His presence known. Consider the Truth: Those who have never experienced the new birth know nothing at all about it. So beware of anyone who tells you that you don't feel anything when you are born again. They don't know because they have never experienced it. The new birth is a miracle! How can anyone say God has performed a miracle when they have nothing on which to base their claim?

I know now that the salvation process begins with believing the Truth of the Gospel. But I also realize it involves more than that. To be saved, one must continue on as a "learner," that is, as a disciple, of Truth. At 5:00 p.m. on August 13, 1995, in Tomball, Texas, the Word of Truth that has changed millions of others was delivered to me by a man whom God called to preach the Gospel. I received that Word, and it completely transformed me. He continues to change me every day. I can attest to the fact that it is a phenomenal experience to grow in an understanding of the Living Word of God. But I realize the gift of the new birth is only the beginning.

For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, {it is} the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.
(Ephesians 2:8-9)

Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!
(2 Corinthians 9:15)

— Marcia Woody



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

Editor: In your article for the October 1996 newsletter, you named the names of some of those responsible for establishing Dispensationalism as a doctrine in the mainstream Church. Although most of the men you cited for creating and promoting this lie are not widely known in the Church today, several of them are very well known and highly regarded in "Christian" circles. I'm speaking in particular of C. I. Scofield and D. L. Moody. To a lesser degree, I'm also speaking of Hal Lindsey, author of The Late Great Planet Earth, whom you referred to briefly. Do you intend to name more names of well-known individuals Satan has used, or is using, to spread his lies before you are done? If so, would you feel comfortable naming more of these false teachers now and exposing them and their lies for what they are?

Elijah: My purpose in that article was not to name names. It was to show how Satan managed to get his deception firmly planted in the minds of those who were most likely to believe the Truth concerning the Gospel. To do that, I had to explain how he had used certain key individuals. That's the only reason I mentioned Hal Lindsey. He, perhaps more than anyone else, has been responsible for popularizing Dispensational Theory in our own time. As far as naming false teachers is concerned, if I started down that

road, I'd be traveling forever. False teachers are a dime a dozen. Every time I turn around, some new Tom, Dick, or Harry is telling us God called him to do this or that. Sometimes it's obvious the person is feeding on delusion. Other times it is obvious they are feeding on the gullibility of the other Pretenders roosting in God's Church. But most of the time it is necessary to listen carefully to what an individual says before you can see through his pretense. That's because a lot of the false teachers got much of what they preach from someone God did, indeed, call to preach the Gospel.

The sad situation in the evangelical Church today is compounded even further by the fact that Satan has sidetracked many of the Evangelists God called to preach the Gospel. Those folks have either corrupted the Gospel message, or else they are off doing something God never intended them to do. Most have ended up pastoring a church where they seldom preach the Gospel and are constantly teaching things they were never called to teach.

I am amazed at how successful the agents of Satan have been at infiltrating the Church. Over the past 150 years, evangelical Christian circles have increasingly become a magnet for people who will readily believe all sorts of farcical notions without one shred of evidence in the Scriptures to back them up. The result of that situation has been a tendency on the part of most people to relegate the Scriptures to the role of a sacred relic that everybody pretends to hold in the highest regard but nobody knows much of anything about. That is probably why dispensationalists have been so successful at conning True Believers into believing Satan's lie.

Dispensationalism provides simplistic answers to some incredibly difficult questions. Yet most folks can't see through its lies because they haven't read and studied the Bible for themselves. If they did, they would know that anyone who believes that particular goofiness has to be either spiritually blind or intellectually lazy. Quite possibly, both.

Editor: The more I look around, the more I become convinced that false teachers are more numerous and influential today than ever before in history. The means by which these "teachers" can get their message to the masses is unparalleled in history. Books, audio and video tapes, radio, television, and now the internet all make it possible for them to reach untold millions with

relative ease. For instance, Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, is an example of how one man's erroneous beliefs about the End Times were introduced to nearly 100,000,000 people. Without doubt, no time in history has ever afforded Satan a greater opportunity to delude the entire world. Is it safe to say True Believers are living in the most dangerous and deceptive time the Church has ever known?

Elijah: When you say "dangerous and deceptive," I assume you are using those two terms to refer to the same thing. The most dangerous thing a True Believer faces is Satan's deception. So there can be little doubt that our generation is facing an incredibly "dangerous and deceptive time." True Believers are about to witness an onslaught of Satan's lies that has never been seen in the history of the Church. The Prophet Daniel mentions it in what he says concerning the "time of the end" (Dan. 8:17; 12:4, 10). But he also offers a bit of encouragement to those who know the Truth. Look at what he says:

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."

(Daniel 12:1-3)

I've mentioned that passage more times than I can remember. I like it because it succinctly states the Truth of what we are going to see in our own time. Things don't seem to be moving all that quickly right now because the Archangel Michael has not yet arisen to do his work. But trust me on this one; it won't be long before that magnificent messenger begins to carry out his mission: to ensure that all of God's People hear the Word that God has hidden in the seven sealed messages of the Hebrew Scriptures. That's how he is going to "guard" Israel, that is, the members of the Body of Jesus Christ, Who is Israel. He will make sure the Elect understand and hold on to the Truth they

have heard. Whatever little bit of Truth True Believers understand is the only defense they have against Satan's lies. But that's all they need. Wherever the Truth is believed, Satan cannot stand. Until now, True Believers have only had available the Truth of the Gospel. That is rapidly changing. I'm amazed at the things in *The Teaching* that have come together over the past five years. Give us another five years, and we'll be ready to provide abundant insight to all who want to understand the Truth.

Editor: *Speaking of things yet to come, the End-Times sequence of events you laid out in the article in the October 1996 newsletter was fascinating. Based on what you said, "Christians" who hold dispensationalist beliefs are one day going to be deceived into worshiping the Antichrist as if he were Jesus Christ. In order for that deception to be successful, however, I assume they would first have to be deceived into thinking the Rapture, the Tribulation, and the reign of the Antichrist have already occurred. I can see how Pretenders might be easily duped into thinking the Tribulation and the reign of the Antichrist have taken place, but the Rapture is another story.*

First of all, in order to create the illusion that the Rapture has taken place, some kind of supernatural event would have to occur to give the impression that thousands and thousands of "Christians" have suddenly disappeared off the face of the Earth. And after this "false wonder" has transpired, there would then be the question in the minds of remaining "Christians" as to why they were not raptured. If my scenario is accurate, it's apparent we "ain't seen nothin' yet" with regard to the "deluding influence" (2 Thess. 2:11) that awaits us in the future. Is my understanding fairly accurate here, or am I assuming things I shouldn't? Do you have any idea how Satan might create the illusion that the Rapture has taken place, when in fact it hasn't?

Elijah: I have no idea what Satan has planned in that regard. The best I can do is make assumptions based on statements the Prophets have made in the Hebrew Scriptures. Those things are all stated *parabolically*, and since I haven't yet explained the *parabolic imagery* they use, I can't say much more than that. Besides, my beliefs in that regard would only be assumptions. And as I've said before, "Assumptions can kill you." So I would rather not speculate.

I do, however, think you are giving folks more credit than they deserve. People believe what they want to believe. Only when driven by the conviction of the Holy Spirit will a sinner even admit the Truth concerning who he is. So why would Pretenders go seeking facts and figures concerning a fictitious Rapture that was supposed to have occurred seven years before their “Christ” appears to establish his “millennial” reign? Their teachers could just as easily tell them they were wrong to believe that doctrine in the first place. False teachers do that sort of doctrinal flip-flop all the time, and fools who are enamored by Satan’s lies don’t even give it a second thought.

But I see no reason why anyone would feel it necessary to deny that the Rapture occurred seven years before the Antichrist appears pretending to be Jesus Christ. We are, after all, *talking about* the beliefs of people who are only pretending to be Christians. They know they aren’t living the way God expects them to live. I know that because I know they have more knowledge of God’s Law than the pagans Paul mentions in the Book of Romans. And he plainly says the unregenerate person with no knowledge at all of God’s requirements still knows he isn’t doing what God expects him to do. Listen to this:

For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

(Romans 2:14–16)

I’m not saying Satan won’t fabricate some phony “Rapture” to convince people they missed the boat. I’m merely saying I’m not absolutely convinced Pretenders will require all that much objective evidence to persuade them they failed to qualify for inclusion in that event. They know what they are. Believe me, deep down inside they know. They just won’t admit it. And Satan has always turned the few things that people do know into something he can use against them. I doubt his appearance in the person of the Antichrist will prove to be the sole exception.

Editor: You have often said it is not possible to comprehend the meaning and significance of what the Scriptures are saying if you don’t first know what they are talking about. And to know what the Scriptures are talking about, everything has to be put into its proper context. That makes perfect sense, but the difficulty is, there are a lot of contexts to be understood, and each context must fit into the larger context in which it exists. In other words, the meaning and significance of a single verse of Scripture must be understood in the larger context of the passage in which it exists, which must be understood in the context of the chapter in which it exists, which must be understood in the context of the book in which it exists, which must then be understood in the context of the entire Bible itself. So let’s start there—with the entire Bible.

Can you provide our readers with a concise statement that explains what the entire Bible is talking about from beginning to end? Would you then pick one book of the Bible and succinctly state what it is talking about and at the same time explain how it fits into the context of what the entire Bible is talking about? And then would you move on from there to explain one chapter, passage, and verse while at the same time explaining how each fits into the larger context of the entire Bible?

Elijah: I can do that. But first, let me say a few things about the need to take into account the literary and cultural context of what you read in the Scriptures. Realtors like to say there are only three things you need to remember when buying real estate: location, location, and location. Well, the Truth is, context is to the Scriptures what location is to real estate. It is everything. So if you don’t fully understand the *neighborhood* in which a verse is *located*, I advise you not to *buy* anybody’s explanation of what that verse says. I can guarantee you that nine times out of ten their explanation of the *meaning* and *significance* of the verse will be wrong. And having firmly based your faith on some lie fabricated by a fool, you will end up living with the Devil as a neighbor for all eternity.

Having said that, let me quickly answer your first question. You asked, “Can you provide our readers with a concise statement that explains what the entire Bible is talking about from beginning to end?” That one is easy. The Bible is a historical account of what God has accomplished through the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of “*The Man*” Jesus Christ. Beyond

that general statement I am not willing to go. Those of you who are participating in The Next Step program already know the *significance* of what I just said. But there are a few relevant details I haven't told you concerning the things I have been explaining on The Next Step tapes recently, so let me explain those things for the benefit—or detriment—of everyone.

As I have stated repeatedly, God in His wrath has hidden seven sealed messages in the Hebrew Scriptures. I have also told you the seals have been taken off four of those seven sealed messages. They are (in order) "*The House*," "*The Way*," "*The Light*," and "*The Name*." Now one would *assume* that since those four messages were opened in that order, that is the order in which God intended them to be understood. That assumption will definitely kill you.

You see, God's thoughts are not our thoughts, and His *Ways* are certainly not our *ways*. I didn't say that; the Prophet Isaiah did. You can find it stated in Isaiah 55:8–9. However, the Truth of what Isaiah said is illustrated by the fact that the first message opened is not the first message one must understand in order to come to a knowledge of the Truth of the Scriptures. The third message—"The Light"—is. That's the message I have been explaining on The Next Step tapes.

The remarkable thing about the first three messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures is the unique way in which they complement one another. The first message—"The House"—is an overview of *The Teaching*. It tells us in a nutshell *what God said*. The second message—"The Way"—adds to that survey of the Truth by providing a historical record of *how God has worked* in history by repeatedly making sure men have had opportunity to hear His message concerning "*The House*." So the second message is essentially an explanation of *what God has done* among men.

The third message—"The Light"—tells us *why* God continually made "*The House*" message available as "*The Way*" that sinful men could become what God desires them to be. That is, it explains *the significance of what God has said and done* in history. That information is absolutely essential to your understanding of the first two messages. That's why I have been explaining it on The Next Step tapes.

It is becoming increasingly clear to me that it is impossible for anyone to fully understand the first two messages unless they first understand the third message. Yet I have no idea when I will be able to make

that message available to everyone in printed form. However, since True Believers must understand that message before they can understand what God is seeking to accomplish in their lives, I'm certain God has a specific plan in that regard.

If God is willing, I plan to explain "*The House*" message in The Resurrection Theology Series. Then I intend to lay out "*The Way*" message in the three or four volumes of *The Mystery of Scripture*. After that, I can think about writing something else. In the interim, I am intending to provide edited transcripts of The Next Step tapes to those who are participating in that program. But those transcripts won't fully explain all of the passages from which the message concerning "*The Light*" is woven together, so I assume I'll eventually put those things into book form also. I already have titles in mind for a couple of the books that will explain "*The Light*" message. I have even mentally outlined the first few chapters of one of those books, but the topics it will discuss are so controversial that I'm fairly certain it won't see the light of day for at least another decade.

I feel absolutely overwhelmed when I stop to consider all of the things in the Scriptures God has called me to explain. I have no idea how to get the first volume of *The Mystery of Scripture* finalized, much less write the two or three remaining volumes in that series. It helped lessen the load a little when I was finally able to submit the segments of a first draft of *House of Israel, Temple of God* as articles for *The Voice of Elijah*®. That double-duty approach will at least make it easier for me to make those things available in printed form. But I discover new things in the Scriptures every day, and I'm not getting any younger. In six more years, I'll be ordering from the seniors' side of the menu.

The most frustrating thing I have to deal with is the chronic lack of funds necessary to purchase the equipment I need and to pay people to help me. That can, and will, change as more True Believers realize they are hearing the Truth and join The Next Step program. But the one thing that won't change is the fact that every day I get one day older. The Truth is, the aging process is not as conducive to what God has called me to accomplish as I would like it to be. I simply cannot remember things as easily as I used to; consequently, I have hundreds of sticky notes attached to the pages of my Bible to direct me back to things I saw while researching *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, nearly five

years ago. Yet, I am still nagged by the fear that I will forget something before I can put it down in print. I know that's silly. When God calls, He also enables. Nevertheless, the frustration of trying to do so much with never enough time and so little money still manages to get to me now and then. But that's not what you asked me to *talk about*. So let me get on with it.

You asked, "Would you then pick one book of the Bible and succinctly state what it is talking about and at the same time explain how it fits into the context of what the entire Bible is talking about?" I've already told you what the entire text of the Scriptures is *talking about*. Now let me explain a few things about the context of the Book of Numbers. For the benefit of those who don't know much about the Old Testament, Numbers is one of the five books of the Pentateuch. To be more precise, it is the fourth of the five books of Moses. Therefore, to understand what that one book is saying, you must first understand how it fits into the context of the other four books that Moses wrote. So let me do that first.

Genesis is the first of the five books of Moses. It tells us what we need to know about how God dealt with Adam, Noah, and the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and how *the promise* of God was *handed down* to the time of Moses by the men who were the *seed* of Abraham. Genesis does that by providing a historical record that concludes with an account of how Jacob scattered *the promise*, which up until then had been the possession of just one man, by distributing it to his twelve sons.

The second book of Moses is Exodus. In that book, Moses tells us God once again unified *the promise* that Jacob had scattered by establishing "all Israel" as a *corporate* entity that could function, as Paul says in Galatians 3:19–20, as a *mediator*. That is, God made sure Israel would hold title to *the promise* until Jesus Christ *became* Israel and *inherited what was promised*. Moses explains all that by giving us a narrative account of historical events relating to the Exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt.

The Book of Leviticus is the third book of Moses. While it describes very few historical events, those it does mention carry a potent pack of information. For example, it describes the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests (Lev. 8), the *parabolic pantomime* in which Aaron prepared the people for the appearance of the Glory of the Lord on the eighth day (Lev. 9), the

circumstances surrounding the death of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–7), and the stoning of a man who cursed "*The Name*" (Lev. 24:10–23). However, the purpose of Leviticus is not to provide a historical account of events that happened in the wilderness. Not at all. Moses wants to tell us *what God said* to him between the first day of the first month of the second year and the first day of the second month of that same year. That is the point at which the Book of Numbers picks up the historical account of the Exodus. Consequently, one must fit the historical events mentioned in Leviticus into that frame of time.

The material one finds in the Book of Leviticus is concerned almost exclusively with sacrifice and ritual. That's because the primary purpose Moses had in mind when he wrote it was to provide the information necessary for the reader to understand *why God said what He said* and *did what He did* in the other four books of the Pentateuch. In other words, the material in Leviticus is concerned with explaining the *significance* of what you read elsewhere in the Pentateuch. That is because, as I explain in the first volume of *The Mystery of Scripture*, God has used *symbolic rituals* as *parabolic pantomime* to explain what He intended to accomplish through His Firstborn Son, Israel.

After Leviticus, we come to Numbers, the book that we are fitting into its larger context. Numbers is the fourth book of Moses. It provides a historical account of what happened after the Tabernacle was consecrated on the first day of the second year that Israel spent in the wilderness (Ex. 40). That is, it details some of the more important events that occurred during the forty years that Israel spent wandering in the wilderness of Sinai.

The first ten chapters of the Book of Numbers describe things that happened between the first day of the second month of the second year and the twentieth day of that same month (Num. 1:1–10:13). An interesting aspect of that account is the fact that Moses also includes a description of events that happened earlier, during the first month of the second year (Num. 7:1–9:14). In the remainder of the book, he tracks the movements of the sons of Israel through the wilderness from the time they left Mt. Sinai until they arrived in the plains of Moab beyond the Jordan in the fortieth year of their wandering.

The fifth book of Moses is Deuteronomy. It takes up the account in the plains of Moab where the Book

of Numbers leaves off. In it, Moses tells us what he said to the sons of Israel shortly before he died and Joshua led the people of Israel into the Promised Land. The purpose of the book is to provide us with a record of the covenant ceremony in which Moses *changed the conditions* of the Mosaic Covenant and *delivered the promise* to “all Israel.” It also contains essential information that allows us to better understand the purpose God had in conducting the *parabolic pantomime* of Israel’s wandering for forty years in the wilderness. I’ve *talked about* all those things in *Not All Israel Is Israel* and *The Passover Parable*, so I needn’t get into them here. (See the Order Form in this issue.)

Now that I’ve given you a brief survey of how the Book of Numbers fits into the overall framework of the five books that Moses wrote, let me explain a bit more about the book itself. To fully understand what Moses has written, one must first have a basic understanding of the following three things: (1) why he begins his account with the census of Israel, which he tells us began on the first day of the second month of the second year (Num. 1:1 ff.); (2) why he then goes back to describe events that occurred during the first month of the second year (Num. 7:1 ff.); and (3) why he concludes his description of the events that occurred at Mt. Sinai by telling us the sons of Israel set out from Mt. Sinai on the twentieth day of the second month of the second year (Num. 10:11–13). I will explain those things only obliquely here because they are not entirely pertinent to my purpose.

First of all, I should tell you the book is called “Numbers” because it begins with the “numbering” of the sons of Israel. That is, it begins with the description of a census in which Moses gives us a genealogical breakdown of the thirteen tribes of Israel along with the number of people counted in each tribe. Most people find this sort of thing to be extremely dry reading. It’s a lot like reading the genealogies that God saw fit to include in the Hebrew Scriptures. I will readily admit that if you don’t know *why* those things are *significant*, it is a bit difficult to work up an interest in them. But the Truth is, a lot of the most *significant* information in the Hebrew Scriptures is hidden in such obvious places. God put it there to mock the stupidity of false teachers who love to expound on things about which they know nothing whatsoever. But let me stow my soapbox for now and do what you asked me to do.

The Book of Numbers tells us Moses and Aaron began “numbering” “all Israel” on the first day of the second month in the second year of their wilderness wandering:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting, on the first of the second month, in the second year after they had come out of the land of Egypt, saying, “Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, by their families, by their fathers’ households, according to the number of names, every male, head by head from twenty years old and upward, whoever {is able to} go out to war in Israel, you and Aaron shall number them by their armies.”
(Numbers 1:1–3)

In giving us the precise date of the first census of Israel, Moses is making a point of reminding us the Tabernacle and the Aaronic priesthood had already been consecrated. He doesn’t explicitly tell us this in his account of the census, but the *significance* of what he wrote resides in the fact that Aaron, the high priest of Israel, consecrated “all Israel” by taking the census. To extract that bit of information from the text, you have only to read what Moses wrote immediately before he wrote the first chapter of the Book of Numbers.

Remember what I told you earlier? When you are reading the Scriptures, context is everything. The book, chapter, and verse divisions in the Pentateuch are completely artificial. They were added by folks who didn’t understand *why* Moses wrote Numbers 1 right after he wrote Leviticus 27. So they made an artificial division in the text at that point, thereby leading everybody after them to believe that Moses began a completely new “book” in Numbers 1. Therefore, most people don’t pay much attention to Leviticus 27 when they read the account of the census in Numbers 1. They do exactly the same thing when they read Exodus 1, Leviticus 1, and Deuteronomy 1; yet the continuity of the biblical text in those cases is even easier to see. For example, Leviticus begins by telling us what happened immediately after Moses consecrated the Tabernacle in Exodus 40. It says this:

Then the LORD called to Moses and spoke to him from the tent of meeting.
(Leviticus 1:1a)

The point of that statement is, God had taken up residence in the Tabernacle.

It isn't all that difficult to see why folks would take what Moses wrote and destroy the continuity of the original text by dividing it up into separate sections. Satan likes it better that way. It keeps people from considering *why* Moses put certain things next to each other the way he did. In this case, the account of the census comes immediately after a whole bunch of information that tells you *why* God told Moses and Aaron to take a census of Israel in the first place. So let's *talk about* that for a bit. It is important because it contributes to the overall context of the passage and verse we are going to look at later.

As I mentioned earlier, Exodus 40 tells us the consecration of the Tabernacle occurred on the first day of the second year:

*Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "On the first day of the first month you shall set up the tabernacle of the tent of meeting."
(Exodus 40:1-2)*

The biblical text immediately tells us Moses did exactly what God commanded. It then describes how the Glory of God descended on the Tabernacle after it had been consecrated. Leviticus picks up the account at that point and, for the most part, tells us *what God said* to Moses in the Tabernacle during the month that followed. It is important to understand that, from Exodus 40 to Leviticus 10, Moses is explaining things we need to know about how he consecrated the Tabernacle and the Aaronic priesthood during the first eight days of the first month. But from Leviticus 11 through the end of Leviticus, he is explaining things God told him *after* he had completed the consecration of the Tabernacle and the priesthood. All of those things relate to the consecration of "all Israel." But make a note of the fact that he begins that section with this:

*The LORD spoke again to Moses and to Aaron, saying to them, "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'These are the creatures which you may eat from all the animals that are on the earth.'"
(Leviticus 11:1-2)*

The things Moses included in Leviticus were all said and done before Moses and Aaron consecrated

the people of Israel on the first day of the second month of the second year. Yet, in what he writes in the first ten chapters of Numbers, Moses wants us to understand he is resuming his historical description of the wilderness wandering right where he left off at the end of Exodus. That is clear from the fact that, in Numbers 7, he specifically refers us back to his account in Exodus 40:

*Now it came about on the day that Moses had finished setting up the tabernacle, he anointed it and consecrated it with all its furnishings and the altar and all its utensils; he anointed them and consecrated them also.
(Numbers 7:1)*

Moses also wants us to know the census was completed before Israel left Mt. Sinai on the twentieth day of that month. That is one of the reasons why he concludes his description of those events this way:

*Now it came about in the second year, in the second month, on the twentieth of the month, that the cloud was lifted from over the tabernacle of the testimony; and the sons of Israel set out on their journeys from the wilderness of Sinai. Then the cloud settled down in the wilderness of Paran. So they moved out for the first time according to the commandment of the LORD through Moses.
(Numbers 10:11-13)*

So you can see that only after a rather long description of the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and "all Israel" at Mt. Sinai does the Book of Numbers go on to detail other events that occurred after the people left Mt. Sinai. Yet nearly all of those events in some way threatened to completely invalidate the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, or "all Israel." Having said that, let me speak more specifically to the context of the verse I am going to explain from the Book of Numbers.

An accurate understanding of the first four chapters of the Book of Numbers is absolutely essential to one's understanding of the things Moses included in the remainder of this particular book. For example, he explains the role of the Levites in his account of the census of Israel. Without that information, we could never understand *why* God orchestrated the *symbolic rituals* described in Numbers 7-8. That is obviously

why Moses reserved his description of those things until after he had given us insight into the role of the Levites in his account of the census.

As important as understanding the relationship of the priests and the Levites is, however, it pales in comparison to the importance of understanding that the taking of the census is what made Israel *holy* to the Lord. By being included in that census, each person counted became a member of Israel, who alone was God's Own possession from among all the peoples of the Earth, the only holy nation among many unholy nations. Those are not my words. They are merely a restatement of what God told Moses to tell "all Israel":

"Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.
(Exodus 19:5-6)

The census of Israel made Israel a *holy* people by ensuring that a ransom was paid for every person counted. For that reason the *significance* of the ritual counting of the members of Israel, more than anything else, is what defines the Book of Numbers. It is, in fact, what makes Numbers a book of "numbers." That is why an understanding of the events leading up to the second census of Israel that Moses describes in Numbers is so important. Yet before I get into explaining that account, I must remind you again concerning what I have repeatedly said about *meaning* and *significance*. To understand *what* Moses said, you must first understand *why* he said it. If you do not understand the function of the census in Israel, you have no idea at all *why* God would order Eleazar, the high priest, to take another census immediately after the sons of Israel "began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab" and the daughters of Midian (Num. 25:1).

In *Not All Israel Is Israel*, I explained why God instituted the census in Israel. Briefly stated, it was the means whereby one could ensure that God's tally of Israel corresponded with man's tally of who was and was not a member of Israel. Therefore, for God to order the high priest to take a second census of Israel, some incredible disaster must have befallen Israel. Indeed, it had. Moses relates those events this way:

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

(Numbers 25:1-3)

I have already explained the fact that "play the harlot" is an inaccurate translation of a Hebrew verb that actually *means* "practice the *zonah* ritual." (See "The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1996.) I have also explained a bit about that ritual and what the Canaanites were trying to accomplish by it. However, in answering your question here, I have to get a little ahead of myself and tell you a bit more about what these ancient people thought the *zonah* ritual accomplished for them. But first, let me remind you how Israel's playing "the harlot with the daughters of Moab" ended. Moses recounts those final events this way:

Then behold, one of the sons of Israel came and brought to his relatives a Midianite woman, in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the sons of Israel, while they were weeping at the doorway of the tent of meeting. When Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he arose from the midst of the congregation, and took a spear in his hand; and he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through the body. So the plague on the sons of Israel was checked. And those who died by the plague were 24,000.

(Numbers 25:6-9)

Immediately after those catastrophic events, God ordered the high priest Eleazar to take a second census of Israel. This is how Moses describes what happened. Notice he specifically links the census to the plague:

Then it came about after the plague, that the LORD spoke to Moses and to Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest, saying, "Take a census of all the congregation of the sons of Israel from twenty years old and upward, by their fathers' households, whoever is able to go out to war in Israel."

(Numbers 26:1-2)

Now you first asked me to give you a “concise statement” of what the entire Bible is *talking about*, and I did that. I told you, “The Bible is a historical account of what God has accomplished through the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of ‘The Man’ Jesus Christ.” Then you asked me to pick one book and explain what it is *talking about*. I did that as well. I told you that “only after a rather long description of the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and ‘all Israel’ at Mt. Sinai does the Book of Numbers go on to detail other events that occurred after the people left Mt. Sinai. Yet nearly all of those events in some way threatened to completely invalidate the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, or ‘all Israel.’”

You then asked me to show you how the book I chose fits into the overall context of what the Bible is *talking about*. Bear with me. I’ll get to that later. But before I do that, I have to show you a few things about the three passages I just mentioned because you also asked me to “move on from there to one chapter, passage, and verse and explain what each is talking about while at the same time explaining how each fits into the larger context of the entire Bible.” I’ll get to that eventually also.

First, let me show you the reason Moses included the entire account of Numbers 22:1–26:65 in his record of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness. By the time I’ve finished my explanation, you should have a better understanding of why I deride “parrots” who dearly love to spout chapter and verse as some sort of idiotic “proof text.” The Truth is, there are no “proof texts” in the Scriptures. There are only individual statements of fact that contribute to the whole of the message of the Scriptures. Those individual statements still have to be understood in their immediate context and as part of the overall context of the Scriptures. Without an understanding of the larger context in which a statement is made, you have very little understanding of any one verse that is worth mentioning. But let me get down off my raggedy old soapbox again and get on with what you asked me to do.

The one thing about the Canaanite *zonah* ritual that I haven’t explained publicly is the fact that it served to unite two “peoples” into “one.” That’s the point of Moses’ account of the Tower of Babel. He plainly tells us everybody on Earth had one language when they set out to “make a name” for themselves. But after they had completed the tower and “made a

name” for themselves through the *sacred marriage* ceremony, God Himself came down and said:

“Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language.”
(Genesis 11:6b)

To understand *why* God said *what He said* and *did what He did* at the Tower of Babel, you first have to understand what He had *promised* Noah earlier and what Noah did when he cursed Canaan. I have no intention of explaining the details regarding those things openly at this time because they appear to be part of the third message—“*The Light*.” But I will point out the fact that Noah’s curse on Canaan set the descendants of Canaan apart from the rest of Noah’s descendants. That is, mankind was no longer “one people” after Ham incurred the wrath of his father, Noah. They were two “peoples.” One “people” stood under *the blessing* of Noah, while the other stood under his curse.

Moses included the account of Noah cursing Canaan because he considered it extremely important that we *make a distinction between* the two “peoples” who lived on the Earth prior to the building of the Tower of Babel. He wanted us to know that one of those two “peoples” had access to *the promise* of God, while the other did not. If you can’t yet see where I am heading with all this, let me remind you that “make a distinction between” is an idiomatic phrase. I won’t go so far as to call it an idiom. But I will tell you it ranks in importance right up there with every idiom God has used to conceal His Truth. So he expects you to firmly fix it in your mind by visualizing the *parabolic imagery* to which it is linked. That image is the image of light and darkness. God Himself has *made a distinction between* those two. He expects you to do the same.

The point of the story of the Tower of Babel has to do with the fact that the cursed descendants of Noah had, through the *sacred marriage* ceremony, joined themselves to his blessed descendants. The cursed thereby became entitled to share in *what God had promised* Noah. Now you can understand a bit better *why* God refused to accept the fact that all the Earth had again become “one people.” That, in turn, makes it easier to understand *why* He rejected the whole bunch of them and started over again by giving *the promise* to Abraham. I’ll explain all of those things

in detail eventually. They will help you understand the message concerning *"The Light."* But there are a whole lot of other things that you must understand first. For now, it's enough that you know the ancient Canaanite *zonah* ritual made two "peoples" "one." Without that bit of information, you cannot even begin to grasp the *significance* of what Moses wrote in Numbers 22:1–26:65. And without an understanding of the *significance* of what he said there, you certainly don't have an inkling as to his *meaning*.

You see, Israel's trouble with Moab and Midian began when they completely annihilated the Amorites (Num. 21:21–35). Word soon got around that the sons of Israel were a force to be reckoned with. So when they left the area they had taken from the Amorites and moved up north to camp out in Moab's front yard, the king of Moab—Balak, the son of Zippor—got understandably nervous. He wanted the Israelites to leave, but he lacked the courage to try to run them off himself. So he approached the leaders of the Midianites with a plan. Together they took up an offering to pay a holy man to come down and curse Israel.

That's where the anecdote about Balaam and his jackass comes in. Moses could have gotten across the point of his story about the deceit of Moab and Midian without including that. But he apparently found it amusing that a fool with insight into the Truth about why Israel was carrying God's *blessing* (Num. 24:17–19) had to be rebuked by a dumb beast of burden. You have to admit the part about the jackass talking is a bit farfetched. But if Moses had left the story out, we wouldn't have the *parabolic image* of those idiots among us who are willing to "walk in the way of Balaam" (2 Pet. 2:15–16; Jude 1:11; Rev. 2:14). Since a lot of folks in our time are going to follow Balaam in repudiating the Truth they have heard, it's clear God had a valid purpose in prompting Moses to put the imagery down in written form. Like the imagery that inheres in the rebellion of Korah, it is *meant* to serve as a reminder to all like-minded fools. Too bad they fail to get the point. But let me get down off my soapbox once more and get on with the task at hand.

The Mosaic Covenant made Israel the *mediator* of God's *blessing*. That's why Balaam had to bless Israel instead of cursing Him. There was nothing else he could do. But Balaam's quandary left Balak and the Midianites right back where they started. Therefore,

they initiated Plan B and did exactly what the "people" who were cursed had done to become part of the "people" who were blessed at the Tower of Babel. They fell back on the *sacred marriage* ceremony. (See "The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1996.) The way the Moabites and Midianites saw it, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Moses lets us know that's what they had decided to do when he relates what the Lord said to him afterwards:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Be hostile to the Midianites and strike them; for they have been hostile to you with their tricks, with which they have deceived you in the affair of Peor, and in the affair of Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian, their sister who was slain on the day of the plague because of Peor."
(Numbers 25:16–18)

His point is, "Cozbi, the daughter of the leader of Midian" did not accidentally happen to meet up with an Israelite man who "took" her on a whim. The elders of Midian intentionally sent her down to the Israelite camp with instructions that she was to function as a *zonah*. When she got there, she found some fool Israelite and talked him into "taking" her. But you have no idea as to *why* that is *significant* unless you know *what* a *zonah* did and *why* she did it. A *zonah* "built a house" and thereby made two "peoples" "one." God knew that, and the sons of Israel did too. That tells us the idiots who fell for the Midianites' plan did so only because they failed to take Israel's covenant relationship to God seriously. They had no excuse. Moses had explained what God required:

"You are therefore to keep all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them, so that the land to which I am bringing you to live will not spew you out. Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I shall drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them. Hence I have said to you, 'You are to possess their land, and I Myself will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey.' I am the LORD your God, who has separated you from the peoples. You are therefore to make a distinction between the clean animal and the unclean, and between the unclean bird and the clean; and you shall not make yourselves detestable by animal or by bird or by anything that creeps on the

ground, which I have separated for you as unclean. Thus you are to be holy to Me, for I the LORD am holy; and I have set you apart from the peoples to be Mine."

(Leviticus 20:22–26)

The point of that passage is obvious when you understand it in its immediate context. It is right smack-dab in the middle of a section of the Pentateuch known as the "Holiness Code." Perhaps I should tell you that scholars call Leviticus 16–26 the "Holiness Code" because it explains things related to how Israel was expected to maintain its holy relationship to God. So you can see that God is emphasizing to Moses one of the ways He expects Israel to maintain holiness. He is to keep Himself separate from the other nations.

I told you earlier that the section of Scripture pertaining to the consecration of Israel actually begins with Leviticus 11, where God insists the people are to *make a distinction between* clean and unclean animals. Knowing that, you can see that, in the passage I just showed you, God is reminding the Israelites that the *parabolic pantomime* in which they were allowed to eat some animals and forbidden to eat others was *meant* to illustrate the *distinction He has made between* Israel (the Blessed) and the nations (the Cursed). The purpose of the *symbolic ritual* was to remind them that, just as they were expected to *make a distinction between* animals, so also they were supposed to *make a distinction between* "peoples." The Jews today make that distinction. Unfortunately, their ancestors, the ancient Israelites, never did. Hence, the Jews are no longer Israel.

As I stated in *Not All Israel Is Israel* (pp. 137–142), Israel's failure to *make a distinction between* themselves and the Gentiles is one of the main reasons why God "cut off from" Israel those who were living in the Northern Kingdom of Israel during the time of the Prophet Elijah. Hosea plainly tells us their practice of the *zonah* ritual had left them little more than Gentiles anyway. The Prophet says this in Hosea 7:

*Ephraim mixes himself with the nations;
Ephraim has become a cake not turned.
(Hosea 7:8)*

He later blasts the sons of Israel because he knew that, through their practice of the *zonah* ritual, they had become "one" with the nations:

*Do not rejoice, O Israel, with exultation like the nations!
For you have played the harlot, forsaking your God.
You have loved {harlots'} earnings on every threshing floor.
(Hosea 9:1)*

The ancient Israelites had a hard time understanding that God actually expected them to *make a distinction between* themselves and the other nations. As a matter of fact, the requirement that Israel not contaminate the purity of the *holy* "seed of Israel" by "taking" foreign women and "mixing" the "seed of Israel" with the nations was something that the sons of Israel did not adhere to until after they returned from the Babylonian Exile. At that time, Ezra and Nehemiah both record the fact that it was necessary to take extreme measures to instill that mentality in the Jews. Nehemiah tells us this:

*Now the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers, the temple servants, and all those who had separated themselves from the peoples of the lands to the law of God, their wives, their sons and their daughters, all those who had knowledge and understanding, are joining with their kinsmen, their nobles, and are taking on themselves a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of GOD our Lord, and His ordinances and His statutes; and that we will not give our daughters to the peoples of the land or take their daughters for our sons.
(Nehemiah 10:28–30)*

A bit later he tells us why the Jews who returned from exile did what they did:

*On that day they read aloud from the book of Moses in the hearing of the people; and there was found written in it that no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God, because they did not meet the sons of Israel with bread and water, but hired Balaam against them to curse them. However, our God turned the curse into a blessing. So it came about, that when they heard the law, they excluded all foreigners from Israel.
(Nehemiah 13:1–3)*

It is not for nothing that Nehemiah refers his reader back to Moses' account of what happened to Israel in the plains of Moab. He wants us to know that

the Jews were at long last intent on getting at least this one part of their covenant relationship with God right. Unfortunately for the Jews, but fortunately for us Gentiles, God has never been much impressed by slavish adherence to the external requirements of *The Law of Moses*. He has always had something far greater in mind. For that reason He continued to “cut off from” Israel until only one person remained “in Israel.” That was a young Jewish girl named Mary. When Mary had a son, the “seed of Israel” was finally *holy*, just as God desired. But that’s another part of the story.

Ezra also tells us how the Jews finally abstained from “taking” foreign women:

Now when these things had been completed, the princes approached me, saying, “The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the lands, according to their abominations, {those} of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken some of their daughters {as wives} for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has intermingled with the peoples of the lands; indeed, the hands of the princes and the rulers have been foremost in this unfaithfulness.” And when I heard about this matter, I tore my garment and my robe, and pulled some of the hair from my head and my beard, and sat down appalled. Then everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel on account of the unfaithfulness of the exiles gathered to me, and I sat appalled until the evening offering.
(Ezra 9:1–4)

Ezra then tells us he prayed that God would forgive the offense of the people in contaminating the holiness of Israel by “taking” foreign women. In his prayer he mentions that God had prohibited this particular sin:

“So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good {things} of the land and leave {it} as an inheritance to your sons forever.’ And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since Thou our God hast requited {us} less than our iniquities {deserve,} and hast given us an escaped remnant as this, shall we again break Thy commandments and intermarry

with the peoples who commit these abominations? Wouldst Thou not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape?”
(Ezra 9:12–14)

Finally, Ezra tells us the Jews resolved to never again fall into this particular sin:

And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God, and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. So now let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise! For {this} matter is your responsibility, but we will be with you; be courageous and act.” Then Ezra rose and made the leading priests, the Levites, and all Israel, take oath that they would do according to this proposal; so they took the oath.
(Ezra 10:2–5)

The Jews who returned from the Babylonian Exile divorced their foreign women and, to this day, a devout Jew will not marry a Gentile. Unfortunately, what the Jews did is a bit like closing the barn door after the horses have gotten out. By the time the sons of Israel finally got it right, God had already *promised* to ratify a New Covenant with “*The House*” of Israel. So He had no intention of continuing His relationship to Israel under the terms of the Old Covenant, as the Jews today insist He has. That is why God couldn’t care less whether or not a Jew marries a Gentile. The Jews no longer hold title to *the promise* of God. Israel does. That is, Jesus Christ does. And *in Him* all the members of the Body of Jesus Christ do as well. Therefore, the lesson to be learned from what happened to Israel at Shittim should not be lost on those “in Israel” today who are the least bit concerned about maintaining the holiness of *Corporate* Israel. I’ll say more about that in a bit; but first, let me finish my explanation of the account in Numbers.

You now know *why* God began to destroy Israel with a plague after several ignorant Israelite men engaged in the *zonah* ritual with Moabite and Midianite women. He did so because those men had

made “all Israel” “one” with the “people” of Moab and Midian. Therefore, they contaminated the holiness of “all Israel” by including a whole host of Gentiles. Moses describes those circumstances this way:

While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel.

(Numbers 25:1–3)

Did you notice what Moses said? He said, “So Israel *joined themselves* to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel.” He is telling you what the *zonah* ritual did. It made “The House” of Israel “one” with “The House” of the Moabites “in” “The House” of the god Baal of Peor. That was so, however, only because the Moabite women who came down to the Israelite camp offering to have sex with anyone who would “take” them were cultic prostitutes. They had no intention of “raising up a seed” for the Israelite men who “took” them. They planned all along to “build a house” for Baal of Peor. And those women didn’t act of their own accord. They were sent. Yet Moab’s deceit worked so well that the Midianites immediately decided to try the same tactic. That’s when God Himself started “cutting off from” among Israel and ordered Moses to do the same:

And the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the leaders of the people and execute them in broad daylight before the LORD, so that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel.” So Moses said to the judges of Israel, “Each of you slay his men who have joined themselves to Baal of Peor.”

(Numbers 25:4–5)

I’ve explained this passage in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, because it graphically illustrates how the new military/judicial structure that Moses established in Israel at Mt. Sinai was imposed over Israel’s existing tribal structure. The *zonah* ritual figures into the mix because it was something the Canaanites borrowed from the Amorites. The Amorites were nomads, and the “heads” of the Amorite tribes most likely used the ritual to extend their influence. Two

tribes who were “one” could more easily defend themselves against the attacks of “strangers.” But my point is, the “heads” of the tribes of Israel had no excuse. They understood the purpose of the *zonah* ritual, and they also knew Moses had taught them God expected Israel to remain *holy* to the Lord by keeping Himself separate from the other “peoples” of the Earth. He never intended for Israel to be “one” with any god except Himself.

The Hebrew text, by the way, does not say Israel “joined themselves.” It says Israel “joined Himself.” The *parabolic imagery* is one in which Israel is not many people, He is “One” Person. He is the Firstborn Son of God. When a member of that Son of God consented to “take” a *zonah* and “raise up seed” for another god, He made “all Israel” “one” with that god. That circumstance angered the God of Israel, and He set out to destroy His Own Son. He was prevented from doing so only by the atoning act of Phinehas. That is all *parabolic imagery* that God has used to speak concerning the purpose of the death and Resurrection of Israel, that is, of Jesus Christ. But I have already mentioned some of those things on The Next Step tapes.

Now let me briefly review where we are. You asked me to give you a “concise statement” of what the entire Bible is *talking about*, and I did. I told you, “The Bible is a historical account of what God has accomplished through the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of ‘The Man’ Jesus Christ.” You next asked me to pick one book and explain what it is *talking about*. I did that also. I told you: “Only after a rather long description of the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and all Israel at Mt. Sinai does the Book of Numbers go on to detail other events that occurred after the people left Mt. Sinai. Yet nearly all of those events in some way threatened to completely invalidate the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, or all Israel.”

You then asked me if I would “move on from there to one chapter, passage, and verse” and explain what each is *talking about*. I have also done that. I have just explained to you the *meaning* and *significance* of what Moses said in Numbers 25:3. However, there is one thing you asked me to do that I have not done. So let me repeat your question in full. You said:

Can you provide our readers with a concise statement that explains what the entire Bible is talking about from beginning to end? Would you then pick one book of the

Bible and succinctly state what it is talking about and at the same time explain how it fits into the context of what the entire Bible is talking about? And then would you move on from there to explain one chapter, passage, and verse while at the same time explaining how each fits into the larger context of the entire Bible?

Did you see what I failed to do? I did not “at the same time explain how” the Book of Numbers “fits into the context of what the entire Bible is talking about.” Nor did I explain “one chapter, passage, and verse while at the same time explaining how each fits into the larger context of the entire Bible.” That was not an oversight on my part. I told you as we went along that I was going to put those things off until later. Well, now is later. So let me begin to tie things together by reminding you of what Paul said about the wilderness wandering of Israel and the lesson that Christians should learn from the wrath of God that fell on them:

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness. Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also craved. And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, “THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY.” Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the Lord, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.
(1 Corinthians 10:1–13)

Take a closer look at that passage, and see if you can find Paul’s reference to the book, chapter, passage, and verse I just explained. Did you see it? He said, “Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day.” He is referring to the plague that destroyed the people in the plains of Moab. You may have missed it because Paul misquotes the exact number who died in the plague. The plague killed twenty-four thousand people (Num. 25:9). Eleazar counted twenty-three thousand in the census that followed the plague (Num. 26:62). In quoting from memory, Paul got those numbers mixed up.

Now *why* do you think Paul says what he says in this passage? More to the point, *why* does he refer to *what* happened when “Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the Lord was angry against Israel” (Num. 25:3)? The answers to those questions lie in the fact that most of the events that Paul mentions are events Moses describes in the Book of Numbers.

As I have already told you, “only after a rather long description of the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, and all Israel at Mt. Sinai does the Book of Numbers go on to detail other events that occurred after the people left Mt. Sinai. Yet nearly all of those events in some way threatened to completely invalidate the consecration of the Tabernacle, the priesthood, or ‘all Israel.’” Paul knows that. That’s *why* he says what he says in 1 Corinthians 10. But to understand *what* Paul says, one must first understand it in its larger context, so let’s take a look at that.

Let me tell you in advance that we will find Paul has been *talking about* things that threaten “to completely invalidate the consecration of ... ‘all Israel.’” that is, the consecration of the Body of Jesus Christ, Who alone is Israel. The entirety of 1 Corinthians 1–10 is concerned with things that threaten the holiness of the Body of Jesus Christ. However, Paul starts *talking about* holiness only in 1 Corinthians 3. He says this:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and {that} the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.
(1 Corinthians 3:16–17)

The Greek text makes it clear that Paul is not *talking about* the holiness of individual Believers. He is *talking about* the holiness of all Believers as One, that

is, the holiness of the entire Body of Jesus Christ, Who is “*The House*” of God. From there, he goes on to describe just how repugnant the situation has become with the Corinthians. Rather than striving to maintain the holiness of the *corporate* Body of Jesus Christ, they are instead tolerating open immorality:

It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father's wife.
(1 Corinthians 5:1)

Paul not only demands that they excommunicate the man, he also tells them they must judge the members of the Body of Jesus Christ to make sure that such people are not allowed to remain among them. In so doing, he refers them to what Moses told Israel:

For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within {the church?} But those who are outside, God judges. REMOVE THE WICKED MAN FROM AMONG YOURSELVES.
(1 Corinthians 5:12–13)

After mentioning other things that threaten the holiness of the *corporate* Body, Paul then says this concerning the need for the individual Believer to maintain holiness:

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body {with her?} For He says, “THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH.” But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit {with Him.} Flee immorality. Every {other} sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.
(1 Corinthians 6:15–20)

His mention of immorality reminds Paul that the Corinthians had asked him a question about marriage. That is why, in 1 Corinthians 7, he explains his view on that subject. In the next chapter, however, he *talks*

about things that defile the body and explains how the issue of idolatry does not revolve around *what* you do, but *why* you do it. Then he informs the Corinthians that, although he has just as many rights as the other Apostles, he has not availed himself of those rights because he is striving for a far greater reward. That is when he mentions the need for all Believers to pay attention to what befell the Israelites in the wilderness.

You can see from the larger context that Paul is concerned about things in the Corinthian church that are threatening to destroy the consecration of the *corporate* Body of Jesus Christ. He is warning the Corinthians that they must either deal with those situations or else risk the same fate that the sons of Israel suffered in the wilderness. His argument, however, is based on the fact that the Church, as the Body of Jesus Christ, is now Israel. Therefore, every member is obligated not only to maintain personal holiness but also to maintain the holiness of the corporate Body.

Unfortunately, it was not just the leaders of the church at Corinth who failed to heed Paul's admonition. Orthodox Church leaders eventually gave up even trying to maintain the holiness of the Church. That is abundantly clear from the fact that they reinstated infidels who denied the faith during persecution, thereby allowing them to be identified as members of the Church. No True Believer could ever commit any greater sin, yet Church leaders overlooked even this. Thus the Church, like ancient Israel before, allowed the Cursed to once again become “one” with the Blessed. It will not be so here at the End.

God began His work by *making a distinction between* light and darkness. Therefore, He expects the Children of Light to *make a distinction between* themselves and the children of darkness. And they will. The Sons of Light will eventually see Pretenders for what they are. They will also realize that the sons of darkness have no part in *the promise* of God, and they will exclude them. How do I know all that? I read what the Prophet Malachi wrote concerning the End:

“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.

(Malachi 3:17–18) ■