



The Word Will Have the Last Word

Afterwards just men were born, friends of God; and these have been styled prophets, on account of their foreshowing future events. And the word of prophecy was committed unto them, not for one age only; but also the utterances of events predicted throughout all generations, were vouchsafed in perfect clearness. And this, too, not at the time merely when seers furnished a reply to those present; but also events that would happen throughout all ages, have been manifested beforehand; because, in speaking of incidents gone by, the prophets brought them back to the recollection of humanity; whereas, in showing forth present occurrences, they endeavoured to persuade men not to be remiss; while, by foretelling future events, they have rendered each one of us terrified on beholding events that had been predicted long before, and on expecting likewise those events predicted as still future. Such is our faith, O all ye men,—ours, I say, who are not persuaded by empty expressions, nor caught away by sudden impulses of the heart, nor beguiled by the plausibility of eloquent discourses, yet who do not refuse to obey words that have been uttered by divine power. And these injunctions has God given to the Word. But the Word, by declaring them, promulgated the divine commandments, thereby turning man from disobedience, not bringing him into servitude by force of necessity, but summoning him to liberty through a choice involving spontaneity.

This Logos the Father in the latter days sent forth, no longer to speak by a prophet, and not wishing that the Word, being obscurely proclaimed, should be made the subject of mere conjecture, but that He should be manifested, so that we could see Him with our own eyes. This Logos, I say, the Father sent forth, in order that the world, on beholding Him, might reverence Him who was delivering precepts not by the person of prophets, nor terrifying the soul by an angel, but who was Himself—He that had

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spoken—corporally present amongst us. This Logos we know to have received a body from a virgin, and to have remodelled the old man by a new creation. And we believe the Logos to have passed through every period in this life, in order that He Himself might serve as a law for every age, and that, by being present (amongst) us, He might exhibit His own manhood as an aim for all men. And that by Himself in person He might prove that God made nothing evil, and that man possesses the capacity of self-determination, inasmuch as he is able to will and not to will, and is endued with power to do both. This Man we know to have been made out of the compound of our humanity. For if He were not of the same nature with ourselves, in vain does He ordain that we should imitate the Teacher. For if that Man happened to be of a different substance from us, why does He lay injunctions similar to those He has received on myself, who am born weak; and how is this the act of one that is good and just? In order, however, that He might not be supposed to be different from us, He even underwent toil, and was willing to endure hunger, and did not refuse to feel thirst, and sunk into the quietude of slumber. He did not protest against His Passion, but became obedient unto death, and manifested His resurrection. Now in all these acts He offered up, as the first-fruits, His own manhood, in order that thou, when thou art in tribulation, mayest not be disheartened, but, confessing thyself to be a man (of like nature with the Redeemer), mayest dwell in expectation of also receiving what the Father has granted unto this Son.

Hippolytus, "The Refutation of All Heresies," Book x, Chap. xxix, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886) Vol. 5, pp. 151-152.

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A Note From the Editor

It has been a year since I first began to explain some things you need to keep in mind as you study the Bible. In the past four issues of this newsletter, I have tried to emphasize how easy it is to overlook important details and facts in Scripture when we let our assumptions and preconceived ideas get in the way. The reason these things are so deadly to Bible study is because they put blinders on us which often cause us to see only what we want to see. Instead of letting the Scriptures dictate what we should believe, we let what we already believe dictate what we think the Scriptures say.

I'm not saying we shouldn't carry information with us into our study of the Bible. I am just saying that the only information we should bring along is what we have already gleaned from the Bible. Of course, most students of the Scriptures think that's exactly what they do. The problem is, they fail to realize that many, if not most, of their beliefs about the Bible don't come out of the Bible at all. They come out of the vain imagination of men who, over the centuries, have conjured up all kinds of half-baked theories and outright lies on the basis of a few verses of Scripture that they use as "proof texts."

Many of these beliefs sound credible as long as you stay focused on just a few verses and ignore everything else that presents a different view. But the fact is, you can't expect to understand the Truth if you do that. Everything in the Scriptures must be understood in "The Light" of everything else in the Scriptures. Those who like to quote one or two verses of Scripture as "proof" of their beliefs generally do so because that's the extent of their knowledge. Take away their precious "proof texts" and most have no ability to present a reasonable explanation for their beliefs using the remainder of the Scriptures.

I have nothing against quoting Scripture as evidence of what you believe. We do it all the time here at *The Voice of Elijah*®. I'm saying we should beware of those who use nothing more than one or two verses of Scripture to "prove" what they believe. The fact is, no single verse or passage of Scripture stands by itself as veritable "proof" of anything. It may lend strong support to some belief or doctrine, but no verse or passage stands as the lone pillar upholding any doctrine. It doesn't have to. The Truth of every valid biblical doctrine is attested by the entire Bible and not just by a single verse or two. In the wisdom of God, He made certain that His Holy Scriptures, from beginning to end, provide overwhelming evidence concerning the Truth.

You see, everything in the Scriptures is so intricately woven together that no valid biblical doctrine has to rely on a mere verse or two to support it. Every doctrine in the Bible is supported by a vast multitude of verses and/or passages in both the Old and New Testaments that, when put together in the right way, provide a rock-solid base of

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support for that doctrine. So be wary of anyone who tries to “prove” what they believe with a few “proof texts.” The only valid “proof text” is the entire Bible.

This is the view you should have toward any verse or passage of Scripture: It is a single piece of evidence that must be examined in conjunction with other pieces of evidence (verses and passages) so that all fit together in a Teaching where all beliefs and doctrines make logical sense and complement one another. We are doing exactly that at *The Voice of Elijah*®. The Teaching the Early Church knew and understood is going to be restored by taking into account all the evidence found in the Scriptures. Since everything fits together perfectly and without contradiction, restoring the Truth is simply a matter of carefully examining all the evidence and drawing logical conclusions based on that evidence. (That’s a bit of an oversimplification, but you get the idea.)

The information in our newsletters and The Elijah Project publications is nothing more than an explanation of how the scriptural evidence we have presented over the years fits into a coherent Teaching that makes perfect sense. What you won’t find in our publications is a bunch of singular “proof texts” concerning what we believe.

So when we tell you that Jesus Christ and His Body—the Church—is Israel instead of the Jews, that salvation is a process and not just an event, that God does not have unconditional love for man, or other such things, don’t expect us to produce one indisputable “proof text” to make our case.

The Bible is a complex book. It cannot, and should not, be reduced to a bunch of “proof texts” just so simpletons can have everything made easy for them. Most who reject The Teaching fit this description. They are too lazy and unconcerned about the Truth to spend much time studying the Bible or contemplating any detailed explanation. All these folks want are simple answers to complex questions. That’s why they rely on “proof texts” that allow them to remain comfortable with the “easy believism” lies they have grown so fond of.

The Bible Does Provide Evidence

Just because I belittle the concept of “proof texts” does not mean the Bible fails to offer True Believers valid evidence of what is true. The Bible provides vast amounts of evidence in support of the Truth. The problem is, that evidence is so vast it’s overwhelming. That’s why, in the final analysis, every True Believer will need help in piecing together the Truth. God established the office of Teacher in the Church for that very purpose—to help True Believers understand the Truth and gain insight into The Teaching of the Apostles.

Face the facts: If True Believers could easily deduce the Truth contained in the Scriptures on their own, there would be no need for Teachers. Everyone would simply read the Bible and, without debate or argument, arrive at exactly the same Truth as every other Believer. Obviously, this is not happening in the Church today.

Therefore, the issue facing True Believers is not whether they need to be taught but under whose tutelage they should sit as disciples. With literally tens of thousands claiming that God called them as Teachers, however, this is not an easy decision to make, especially when there are so many “teachers” teaching so many different variations of the “truth.” Consequently, the challenge facing True Believers is ascertaining whose version of the “truth” is actually the Truth.

If you are a True Believer, you don’t have to live with the confusion and deception created by lies and liars. It is within your power to recognize the Truth and to distinguish between those who speak the Truth and those who do not. But you need to be diligent in studying the Bible so you can verify whether the teaching you hear from us or from someone else is true.

The Holy Spirit will assist you in verifying the Truth, but the Bible is still your first line of defense against lies and liars. That’s because the Bible is a physical object that contains tangible evidence you can study and examine. 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 the Scriptures.

What Do You See?

The Bible study technique I have been explaining revolves around two basic activities on your part: (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 thing to remember about this approach is that key words and phrases mean nothing in and of themselves. They are important only because they let you know that a specific type of information may be near at hand.

Here is a review of the specific kinds of information I have told you to look for when reading the Scriptures. Look for:

- ▲ *Stated reasons why something is true.*
- ▲ *How something is accomplished.*
- ▲ *Conditions that must be met.*
- ▲ *Who is being spoken to or spoken about.*
- ▲ *Contrasts and comparisons between two things.*
- ▲ *Exceptions or restrictions to what has been said.*
- ▲ *Repeated words and phrases.*
- ▲ *Cause and effect.*
- ▲ *Conclusions or summaries.*

This is not intended as an exhaustive list of things you should pay attention to when reading the Bible. It's a good start, but I may add to it later. The important thing to remember is that in looking for the things listed above, you can find specific details and information that will help you validate the Truth you hear taught.

Key words and phrases are important because they can help you locate some, although certainly not all, of the things listed above. They act as flags in signaling that vital information is nearby. If you will train yourself to look for certain words and phrases when reading the Bible and then study the context in which these terms are used, you will begin to see things in the Scriptures you never noticed before.

There are no shortcuts in Bible study. This technique will not make you aware of all you need to know concerning the Bible—not by a long shot. However, it will help you extract information from

the text of Scripture you might otherwise overlook. Just remember: Key words and phrases are only a means to an end. Your ultimate objective is to find as many clear-cut explanations, answers, and facts as the Bible will give you.

Since many pertinent facts in the Bible are not accompanied by key words or phrases, you need to develop an ability to spot the specific information listed above, even when there are no key terms to help out. (I have included a few examples of what I'm talking about at the end of this article.) Key words provide a simple means of finding some pertinent information, but certainly not all of it.

To this point, we have examined several key words and phrases that are used in conjunction with the first two items on the list above. To help you find *stated reasons why something is true*, I told you to look for these key words and phrases: *because, for this reason, for this purpose, in order that, so that, for, and that*. To help you discern *how something is accomplished*, I told you to look for two key words: *by* and *through*. You can find examples of how these terms are used in the Bible in the last three issues of the newsletter, so I won't review them here. I want to talk about the next item on the list instead.

Conditions Which Must Be Met

If there is anything in the Bible that the Church would be wise to pay more attention to, it's the set of conditions the Bible says must be met if one hopes to reap the blessings found in God's promises. Contrary to what the Church teaches today, most of the promises that God has given His People are based on conditions which must be met before such promises will be fulfilled. Just as surely as Israel paid a severe price for failing to meet the conditions God required of them under the Old Covenant, so the Church will soon pay a severe price for its failure to meet the conditions set forth under the New Covenant.

The Church today tells us God has unconditional love for all men. Some even teach that once a person has been born again, they will be saved unconditionally. They don't actually say it that way, but that's the only way "once saved, always

saved” can be interpreted. If the new birth is all that is required for salvation, that can only mean there are no conditions attached to maintaining your salvation. If there were, the possibility would exist that you might fail to meet some condition and thereby not be saved.

Needless to say, “easy believism” is running rampant in the Church. Few “Christians” are willing to believe that maintaining their salvation might depend on meeting specific conditions spelled out in the New Testament. Unfortunately, most are going to find out too late that there are not only specific conditions attached to their salvation, but also conditions attached to their being loved by God. We have already looked at some of the evidence regarding the latter in the July 1996 newsletter. We will look at evidence related to the former in this issue. But first, I want to give you three key words and one phrase to watch for in Scripture.

The three key terms are *if*, *unless*, and *until*, and the phrase is *as long as*. Each one of these can indicate that a condition is being stated, a condition which needs to be met before something will be accomplished, completed, or fulfilled. Of this group, the primary word I watch for is *if*. Although this word can be used in several different contexts (as can any of the other terms mentioned), one of its crucial contextual uses is to stipulate a condition. Some of the strongest challenges to the belief in unconditional salvation come from this word. So you need to watch its usage carefully as you study Scripture.

Let’s look at a few examples of how the terms above are used in Scripture to indicate that conditions are being stipulated. As you examine these passages, ask and answer the following two questions: What’s the condition being stipulated? And what one thing is dependent on, cannot take place without, or will be the result of that particular condition being met or not being met?

“For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”
(Matthew 6:14–15)

What’s the condition being stipulated? That you need to forgive others for their transgressions against you. What will be the result *if* you don’t? God won’t forgive you. That’s pretty straightforward, isn’t it? There’s just one problem with this passage as far as the Church is concerned. If receiving God’s forgiveness is necessary for one’s salvation, then these two verses cast serious doubt on the notion that once you have been born again, there are *no conditions* left for you to meet in order to be saved. What happens if you hold a grudge?

Since I’ve already belittled the idea of “proof texts,” maybe I shouldn’t be so adamant about what these verses are saying. After all, if I’m going to dish out advice, I should be able to take it—especially when it’s my own. But just in case you think God is incapable of withholding forgiveness from individuals who ask it of Him, I point you to what Jesus said on the matter in Matthew 18:21–35. You would be wise to pay close attention to His concluding remarks in verses 32–35. Enough said for now; let’s move on to another passage.

And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, {engaged} in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard.

(Colossians 1:21–23a)

What’s the stipulated condition? That True Believers must “continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel” they had heard. What is dependent on them doing so? The “reconciliation” they gained through Christ’s death and their “holy and blameless” standing before Him. Do you see *conditional* salvation taught here? If not, maybe this next passage will help you get the picture.

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if

you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain.
(1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

What's the condition? That True Believers must continue to "hold fast the word" preached to them. What will be the result if they don't? They will not "stand" or be "saved" because both depend on them holding firmly to The Teaching Paul taught. Paul knew that if the Corinthians failed to hold firmly to the Truth he had taught them, their faith was "in vain." If this doesn't make sense to you, it's only because you still want to believe the lie of "once saved, always saved." I suggest you get rid of the lie, lest your faith also prove to be "in vain." Here's one more verse to think about:

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."
(John 3:3)

What's the condition? That one needs to be born again to be saved. What one thing cannot happen *unless* you are born again? You cannot see the kingdom of God. That seems pretty straightforward, doesn't it? But you need to be careful not to make too much out of this verse. Many try to use it as a "proof text" for the "once saved, always saved" belief. Those who do, however, assume that being born again is the only condition one needs to meet in order to be saved. Even if it were, this verse alone does not offer sufficient "proof" to back up such a claim. The fact is, Jesus doesn't say whether being born again is the first step, the last step, or the only step necessary for one to be saved. He only says it's a necessary step. So if you are wise, I suggest you remain open to the possibility that there might be other conditions in the Scriptures (such as those we already looked at) to be met if you hope to be saved.

Conditions, Conditions, Conditions

Now that we've examined a few verses of Scripture together, here are some verses for you to

study on your own. See if you can find the condition that's being stipulated and the thing which hinges on that condition being met.

"Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 18:3b)

"Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all things take place."
(Luke 21:32)

"If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him."
(John 14:23b)

I suggest you study the last verse carefully. It's addressing a specific condition that must be met if one hopes to be loved by God. You might also look at John 14:21, not to mention the entire fourteenth and fifteenth chapters of John's Gospel.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you, unless you abide in Me."
(John 15:4)

Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.
(Romans 11:22)

For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles has come in; and thus all Israel will be saved.
(Romans 11:25-26a)

A wife is bound as long as her husband lives; but if her husband is dead, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord.
(1 Corinthians 7:39)

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.
(Hebrews 3:12-14)

Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, {being} by itself.
(James 2:17)

Closing Thoughts

As I mentioned earlier, key words and phrases do not point out everything you need to see in Scripture. This is certainly true with regard to the conditions stated in Scripture. In many cases, the Bible implies conditions rather than stating them outright. This does not make them any less valid than those conditions which are stated outright. I want to show you a few implied conditions so you are better prepared to spot them on your own.

*For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
So great is His lovingkindness
toward those who fear Him....
Just as a father has compassion on {his} children,
So the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him.*
(Psalm 103:11, 13)

These two verses imply there is a condition attached to receiving God's lovingkindness and compassion. Do you see what the condition is? It is the need to fear God. Do you see it? It's really not that difficult. The implication is, fear of God is a necessary requirement to becoming a recipient of His lovingkindness and compassion. Here's another example of an implied condition.

And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose.
(Romans 8:28)

You will often hear someone quote this verse while trying to encourage a person struggling with adversity or hardship. The problem is, the promise in this verse does not apply to everyone. It applies only to those who meet the qualification (i.e., condition) stipulated in the verse. It applies to "those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose." Therefore, to ensure that the promise applies to you, you must meet the condition.

Here are a few more verses that contain implied conditions. See if you can figure out the specific condition(s) which must be met in order to gain a positive result. Think hard. Some are not easy to see.

*The LORD is far from the wicked,
But He hears the prayer of the righteous.*
(Proverbs 15:29)

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand."
(John 10:27-28)

"He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him."
(John 14:21)

The Scriptures are filled with them, and every one details some sort of requirement to be met. I hope you will take seriously those conditions which apply to you and seek to meet them—it's important that you do.

Allen Fried

Thy Kingdom Come. Thy Will Be Done, on Earth

Have you ever considered the fact that what you choose to believe today will in some way or another influence what you choose to do tomorrow? If you haven't, you really should stop to ponder what that *means*. After all, Moses tells us Satan motivated Eve to sin against God by telling her the Truth. But Moses also makes it clear Satan lied to Eve first to make sure she would do what he wanted her to do. Look at how Moses describes those events:

Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make {one} wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings.
(Genesis 3:1-7)

There are a variety of issues that theologians have not yet adequately answered about that passage. But let's put those aside for now and concentrate on a few things that seem self-evident. For one thing, Satan

told Eve she would not die if she ate the forbidden fruit. That was a lie. We know that because, later on, God cursed the ground and told Adam he would return to it because of his sin (Gen. 3:17-19). But notice that after Satan lied to Eve, he told her the Truth. He assured her she would "be like God, knowing good and evil." A bit later, Moses confirms that what Satan said was, in fact, true:

*Then the LORD God said, "Behold, **the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil**; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.*
(Genesis 3:22-23)

Let's also ignore the thorny little issue of how a man and a woman created in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26-27) could suddenly become more "like God," shall we? That's best left for an in-depth explanation. We can focus instead on the simple fact that Satan was able to entice Eve into sin by telling her something God had conveniently forgotten to mention—that after she sinned she would "be like God, knowing good and evil." While we're at it, let's not overlook the fact that Eve saw "wisdom" as something desirable only because she had already believed Satan's lie—that she would not die. Had she known wisdom came with death-strings attached, I doubt she would have found the fruit quite so attractive.

I mention all this only because Satan hasn't changed. He is still the Liar, the father of all lies, and the master of deception. He is still telling people the

Truth in order to ensure they act on the basis of some lie he has gotten them to believe. So if you are one of those who is absolutely convinced you know and understand the Truth just because you had an awesome, life-transforming salvation experience when you were younger, I suggest you learn from Eve's encounter with the Devil. The problem isn't the Truth you believed when you were born again, it's the lie you have chosen to believe since.

Before Satan approached her, Eve believed the Truth. She knew she would die if she ate the fruit. But she gave up that Truth when she believed Satan's lie. Believing his lie made her the perfect patsy for even more Truth. You should learn from her example. Believing the Truth of the Gospel that you heard when you came to the Lord isn't going to send you to Hell. Not by a long shot! No, if you end up in the Pit, it will be because you have given up some essential part of the Truth you understood when you first believed.

I only mentioned Eve as an example of how easy it is for Satan to delude people who already know the Truth. All he has to do is get them to believe something that contradicts the Truth the Spirit impressed on them when they were born again. Then he can entice them into his snare by telling them anything, including the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. That's what he did with Eve. But I don't want to *talk about* Eve. That's history. What I really want to *talk about* is you.

Have you ever noticed how many different warnings in the New Testament are directed at Believers? I started looking into that the other day and came away absolutely astounded by the incredible volume of material I found. Now I have known about the following warning for quite a long time, but that's only because it forced me to face up to the fact that the calling of God on my life is no guarantee of anything as far as God is concerned:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"

(Matthew 7:21–23)

The difficulty with understanding that passage inheres in the fact that most people don't have any idea at all as to what "the will of My Father who is in heaven" actually is. Consequently, they don't know how to "do" it. So let me tell you what the will of God is. Then maybe you'll understand why Satan lies to us. But first, let me show you another passage where the same phrase occurs. Take a look at what Matthew tells us Jesus said later on:

While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

(Matthew 12:46–50)

I've already explained what Jesus was doing in this passage, so I won't bother covering that ground again. He was making an *oral will*. (See "Did Jesus Leave a Will?" *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1991.) Under Roman law, He had to *disinherit* His legal heirs—His closest relatives—in order to allow others the opportunity to *inherit* His estate along with them. That will is what has made it possible for folks like you and me to *inherit the promise* from Him over the past two thousand years. (That's what Paul is *talking about* in Galatians 3 and Ephesians 1.) But did you notice what Jesus said? He said, "For *whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven*, he is My brother and sister and mother." There's that phrase again. So I guess you're tough out of luck if you don't know what "the will of My Father who is in heaven" is. You don't stand a chance of *inheriting the promise* if you don't understand what God requires of you. That's why I'm going to tell you what that requirement is. Actually, I'm just going to quote what Jesus said and tell you what He was *talking about*. Then it will be your own fault if you believe Satan's lie. Jesus said this:

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the

will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day."

(John 6:38–40)

That was easy, wasn't it? Jesus Christ came down from Heaven to do the will of the Father so that you don't have to do anything except be one of those "who beholds the Son and believes in Him." That *means* all you have to do is find Jesus Christ and take a good look at Him. Or, as Jesus said, you have to "behold" Him. Then you can believe "in Him" and "have eternal life." Lacking that, I guess you'll just have to toddle on down to Hell denying the fact that God would require you to do something so obviously impossible. At least it would seem so—the body of Jesus Christ disappeared in a vapor nearly two thousand years ago.

The *parabolic statements* of Jesus are something, aren't they? When He combines a *parabolic image* with a straightforward statement of Truth, folks ignore the *parabolic image* and focus on the straightforward statement, or else they ignorantly assume they already know what He is *talking about*. Folks like that are easy prey for Satan. That's why you need to pay close attention to the *context* in which Jesus said the things He said. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John provide all the necessary information about the *context* of Jesus' statements. The only additional insight you require is some clue as to what He is *talking about*. Then everything more or less falls into place. The trouble is, Jesus is *talking about* things that are explained *parabolically* in the Hebrew Scriptures. I want to show you one of those things so you will know what the will of God is.

We are going to take a closer look at the three different *contexts* in which Jesus mentioned the "will of the Father." When we do, we will find He had in mind the same *parabolic imagery* that Isaiah used when he depicted Jesus Christ as the Word of God Who would one day come down from Heaven LIKE the rain and the snow to go about "accomplishing what I desire," or to put it as Jesus did, "do the will of My Father." Isaiah said this:

*Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.*

*Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
"For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.
"For {as} the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it."
(Isaiah 55:6–11)*

There is no possible way for anyone to understand what Isaiah has said if they don't know what he is *talking about*. So let me tell you what you need to know about that. Isaiah has in mind the fact that Moses taught Israel "The Way" of the Lord. That is, he is *talking about The Teaching of Moses* in terms of the *parabolic image* of "The Way." He is telling his generation that the Truth God revealed to Moses is completely different than the things they want to believe about God. He tells them that if they want to accurately understand the things Moses taught, they first have to "forsake" their "way," that is, their "thoughts," and "return to the Lord." The "Lord" he refers to is the One Who is *The Word of Truth* that Moses taught Israel. That's not an altogether different story. But it's not the part of the story I want to get into here. I'll eventually deal with the *parabolic* basis for the imagery of the God Who is a Word. I've already begun explaining some of the things you need to know in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*.

What Isaiah told his generation is good advice, not only for his generation but also for folks today. However, most people won't be able to do what he advises. You want to know why? Because the Truth makes people start to question *all* of their religious beliefs when it begins to tear down the lies they have believed for so long. That's too scary for most people.

So they go back to believing what's comfortable. That is, they console themselves with the lie that tells them they already know the Truth. It doesn't matter that they should have been questioning what they believed all along or that they didn't because they were intellectually too lazy. It is just too easy for them to latch on to any belief that allows them to continue living as they have been. Satan knows that. He uses it against us.

The Truth is unsettling. When you start to see through the lies you have believed, you realize you have to work a whole lot harder if you want to accurately understand the Truth. The ultimate Truth is Jesus Christ, the *Living Word of God*—the One Who came down from Heaven LIKE the snow and the rain to accomplish what God desires—that is, to do the will of God—just as Isaiah said He would. In case you could not see it before, that's what Jesus is *talking about* in John 6:38–40. He says He came down to do “the will of Him who sent Me,” which is to “lose nothing” “of all that He has given Me” “but raise it up on the last day.” If you don't believe me, take another look:

“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

(John 6:38–40)

Most people think “all that He has given Me” refers to Believers. The Truth is, as always, an apparent contradiction. It does, and it doesn't. Jesus is speaking *parabolically* concerning the Truth He had been given. But you have to understand the *parabolic image* of the Word of God before you can fully understand what He is *talking about*. I can't easily explain that here.

John tells us Jesus said those things right in the middle of a discourse in which He was *parabolically* comparing Himself to manna—the bread that fell from Heaven so the sons of Israel would have something to eat during the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. But if you know your Bible, you already know Moses told the sons of Israel that God had a greater purpose in making them conduct the *parabolic* ritual of gathering and eating manna:

“And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.”

(Deuteronomy 8:3)

Isn't that something? God had a specific purpose in mind when He gave the people manna to eat. I mentioned that in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*. He was trying to make them understand how the Word of the Lord that comes down to Earth out of Heaven is more important to their survival than physical food. If that's true, you really should pay more attention to the *parabolic images* of the Bible instead of getting caught up in lusting after fine houses, fancy cars, and expensive clothing. Those things are all going to rust, rot, and return to the earth from which they came. The One Who is—*parabolically*—the Word of the Lord, on the other hand, is going to accomplish exactly what God sent Him to do, just as Isaiah said. Then He will return to the Lord again after having “raised up” a multitude “on the last day.” Will you be among them? You won't if you aren't one of those who “beholds the Son and believes in Him” as Jesus said in John 6:40. So I suggest you start looking for the One Who said this about Who He was, is, and always will be:

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”

(John 14:6)

Jesus is *talking about* Himself as the *Living Word of God*. He is “*The Way*,” the same *Way* that Moses and all the other Prophets *talked about*. He is—*parabolically*—*The Teaching of Moses*, “*The Way*” that Isaiah mentioned in Isaiah 55:6–11. You see, Isaiah knew the Word would one day come down to Earth in human form to accomplish exactly what God desired. That's why he said what he said to his generation. Here, take a closer look at what he said:

*Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,*

*And He will have compassion on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.
“For {as} the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it.”
(Isaiah 55:6–11)*

Can you see that Isaiah is speaking *parabolically*? That he is *talking about* the Truth of the Word of God, *The Teaching of Moses*, which is “*The Way*”? If you can, consider this: Jesus Christ says He is “*The Way*.” He is *The Truth*. He is *The Life*. That’s because everyone is what they believe. Jesus Christ believed the totality of the Truth He saw hidden in the idioms and *parabolic imagery* of the Hebrew Scriptures. Therefore, He was, and still is—*parabolically*—the *Living Word of God* Who came down to Earth to give life to men just as John said:

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

Jesus told us on various occasions why most folks can’t “comprehend” *The Word of Truth* that He is. They can’t “see” “*The Light*” because they are—*parabolically*—blind. He also said that when those who can’t “see” the Truth lead others who can’t “see” the Truth, both will fall into the Pit (of Hell). The Church today is filled with those kinds of people. Yet the fact still remains, the only hope anyone has is to “behold” the Son just as Jesus said so that they can “believe in” Him and be “raised up” on the Last Day.

The Greek word translated “behold” in John 6:40, where Jesus *talks about* Himself as being *parabolically* LIKE bread, is sometimes translated “see” or “perceive.” In case you haven’t caught on yet, Jesus was speaking *parabolically* about people mentally “beholding” the Truth that He—the Word of God—is. Now that you are equipped with that bit of information, let me show you a couple of other places where Jesus *talked about* His disciples being able to mentally “see” Him.

*And Jesus cried out and said, “He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in Him who sent Me. And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me. I have come {as} light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears My sayings, and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.”
(John 12:44–50)*

If you intend to avoid the Pit, I suggest you take a good, long look at what Jesus said. If you don’t “see” the Truth that stands behind His *parabolic statements*, you stand about the same chance as the proverbial snowball in Hell. He is speaking *parabolically*, just as the Prophets did when they *talked about* *The Teaching of Moses* as “*The Way*.” He is *talking about* the fact that He is, Himself, the *Living Word of God*. If you “behold” the Truth of that Word, you “behold” not only the Son but also the Father Who sent Him. That’s because both Father and Son are what they believe, and both believe the Truth. But I wonder—do you?

Jesus said that if you believe the Truth of the Word of God that He is, you believe not only in the Son but also in the Father Who sent Him down to Earth from Heaven just as Isaiah said He would. Therefore, you no longer dwell in darkness. You dwell in the very presence of the Word of God, the One Who is (*parabolically*) “*The Light*” that John mentions. On the Last Day, that Word will judge everyone on the basis of whether or not they believed what He had to say.

He will then do one of two things—either condemn to eternal torment or raise up to eternal life.

The choice of your eternal destination is yours alone to make. Only you can determine whether or not you believe the Truth of the Word of God when you have opportunity to hear. So step right up and get your ticket. It's one way all the way; no return trips allowed. The issue isn't even whether or not you *want* to make a decision. You *will* choose one way or the other. The wise will look at the evidence. The fool will not even consider the possibility that he doesn't already know the Truth. That being the case, let me show you something else that Jesus said, just to put another nail in your coffin if you choose to scoff. John tells us Jesus said this to His disciples:

*"Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, {there} you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?" Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him." Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been so long with you, and {yet} you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how do you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. Believe Me that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me; otherwise believe on account of the works themselves."
(John 14:1-11)*

I have to chuckle when I read that passage. Jesus was speaking *parabolically* concerning Himself as the Word of God. Yet Philip and Thomas took what He said literally. Some folks still do. They *talk about* "mansions" of gold and other such nonsense. If they had any insight at all into the Old Testament message concerning "*The House*," they would realize how foolish

such beliefs are. Jesus Christ is *talking about* Himself as "*The House*" of Israel, "*The House*" of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David that God "built" when He raised Him from the dead. There is now no other *House* of God and there never will be. Jesus is merely saying that His disciples already "know *The Way*" into that "house" because He taught them the Truth concerning the parables of Scripture. They are, therefore, prepared to become members of that "house." But we can, and will, look at that *parabolic imagery* another time.

The point of what Jesus said to Philip and Thomas on the night Judas betrayed Him is actually quite easy to understand. He had been constantly teaching them concerning the *parabolic imagery* of "*The House*" and "*The Way*" for over three years. Yet they still did not completely grasp the simple fact that all they had to do was believe the things He told them. They would then become "one" with Him as well as "one" with the Father Who sent Him. However, Jesus is insisting that spiritual unity is possible only *in Him*, the Word of God (the One Who is *parabolically* also "*The Name*" of God). He is *talking about* the fact that a person is what they choose to believe. The person who believes the Truth of the Word of God has become "one" with God. That's why Jesus went on to say this immediately after He rebuked Philip:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater {works} than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do {it.} If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; {that is} the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, {but} you know Him because He abides with you, and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. After a little while the world will behold Me no more; but you {will} behold Me; because I live, you shall live also."
(John 14:12-19)*

Do you understand what Jesus said? I doubt it. He has used at least one Hebrew idiom and a couple of Greek technical terms related to the *handing down* of *The Teaching* as an oral tradition. He is *talking about*

the fact that the full power of God resides in the Word of God. He tells us that those who believe the Truth of *The Teaching* have access to that power. Yet He also makes it clear that a person must first *receive* “the Spirit of truth” before they can “behold” Jesus Christ.

I wonder: Have you ever had the salvation experience that Jesus mentions here? If you have, there won’t be a shred of doubt in your mind about it. If you haven’t, you and that proverbial snowball have a whole lot more in common than you might think. The things I have been called to teach certainly won’t do you any good until you *receive* “the Spirit of truth” God sent His Evangelists to preach. Only then can you “behold” the Word of God as He actually is. But I’m getting ahead of the story. Jesus *talks about* that in what He says next:

“In that day you shall know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.” Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and **the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father’s who sent Me.** These things I have spoken to you, while abiding with you. **But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**”
(John 14:20–26)

Now do you understand how it is possible for us to “behold the Son”? No? Well then, let me state it for you plainly: You must first *receive* “the Spirit of truth” from someone whom God has authorized to *hand* it *down* to you. By that I *mean* you must “repent and believe the Gospel” as it is preached by an Evangelist (which I am not). Then Jesus Christ, the Word of God, will “disclose” Himself to you. Lacking that single most all-important salvation experience, there’s not a whole lot I can do for you. I have been called to teach *The Teaching*, not preach the Gospel. Believe it or not, there is a vast difference between those two ministries.

God has called the one to minister to unbelievers, the other to Believers.

Speaking of what I can and cannot do for you, I wouldn’t tread too heavily on the things Jesus said to His disciples in the passage above. Some do, and they will eventually have good reason to regret it. Those folks will tell you the Holy Spirit “will teach you all things.” If you choose to believe that nonsense, good luck! I trust He will also “bring to your remembrance all that” Jesus “said to you” while you walked the dusty trails of Palestine together. Don’t be Satan’s fool. Consider the *context*.

Are you beginning to get the drift of what Jesus was doing when He spoke *parabolically*? He was just saying, This is what I am *LIKE*. The Prophets did the same thing when they predicted His First and Second Coming. It’s easy to see how they did that when you know what they are *talking about*. But that bit of information has been reserved for those who have *received* “the Spirit of truth.” They are the only ones able to “see” the Word of God as He actually is. The disciples of Jesus were but the first in a long line of folks who have had that ability. Jesus described the new-birth experience to them this way:

“A little while, and you will no longer behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me.” {Some} of His disciples therefore said to one another, “What is this thing He is telling us, ‘A little while, and you will not behold Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me’; and, ‘because I go to the Father’?” And so they were saying, “What is this that He says, ‘A little while’? We do not know what He is talking about.” Jesus knew that they wished to question Him, and He said to them, “Are you deliberating together about this, that I said, ‘A little while, and you will not behold Me, and again a little while, and you will see Me’? Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned to joy. Whenever a woman is in travail she has sorrow, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she remembers the anguish no more, for joy that a child has been born into the world. Therefore you too now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one takes your joy away from you. And in that day you will ask Me no question. Truly, truly, I say to you, if you shall ask the Father for anything, He will give it to you

in My name. Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full. These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father."

(John 16:16–25)

Jesus bluntly told His disciples He had been speaking to them "figuratively." By that He meant He had been speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of the Prophets. It is fairly obvious He was doing that. He has just talked about His Resurrection in terms of the *parabolic image* of the birth of Israel, the One the Prophets tell us is "The Name" of God. Nonetheless, folks ignore the *parabolic image* of "The Name" and assume they already know what He is talking about. They don't. "The Name" of God is a Word just as your own name is a word. That means "The Name" of God is also the Word of God. That is, it is *parabolically* the Spirit of Jesus Christ, the only Word of God to ever come down from Heaven and return there after completing the task for which God sent Him just as Isaiah said He would:

*"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it."
(Isaiah 55:10–11)*

Did you pay close attention to what Isaiah said? I hope so, because I don't have time to point out all the details here. But I would like for you to notice that he says the Word of God would come down LIKE SNOW and rain to furnish "seed to the sower and bread to the eater." In using the word *as* in verse 10, he lets us know he is defining a *parabolic image*. Did you notice that? That's why Jesus talked about Himself as the Word of God under the *parabolic image* of bread. Among other things, He had in mind the fact that Isaiah had said "the rain and the snow" of the Word would provide *parabolic* "bread for the eater." But that's also the reason why He told the parable about the sower who went out to sow seed. He was keying on what Isaiah said about the snow

and the rain furnishing "seed to the sower." Before I show you that parable, however, let me review the *context* in which He told it. Matthew tells us Jesus did this right before He told that parable:

While He was still speaking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers were standing outside, seeking to speak to Him. And someone said to Him, "Behold, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside seeking to speak to You." But He answered the one who was telling Him and said, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?" And stretching out His hand toward His disciples, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

(Matthew 12:46–50)

Have you seen this passage before? Sure you have. I mentioned it earlier in this article in connection with the clause "whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven." Isn't that interesting? We've come right back to that phrase. That's encouraging, isn't it? Maybe I'm not rambling incoherently like some folks prefer to think I am. Keep reading. Before I'm finished, I will achieve a good bit of coherency. You know, tie up all the loose ends and show you how the *parabolic imagery* that Jesus used relates to what Isaiah said, that sort of thing. Scoffers will deny it, but what do they know? They wouldn't be able to "see" the Truth if it were put in storybook form.

Matthew tells us what Jesus did immediately after He made an *oral will* in which He *promised* to leave His estate to "whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven." He told the parable about the sower and the seed. In that parable, we find Him telling people what they must do to be one who "does the will of My Father who is in heaven." Listen to what He said, and see what you think:

On that day Jesus went out of the house, and was sitting by the sea. And great multitudes gathered to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole multitude was standing on the beach. And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, "Behold, the sower went out to sow; and as he sowed, some {seeds} fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell upon the rocky places, where they did not

have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. And others fell on the good soil, and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear.”
(Matthew 13:1–9)

Jesus is *talking about* the one requirement that God has placed on the *inheritance of the promise*. That is, He is using a parable to tell the people what they must do to be one of those who “does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” However, my point here is, He has taken the *parabolic imagery* of the sower and the seed from what Isaiah said about Him—the Word of God—coming down from Heaven “like the snow and the rain” to furnish “seed to the sower.” You can’t “see” that? I pity you. When Jesus explained the *meaning* of the parable to His disciples, He plainly told them that was what He was *talking about*. But before He did that, He said this about folks like you:

And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” And He answered and said to them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him shall {more} be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

*‘YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND;
AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;
FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL,
AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR,
AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES
LEST THEY SHOULD SEE WITH THEIR EYES,
AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS,
AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN,
AND I SHOULD HEAL THEM.’*

But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. For truly I say to you, that

*many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see {it;} and to hear what you hear, and did not hear {it}.”
(Matthew 13:10–17)*

Now doesn’t that beat everything you’ve ever seen? Here Jesus is again, *talking about* people “seeing” the Truth with the mind, that is, with the “heart.” It sort of makes me wonder if all the things that Jesus said in His parables don’t somehow fit together in a neat little bundle. Does it strike you the same way? I *mean*, to hear Satan tell it, they don’t. But he lies a lot. So why would you listen to anything he has to say?

Matthew tells us that, immediately after Jesus said what He said about sluggards who are too intellectually lazy to examine the Truth, He explained to His disciples what He was *talking about* in the Parable of the Sower. Listen carefully; otherwise, you might miss something:

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

Do you understand what He is *talking about*? If you don’t, you are obviously not one of those “who hears the word and understands it”! Jesus is *talking about* the same *parabolic* Word of God that Isaiah *talks about* in Isaiah 55. That Word is LIKE the rain and the snow. He came down from Heaven to water the Earth, to make it bear and sprout, to furnish seed for the sower and bread for the eater. Can you “see” that *parabolic imagery*? If not, I pity you. Lacking that, you have

no hope whatsoever of ever *inheriting the promise* that Jesus left to “whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” I say that because Jesus has just told you what God requires. You must hear the Truth, believe it, and then go on to “bear fruit”:

“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”
(Matthew 13:23)

You know, that part about bearing fruit reminds me of another parable that Jesus told His disciples. I’m sure you have seen this passage before as well:

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

Isn’t that remarkable? Here we are looking into the *parabolic image* in which a person is depicted as a plant that “bears fruit,” and we again find Jesus *talking about* “the will of my Father who is in heaven.” Can you “see” what He has in mind? If not, let me give you a clue: The false prophet pretends to speak for God. That is, he tells folks he is telling them what God has said when, in fact, he is telling them nothing more than lies he has heard other folks tell or things he made up himself. If he actually knew the Truth, he could tell people the Truth. But he doesn’t know the Truth. He only thinks he does. Therefore, he doesn’t even know that he is a false prophet. That is why he will be

absolutely astounded when Jesus says, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.”

Now do you understand? I pity you if you don’t. Jesus is *talking about* the fact that the only requirement God has ever laid on anyone is this: They must hear, understand, and believe the Truth of the Word of God that He is. That is, they must “see” Him. Lacking that ability, they cannot be one who “does the will of My Father who is in heaven.” To state the matter more plainly, the “will of My Father” is that people believe the Truth rather than believing Satan’s lies. That’s what Isaiah is *talking about* in Isaiah 55 when he says this:

*Seek the LORD while He may be found;
Call upon Him while He is near.
Let the wicked forsake his way,
And the unrighteous man his thoughts;
And let him return to the LORD,
And He will have compassion on him;
And to our God,
For He will abundantly pardon.
“For My thoughts are not your thoughts,
Neither are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.
“For {as} the heavens are higher than the earth,
So are My ways higher than your ways,
And My thoughts than your thoughts.
For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
And do not return there without watering the earth,
And making it bear and sprout,
And furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater;
So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth;
It shall not return to Me empty,
Without accomplishing what I desire,
And without succeeding {in the matter} for which I sent it.”*
(Isaiah 55:6–11)

If you wanted to paraphrase that translation a bit, you could change the phrase “without accomplishing what I desire” to read “without doing My will.” Perhaps then you could better see the link that exists between Isaiah’s prophecy and what Jesus said in the three passages above, where He mentions those who do “the will of My Father who is in heaven.” He and Isaiah are both *talking about* people who voluntarily choose to give up their own thoughts and ideas—which is “their way”—in order to understand the Truth of the Scriptures—which is “The Way”—in terms of the original *parabolic imagery* that God used when

He communicated it through Moses and the Prophets. In these Last Days, those people alone will be able to “behold the Son,” that is, be able to understand the Truth of the Word of God—the One Who is “the way, and the truth, and the life.” That being the case, it is entirely up to you whether or not you are one of them.

Let me tell you what I know to be an absolute fact. Before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, there is going to be a multitude who do “the will of the Father who is in heaven.” By that I *mean* God’s will is finally going to be done here on Earth just as it is in Heaven. I know that to be a fact because the Prophets declared it. And the Word of God cannot lie.

God’s desire is that people who were formerly “blind” be able to “see” and completely understand the Truth He has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. That “will of God” is going to be accomplished one way or the other. So it doesn’t matter much whether you, as one individual, choose to believe the things I have been called to teach. Others will ensure that His will is done. You can believe that if you care to, or you can disbelieve it if you dare to. It makes no difference to me. I’m merely doing what God called me to do. But by the time I have accomplished what God has called me to do, you will be forced to understand what Habakkuk was *talking about* when he said this:

*“Woe to him who builds a city with bloodshed
And founds a town with violence!
Is it not indeed from the LORD of hosts
That peoples toil for fire,
And nations grow weary for nothing?
For the earth will be filled
With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD,
As the waters cover the sea.”
(Habakkuk 2:12–14)*

Habakkuk is *parabolically talking about* the futility of people who build great cities and think they have accomplished some tremendous thing. His point is, Why bother striving for things down here? Everything is just going to be destroyed when a knowledge of the Truth of God’s Word finally becomes known throughout the world. So it would be far better for you to focus your attention on “building” something that will last—like “*The House*” of God. But did you notice how the Prophet defined his *parabolic* comparison through the use of the Hebrew term translated “as”? He is telling us

he is using the same *parabolic image* that Isaiah used in Isaiah 55. He compares the Word of God to the waters in the sea. That’s not by happenstance or accident. It is the same *parabolic image* the other Prophets use time and time again. Therefore, you should get the *parabolic image* firmly fixed in your mind.

The Word of God IS LIKE water. Isaiah just happened to use the image in its purest form: the Word of God is water that comes down as a gentle, cleansing rain to water the Earth so that the “planting of the Lord” might grow and “bear fruit.” However, we all know rain can sometimes be a deluge that is driven by a terrifying wind. That’s what Jesus had in mind when He concluded His statements concerning those who failed to do “the will of My Father who is in heaven.” He said this:

*“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and {yet} it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall.”
(Matthew 7:24–27)*

I’ve told you before that Jesus crafted this parable around the Hebrew idiom “build a house.” I could just as easily have told you that the *parabolic image* of the rain relates to the Hebrew idiom “raise up a seed.” Jesus is combining those two *parabolic images* in this parable because they are closely related. But those things are not essential to your understanding of what Jesus is *talking about*. They are necessary only to your understanding of the *significance* of what He said.

In this parable, Jesus is *talking about* the fact that there will be only two “houses” to which a person can belong on the Last Day. The one will be “*The true House of Israel*” that God “built” when He raised Jesus Christ from the dead through the pure, unadulterated power of the Word of God. The other will be the false “house of Israel” that Satan is planning to “build” through the seductive power of his lies. It is the kingdom of the Antichrist over which Satan will rule in

person. Jesus is telling us that, when the Truth of God's Word finally becomes known here on Earth, everyone will have declared allegiance to one "house" or the other. Thus the stage will be set for His Return, which He plainly said "will be just like the days of Noah." Look at what He said:

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."

(Matthew 24:37-39)

Jesus is using the same *parabolic image* of the Word of God that Habakkuk and Isaiah used. The Truth is, *parabolically*, LIKE rain. But He is *talking about* the fact that the "rain" of the Truth that God has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures is eventually going to become a torrent that will produce a flood. That flood of knowledge will then cover the Earth, in the process destroying the "house" that Satan "built." I wonder if you will be one of those Jesus mentioned who do not understand the Truth until it can no longer be denied. If you are, I should tell you that Isaiah also *talked about* you in a passage where he mentions the same *parabolic "house" imagery* that Jesus used. He said this:

*Because you have said,
"We have made a covenant with death,
And with Sheol we have made a pact.
The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by,
For we have made falsehood our refuge
And we have concealed ourselves with deception."
Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,
"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,
A costly cornerstone {for} the foundation, firmly placed.
He who believes {in it} will not be disturbed.
And I will make justice the measuring line,
And righteousness the level;
Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,
And the waters shall overflow the secret place.
And your covenant with death shall be canceled,
And your pact with Sheol shall not stand;
When the overwhelming scourge passes through,
Then you become its trampling {place.}*

*As often as it passes through, it will seize you.
For morning after morning it will pass through,
{anytime} during the day or night.
And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means."
(Isaiah 28:15-19)*

Amazing, isn't it? When you know just a little bit about what the Prophets are *talking about*, their statements start to come alive. Isaiah is describing the End in terms of the same *parabolic imagery* that Jesus used when He *talked about* the wise man who "built his house upon the Rock." Jesus knew that. He alludes to it in His parable about the wise man and the fool. But did you know that all the Prophets got their imagery from a common source? If you don't understand the source however, you can't understand how the imagery all ties together. Scoffers will scoff at that, but what do they know? Ignorance is endemic to all humanity. And the greatest of all fools will not even stop to consider that he might not know what he thinks he knows.

The things I have explained in this article are nothing more than elementary *parabolic images* the Prophets of Israel used to speak concerning "the Day of the Lord." I'll explain how all of the imagery fits together in due course. After all, in the *parabolic image*, Elijah is the one who brings the "latter rain" to end the famine foretold by the Prophet Amos:

*"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord GOD,
"When I will send a famine on the land,
Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,
But rather for hearing the words of the LORD."
(Amos 8:11)*

It's been a long time, but the drought has finally ended, and the famine is quickly coming to an end. The time is rapidly approaching when those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will finally be filled. They will be filled in the same way that True Believers in the Early Church were filled, in spite of the fact that many who have already believed will refuse to eat, preferring instead to believe Satan's lie.

Now it doesn't matter much—to anyone but you—whether you believe the things I've told you. We all know you can believe whatever you want. But if these things are true, you certainly do have a problem. Not being able to "behold" the Son, you have no hope at all of ever being raised up on the Last Day. ■



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 the last issue, you talked at length about how everything in Scripture needs to be understood in its proper context. You explained that it's not possible to understand what the Scriptures are talking about at any particular point if you don't understand the context in which something has been stated. This means the context of Scripture and what the Scriptures are talking about are closely related but not exactly the same. Can you clarify the distinction between these two a bit more?

Elijah: Sure. As I have stated repeatedly, there is no possible way anyone can understand the message of the Scriptures unless they first know what the Scriptures are *talking about*. That is because the *context* of a particular passage of Scripture includes *everything* the Scriptures have *talked about* up to that point. Obviously, then, if that is true, the person who reads the first chapter of Genesis *without understanding* what Moses *meant* by what he said there can never fully understand what the Scriptures are *talking about*. They certainly will never understand the things they read in the second and third chapters of Genesis.

Anyone who has ever read the first three chapters of the Book of Genesis and honestly tried to understand them has to admit there are some apparently contradictory things stated there. For example,

on the basis of Genesis 1:26–27, most people understand Adam and Eve were created on the sixth “day” of Creation, after God created the animals. Yet the second chapter of Genesis plainly says God created Adam on the third “day,” after dry land had appeared but before there was any vegetation. Then He created the animals on the sixth “day” in an attempt to find a “helper” for Adam. Finally, He created Eve, but only after He had finished creating the animals. That *means* she must have been created on the sixth “day” as well.

Anyone who is willing to “see” the Truth of the Scriptures has to admit there appears to be some sort of contradiction between those two accounts. Yet, amazing as it may seem, there is no contradiction at all when you know the Truth. But you must understand that the first chapter of Genesis is an overview of all the events one finds recorded in the rest of the Scriptures. By that I *mean* that one chapter provides the basic *context* into which the entirety of the Scriptures, including the second and third chapters of Genesis, fits. That is why I have spent nearly two years in The Next Step program explaining the *meaning* and *significance* of the statements Moses made in just the first chapter of Genesis. Believe it or not, those few statements tell you specifically what the Scriptures are *talking about*.

I haven't asked the participants in The Next Step program for feedback on what I have taught them concerning the *meaning* and *significance* of the things Moses wrote in the first chapter of Genesis. But maybe you could ask them sometime and then publish their comments for everyone to read. While you're at it, you could ask them which one of Satan's monstrous lies they found the most difficult to relinquish. You might also ask them which bit of evidence that I presented, scriptural or otherwise, finally convinced them that what I said was true. Obviously, you could not publish their responses to those two questions without revealing specific information that has to await its own public venue some years down the road. So you would have to be somewhat circumspect in regard to the things you print. But you could ask any number of other questions, and their answers might surprise you.

Over the past four years, I have been explaining the *meaning* and *significance* of specific statements made throughout the Scriptures and then showing you how those fit together with things found elsewhere in the Scriptures. What I have been doing is nothing more than explaining one particular facet of

what the Scriptures are *talking about* and then using that information as a *partial context* in which I can explain what other individual passages of Scripture are *talking about*.

I have been showing you that, when you boil it all down, a complete understanding of the Scriptures doesn't depend on building a series of "proof texts." It depends on understanding what the Scriptures are *talking about* from the first chapter of Genesis to the last chapter of the Book of Revelation. That is what I have been trying to demonstrate by the things I am teaching in The Next Step series. It is obviously going to take me a while to publish those things in a form that everyone can read, but I plan to do that—eventually.

I have repeatedly warned you and the other Next Step participants not to think you understand more about a particular passage than you actually do just because you can suddenly grasp the gist of what the author is *talking about*. I have done that because there are quite often a variety of things in the Hebrew Scriptures standing behind the *parabolic statements* made by those who came along after Moses. That is especially true of the things the authors of the New Testament wrote.

For example, understanding one aspect of what Paul is *talking about* in the third and fourth chapters of 2 Corinthians does not *mean* you automatically understand the *total context* of that passage. I say that in spite of the fact that insight into the *meaning* and *significance* of the two terms *image* and *glory* as they relate to God is obviously essential to an understanding of what Paul has said there. But those two terms are not the only *significant* terms he has used in that passage.

Let me give you another example of the distinction that exists between the *context* of a particular passage of Scripture and what the passage is *talking about*. At the same time, I'll try to show you how those two things fit together with the *meaning* and *significance* of what the author has said. As you undoubtedly remember, after the recent Voice of Elijah, Inc. board meeting, I quickly explained to you a few things about the *meaning* and *significance* of things Moses stated in the second and third chapters of the Book of Genesis. I did that for two reasons. First, I wanted to see how you would react to being suddenly confronted by a view that turns one of Satan's most widely believed lies completely on its head. But I also wanted you to experience a feeling that I have often had when I gain

a sudden insight into some new part of the message of the Scriptures.

I believe the term you used to express how you felt when I explained what happened to Adam and Eve in the Garden was *shocked*. That's understandable. I used to feel that way myself when I suddenly realized I had firmly believed one of Satan's lies. But I've long since gotten used to the fact that most of what this generation accepts as "common knowledge" is, in fact, nothing more than Satan's lie. For that reason nothing much surprises me any more. But that's another story.

What I explained concerning the creation and fall of Adam and Eve provides absolutely essential insight into the *significance* of things Moses stated later on in the Pentateuch in those passages where the term *nakedness* occurs. But consider this: Your insight into what those passages are *talking about* does not come from the *meaning* of what you find stated there. It comes from your understanding of the *context* in which those passages occur. That's because your knowledge of what happened to Adam and Eve when they ate the forbidden fruit allows you to understand *why* God chose to make an issue of nakedness. Therefore, you understand a bit more concerning what those passages are *talking about*. But that does not *mean* you understand the *total context* in which those passages occur. So you can see that no matter how essential the information regarding the nakedness of Adam and Eve is, you still only have insight into a *part* of the *context* in which the laws concerning nakedness occur.

To understand the *total context* of the laws concerning nakedness that Moses gave Israel, you must understand the *meaning* and *significance* of everything Moses wrote before he included the few prohibitions against "uncovering nakedness" that you find in Exodus 20, Leviticus 18, and Leviticus 20. That *means* you must understand everything he said about *the promise, the blessing, the inheritance, and the covenant*, as well as how all those things fit into God's purpose and plan for Israel. Without all that information, you are left with nothing more than a tantalizing glimpse of God's purpose in giving His laws to Israel through Moses.

Editor: That brings up another question. In the last issue, you discussed what the Bible as a whole and the

Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, are talking about. You also explained how the books of the Pentateuch relate to one another and to the Bible as a whole. I personally learned a lot from your explanation of these things, and I know others did as well. I even wrote down the synopsis you provided at the beginning of each book of the Pentateuch so I would have a handy reference. Since I would like to do this with all thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, I was hoping you would continue where you left off, explain a few things about the context of the other books of the Old Testament, and tell us what each one is talking about, generally. Any additional information you are willing to provide on how these books relate to one another and to the Bible as a whole would also be appreciated. You can make this as simple, or complex, as you wish. Since there are still thirty-four Old Testament books to go, you could spread this out over as many issues as you like. Would you be willing to do this?

Elijah: I see no reason why I can't. I gained quite a bit of additional insight from thinking about the things I told you in the last issue. So it should be an interesting mental exercise to formulate a concise summary, or synopsis, of the message contained in every book of the Hebrew Scriptures. I'll do that in a series of articles over the next few issues.

Editor: Also, you have often said that most, if not all, books of the Bible build upon, or draw information from, previously written books of the Bible. That makes the chronology of the books of the Bible very important, especially those in the Old Testament. Since you're already going to be dealing with how the books of the Old Testament relate to one another, would you please tell us the chronological order of the books of the Old Testament? And would you also include the approximate time frame in which each book was written?

Elijah: Now you've raised the bar considerably. I say that because you have to *make a distinction* between the chronological order of the events described in the text of Scripture and the chronological order in which the books were written. What I *mean* is, you must take into account both the *historical context* in which the recorded events occurred and the *historical context* in which the author was writing. Both contribute to your understanding of a particular text. That is because the *historical*

context of the events described in a text provides insight into the *meaning* of the text—that is, what the text says; the *historical context* of the author provides insight into its *significance*—that is, *why* the text was written. It may seem at first to be an overwhelming task to make such a distinction, and sometimes it is. But most of the time it is actually quite easy. All you have to do is pay attention to the text. Let me give you an example of what I *mean*.

The Book of Ruth is ostensibly just an account of a man and a woman who followed the law that Moses prescribed regarding levirate marriage. If you are interested in the specifics of that law, you can find them in Deuteronomy 25:5–10. I say “ostensibly” because appearances are sometimes incredibly (and intentionally) misleading when it comes to the text of the Scriptures. Without the information included in the Book of Ruth, it is impossible for anyone to understand what God and David are *talking about* in 2 Samuel 7 or what Isaiah is *talking about* in Isaiah 40–66 or what Hosea is *talking about* in the Book of Hosea. That is because the Book of Ruth provides graphic illustration of the *parabolic imagery* of the Hebrew Scriptures in which God is the “Redeemer” Who *parabolically* “takes” the woman Israel to “raise up a seed” for Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David just as Hosea said He would. See there, I've just given you a synopsis of the Book of Ruth and a few hints concerning what some of the Prophets are *talking about*. But that's not what I want to *talk about* here.

You see, the *historical context* of the events described in the Book of Ruth is much earlier than the *historical context* of the author of the book. By that I *mean* Boaz “redeemed” Ruth quite a while before some anonymous writer sat down and recorded those events. By the time that person wrote his account, Samuel had long since anointed Saul as the first king of Israel and had then gone on to anoint David to replace him. How do I know that? Well, the author plainly tells you Boaz and Ruth lived sometime before Israel had a king, during the period when judges governed. He says that in the first verse of his book:

Now it came about in the days when the judges governed, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab with his wife and his two sons.
(Ruth 1:1)

That verse provides the *historical context* for the events described in the Book of Ruth. But the author also tells you *why* he wrote the Book of Ruth at the same time that he provides an essential clue as to *when* he wrote it—that is, to his own *historical context*. He provides that bit of information in the last five verses of the book. Listen to what he says there:

Now these are the generations of Perez: to Perez was born Hezron, and to Hezron was born Ram, and to Ram, Amminadab, and to Amminadab was born Nahshon, and to Nahshon, Salmon, and to Salmon was born Boaz, and to Boaz, Obed, and to Obed was born Jesse, and to Jesse, David.
(Ruth 4:18–22)

If you have any interest at all in understanding the message of the Scriptures, you have to ask yourself, Why did the author think it important to include that colophon at the end of his work? Now I realize there are “scholars,” both conservative and liberal, who are too enamored by one of Satan’s lies to try to understand the text of the Hebrew Scriptures on its own terms. So they don’t even ask the question. Satan has gotten those folks to the point where they think the Bible *means* whatever they say it *means*.

Most conservative Christians use the biblical text as a drop-off point from which they can go on to read their Christian values into the Hebrew text. Liberals, on the other hand, slice and dice the text of Scripture into small pieces so that they can dismiss any evidence that doesn’t fit into their parochial view of how the Scriptures came together.

Conservatives tend to give things like the genealogy at the end of the Book of Ruth rather short shrift, and liberals quite often view them as additions to the text. There is absolutely no reason to believe that last bit of nonsense. It derives from goofiness that became popular in the late nineteenth century when liberal scholars began to realize the Hebrew Scriptures were too tough a nut for them to crack. But if you follow the conservatives’ lead and ignore the ending, you end up thinking the Book of Ruth is nothing more than a short story about old-fashioned love and romance.

Unfortunately for both camps, the Book of Ruth describes the hows, whys, and wherefores of levirate marriage, which in turn provides essential insight into the purpose of the Canaanite *zonah* ritual. But we can,

and will, *talk about* those another time. For now, we are only interested in how the ending of the book might help us determine *why* and *when* it was written.

The genealogy at the end of the Book of Ruth tells you the author was writing at some point after Samuel anointed David as king over Israel. Logic alone tells you he was probably writing after David actually became king. I say that because David was not anyone of particular note until after Samuel anointed him and he then became king over “*The House*” of Judah in Hebron. However, you can narrow down the time when the Book of Ruth was written even further. The events described in the Book of Ruth tell you the author was also writing after God spoke to David through the Prophet Nathan in 2 Samuel 7. Let me tell you why I say that.

If I were to postulate a theory concerning who wrote the Book of Ruth, I would have to say the Prophet Nathan is a prime suspect. I favor him not only because he had access to the history of David’s family but also because he had firsthand knowledge of what God actually *promised* David in 2 Samuel 7. Before you can understand why Nathan’s knowledge of that information is important, you must first be aware that God’s *promise* to David is essentially a *promise* that God would be David’s “Redeemer” if he ever needed one. That is, God *promised* David He would one day function as his “Levir.”

The purpose of whoever wrote the Book of Ruth was to explain the key role that the practice of levirate marriage played in the lineage of David prior to the time that God gave him His astounding *promise of redemption*. The author wants his reader to key on the fact that levirate marriage was the only way David’s lineage had managed to endure as long as it had. That’s why he begins the lineage of David with Perez instead of Judah. He is telling us Obed was not the first of David’s ancestors to be engendered that way; Perez was. If you know your Bible very well, you already know Perez was the firstborn of the twins born to Tamar after she enticed Judah into a somewhat perverted levirate “situation” (Gen. 38:27–30).

I trust you can see from what I have just told you why it is important to *make a distinction between* the *historical context* of the author of Scripture and the *historical context* of the events he describes. Sometimes that bit of information is crucial to an understanding of the *significance* of what you are reading. At other times

it is not all that important. But it is never completely irrelevant. Having said all that, I'll take up the other things you asked and deal with them in articles I submit for publication in the next several issues.

Editor: On a totally different matter, I'd like to get your thoughts on a recent current event that has a lot of people buzzing—the cloning of a sheep. I don't know if this scientific breakthrough will eventually lead to the cloning of a human being, but a lot of people think it's only a matter of time before it happens. Just thinking about the possibility of human beings being cloned is an eerie thought. Yet as we draw nearer and nearer to the End, a lot of strange and frightening things we never would have imagined are going to happen. My question is whether you think the recent breakthrough in cloning and DNA research is a significant event that might have ramifications for the future. For instance, do you think it's possible that the Antichrist could be born as a result of cloning? Are there other scientific breakthroughs you know of that we should keep our eye on?

Elijah: Just the little bit of insight into the Truth that I have provided in The Next Step program over the past four years should tell you that anything is possible when it comes to what Satan has up his sleeve. However, I still have not had the time to look into everything the Prophets have said concerning Satan's appearance as a man. And I certainly haven't been able to completely decipher everything the Early Church Fathers understood about that subject. So I'm not all that sure about the specifics of what is yet to come. I will point out, however, that John says this in the Book of Revelation about the events you mentioned:

And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has

come to life. And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and {he provides} that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, {either} the name of the beast or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six.
(Revelation 13:11–18)

John is obviously describing End-Time events *parabolically*. So I pity the poor fool who thinks he can understand that passage without a clear understanding of what “another beast,” the “first beast,” and the “image of the beast” actually represent rather than rapidly regurgitating theories that are based on speculation concerning what the Prophet Daniel has written or what John says. I have already provided sufficient information in The Next Step program for you to understand the Truth concerning the “image of the beast.” The things I have told you imply that Satan is going to try to accomplish the same thing that God accomplished through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is, he is ignorantly going to do what he has always done—try to beat God at His Own game. Like most people in our own generation, Satan is too arrogantly convinced of his own self-worth to realize just how futile that is.

The “image of the beast” is a body in which Satan thinks he will be able to dwell here on Earth for all eternity. Beyond that bare statement I am not willing to go. Understanding the things I have taught you concerning the “image” of God, however, you can understand why that is. You also know full well that nobody in the Church today has the slightest inkling of what Satan has planned. I say that in spite of the fact that a multitude of folks glibly spout some version of the various lies that Satan has put into play down through the centuries. I showed you in the October 1996 issue just how distorted some of those things are. You'll eventually discover how completely deluded our generation is. Until then, I'm willing to let the pot simmer until it's time to serve. (That's a *parabolic image*.)

As far as cloning is concerned, that process could easily fit into Satan's plan. I can't say whether it will or it won't. But I can tell you this: The one thing you need to watch closely is the scientific research going on in the human genome project. Scientists are forging ahead with an all-out effort to identify the genes responsible for all sorts of things. But there is a concerted effort being put forth in the area of the aging process. As I mentioned several years ago, the study of the DNA string that limits the number of times a cell can divide will eventually make it possible for scientists to make the human body live forever. I see that breakthrough coming within the next ten to fifteen years. It may take longer, who knows? But I have no doubt whatsoever that it fits into Satan's plan.

When it becomes possible to genetically alter a person so that they can go on living without aging, the question will then become, Who will be allowed to live forever, and who will be forced to die? The offer of eternal life in the flesh is the most effective tool Satan could ever use to force people into going along with his delusion. So you can understand how scientific research already underway fits into Satan's plan to prepare a human body in which he can live. As to how and when all those things will eventually come together, I really can't say. They are not all that important right now anyway. Understanding the Truth of the Scriptures is. Only then will you be able to recognize Satan when he actually appears.

I will say this about the current controversy over cloning: It is essentially much ado about nothing. Idiots in the media went looking for some new controversial issue, like they always do, and they decided they had found it in cloning. If you look at the controversy in those terms, you should be able to see how stupid it actually is.

Cloning uses exactly the same process that God ordained to create a new person. That is, it takes one cell and, through a process of cell division in the womb, creates a completely new being. There is only one basic difference between cloning and the natural procreation process. Rather than creating a completely new cell by merging chromosomes in a woman's egg with those in a man's sperm, cloning recycles the already merged chromosomes in the cell of some living being. Why is that a problem? Does anybody actually think the soul of a person resides in an individual cell? If they do, they certainly have a weird concept of the soul.

As I understand it, cloning produces a person who looks exactly like someone else. Does that sound familiar? It should. If it doesn't, I suggest you attend the annual convention of identical twins. All cloning will do—if it actually works—is produce an identical twin who is born a few months or years later than the brother or sister with whom it shares an identical set of chromosomes. Is that supposed to be some big deal? It may be different than what has been, but so are thousands of other medical procedures that nobody ever considered possible before our own time.

Are we going to say cloning is wrong just because it is different than what has been? If so, what do we say about heart transplants? What about blood transfusions? Better yet, what about artificial insemination? I'm sure those things were completely revolutionary at one time. But if you accept even one of the medical procedures in which one person contributes a part of their body to another person, why would you refuse to accept their contribution of a donor cell?

Creating identical twins from the same set of chromosomes has been going on for thousands of years in the womb. As a matter of fact, there have been four, five, and six people born with the same set of chromosomes. Do all those folks share the same soul? Of course not! If they don't, then where is the problem? I'll tell you where it is. It is in the minds of the media types who love to stir up controversy wherever they can in order to make their stories more "interesting." I prefer not to go down the road with them.

I'm sure religious folks are going to vehemently resist cloning. That's understandable. The conservative wing of the Church has always had a distinct propensity for coming down on the wrong side of scientific advances. That's because Satan loves to discredit the only source from which the Truth of the Gospel is still available. If he can convince ignorant people to cling tenaciously to both the Gospel and something he can eventually show to be an obviously idiotic belief, he can discredit both beliefs in the mind of the masses. It has happened that way time and time again. Look at how the Church treated Copernicus when he dared to challenge the ignorance of church leaders. Look at what they did to Galileo. The Church has long since been forced to admit its error in regard to the truths those men discovered. But then there's always Darwin's theory of evolution. What should I say about that? ■

The Holy Bible: What Is It? What Does It *Mean*? Who Wrote It? When and Why?

This is the first in a series of articles that are meant to provide the reader with a basic understanding of what the Hebrew Scriptures are as well as when and why they were written. It is intended only as an introduction. Subsequent articles will deal with specific books of the Old Testament.

The Bible is the only Book God ever authored. Yet the Truth is, God didn't even write His Own Book. He *inspired* others to do it for Him. It was actually written over the span of about fifteen hundred years by a variety of people, many of whom remain anonymous. Nonetheless, the text of Scripture is exactly what God would have it to be. As the Apostle Paul said:

All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
(2 Timothy 3:16–17)

Now you might think that since God *inspired* other folks to write His Book for Him, that would present a bit of a problem for anyone who wanted to understand what God had to say. How can we be sure they actually said what He wanted to say? There are a lot of folks who voice that argument, and some do so quite eloquently. They dislike the notion that the Bible is somehow the Book that God wrote. So they ignorantly deride the conservative beliefs concerning verbal inspiration, original autographs, and all that.

Not that the conservatives understand all that much about what God did either. They want to confuse the issue by talking about *revelation*. Both sides

miss the point. God only *inspired* people to write the Scriptures. He didn't tell them what to say. From Moses on down, He simply made sure the Prophets and Apostles understood the Truth of *what He had done and was going to do*. Then they and others around them wrote whatever they felt *inspired* to say about that. *What* they said was true. *How* they said it was up to them. That is, it depended on their own creativity and ability to communicate. Therefore, the Scriptures do not exhibit the same literary qualities throughout. Should you doubt that, just ask anyone who has read the Hebrew text of the Book of Job.

If you want to understand the Truth that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures, you must first accept those Scriptures for *what* they are. That is not an idle statement. There is no better way that I know of to come away from the Scriptures believing a lie than to approach the Scriptures already believing one of the various lies that Satan has propagated concerning their nature and purpose. That is why, in this article, I am going to tell you *what* the Scriptures are and *why* they were written. Then you will be left without excuse if you choose not to believe what I've written.

As I explained in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, Moses *received* both a *written Torah* (a *written Teaching*) and an *oral Torah* (an *oral Teaching*) while Israel was camped at the foot of the Mountain of God in the wilderness of Sinai. The Jews are still aware of that bit of Truth, in spite of the fact that the Church has long since lost sight of it. The Jews know their ancestors were supposed to *hand down* the *oral Teaching of Moses* to subsequent generations, along with the *written Teaching* that they *received*. Unfortunately, the one thing they are—to this day—unwilling to admit is the

fact that the sons of Israel failed to *hand down* the *oral Teaching* that they *received* from Moses. But I've also explained those things in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, so I needn't get into them again here. What I want to *talk about* is the nature and purpose of the Pentateuch and the books of the Bible that were added to the Scriptures after the time of Moses.

A Written and an Oral Teaching

The *written Teaching* and *oral Teaching* that God *delivered* to Moses differed in a couple of extremely significant ways. The first difference is obvious: One was *written*; the other was *spoken*. As I explained in *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, God Himself inscribed the *written Teaching* on the two stone tablets that Moses *received*. By logical extension, however, the sons of Israel eventually came to identify the Pentateuch—the five books that Moses wrote—as *written Teaching*. That is because Moses used the information contained in the *oral Teaching* he *received* from God as the basis from which he created a *written* record of *what God had done and was going to do*. Therefore, in this context at least, we will acknowledge the fact that the Pentateuch is, in some special way, a *written* version of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received*. How that is so remains to be seen.

The second difference between the *oral Teaching* and the *written Teaching* involves not only their nature but also their intrinsic purpose. The *oral Teaching* that Moses *handed down* to Israel was an *openly stated Teaching* whose purpose was to clearly explain *what God was going to do* so the sons of Israel would be prepared when the time came. It did so by explaining the *meaning* of the *symbolic (parabolic) rituals* that Moses established in Israel in terms so simple that even a child could understand. That is why Moses told the Israelites to *hand down* the *oral Teaching* from one generation to the next by teaching it to their children:

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."
(Deuteronomy 6:4-7)

The *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel was the *Living Word of God* in and of itself. That is, it was a complete explanation of *what God was going to do*. Therefore, Moses warned the sons of Israel not to "add to" the *oral Teaching* "nor take away from it." That is, they were not to change it in any way as they *handed it down* from one generation to the next. He said this:

"You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
(Deuteronomy 4:2)

Moses evidently felt quite strongly about this warning. He reiterated it later on:

"Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it."
(Deuteronomy 12:32)

Now some folks will blindly argue that Moses is here referring to the things he wrote down. That is, they will claim he is referring to what we find written in the Pentateuch. The major problem with that argument lies in the fact that the sons of Israel "added" thirty-four other books to the things Moses wrote and the Church "added" an additional twenty-seven. So, unless those folks want to go back to reading a five-book Bible, I suggest they accept the fact that Moses was *talking about* the *oral Teaching* he *handed down* to Israel. But enough about the *oral Teaching*; let's *talk about* the *written Teaching*.

In contrast to the *oral Teaching*, the *written Teaching* hidden in the Pentateuch is not an easily understood explanation of *what God was going to do*. It is instead a cryptic explanation, and it has been intentionally hidden in the narrative historical text. It is therefore extremely difficult for anyone to understand the *written Teaching* that Moses included in the Pentateuch unless they already have knowledge of the *oral Teaching*. That is because, in the wisdom of God, the *oral Teaching* and the *written Teaching* have two entirely different, but complementary, purposes.

As I have already stated, the *oral Teaching* was *meant* to clearly explain *what God was going to do* so that Israel would be prepared when the time came. By contrast, the purpose of the *written Teaching* was to verify that the *oral Teaching* being taught in Israel at any

point in time was, indeed, the same *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is, the *written Teaching* provided a system of checks and balances for the *oral Teaching*.

If Israel still taught the easily understood *oral Teaching* that Moses taught, the people would be able to understand the cryptically explained *written Teaching*. If they did not understand that *oral Teaching*, they would not be able to understand the *written Teaching*, or, for that matter, even be able to see where it was hidden. That is why, when Jesus challenged the Pharisees' understanding of the biblical text, He said this:

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. If I {alone} bear witness of Myself, My testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true. You have sent to John, and he has borne witness to the truth. But the witness which I receive is not from man, but I say these things that you may be saved. He was the lamp that was burning and was shining and you were willing to rejoice for a while in his light. But the witness which I have is greater than {that of} John; for the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me. And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life. I do not receive glory from men; but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves. I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me; if another shall come in his own name, you will receive him. How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another, and you do not seek the glory that is from the {one and} only God? Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?"

(John 5:30–47)

Pay attention! Jesus is using a *parabolic image* in which a *witness* is *testifying* concerning the Truth of Who He is. In that context, Jesus told the leaders of the Jews, "the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope." I will discuss that *parabolic image* in a bit. Keep in mind the fact that Jesus was speaking to Pharisees. Those people firmly believed they were still teaching the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* from God. They weren't, and Jesus knew they weren't. He could be absolutely certain of that, however, only because He understood the *testimony* of the *written Teaching* that Moses had cleverly concealed in the Pentateuch. Knowing what He knew, Jesus could clearly see that the *oral Teaching* of the Pharisees did not agree at all with the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel.

In this article, I am going to explain a few things concerning the *written Teaching* that Jesus referred to in His conversation with the Pharisees. I am also going to tell you how that information is a *witness* that "accuses you" in the same way that it accused the Pharisees if you don't know the Truth but think you do.

Historical Record and Prophecy

The *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel and the *written Teaching* that he concealed in the Pentateuch are essentially the same *Teaching*. Both contained the same explanation of the Truth concerning *what God was going to do*. However, there is much more to the Pentateuch than just the *written Teaching*. The five books of the Bible that Moses wrote explained not only *what God was going to do* but also *what God had already done*. Since the Hebrew Scriptures are nothing more than an extension of the Pentateuch, they exhibit those same characteristics. Therefore, if you want to understand the nature and purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures, you must first get it firmly fixed in your mind that they *make a clear distinction between what God has done and what He is going to do*.

The information in the Scriptures related to *what God has done* is historical record. The information concerning *what He is going to do* is prophecy. History explains the known; prophecy explains the unknown. In the wisdom of God, however, both history and prophecy contribute to a set of checks and balances for the protection and preservation of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. The prophetic passages

tell you what *The Teaching of Moses* was, and therefore, what the *oral Teaching* of Israel should be. The historical passages tell you why the *oral Teaching* of Israel is or is not the same as *The Teaching of Moses*.

You will find both history and prophecy intermingled in the Pentateuch and in the rest of the Scriptures. But it is absolutely essential that you not confuse the two, especially in the Pentateuch. If you do, you will never be able to understand the *written Teaching* that Moses hid there. That is because Moses used history and prophecy to conceal the *written Teaching* from the prying eyes of anyone who does not understand the *oral Teaching* he *delivered* to Israel. That is, he intentionally sought to mislead the uninformed.

One of the most effective techniques that Moses used to conceal the *written Teaching* was to make his readers think they were reading history when they were, in fact, reading prophecy. By that I *mean* he used the Hebrew Prophetic Perfect to speak concerning the future as though it were the past. If you don't know what the Prophetic Perfect is, I suggest you ask someone who teaches Biblical Hebrew, or else look it up for yourself in a Hebrew grammar book. All of the Prophets used the Prophetic Perfect, but they did so only because they took their lead from Moses.

Moses was the greatest of the Prophets, not only because of his understanding of *The Teaching* but also because he initiated the techniques the Prophets used to conceal their message. So I doubt that, without an accurate understanding of *The oral Teaching*, you will understand much, if any, of the *written Teaching* that Moses included in the Pentateuch.

Let me summarize: *The written Teaching of Moses* is nothing more than an explanation of *what God is going to do*. Therefore, you will find it explained only in prophetic passages. They alone contain a detailed, but cryptic, explanation of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* at Mt. Sinai and *handed down* to Israel during the forty years they wandered in the wilderness. The historical account in which this enigmatic prophetic material has been embedded is nothing more than a narrative description of *what God has done*. Moses included the historical information so his reader would be better able to understand *what God is going to do*. Since I am not yet free to openly explain the contents of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *received* from God and *delivered* to Israel, I will focus instead on giving you a basic understanding of the historical record.

The Bible as History

I have already told you it is nearly impossible for anyone to understand the prophecy one finds in the Pentateuch (and in the rest of the Scriptures) without an understanding of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is bad enough. However, the situation is actually much worse than that. It is sometimes impossible to understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the narrative historical account if you do not have at least a general understanding of *what God is going to do*. So even though the authors of Scripture did not intentionally make the historical record obscure, it quite often ended up that way anyway. For that reason the uninformed reader is going to need a bit of help in understanding the text.

Let me put it bluntly: There is no possible way for anyone to fully understand the Scriptures' explanation of *what God has already done*—that is, the historical passages—until one first understands what the Scriptures are *talking about*. So let me explain that for you in general terms. The Scriptures are *talking about* the *oral Teaching* that God gave to Moses. They are, for the most part, a historical account of what Israel did with *The Teaching of Moses*. I say "for the most part" only because the Pentateuch includes a good bit of introductory information before it records how God gave the *oral Teaching* to Moses.

Since a primary purpose of the Scriptures is to provide a written history of the *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel, you can see why the Prophets continued to add to that history until *The Teaching of Moses* was finally accomplished in the Resurrection of the Body of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Church as the new/true Israel. After God's *promise* had been fulfilled, there was no longer a need for anyone to write additional Scripture, and they haven't. In spite of what some folks claim, the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures tell you everything you need to know about the history of the *oral Teaching* that God gave to Moses. That is why the last chapter of the Book of Revelation contains the only scriptural warning against adding to or taking away from the Scriptures:

I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy,

God shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book.
(Revelation 22:18–19)

The Witness

Now that I've explained what the Scriptures are *talking about* in general terms, let me explain why God wanted them written. In Deuteronomy 31:26, we find that, at Moses' specific direction, the things he wrote were supposed to be preserved and protected in the sanctuary, where they were to serve as a *witness against* Israel.

"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, that it may remain there as a witness against you."
(Deuteronomy 31:26)

The inquiring reader will read that verse and ask, Why would God use a historical record of *what He had done* and a prophetic account of *what He was going to do* to serve as a *witness against* Israel? And what possible evidence might that provide? The fool will assume he already knows. But I'll give you the benefit of the doubt and say, "I'm glad you asked." Moses goes on to tell you exactly what you want to know:

"For I know your rebellion and your stubbornness; behold, while I am still alive with you today, you have been rebellious against the LORD; how much more, then, after my death? Assemble to me all the elders of your tribes and your officers, that I may speak these words in their hearing and call the heavens and the earth to witness against them. For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands."
(Deuteronomy 31:27–29)

Did you see the reason? God wanted a *witness* that could *testify against* the sons of Israel because, just as Moses said, He knew they were going to "turn from the way which I have commanded you." That statement has amazingly little *significance* unless you know that "The Way" is what Moses called the *oral Teaching*

he *handed down* to Israel. (See *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1.*) Then it speaks volumes.

Moses is telling the sons of Israel that he wrote the first installment of the Scriptures for the specific purpose of documenting whether or not Israel would preserve and protect the *oral Teaching* they had been given without adding to or taking away from it. So, you see, the *testimony* of the Scriptures is not only going to tell us *what The Teaching of the Jews and the Church should be*, it is also going to tell us *why the teaching of the Jews and the Church is not what it should be*. That is, it is going to *testify against* Israel by telling us the Israel of the Old Testament didn't *hold on to the oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to it. But neither did the Israel of the New Testament. That's why both are still pretending to slavishly abide by the terms of a *witness* Who is ultimately going to *testify against* them.

I have news for you, folks. It doesn't matter at all to God how many people believe the lie that tells them the Jews are still Israel. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel.*) That doesn't alter the Truth. The Church is the only Israel in existence today, and the purpose of the Scriptures remains exactly the same as it was when Moses wrote the following words in Hebrew: "In the beginning..." It is still a *witness* that is going to *testify against* Israel. But how will it do that?

Consider the *parabolic image*: The role of a *witness* is to *testify* on the day of trial. That day is swiftly approaching. Most folks call it Judgment Day. In preparation for that Great Day, however, the *testimony* of the primary *witness* must first be heard to determine if there is sufficient evidence to proceed with prosecution. If there is, the prosecution will take its case to trial.

If the Scriptures are today a *witness* that is prepared to *testify* concerning whether Israel still understands and believes the Truth that God *delivered* to Moses, what do you think their testimony will be concerning the Church? Do you think it has protected and preserved the *oral Teaching of Moses* that John the Baptist *restored* and Jesus Christ *handed down* to His disciples? Only a fool would insist that it has. Most will deny the Church was ever given any such *oral Teaching*, in spite of the fact that every faction of the Church is hard at work *handing down* an *oral Teaching* of one sort or another. But our generation is doing exactly what Moses warned the sons of Israel not to do: They are adding to and taking away from whatever *oral Teaching* they *receive*. Imbeciles!! What kind of "truth" do they

think their teachers have *delivered* to them? If what they have heard is true, they don't need to change it; they only need to believe it. If it isn't true, why did they believe it in the first place?

Unfortunately for you, it doesn't matter much to anyone except you whether or not you believe Jesus Christ *handed down* an *oral Teaching* to His disciples. Your beliefs are still going to determine your eternal destiny. If you choose to believe the Church has never had a complete understanding of the Truth, you have thereby denied the possibility that it understands the Truth today. If you deny the Church ever lost the Truth, you must believe there are various versions of the Truth—one for every segment of the Church in existence today. That's the most idiotic notion Satan has ever disseminated. Two contradictory beliefs cannot both be true. One (or both) must be a lie.

Were you aware that the primary purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures is to speak to you as a *witness*? You should have been if you believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ can be found in them. Jesus plainly *talked about* the Gospel in terms of the *witness* image:

“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”

(Matthew 24:14)

It is up to you whether or not you *believe* the *testimony* that is embodied in the simple Gospel message. If you do, you will repent and be born again. If you don't, you have essentially called God a liar. Under such circumstances, I hardly think He will look on you with much favor in that Great Day. If you have believed the Truth of the Gospel and are born again, however, the role of the Scriptures in your life is to prepare you to *testify* as a *witness* for the prosecution on Judgment Day. I doubt that many will believe it, but that is exactly what Jesus is *talking about* in this passage:

And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

(Acts 1:6–9)

The *written Teaching* one finds in the Pentateuch allows the informed reader to look back from the future and corroborate that what he believes is the same *oral Teaching* that Moses *delivered* to Israel. That is exactly as God planned it all along. The Scriptures were never *meant* to *teach*. They were *meant* to *confirm* that one has, in fact, been taught *The oral Teaching of Moses*. But before a person can fully comprehend the reality that stands behind *The Teaching*, he must first believe the *witness* provided by the Gospel. Otherwise, he has no *witness* within himself (1 John 5:7–11).

The purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures is to tell True Believers everything they need to know to be able to confirm whether or not Israel preserved and protected *The oral Teaching of Moses*. For them to be able to *testify* as a credible *witness*, however, they must have a thorough knowledge of all the facts of the case. Therefore, they need some way to verify what Moses actually taught. That is why he included the *written Teaching*, cryptically and securely embedded in a matrix of historical narrative. In this series, I am going to explain a few things about that historical narrative. As I said, the Scriptures provide a detailed history of *The Teaching* that Moses *received* from God and *delivered* to Israel. To understand how that is, however, one must first understand what the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures intended to accomplish by what they wrote. I intend to give you a general overview of those things.

The Truth of the Scriptures is no different than any other Truth. When people don't understand the Truth, various theories can appear to fit the *evidence*. But when the Truth becomes known, those who are willing to believe the Truth can easily see that it alone fits *all* the *evidence*. No generation before our own has ever had the information necessary to corroborate the Scriptures' *testimony*. By that I *mean* people living in earlier times could not document the beliefs of the ancient Canaanites and Egyptians. Those beliefs provide the information necessary for us to understand the things Moses and the Prophets wrote. So it is going to happen. The complete *testimony* of the Hebrew Scriptures is going to be heard in our day whether you like it or not. You can believe it if you care to ... ■