



THE VOICE of ELIJAH

Why Don't They Talk Like This Anymore?

Inasmuch as certain men have set the truth aside, and bring in lying words and vain genealogies, which, as the apostle says, "minister questions rather than godly edifying which is in faith," and by means of their craftily-constructed plausibilities draw away the minds of the inexperienced and take them captive, [I have felt constrained, my dear friend, to compose the following treatise in order to expose and counteract their machinations.]

These men falsify the oracles of God, and probe themselves evil interpreters of the good word of revelation. They also overthrow the faith of many, by drawing them away, under a pretence of [superior] knowledge, from Him who founded and adorned the universe; as if, forsooth, they had something more excellent and sublime to reveal, than that God who created the heaven and the earth, and all things that are therein.

By means of specious and plausible words, they cunningly allure the simple-minded to inquire into their system; but they nevertheless clumsily destroy them, while they initiate them into their blasphemous and impious opinions ...; and these simple ones are unable, even in such a matter, to distinguish falsehood from truth.

Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced (ridiculous as the expression may seem) more true than the truth itself. One far superior to me has well said, in reference to this point, "A clever imitation in glass casts contempt, as it were, on that precious jewel the emerald (which is most highly esteemed by some), unless it come under the eye of one able to test and expose the counterfeit.

Continued on back cover

Or, again, what inexperienced person can with ease detect the presence of brass when it has been mixed up with silver?" Lest, therefore, through my neglect, some should be carried off, even as sheep are by wolves, while they perceive not the true character of these men,—because they outwardly are covered with sheep's clothing (against whom the Lord has enjoined us to be on our guard), and because their language resembles ours, while their sentiments are very different,—I have deemed it my duty ... to unfold to thee, my friend, these portentous and profound mysteries, which do not fall within the range of every intellect, because all have not sufficiently purged their brains.

I do this, in order that thou, obtaining an acquaintance with these things, mayest in turn explain them to all those with whom thou art connected, and exhort them to avoid such an abyss of madness and of blasphemy against Christ. I intend, then, to the best of my ability, with brevity and clearness to set forth the opinions of those who are now promulgating heresy.... I shall also endeavour, according to my moderate ability, to furnish the means of overthrowing them, by showing how absurd and inconsistent with the truth are their statements.

Not that I am practised either in composition or eloquence; but my feeling of affection prompts me to make known to thee and all thy companions those doctrines which have been kept in concealment until now, but which are at last, through the goodness of God, brought to light. "For there is nothing hidden which shall not be revealed, nor secret that shall not be made known."

Irenæus, "Against Heresies," Book i, Preface, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, (1867), Vol. 1, pp. 315–316.

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A Note From the Editor

As you probably know, a major segment of the Church today believes that once a person has been born again, they are forever saved and can never lose their salvation. According to this belief, being saved is viewed as a singular event that occurs at the moment of the new birth. In contrast to that view of salvation, we at *The Voice of Elijah*® believe that being born again is not an absolute guarantee of salvation. It is merely a crucial first step in the salvation process (John 3:3, 5).

Since it's obvious there cannot be two correct views on this all-important issue, somebody must be wrong. If you are certain it is us, consider this: Even if our position on salvation is wrong, it can't possibly hurt you to consider what we believe. If you have been born again, nothing we say can possibly threaten your salvation—if what the Church teaches is true. It wouldn't matter if we were the biggest liars on the face of the Earth and you believed everything we had to say—you would still be saved because believing a lie could not keep you from inheriting eternal life. That's the beauty of the once-saved-always-saved position: *nothing* can keep you out of Heaven once you have experienced the new birth. At least that's what many in the Church would have you believe.

But what if that belief is wrong? What if salvation is a process, as we say it is? Would True Believers be in danger of losing their salvation under these circumstances? You bet they would. You see, contrary to what the Church teaches, salvation by faith pertains just as much to what you believe *after* the new birth as it does to what you believed *at the time of* the new birth. In other words, saving faith requires an ongoing, not just momentary, belief in the Truth of God's Word. Nowhere in the Scriptures is it taught that saving faith finds its culmination in the new birth. The True Believer who fails to understand this fact is unlikely to meet the demands that saving faith requires. That's why the once-saved-always-saved teaching is so dangerous to True Believers. It breeds complacency and a false sense of security, which is exactly what Satan wants.

Salvation by Faith in Christ

When all is said and done, the basic goal of the Christian faith is to teach people what they need to know in order to be saved. Having just told you that saving faith requires an ongoing belief in the Truth of God's Word, you may think I disagree with the belief that faith in Jesus Christ is all that God requires for salvation. I do not. Salvation by faith in Jesus Christ is a valid biblical doctrine, and we at *The Voice of Elijah*® hold firmly to it. However, we hold just as firmly to the belief that few in the Church today actually understand what genuine faith in Christ is. That is, very few in the Church today comprehend what the expression *faith in Christ* evoked in the minds of first-century Christians.

Continued on page 29

Continued from inside front cover

Most “Christians” today think that having faith in Christ or believing in Christ means believing in the things that Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, accomplished on behalf of mankind, i.e., atonement for sin and the hope of resurrection. While these things are important and should certainly be part of the Gospel message every Evangelist preaches, they only scratch the surface of what it means to believe in Christ.

You see, the Scriptures tell us Jesus Christ is called many things in addition to the Son of God. He also carries the titles Son of Man, Son of David, Messiah, Savior, Lord, and King. But the interesting thing is, none of these designations actually tell us *Who* Jesus Christ is. They only tell us *what* He is in terms of His standing or position in relation to God and man. Although each of these titles reveals something unique about Jesus Christ, they do not reveal *the Person that He is*. That is, they do not reveal His innermost thoughts, beliefs, emotions, desires, and motivations. Yet these things, not external labels, reveal *Who* Jesus Christ was and is. The same is true for every human being. That’s why the writer of Proverbs says, “For as he thinks within himself, so he is” (Prov. 23:7a). The author of the Book of Proverbs is merely expressing what any honest person will readily admit: Our inner thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and desires determine who we are as individuals, not our outward accomplishments and titles.

Using this definition, it should be easy to see *Who* Jesus Christ is. He is the Word of God, just as the Apostle John said (John 1:1 ff.). Every thought, belief, emotion, and desire of Christ’s heart (mind) was rooted in the Truth of God’s Word. His entire life was guided and directed by His understanding of the Word of God. Since His mind was filled with nothing but the Word of God, that’s *Who* He was and still is. In fact, He was the Word of God *before* He became flesh and dwelt among men. The Apostle John tells us that in the opening discourse of his Gospel (John 1:1–14).

If you hope to have any understanding at all of what John is *talking about* in these verses (not to

mention the rest of his Gospel account), you must think parabolically (figuratively; comparatively). That’s because John and the other authors of the New Testament constantly allude to parabolic images and idioms that are part of The Apostolic Teaching.

The parabolic image of Jesus Christ as the Word of God is what John has in mind in the opening discourse of his Gospel and first epistle. However, the thing to remember is that parables do not tell us what spiritual reality is, they only tell us what spiritual reality is like. That’s why it’s important for you to understand that Jesus Christ is not literally the Word of God, He is parabolically the Word of God. If you would like to learn more about the parabolic image of the Living Word of God, I suggest you listen to the seminar tapes, *The Way, The Truth, The Life*. (See the Order Form in this issue.)

The problem is, people in the Church today don’t think the same way Christians in the Early Church thought. Therefore, when they think of Jesus Christ, they think of Him in human terms rather than as the embodiment of the Word of God. Consequently, when “Christians” talk about having faith in Christ, they have in mind their belief in what He accomplished as a man. They have no idea that true faith in Christ demands their faith (belief) in the same Word (body of knowledge) that resided in Christ’s own mind.

Let me state it plainly: If you don’t see that the only way Jesus Christ can live in the hearts (minds) of True Believers is as the Word of God (i.e., as a specific body of knowledge), you don’t really see Jesus Christ as He is. Consequently, you will never come to know Him or the Father because to know Them is to know the Truth of God’s Word. Don’t be deluded into thinking that *knowing about* God and Christ is the same as actually *knowing* Them. There is no way anyone can know the Father and the Son apart from knowledge of the Word of God—The Apostolic Teaching.

So the next time you hear someone in the Church telling one and all that faith in Christ is all that God requires for a person to be saved, just remember that faith in Christ cannot be defined according to twentieth-century thinking. It must be defined according to the first-century mind-set that

existed in Christ's day. And I can assure you the Early Church knew absolutely nothing of the easy-believism, once-saved-always-saved mentality that exists in the Church today. These concepts have no basis at all in the Scriptures.

If you're not certain whether you should believe that, remember what I said earlier: If it is true that born-again Believers cannot lose their salvation, you have nothing to lose by listening to what we say (even if it's all lies) because you will still be saved in the End. But if what we believe is true (which it is), and you choose to believe the easy-believism lie, you have everything to lose and will, most assuredly, lose it. I suggest you give that some serious thought before you casually dismiss The Teaching as heretical.

Believe Because It Makes Sense

I don't want to leave the impression that you should believe what you read in the materials distributed by *The Voice of Elijah*® merely because you have nothing to lose or because we've scared the daylight out of you. Our hope is that True Believers will listen to and believe The Teaching because they see the evidence in the Scriptures that supports it and because that evidence tells them there is much more to the Christian faith than most would ever believe. So if you don't honestly see the biblical evidence that supports what we present, you have no reason to believe what we say, nor should you.

On the other hand, you shouldn't automatically discard it, as most people will, merely because it contradicts something you currently believe. Although it's understandable that you would be wary of a teaching that differs in some ways from your own beliefs and those of the majority in the Church today, the Bible is still the final authority on what is true and not true. That's why, in the final analysis, it doesn't matter what you believe, what the majority in the Church believes, or what we believe. The only thing that matters is whether the Scriptures *validate* the things we believe.

Naturally, everyone claims the Bible validates *their* beliefs, while at the same time claiming it does

not validate the beliefs of those who hold different opinions. While there will always be an ongoing debate about whose beliefs are right and whose are wrong, we should all be able to agree on one thing: The true meaning of any Scripture passage is the meaning *the author had in mind* when he wrote that passage. It doesn't matter what we think a passage means, it only matters what the author intended it to mean when he wrote it. That's why we have continually stressed the importance of knowing the mind-set of those who wrote the Scriptures. If we fail to understand the things that influenced their way of thinking, we will undoubtedly fail to grasp the meaning and significance of the things they wrote.

That's why I have repeatedly stated that True Believers need to be instructed by someone whom God has legitimately called as a Teacher. They need someone who can explain the ancient mind-set and various categories of thought that existed over the fifteen-hundred-year span of time in which the Scriptures were written. This is crucial because God used the ancient religious concepts that existed at the time the Scriptures were written as the basis for His parabolic Teaching that explains what spiritual reality is like.

In an attempt to help you better *verify* the things you hear taught by those who claim the calling of a Teacher, I have, for nearly two years, repeatedly stressed the importance of being more attentive to the things you find written in the Scriptures. My basic contention is that if you pay close attention to details and facts when reading the Bible, you can more accurately discern whether the things you have been taught are true or untrue. That's why I have often cited the Berean Christians (Acts 17:10) as a perfect example of how True Believers should respond to those who teach them. The Bereans examined the Scriptures daily to see whether the things they were being taught made sense and were true (Acts 17:11). That's the way it should be.

To help you become more Berean-like, I have been explaining a simple Bible study technique that I have used for years to get more out of my own study of the Scriptures. My approach involves two basic activities: (1) looking for specific types of information

(*who, what, when, why, how*) while reading the Bible; and (2) looking for key words and phrases that point to this specific information. Although this simple approach is limited in what it can do for you, it's a good first step for anyone trying to get more out of their study of the Bible.

Here are some of the specific things to look for as you read and study the Bible. 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.*

As I have said many times before, this is not an exhaustive list. You can probably think of other things to add to the list. If that's the case, by all means do so. I have limited the key terms in this series of articles to those used most frequently in the New American Standard Bible. But that doesn't mean there aren't others. So don't hesitate to add your own key words and phrases to those I give you.

Exceptions and Restrictions

To this point, we have covered the first five items on the list above. We are now ready for the sixth—exceptions or restrictions to what has been said. This is anything that is excluded, exempted, or set apart as an exception or restriction to what is being talked about.

The key words most often used to point out exceptions and restrictions are *except, unless, but, and only*. In some cases, *however, yet, and although* are also used to denote an exception or restriction, but only infrequently, so we won't be looking at them at this time. I only mention them to emphasize what I just said about other key terms that may apply.

Let's examine the four key words mentioned above. The most obvious is *except*. Although *except*

can be used in several different contexts, it is almost always used in the Scriptures to let us know that an exception is being made to something that has been stated. Here are a few examples:

"All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father, except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal {Him.}"
(Matthew 11:27)

"And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."
(Matthew 19:9)

And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone."
(Luke 18:19)

I assume you can see the exception in each of these verses, so I won't bother to explain the obvious. However, I would like to point out that each exception helps clarify what is being talked about by providing additional information. Without that information, we might, otherwise, assume something we shouldn't. For instance, if Jesus had not included the immorality exception clause in His discussion about divorce, we might assume there is no justification for divorce under any circumstances. By the same token, we might also assume that it's impossible for any man to "know the Father" if Jesus had not exempted Himself and those to whom He chooses to reveal the Father. (If you believe what I wrote earlier about knowing the Father and the Son, you should understand what Christ is talking about here.) So remember that stated exceptions provide additional information that helps clarify our understanding of a particular issue.

You may recall that we have already seen the next key word—*unless*. It is a key term that can sometimes stipulate a condition. (See "A Note From the Editor," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1997.) The fact that it can denote both an exception and a condition makes sense when you realize that conditions

and exceptions often go hand in hand. For instance, consider this verse:

*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)*

As you can see, this verse stipulates a condition that must be met before one can see the Kingdom of God. But it also denotes an exception in that no one can see the Kingdom of God *except* the person who has been born again. So, as you can see, Jesus' statement contains both a condition and an exception. The reason you often find these two inextricably linked together is because most exceptions qualify as exceptions only because they stipulate certain conditions. (This isn't always true, but it is much of the time.)

Because of the correlation that exists between conditions and exceptions, the word *unless* often relates to both. So any time you see *unless* in the Scriptures, you should take note of it because a condition and an exception are most likely being stated concurrently. You may not see one or the other at first, but you can usually restate the verse (as I did with John 3:3) in such a way that both the exception and the condition are obvious. See if you can discern the exception and the condition in each of these verses:

*"For I say to you, that **unless** your righteousness surpasses {that} of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 5:20)*

*And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, "Truly I say to you, **unless** you are converted and become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."
(Matthew 18:2-3)*

*"Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, were {worse} culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but **unless** you repent, you will all likewise*

*perish."
(Luke 13:4-5)*

*"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)*

The next key word that sometimes denotes an exception or restriction is the word *but*. Like *unless*, we have seen *but* before in our examination of key words. We saw it in the last issue when we looked at contrasts. As I told you then, *but* is a word that carries many shades of meaning, so the context dictates how it should be understood. While *but* is used in the Scriptures more often to denote a contrast, it is still used at times to denote an exception. Most often you will have no doubt when *but* denotes an exception or a restriction, but when there is doubt, try substituting *except* in its place. If the sentence still makes sense, then an exception is most likely being stated. See if you can detect the exception or restriction in the following verses. While you're at it, see if you can detect conditions as well.

*"Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, **but** blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven."
(Matthew 12:31)*

*"For many are called, **but** few {are} chosen."
(Matthew 22:14)*

*"And no one has ascended into heaven, **but** He Who descended from heaven, {even} the Son of Man."
(John 3:13)*

*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)*

I trust you can see the exceptions and restrictions being stated here. Whether you actually understand what Jesus is saying in these verses, however, is another story. If a legitimate Teacher called of God has not explained these things to you,

then you probably don't. That's because very little of what Jesus says in the Scriptures is intended to be understood literally. His comments are parabolic in nature, and many of them pertain to Himself as the Word of God Who "descended from heaven" and Who is "the way, and the truth, and the life."

The final key word I want to look at is *only*. Since *only* carries different shades of meaning—like other words we have looked at—it is important that you let the context dictate when it is being used to denote an exception or restriction. Here are a couple of examples of *only* being used in this way:

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)

Let a widow be put on the list only if she is not less than sixty years old, {having been} the wife of one man, having a reputation for good works; {and} if she has brought up children, if she has shown hospitality to strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has assisted those in distress, {and} if she has devoted herself to every good work.

(1 Timothy 5:9–10)

In these two passages, *only* is used in a restrictive sense. As we have seen with other key words, it is also linked to specific conditions that need to be met. In the first passage, Paul states that any widow who is a True Believer is free to remarry, but she is restricted to marrying another True Believer. This restriction imposes a condition on the widow—she can *only* remarry a True Believer. In the second passage, we also see a link between restrictions and conditions. Early Church leaders were to follow certain guidelines that were intended to restrict the type of widows placed on their aid and assistance list. These restrictive guidelines also imposed conditions on the widows—they could *only* be placed on the list if they met certain qualifications.

As I said earlier, the reason conditions and exceptions often go hand in hand is because most exceptions qualify as exceptions by meeting certain conditions. If you want to be one of those few

exceptions whom God saves, you must remember that He has restricted salvation to *only* those who meet the conditions He sets forth. Do you know what those conditions are? They are that you come to know Christ and put your faith in Him.

Does that sound familiar? It should. It's exactly the same message that's being preached in the Church today. The problem is not the message. Teachers in the Church today are capable of repeating what they find written in the Scriptures. The problem is, they don't attach the same meaning and significance to those things as the Early Church did. That's understandable. Nearly two thousand years have passed between the dawn of Christianity and our own time. Who in their right mind actually believes that the categories of thought employed by the Church today are identical to those of the Early Church?

That's why you need to seriously question whether the expressions *knowing Christ* and *having faith in Christ* actually mean what those in the Church today say they mean, or whether they mean something far different. What you choose to believe is up to you. However, I advise you to make your choice based on a logical evaluation of the evidence found in the Scriptures and not on wishful thinking. Now is the time to engage your mind and use deductive reasoning. Show yourself to be the exception—think.

Allen Fries

God Lives in a Three-Story House

In the “Questions & Answers” section of the January 1997 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I was asked to explain the *meaning* and *significance* of a single verse of Scripture, while at the same time showing how that verse fits into the context of the chapter and book in which it occurs, as well as into the overall context of the Scriptures. In doing that, I gave a brief synopsis of what Moses was trying to accomplish in each of the first five books of the Old Testament. As a result, in the “Questions & Answers” section of the April 1997 issue, I was asked to provide a similar succinct summary for each of the remaining thirty-four books of the Old Testament. I agreed to do that, and then I summarized the purpose for which the Book of Ruth was written.

In that same issue, I included a brief introduction to this series of articles in which I discussed the nature and purpose of the Hebrew Scriptures. (See “The Holy Bible: What Is It? What Does It Mean? Who Wrote It? When and Why?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1997.) In the second article of this series, I explained a bit about why the Prophet Jeremiah wrote the Deuteronomic History. (See “Contrary to What You May Have Heard, Jeremiah Was No Bullfrog,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1997.) In this, the third article, I am continuing to do what I have been asked to do. In so doing, however, I am building on the information I provided in the articles I just mentioned. Therefore, you may want to read those before you read this one.

Let me begin by reminding you of what I stated previously: The Hebrew Scriptures are a combination of both history and prophecy. History explains *what God has done*. Prophecy explains *what God is going to do*. I must also remind you why it is important to remember that: It is because Moses hid some incredibly important

information in the five books of the Bible that he wrote by intentionally giving his readers the impression they are reading history when they are in fact reading prophecy.

Since the Prophets of Israel took their lead from Moses, we should expect them to use somewhat the same tactics that he used to conceal the Truth. And we will. As a matter of fact, the Prophets did that in the historical books of the Old Testament as well—at least in the ones they authored. I say “in the ones they authored” because not all of the historical books were authored by Prophets. But that’s just another curve that God has thrown past the proud and arrogant who assume they can easily pierce the veil that conceals the Truth He has hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures.

A good example of a nonprophetic historical work is the Book of Nehemiah. Knowing that Nehemiah was not a Prophet has no impact at all on the *meaning* of what he said, but it makes an incredible difference in the *significance*: The reason *why* Nehemiah said what he said is not the same reason *why* the Prophet included his statements in the Hebrew Scriptures. And the Apostles and Prophets determine the *significance* of the statements they recorded, not the person who made them.

If the biblical author did not determine the *significance* of the things he wrote, one would have—as some conservative theologians have for three-quarters of a century—a difficult time explaining how so many bits and pieces of an ancient Egyptian text titled *The Teaching of Amenemope* came to be embedded in the Book of Proverbs (Prov. 12:22; 15:16, 17; 16:11; 20:23; nearly all of 22:17–23:14; 24:29; 25:21; 26:9; 27:1). Their perplexity concerning how they should treat material from that apparently secular text is only natural. But

the one who understands the *parabolic image* of “The Way” has only to read a translation of the original Egyptian text in order to understand *why* Solomon included excerpts of it in the Book of Proverbs. But I will explain that another time. If you are interested, you can find a translation of *The Teaching of Amenemope* in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 421–425.

The Books of Chronicles and Ezra

In the previous article in this series, I explained *why* Jeremiah wrote the Deuteronomic History. I told you his purpose was to present God’s case against the sons of Israel by specifying their many sins. In doing that, however, he also gave us a fairly detailed history of Israel. But, as I mentioned, Jeremiah’s history ends abruptly at the beginning of the Babylonian Captivity. That is *significant* to us in this context because it helps us better understand *why* the author of the two Books of Chronicles would write a parallel history of Israel and *why* his account differs in some particulars from Jeremiah’s account. I’ll show you some of those differences after resolving the basic issue of authorship.

Before we can discern *why* the Chronicles were included in the Scriptures, we need to know who wrote them. Just as was the case with Jeremiah’s Deuteronomic History, we know the author had to be a Prophet because of the perspective from which he writes. His inclusion of statements like the following tells us he was intent on giving us God’s viewpoint:

But they acted treacherously against the God of their fathers, and played the harlot after the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul, king of Assyria, even the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away into exile, namely the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and to the river of Gozan, to this day.

(1 Chronicles 5:25–26)

So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry {of it}, and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom to

David the son of Jesse.

(1 Chronicles 10:13–14)

And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts {was} with him.

(1 Chronicles 11:9)

Then the fame of David went out into all the lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him on all the nations.

(1 Chronicles 14:17)

Then David put {garrisons} among the Arameans of Damascus; and the Arameans became servants to David, bringing tribute. And the LORD helped David wherever he went.

(1 Chronicles 18:6)

Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.

(1 Chronicles 21:1)

And God was displeased with this thing, so He struck Israel.

(1 Chronicles 21:7)

So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; 70,000 men of Israel fell. And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy {it,} the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, “It is enough; now relax your hand.” And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

(1 Chronicles 21:14–15)

And the LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed on him royal majesty which had not been on any king before him in Israel.

(1 Chronicles 29:25)

Now Solomon the son of David established himself securely over his kingdom, and the LORD his God {was} with him and exalted him greatly.

(2 Chronicles 1:1)

In those passages, the author of the Chronicles tells us how God felt about certain things and what He did as a result. He would not have been able to tell us that if he were not a Prophet. However, we also know

that he, like Jeremiah, relied on various prophetic sources for his information. In the following verse, he reveals three sources from which he got things he recorded:

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the records of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?
(2 Chronicles 9:29)

The mention of these three written sources discloses that, just like Jeremiah, the author of the biblical text drew on things that had been recorded by the sons of the Prophets. As I told you before, Jeremiah mentions *The Book of Jashar* in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18 and *The Book of the Acts of Solomon* in 1 Kings 11:41. But the two major sources he used appear to be *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah* and *The Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (1 Kin. 14:19, 29; 15:7, 23, 31; 16:5, 14, 20, 27; 22:39, 45; 2 Kin. 1:18; 8:23; 10:34; 12:19; 13:8, 12; 14:15, 18, 28; 15:6, 11, 15, 21, 26, 31, 36; 16:19; 20:20; 21:17, 25; 23:28; 24:5).

Nowhere does Jeremiah mention that he had before him anything written by Nathan the Prophet, Ahijah the Shilonite, or Iddo the Seer. Yet he probably did because he mentions two of those three men in his own work—Nathan in 2 Samuel 7:2–4, 17; 12:1, 5, 7, 13, 15, 25; and 1 Kings 1:8, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24, 32, 34, 38, 44, 45; and Ahijah in 1 Kings 11:29–30; 12:15; and 15:29.

The author of the Chronicles names several other sources that he used as well. He mentions *The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel* (2 Chr. 33:18), *The Writing of The Book of the Kings* (2 Chr. 24:27), *The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel* (2 Chr. 16:11; 25:26; 27:7; 28:26; 32:32; 35:27), *The Book of the Kings of Israel* (1 Chr. 9:1; 2 Chr. 20:34), *The Writing of David King of Israel* (2 Chr. 35:4), *The Writing of Solomon* (2 Chr. 35:4), *The Chronicles of King David* (1 Chr. 27:24), *The Chronicles of Nathan the Prophet* (1 Chr. 29:29; 2 Chr. 9:29), *The Chronicles of Shemaiah the Prophet* (2 Chr. 12:15), *The Writing of Iddo the Prophet* (2 Chr. 13:22), *The Chronicles of the Seers* (2 Chr. 33:19), *The Chronicles of Samuel the Seer* (1 Chr. 29:29), *The Chronicles of Gad the Seer* (1 Chr. 29:29), *The Chronicles of Iddo the Seer* (2 Chr. 12:15). And he twice mentions things written by the Prophet Isaiah (2 Chr. 26:22; 32:32).

One cannot help but get the impression from that list that the author of the Chronicles was extremely

familiar with the literature written by the sons of the Prophets. However, from the long list of sources he mentions, one would have expected him to produce a work that was completely different than the history Jeremiah wrote. Yet, in the main, it isn't. Although he frequently includes additional information (2 Chr. 16:1–10; cf. 1 Kin. 15:17) and often preserves important details that Jeremiah omits, much of his material covers the same ground. Even more illuminating is the fact that his repeated references to *The Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel* appear to be pointing to Jeremiah's account. In addition, nearly identical passages like the following indicate that either he got some of his information from what Jeremiah had written in the Books of Samuel and Kings, or else both men appropriated material from a common source:

So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn {of events} from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
(1 Kings 12:15)

So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn {of events} from God that the LORD might establish His word, which He spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.
(2 Chronicles 10:15)

Did you see how those two accounts differ? It has to do with the way in which reference is made to God. Did you notice that? You should have; it's important. Subtle differences like those disclose the different perspectives from which Jeremiah and the author of the Chronicles wrote. Both were concerned with explaining things we need to know about the *parabolic imagery* of "The House." However, Jeremiah focuses on the *parabolic imagery* of the Messiah as the One Who is, in Himself, both "The House" of Israel and "The House" of David. By contrast, the purpose of the author of the Chronicles is to weave into Jeremiah's account the *parabolic imagery* in which the Messiah is also "The House" of God. That's why he patterns his account after Jeremiah's. The *parabolic image* of the Messiah that emerges from the blending of the two accounts gives us a much more vivid *parabolic image* of Jesus Christ than what we would have found in Jeremiah's work alone. But we can—and will—look into that another time.

Whodunit?

The biblical evidence clearly indicates a Prophet wrote the two Books of Chronicles. The question is, Can we identify that Prophet? Certainly. All we have to do is admit that Jewish tradition is, in this case, extremely accurate. According to the Rabbis, Ezra the scribe wrote both the Books of Chronicles and the Book of Ezra (*Bab. Bath. 15a*). If that be true, however, we must either admit that Ezra was a Prophet or, at the very least, that he acted as a scribe for a Prophet. Let's see if we can determine which of those two it was.

Most scholars argue against the notion that Ezra wrote the Chronicles as well as the Book of Ezra. They do so, however, on the mistaken assumption that he must have written the Chronicles at about the same time as he wrote Ezra. That is, they can see that the text of the Book of Ezra indicates it was composed fairly soon after the events it describes. Since those events apparently took place from 458–443 B.C., scholars believe Ezra was written not much later. Yet the genealogy in 1 Chronicles 3:19–24 indicates the Chronicles were written quite a while later, perhaps as late as 400 B.C.

To see why Ezra must be the author of both works, the first thing you need to know is this: The Chronicles and Ezra have been intentionally tied together by means of an ancient literary technique. Let me show you what I *mean*. This is how 2 Chronicles ends:

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia—in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah—the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout his kingdom, and also {put it} in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!’”
(2 Chronicles 36:22–23)

Now compare the passage above with the beginning of the Book of Ezra. You will discover that the Book of Ezra begins with exactly the same decree of Cyrus with which 2 Chronicles leaves off:

Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he sent a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and also {put it} in writing, saying, “Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, ‘The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and rebuild the house of the LORD, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem.’”
(Ezra 1:1–3)

There are a few minor discrepancies between those two passages, yet nothing in them cannot be accounted for as a scribal error that occurred during the transmission of the biblical text. But did you notice how the author of 2 Chronicles ends the decree of Cyrus in midsentence? That is called a catchline. The catchline was a literary technique commonly employed by the ancient Babylonians. Its purpose is to link two separate works together in a series. That bit of information tells us the author of the Chronicles was familiar with this particular Babylonian literary technique, as Ezra—a scribe who had been trained in Babylonia (Ezra 7:6)—would have been. It also tells us the author of the Chronicles wants his reader to understand that the Book of Ezra picks up where he leaves off. That, in turn, tells us the Book of Ezra must have already been in existence when the author of the Chronicles crafted his work. Otherwise, he would not be pointing his reader to Ezra's account. He would have simply continued writing and made that material a part of his own account.

The assumption on the part of scholars that Ezra could not be the author of the Chronicles is just that—an assumption. It is based on the belief that he must have written both works at about the same time. The Truth is, if Ezra wrote the Chronicles, internal evidence indicates he must have written them quite some time after he wrote the Book of Ezra. Therefore, his purpose in ending 2 Chronicles in midsentence was to tell his reader to continue his account at the beginning of his earlier work—the Book of Ezra.

Now what indicates that both the Chronicles and Ezra were written by the same person? The first thing is, they share a common *parabolic* perspective, which I will

discuss another time. But more than that, they view the history of Israel from the same historical perspective. That is, both are concerned with telling us what happened to “*The House*” of David and “*The House*” of God. They do so ostensibly because they are presenting a completely positive view of Solomon’s Temple. That is how God in His wrath intended the uninformed reader to understand the account. However, a somewhat more complex Truth lies hidden in terse statements that lie scattered throughout the Chronicles and Ezra. Unfortunately, the *significance* of many of those brief comments can only be understood in light of things that have been *parabolically* explained by Moses and the other Prophets. Consequently, since the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures had already been written by the time Ezra compiled his account, the reader who lacks insight into their message will never be able to fully comprehend *why* Ezra—a Prophet—wrote his assigned portion of those Scriptures.

Another indication that the person who wrote the Chronicles also wrote Ezra lies in their similarity of style and interest. An example can be found in the unusual phrase “heads of the fathers.” It occurs repeatedly in the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah yet appears nowhere else outside of the Pentateuch. The reason for Ezra’s use of that peculiar phrase is not difficult to determine: Nowhere outside of the Pentateuch, the Chronicles, Ezra, and Nehemiah do we find anywhere near as much genealogical data. Ezra used the phrase because his intention was to provide us the information we need to understand how his history of “*The House*” of God ties in with Moses’ and Jeremiah’s history of “*The House*” of Israel. The fact that the phrase “heads of the fathers” also occurs frequently in the Book of Nehemiah tells us Ezra had a hand in that work as well. However, it would be a mistake to view him as the author. He was merely acting as a scribe who mockingly recorded the words of a proud and arrogant politician named Nehemiah. That’s how that little man’s boasting found its way into the Hebrew Scriptures.

The fact that the Books of Chronicles and Ezra were obviously written by the same individual says nothing at all about who wrote them. Therefore, the final point that one needs to be aware of is the evidence that Ezra wrote the Book of Ezra. That resides in the following passage, where Ezra the scribe identifies himself after having spoken in the first person:

But at the evening offering I arose from my humiliation, even with my garment and my robe torn, and I fell on my knees and stretched out my hands to the LORD my God; and I said, “O my God, I am ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to Thee, my God, for our iniquities have risen above our heads, and our guilt has grown even to the heavens. Since the days of our fathers to this day we {have been} in great guilt, and on account of our iniquities we, our kings {and} our priests have been given into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to plunder and to open shame, as {it is} this day. But now for a brief moment grace has been {shown} from the LORD our God, to leave us an escaped remnant and to give us a peg in His holy place, that our God may enlighten our eyes and grant us a little reviving in our bondage. For we are slaves; yet in our bondage, our God has not forsaken us, but has extended lovingkindness to us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us reviving to raise up the house of our God, to restore its ruins, and to give us a wall in Judah and Jerusalem. And now, our God, what shall we say after this? For we have forsaken Thy commandments, which Thou hast commanded by Thy servants the prophets, saying, ‘The land which you are entering to possess is an unclean land with the uncleanness of the peoples of the lands, with their abominations which have filled it from end to end {and} with their impurity. So now do not give your daughters to their sons nor take their daughters to your sons, and never seek their peace or their prosperity, that you may be strong and eat the good {things} of the land and leave {it} as an inheritance to your sons forever.’ And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and our great guilt, since Thou our God hast requited {us} less than our iniquities {deserve,} and hast given us an escaped remnant as this, shall we again break Thy commandments and intermarry with the peoples who commit these abominations? Wouldst Thou not be angry with us to the point of destruction, until there is no remnant nor any who escape? O LORD God of Israel, Thou art righteous, for we have been left an escaped remnant, as {it is} this day; behold, we are before Thee in our guilt, for no one can stand before Thee because of this.” Now while Ezra was praying and making confession, weeping and prostrating himself before the house of God, a very large assembly, men, women, and children, gathered to him from Israel; for the people wept bitterly.

(Ezra 9:5–10:1)

Whatizit?

Now that we know *who* wrote the Chronicles and Ezra, the logical question to ask is, *Why* did he write them? There is no one easy answer to that question because Ezra's motives grew out of his thorough understanding of the *parabolic imagery* he found in *The Teaching of Moses*. As he himself puts it:

This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God {was} upon him.
(Ezra 7:6)

If you do not yet understand the *meaning* and *significance* of all the things that Moses wrote, you can hardly expect to understand *why* Ezra would write a history of Israel from his own unique perspective or *why* he would sit down and take dictation from a fool like Nehemiah. Neither would you be able to understand *why* he would conceal the fact that he was a Prophet by calling himself a scribe. But you can easily see a few of the things you need to know from just a brief survey of his work.

Ezra devotes the entirety of the first nine chapters of 1 Chronicles to genealogical information. His purpose in doing that is both to conceal and to reveal the purpose of his work. Since most people's eyes glaze over before they get through a half-dozen "begots," it is rather easy to hide crucial information from them by just listing a few dozen names. Yet anyone who knows that the Prophets employed various such techniques to hide the Truth should be able to easily spot that one. It is one of the more obvious. So let's take a look at a few of the things that Ezra hid in, among, and behind all those names.

I have already shown you one of the reasons *why* genealogies are included in the Scriptures. They tell us what happened to *the promise* that God *handed down* to Adam and Eve right before He booted them out of the Garden: Adam *handed down the promise* to his son Seth, who *handed it down* to his son Enosh, who *handed it down* to his son Kenan, and so on, until it came to be in the possession of Noah. Then, after the Flood, Shem *handed down the promise* to his son Arpachshad, who *handed it down* to his son Shelah, and so on, until it came to be in the possession of Abraham. Then, after

Abraham moved to the land of Canaan, he *handed down the promise* to his son Isaac (Gen. 25:5), who *handed it down* to his son Jacob (Gen. 27). And that's when *the promise* ran into big trouble.

Instead of *handing down the promise* to just one son, as Abraham and Isaac before him had done, Jacob divided up *the promise* right before he died and *handed down* pieces of it to several of his sons and grandsons (Gen. 49). It is not all that difficult to see that, as long as *the promise* remained fragmented, no one person could ever *inherit the promise*, much less *inherit what was promised*. That presented a bit of a problem since *The Teaching of Moses* tells us the plan of God had always been that the Messiah would be "The Man" who held title to *the promise* when He *fulfilled the promise*. "The Man" would then *inherit what was promised*. While those things are not the focus of our investigation here, it is important that you understand them because Ezra discloses his knowledge of the situation in this way:

Now the sons of Reuben the first-born of Israel (for he was the first-born, but because he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph the son of Israel; so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright. Though Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him {came} the leader, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph).
(1 Chronicles 5:1-2)

Now we know *why* Ezra provides us genealogical information: He is going to be telling us what happened to *the promise* after Moses gained title to it and then *handed it down* to all Israel, the Firstborn Son of God. So let's take a closer look at the text of Chronicles and see if we can identify Ezra's primary interest in that regard.

A quick survey tells us exactly what we need to know. It is obvious that Ezra has gathered together the genealogical information that Moses provides in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 4; 10-11; 25; and 36) and has stated it in a summary fashion. Only an enlightened reader would be able to sort out the pertinent information in all those names, but even a novice can appreciate the *significance* of one account in particular:

The sons of Judah {were} Er, Onan, and Shelah; {these} three were born to him by Bath-shua the Canaanitess. And

Er, Judah's first-born, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, so He put him to death. And Tamar his daughter-in-law bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.
(1 Chronicles 2:3–4)

Ezra is pointing us back to Genesis 38 to remind us that, in that chapter, Moses outlined the *parabolic imagery* related to the *symbolic ritual* of levirate marriage. Then he immediately goes on to tell us *why* he mentions it:

*The sons of Perez {were} Hezron and Hamul. And the sons of Zerah {were} Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara; five of them in all. And the son of Carmi {was} Achar, the troubler of Israel, who violated the ban. And the son of Ethan {was} Azariah. Now the sons of Hezron, who were born to him {were} Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai. And Ram became the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, leader of the sons of Judah; Nahshon became the father of Salma, Salma became the father of Boaz, Boaz became the father of Obed, and Obed became the father of Jesse; and Jesse became the father of Eliab his first-born, then Abinadab the second, Shimea the third, Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, Ozem the sixth, **David the seventh.***
(1 Chronicles 2:5–15)

There it is in the last line: The focus of attention is David. That is obvious from the fact that he did not bother giving us any information at all about the other sons of Jacob. He went immediately to the lineage of Judah and traced it down to David. So, now that we know his primary interest lies in telling us how God's reunification of *the promise* in "all Israel" relates to the lineage of David, we can look at the remaining seven chapters of genealogical information and try to discern what else he has in mind.

After giving us an overview of David's lineage, Ezra goes back and provides another long list of names that appears to be nothing more than a smoke screen. Whether or not that is its only function remains to be seen. Then, at the beginning of Chapter 3, he names all of the sons that David engendered. He concludes his focus on David with the following:

Now Solomon's son {was} Rehoboam, Abijah {was} his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, Amaziah his son, Azariah

his son, Jotham his son, Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, Amon his son, Josiah his son. And the sons of Josiah {were} Johanan the first-born, and the second {was} Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. And the sons of Jehoiakim {were} Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. And the sons of Jeconiah, the prisoner, {were} Shealtiel his son, and Malchiram, Pedaiah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah. And the sons of Pedaiah {were} Zerubbabel and Shimei. And the sons of Zerubbabel {were} Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith {was} their sister; and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed, five. And the sons of Hananiah {were} Pelatiah and Jeshaiiah, the sons of Rephaiah, the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shecaniah. And the son of Shecaniah {was} Shemaiah, and the sons of Shemaiah {were} Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat, six. And the sons of Neariah {were} Elioenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam, three. And the sons of Elioenai {were} Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pedaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven.
(1 Chronicles 3:10–24)

One would naturally assume that Ezra included that passage because the lineage of Solomon holds some special *significance* in the grand scheme of things. That assumption would be wrong. He merely wants his reader to have a historical framework on which to peg the various events he describes in the Chronicles and in Ezra. That is why he carries Solomon's lineage far beyond the Babylonian Exile and concludes it with a list of children who were born in his own day.

After giving us Solomon's lineage, the Prophet returns once more to Judah's lineage and provides even more eye-glazing genealogical detail. Again, his purpose is apparently to confuse rather than to clarify, although one never knows what minor detail in one of those lists might carry some major *significance*. We won't be able to recognize that minor detail, however, until we understand everything that Moses wrote. That will come later.

When the Prophet finally gets around to providing genealogical information regarding the other sons of Jacob, he leaves little room for doubt as to which one he considers most important—the tribe of Levi. He devotes the entirety of Chapters 6 and 9 to it. The other tribes split the remaining three chapters among them. In the end, Zebulun gets little attention, and Dan isn't even mentioned.

In the midst of all this seemingly mindless focus on names, one specific name—Jehozadak—stands out above the rest. Without it, one could not understand the *significance* of the things the postexilic Prophets Haggai and Zechariah tell us in their works. Therefore, I'll point it out to you now and trust that you will remember it later on when we look at what those two Prophets wrote. Ezra says this:

The sons of Levi {were} Gershon, Kohath and Merari. And the sons of Kohath {were} Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. And the children of Amram {were} Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. And the sons of Aaron {were} Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. Eleazar became the father of Phinehas, {and} Phinehas became the father of Abishua, and Abishua became the father of Bukki, and Bukki became the father of Uzzi, and Uzzi became the father of Zerahiah, and Zerahiah became the father of Meraioth, Meraioth became the father of Amariah, and Amariah became the father of Ahitub, and Ahitub became the father of Zadok, and Zadok became the father of Ahimaaz, and Ahimaaz became the father of Azariah, and Azariah became the father of Johanan, and Johanan became the father of Azariah (it was he who served as the priest in the house which Solomon built in Jerusalem), and Azariah became the father of Amariah, and Amariah became the father of Ahitub, and Ahitub became the father of Zadok, and Zadok became the father of Shallum, and Shallum became the father of Hilkiyah, and Hilkiyah became the father of Azariah, and Azariah became the father of Seraiah, and Seraiah became the father of Jehozadak; and Jehozadak went {along} when the LORD carried Judah and Jerusalem away into exile by Nebuchadnezzar.

(1 Chronicles 6:1–15)

We will look at what Haggai and Zechariah wrote about one of the descendants of Jehozadak later. For now, I should point out that this particular genealogy carries special *significance* in regard to the Books of Chronicles because it is also Ezra's genealogy:

Now after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, {there went up} Ezra son of Seraiah, son of Azariah, son of Hilkiyah, son of Shallum, son of Zadok, son of Ahitub, son of Amariah, son of Azariah, son of Meraioth, son of Zerahiah, son of Uzzi, son of Bukki, son of Abishua, son of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron

the chief priest. This Ezra went up from Babylon, and he was a scribe skilled in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given; and the king granted him all he requested because the hand of the LORD his God {was} upon him.

(Ezra 7:1–6)

Did you notice how that genealogy has been condensed? Some of the names have been omitted and the phrase "son of" has been used in the sense of "descendant of" to bridge the gaps. Remember that technique. It will come in handy later on. For now, it is enough to know that the point of the genealogy has to do with the fact that Ezra was a priest. But we also know, because we know he wrote the Chronicles and Ezra, that he was a Prophet. If you know much at all about the other Prophets, you probably already know that many of them tell us they were priests as well. There is a reason for that. But we can, and will, look into those things in the second volume of *The Mystery of Scripture*.

If you were paying close attention when you read that last passage I quoted, you now know that Ezra was a descendant of Hilkiyah, the high priest who found the book of the covenant in the Temple during Josiah's reign (2 Kin. 22:8; 2 Chr. 34:14). If that Hilkiyah was the father of the Prophet Jeremiah, as I tend to believe he was, then Ezra would have also been related to Jeremiah. You can see how, under those circumstances, he would have had more than a passing incentive to use Jeremiah's history of Israel as a two-story "house" to which he could add a thoroughly enlightening third story. Which is exactly what he did. He rounded out Jeremiah's account of "The House" of Israel and "The House" of David by contributing vital information that we need to know about "The House" of God.

Whatduzitsay?

After a bit of preliminary information about David, Ezra gives us an account of how God *handed down the promise* to David through Nathan the Prophet (1 Chr. 17). His account of that prophecy parallels the account that Jeremiah provides in 2 Samuel 7. Therefore, one should carefully compare Jeremiah's version of *the promise* with 1 Chronicles 17. I realize that, unfortunately, every translation hides important information from those who must read the biblical text in translation; nevertheless, in the following translation

you can see how, in verse 10, Ezra deftly substitutes the idiom “build a house” for the idiom “make a house” that occurs in 2 Samuel 7:11. That’s because he wants to make sure his reader can see that Nathan’s prophecy is speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of levirate marriage:

And it came about, when David dwelt in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, “Behold, I am dwelling in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under curtains.” Then Nathan said to David, “Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you.” And it came about the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, “Go and tell David My servant, ‘Thus says the LORD, “You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in; for I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel to this day, but I have gone from tent to tent and from {one} dwelling place {to another.} In all places where I have walked with all Israel, have I spoken a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd My people, saying, ‘Why have you not built for Me a house of cedar?’”’ Now, therefore, thus shall you say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be leader over My people Israel. And I have been with you wherever you have gone, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a name like the name of the great ones who are in the earth. And I will appoint a place for My people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place and be moved no more; neither shall the wicked waste them anymore as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges {to be} over My people Israel. And I will subdue all your enemies. Moreover, I tell you that the LORD will build a house for you. And it shall come about when your days are fulfilled that you must go {to be} with your fathers, that I will set up {one of} your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be his father, and he shall be My son; and I will not take My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it from him who was before you. But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”’” According to all these words and according to all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David. (1 Chronicles 17:1–15)

If you have compared that passage to 2 Samuel 7, you already know that Ezra has strengthened God’s prohibition against David building a Temple for Him. Jeremiah tells us God said this:

“Go and say to My servant David, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in?”’”
(2 Samuel 7:5)

For some peculiar reason, which we will soon discover, Ezra finds that statement too weak. Therefore, using his license as a Prophet, he changes the wording to make the *meaning* of God’s statement even more obvious:

“Go and tell David My servant, ‘Thus says the LORD, “You shall not build a house for Me to dwell in.”’”
(1 Chronicles 17:4)

Now we know that God specifically told David he could not “build a house” for Him. But—and this is extremely important information—we also know *why* God would not allow David to build Him a house. Both Jeremiah and Ezra tell us it had nothing to do with David; it was because God did not want a house built. He found living in a tent suited Him just fine. You need to keep that bit of information in mind. It will come in handy shortly.

The next thing we need to glean from Ezra’s account of Nathan’s prophecy is the fact that David understood—at that time—*what was promised*. That is clear from what he says in response to God’s *promise*:

Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD and said, “Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house that Thou hast brought me this far? And this was a small thing in Thine eyes, O God; but Thou hast spoken of Thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the standard of a man of high degree, O LORD God.”
(1 Chronicles 17:16–17)

That tells us David knew that *the fulfillment of the promise* would be in the distant future. However, David also understood that God *promised* He would step in as his (levirate) Redeemer if he ever needed one. That can be seen from the fact that he concludes

his prayer with this summary statement of *the promise* he had *received*:

"And now, O LORD, let the word that Thou hast spoken concerning Thy servant and concerning his house, be established forever, and do as Thou hast spoken. And let Thy name be established and magnified forever, saying, 'The LORD of hosts is the God of Israel, {even} a God to Israel; and the house of David Thy servant is established before Thee.' For Thou, O my God, hast revealed to Thy servant that Thou wilt build for him a house; therefore Thy servant hath found {courage} to pray before Thee."
(1 Chronicles 17:23–25)

If one does not understand the *meaning* of the three Hebrew idioms "build a house," "raise up a seed," and "make a name," one can hardly be expected to appreciate the extreme importance of *the promise* or the two statements that David made in response. So, if you don't understand that these three idioms all *mean* "engender a son," I suggest you begin at the beginning and read the various things I've written over the years. While the idioms do little more than confuse the issue for the fool who has no interest in knowing the Truth, they tell the enlightened reader that David understood—at the time—that God had *promised* to "build for him a house," that is, to engender a son for him, in the distant future. That agrees with what Nathan said:

"And it shall come about when your days are fulfilled that you must go {to be} with your fathers, that I will set up {one of} your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom."
(1 Chronicles 17:11)

Unfortunately, the translator mangled the *meaning* of that verse. His translation completely obscures the idiom "raise up a seed." The Hebrew word *seed*, which he translated "descendants," is not plural, it is a singular collective. So we know the translator didn't understand what God *meant* by His use of the idiom. You do, provided you believe what I have written in that regard. God *meant* He would one day engender a son for David. He is referring to the fact that He was going to "give" the Messiah—Jesus Christ—to David as a *seed*.

Again, if you have done your homework, you should already know that Ezra's account of what God

said to David about "raising up a seed" differs slightly from Jeremiah's account:

"When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom."
(2 Samuel 7:12)

That verse and 1 Chronicles 17:11 are essentially the same in the Hebrew. Yet you can see the Hebrew idiom "raise up a seed" much more clearly in this translation than you could in the one above. The most important difference in the Hebrew is that, whereas Jeremiah literally says the Messiah will come "from the loins" of David, Ezra says He will be "one of your sons." Ezra obviously wanted to make it a bit clearer that Solomon was not the son that God had in mind when He *promised* David He would one day "build a house" for him. His reason for that will become obvious fairly soon because now we come to the most interesting part of Ezra's account.

If you compare Ezra's history of Israel with Jeremiah's, you will find he condensed sixteen fairly long chapters (2 Sam. 8–23) down to just three short ones (1 Chr. 18–20). Then, where Jeremiah provides only a cursory treatment of what happened following David's sin in numbering Israel (2 Sam. 24), Ezra goes into extreme detail (1 Chr. 21 ff.). Starting from that point and continuing on to the end of 1 Chronicles, he provides crucial information as to how Solomon's Temple came to be built. And in those nine chapters, Ezra has hidden the reason *why* he wrote a history of Israel. Fools who are enamored with Satan's lie will never believe it, but the one thing God wanted Ezra to make perfectly clear to the Elect is this: He never told David or anyone else to "build a house" for Him to live in. As Nathan plainly told David—and as Haggai and Zechariah affirm—that would be the responsibility of the One Whom God Himself engendered when He finally "built a house" for David:

"And it shall come about when your days are fulfilled that you must go {to be} with your fathers, that I will set up {one of} your descendants after you, who shall be of your sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build for Me a house, and I will establish his throne forever."
(1 Chronicles 17:11–12)

That passage makes it perfectly clear that God expected the Messiah—Jesus Christ—to “build *The House*” of God. Under those circumstances, the one who wants to know the Truth will immediately ask this question, Then why did Solomon build the Temple? I’m glad you asked. That’s exactly what Ezra is going to tell us. As a matter of fact, that is the primary reason *why* he wrote the Books of Chronicles and Ezra.

Whoyagonnabelieve?

Everybody *talks about* “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15—KJV), yet few who glibly spout that phrase have any idea at all as to how they should go about it. So let me give you a brief introduction to one tricky little issue you need to be aware of. Maybe then you will appreciate why God is going to brutally silence forever those fools who have ignorantly taken it upon themselves to cause others to stumble by teaching what they believe the Scriptures have to say.

As I’ve told you before, the Scriptures can get murky rather quickly if you don’t pay close attention to who says what to whom. That simply *means* you need to take into account the person who made a particular statement, the *context* in which he made it, the person or persons to whom he made it, and then consider the reason(s) *why* he made it. In other words, if you think everything you read in the Scriptures stands on equal footing as God’s honest Truth, I can already tell you the Prophets and Apostles who wrote them have made a fool of you. They never *meant* for the wise to be so easily taken in.

Let me show you what I’m *talking about*. The author of the Book of Job tells us this:

*Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, “From where do you come?” Then Satan answered the LORD and said, “From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it.” And the LORD said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil.” Then Satan answered the LORD, “Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. **But put forth Thy hand***

now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face.”

(Job 1:6–11)

Now we know that a Prophet wrote that text because he tells us things that only a Prophet could know. Therefore, we know that what we have read is absolutely true. However, it should be obvious that the Prophet is merely telling us what Satan said. He certainly did not *mean* for us to believe that what Satan said is true. And only a fool would insist that he did. After all, he goes on immediately after that to tell us how Job proved Satan wrong. Having pointed out those things, I am now going to bring the fools among us out of hiding by applying the same principle of interpretation to something that the Prophet Ezra tells us David said:

Then he called for his son Solomon, and charged him to build a house for the LORD God of Israel. And David said to Solomon, “My son, I had intended to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, ‘You have shed much blood, and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed {so} much blood on the earth before Me. Behold, a son shall be born to you, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days. He shall build a house for My name, and he shall be My son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel forever.’ Now, my son, the LORD be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of the LORD your God just as He has spoken concerning you.”

(1 Chronicles 22:6–11)

According to what David says here, God was *talking about* Solomon in *the promise* that He *handed down* to him through Nathan. We already know that is not true. God did not “build a house” for David by engendering Solomon. David himself engendered Solomon. Furthermore, God *promised* He would “build a house” for David long after David had died. Yet Solomon was born quite some time before David died. Moreover, David says the reason God would not allow him to “build a house” for Him was because he had shed blood. Yet that is not what Nathan told David. Nathan said it was because God did not want anyone to build

Him a house. He liked living in the smelly old tent He had lived in for centuries.

Considering the discrepancies we find in David's statement, we need to ask ourselves, Does Ezra expect us to accept it as the Truth? Obviously not. He is only telling us what David said in order to make us aware of the fact that Satan had somehow managed to completely deceive him as to the *meaning of the promise*. He knows that those who have insight will remember what he has already told them and be able to see the Truth. So let's go back and see if Ezra has told us what led to David's delusion. He begins his account of Satan's deception in this way:

*Then Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel.
(1 Chronicles 21:1)*

Ezra's point is, Satan enticed David to sin in ordering a census of Israel. But the Prophet is now going to tell us how David compounded his initial error and consequently ended his life in complete delusion. If you want to understand the Truth, however, you must never waver from your belief in the Truth we have already seen concerning *the promise* God handed down to David—that God would one day engender for David a Son Who would, in turn, "build a house" for God. If you let go of that Truth, you will immediately drift off into the part of Satan's delusion that is going to carry him to power as the Antichrist. With that warning in mind, let's go on.

Ezra tells us that after David sinned, God gave him three choices from which to select the punishment for his sin. He could either have three years of famine, three months at the mercy of his enemies, or three days under the sword of the Lord. David chose the sword of the Lord. Therefore, the Lord struck Israel with a plague because of David's sin. This is Ezra's account of how the devastation ended:

And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy {it,} the LORD saw and was sorry over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. Then David lifted up his eyes and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, with his drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem.

*Then David and the elders, covered with sackcloth, fell on their faces. And David said to God, "Is it not I who commanded to count the people? Indeed, I am the one who has sinned and done very wickedly, but these sheep, what have they done? O LORD my God, please let Thy hand be against me and my father's household, but not against Thy people that they should be plagued." Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up and build an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. So David went up at the word of Gad, which he spoke in the name of the LORD. Now Ornan turned back and saw the angel, and his four sons {who were} with him hid themselves. And Ornan was threshing wheat. And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out from the threshing floor, and prostrated himself before David with his face to the ground. Then David said to Ornan, "Give me the site of {this} threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the LORD; for the full price you shall give it to me, that the plague may be restrained from the people." And Ornan said to David, "Take {it} for yourself; and let my lord the king do what is good in his sight. See, I will give the oxen for burnt offerings and the threshing sledges for wood and the wheat for the grain offering; I will give {it} all." But King David said to Ornan, "No, but I will surely buy {it} for the full price; for I will not take what is yours for the LORD, or offer a burnt offering which costs me nothing." So David gave Ornan 600 shekels of gold by weight for the site.
(1 Chronicles 21:15–25)*

Again, you need to compare what Ezra tells us here with what Jeremiah says in 2 Samuel 24. When you do, you will find that the two convey basically the same information. However, Ezra provides a couple of specific details at the end of his account that Jeremiah neglects to mention. Jeremiah says this:

*And David built there an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. Thus the LORD was moved by entreaty for the land, and the plague was held back from Israel.
(2 Samuel 24:25)*

This is how Ezra concludes his account:

Then David built an altar to the LORD there, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. And he called to the

*LORD and He answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. And the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back in its sheath.
(1 Chronicles 21:26–27)*

I must tell you, first of all, that Jeremiah and Ezra have mocked the simpleminded among us who quickly jump to conclusions rather than paying close attention to what they read. Their mockery can be seen in the way they concealed the Truth: They stated one Truth as a matter of fact—without telling us *why* they told us—and then stated another Truth as a matter of fact—without telling us *why* they told us—so as to lead us to believe something other than the first Truth they told us. Then they moved on without providing any insight at all into the *significance* of (*why* they told us) the Truth. They learned that technique from Moses. As you are about to see, it is a simple, but highly effective, way to hide the Truth.

You see, God did not tell David to offer sacrifices on the altar. He only told him to build it. Ornan (or Araunah in 2 Samuel) suggested that David might also want to offer sacrifices, and David foolishly took his advice. I say “foolishly” because, if you know your Bible, you already know that God had specifically prohibited that activity. As a matter of fact, God was so adamant that the king of Israel could not offer sacrifices that He rejected Saul as king because he did just that (1 Sam. 13:8–14). This is how Ezra puts the matter:

*So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against the LORD, because of the word of the LORD which he did not keep; and also because he asked counsel of a medium, making inquiry {of it}, and did not inquire of the LORD. Therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom to David the son of Jesse.
(1 Chronicles 10:13–14)*

You need to remember the part about Saul not inquiring of the Lord in an appropriate manner. You are going to understand *why* Ezra mentions it in just a bit. The Truth is, David’s relationship to God ended up a whole lot more like Saul’s than you would have ever suspected. In David’s case, however, God did not confront him with his sin. Instead, He intentionally misled him by igniting a fire on the altar to consume the sacrifices. He thereby led David to believe that what he had done in offering sacrifices was acceptable.

Now we know that ordering a census of Israel was only David’s first mistake. His second was in doing more than he had been told to do—build an altar as a *witness* to the Lord (Josh. 22:10–34). That is where the deception of David begins to look a lot like the way God is dealing with True Believers in the Church today: They know what God requires, but they conveniently forget when Pretenders suggest that they do something they find more appealing. When God does not confront them with their sin, they stupidly believe that He finds their actions acceptable. You are about to discover that God doesn’t operate the way we expect Him to (Is. 55:8–9). So pay close attention.

Jeremiah says nothing more about God’s allowing David to be deceived, but Ezra goes into great detail because he wants his reader to understand that it was never God’s intention that a temple be built in Jerusalem—that it was David’s doing, that God merely went along with it to conceal the Truth concerning *the promise* that Jesus Christ *inherited*. But to see all that, you need to take a closer look at what Ezra says next:

*At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he offered sacrifice there. For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering {were} in the high place at Gibeon at that time. **But David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was terrified by the sword of the angel of the LORD.** Then David said, “This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of burnt offering for Israel.”
(1 Chronicles 21:28–22:1)*

That just about says it all: David ignorantly took God’s lenient response to *mean* not only that he could continue to function as a priest, but also that God had consecrated the altar he had built and thereby made it a place of worship. Yet Ezra makes it clear that David never once consulted God concerning the matter because he was too afraid of what might happen if he went out to the legitimate place of sacrifice—the Tabernacle in Gibeon. (Doesn’t that sound just like Saul?) Ezra wants it understood that instead of inquiring of the Lord, David took it upon himself to transfer the sacrificial ritual of the Tabernacle to Jerusalem. If you know anything at all about the restrictions God placed on the sacrificial ritual, you already know that

was his third mistake. Moses puts the ordinance of God this way:

“Then you shall say to them, ‘Any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who offers a burnt offering or sacrifice, and does not bring it to the doorway of the tent of meeting to offer it to the LORD, that man also shall be cut off from his people.’”
(Leviticus 17:8–9)

Fools will insist that restriction doesn’t apply in this case since God responded to David by consuming the sacrifices he laid out on the altar. In the goofy tradition of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1–7), they fail to get the point: God responded with fire *after* David had already sinned. Since the fire that proceeds from God is nothing more than a manifestation of His rage, that fire could just as easily have consumed David as it did his sacrifices. But in His compassion for Israel, God held back. Ezra assumed the wise didn’t need that pointed out to them. I’m sorry if you did.

Ezra goes on to describe just how completely David fell into Satan’s snare. We already know David wanted to build a temple in Jerusalem. That was the reason *why* God sent Nathan to him with *the promise* in the first place. Therefore, all Satan had to do was convince David that he could have his cake and eat it too. If you are dumb enough to think that God doesn’t deal with you in exactly that same way, you deserve everything that is coming your way. Like the fools in the Church today, David didn’t go for Satan’s lie hook, line, and sinker; he swallowed the whole pole:

So David gave orders to gather the foreigners who were in the land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to hew out stones to build the house of God. And David prepared large quantities of iron to make the nails for the doors of the gates and for the clamps, and more bronze than could be weighed; and timbers of cedar logs beyond number, for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought large quantities of cedar timber to David. And David said, “My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands. {Therefore} now I will make preparation for it.” So David made ample preparations before his death.
(1 Chronicles 22:2–5)

There you have the whole story. At this point in Ezra’s account, David tells Solomon that he is *the fulfillment of the promise* God had given through the Prophet Nathan. That’s where we came in. We now know just how big a lie that was. Nevertheless, David believed it. Solomon did too. The same goes for a long line of fools since that time. The Truth is, Jesus Christ alone is *the fulfillment of the promise*—the only One qualified to “build *The House*” of God in the same way that God “built *The House*” of David. By that I mean *the promise* God gave David is speaking *parabolically* in terms of the three Hebrew idioms “build a house,” “raise up a seed,” and “make a name,” all of which mean “engender a son.”

You cannot—as some fools prefer—slice and dice *the promise* so as to leave any room at all for Solomon building a literal House of God in Jerusalem. Just keep that in mind when you see the Antichrist pretending to be Jesus Christ busy at work rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. “*The only House*” of God that Jesus Christ will ever “build” is the family of God. Isaiah tells us there is no other “house” in which God desires to dwell (Is. 66:1–2). But that’s enough exhortation. I must leave room for doubt in the mind of those destined for destruction. They want to believe a lie.

It is obvious that Ezra knew David had been deceived. And in his role as both the concealer and revealer of the Truth, the Prophet cryptically told us how David arbitrarily decided on his own, without any input from God whatsoever, that his son Solomon should build a Temple in Jerusalem. However, Ezra was careful to let us know that David did that because God—in His mercy—consumed only the sacrifices on the altar rather than destroying David as well.

Ezra goes on to reveal how completely deluded David became. You can read the account for yourself. Now is not the time for me to explain those things. My only purpose here has been to show you who wrote the Books of Chronicles and Ezra and *why*. If you decide to read the remainder of Ezra’s account on your own, just remember you can’t believe much of what David or Solomon have to say. It was by God’s design that they labored under Satan’s delusion. Therefore, when Ezra describes how God responded to their requests, carefully examine His response. David and Solomon didn’t know that they didn’t know. But they thought they did. And just like the deceived today, God wasn’t about to tell them anything different. ■



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: You had some interesting things to say, as you always do, in the last issue of the newsletter. Based on what you wrote in the main article, "So Why Would a Nomad 'Build a House' and Settle Down?" it seems logical to believe that The Teaching God originally handed down to Adam and Eve was probably not as complex or multifaceted as The Teaching He handed down to Moses. I say that because The Teaching handed down to Adam and Eve would have been in its purest and simplest form. That is, it would not yet have been corrupted by men like Cain, Ham, and others, who perverted it to suit their own ends. As fools like these continued to add their own thoughts to The Teaching over the centuries, it seems likely that the lies being handed down from generation to generation would have become quite complex and convoluted. As such, when God finally reestablished The Teaching in Moses' day, it appears He would have been forced to modify the parables, although not the message, of The Teaching to accommodate the convoluted thinking that existed in that day. Is this a fairly accurate account of what happened?

Elijah: The Truth is, the only thing related to The Teaching that has ever changed is the perspective from which it is viewed. For example, True Believers who lived prior to the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ looked forward to the fulfillment of the promise,

while those who have lived since have looked back at it. But nothing in *The Teaching* itself—the *Living Word* of God—has ever changed. The parables that God used to explain the Truth to Adam and Eve were still the same in Moses' day, just as they are in our own. If it were otherwise, one would have to concede that God Himself must have changed at some point because *The Teaching* is Who God is.

From your question, it appears that the area you want to understand better relates to the fact that God added the Law to *The Teaching* when He reestablished *The Teaching* in the time of Moses. That is, He attached *The Teaching* to a rigid system of do's and don'ts that were designed to accomplish an entirely different purpose than *The Teaching*. That is what the Apostle Paul is talking about in his letter to the Galatians:

Brethren, I speak in terms of human relations: even though it is {only} a man's covenant, yet when it has been ratified, no one sets it aside or adds conditions to it. Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as {referring} to many, but {rather} to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. What I am saying is this: the Law, which came four hundred and thirty years later, does not invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance is based on law, it is no longer based on a promise; but God has granted it to Abraham by means of a promise. Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed should come to whom the promise had been made.

(Galatians 3:15–19)

Paul goes on from there to explain how the Jews failed to *inherit the promise* because they sought to *inherit* it on the basis of *The Law of Moses* rather than through belief in *The Teaching of Moses*. The point of what Paul is talking about in the Book of Galatians has been consistently misunderstood by translators and commentators alike, in part because they don't understand his use of the Greek term *diatheke*, which can mean either "testament" or "covenant." In this case, it obviously means "testament," but they prefer to understand it as "covenant" and think he is referring to one of the covenants that God made with Abraham. What they fail to understand is, he is and he isn't. But to

understand how that is, one has to know a whole lot more about the *meaning* of the ritual that God performed as a *parabolic pantomime* in Genesis 15. Since I've already discussed the *significance* of the term *diatheke* in the article "Did Jesus Leave a Will?" (*The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1991), I won't say more about that here.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul is *talking about* the fact that Jesus Christ is "*The Man*" Moses said would *inherit the promise* that God *handed down* to Adam and Eve. Paul doesn't mention Adam and Eve, however, because his central argument is against Jews who were insisting that Gentile Christians could not be members of Israel—the Body of Jesus Christ—if they remained uncircumcised. That is, upon hearing the Apostles explain from the Hebrew Scriptures how Jesus Christ had become Israel, some Jews converted to Christianity because they could see that was true. Yet they still claimed that Gentiles had to symbolically indicate that they were members of Israel by submitting to the Jewish ritual of circumcision. However, as Paul plainly indicates in his letter, they did that because they were Pretenders, that is, they had never been born again. That is why he calls them "false brethren":

*Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. And it was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but {I did so} in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. **But {it was} because of the false brethren who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.***
(Galatians 2:1-5)

You can see from what Paul says here that the asinine views of Pretenders have been with us from the first. Yet in refuting this particular brand of Satan's idiom, Paul merely points out the fact that *The Teaching* was the sole means of salvation long before either circumcision or *The Law of Moses* was added to it. Therefore, foolish insistence on slavishly adhering to any ordinance—whether circumcision, the eating of only clean animals, or observance of the Sabbath—disregards the

central issue: Salvation, that is, *inheritance of the promise*, is and always has been by faith—which is nothing more than belief—alone. But, as I have repeatedly stated, biblical faith is faith in the sense of *what you believe*, not the goofy modern concept of faith in the sense of *that you believe*. God is much more interested in the content of your beliefs concerning Who He is and what He has done than He is in the fact that you believe, or worse yet, merely say you believe, that He is.

The essential content of saving faith is, and always has been, what the Apostles called "the Gospel." The Gospel is nothing more than the elementary Truths of *The Teaching* concerning how it is possible for sinful man to *inherit what was promised* just as Jesus Christ did. But neither the Gospel message itself nor the more advanced Truths of *The Teaching* have ever changed. In the wisdom of God, the entirety of the Mosaic legal system was added to *The Teaching* in order to obligate the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to *ritually* act out some of the *parabolic images* described in *The Teaching*. But the most important purpose those legal ordinances served was to protect and preserve *the promise* until the time came for *the fulfillment of the promise*.

The Truth is, God instituted the regulations of *The Law of Moses* in order to make *the heir of the promise* a *mediator*, just as Paul says in Galatians 3:20. The role of that *mediator* was to convey title to *the promise* from God Himself to His Son Jesus Christ. Paul knew that. He also understood the *parabolic imagery* that describes how God the Father and God the Son are One and the same Person. That's why he makes this enigmatic statement right in the middle of his discussion of how Gentiles came to be in possession of *the promise* God made to Abraham:

Now a mediator is not for one {party only;} whereas God is {only} one.
(Galatians 3:20)

Paul's point is, a person does not normally need a *mediator* to transfer something from himself to himself. In this case, however, we are not dealing with an ordinary person, or an ordinary *mediator* for that matter. It had already become evident, from what Jacob did in dividing *the promise* up and giving part of it to Judah and part of it to his grandson Ephraim, that God needed to park *the promise* with a *mediator* who would never

die. Otherwise, *the promise* would most likely be lost somewhere in transit from Himself to Himself. That's why He made sure the *mediator* He chose was held together by an eternal covenant that demanded strict adherence to *The Law of Moses*. Yet the rituals of *The Law of Moses* are nothing more than *parabolic pantomimes* that illustrate or emphasize some specific aspect of *The Teaching*. Although those *parabolic images* were already a part of *The Teaching* before Moses came on the scene, they were not obligatory rituals until God made them part of His covenant with Israel. For example, God commanded the sons of Israel to:

*"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy."
(Exodus 20:8)*

What in the world is He *talking about*? Lay aside for now the greater question as to what He *meant* by the two words *remember* and *holy*—which have to do with the essential *meaning* of the verse. Just ask yourself *why* God appointed a day of rest in the first place. That question pertains to the *significance* of the Sabbath day. And the *significance* of a particular statement made in the Scriptures can almost always be found in something that has been stated earlier in the Scriptures. That is *why* God went on to say this concerning the Sabbath day:

*"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the LORD your God; {in it} you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and made it holy."
(Exodus 20:9–11)*

That seems like a rather innocuous statement, doesn't it? Yet anyone who has been a participant in The Next Step program for at least three years already knows there is a whole lot more to that passage than meets the eye. Moses has concealed the Truth concerning the Sabbath day ritual by leading his reader to believe he is speaking *historically* when, in fact, he is actually speaking *prophetically*. Moses has already told us in the first chapter of Genesis that God created the heavens and the Earth in six "days" and then rested on the seventh. Therefore, he wants us to know the sons

of Israel were obligated to commemorate the seventh "day" in which God rested by observing every seventh day as a day of rest.

The difficulty with understanding the *significance* of the Sabbath day ritual lies in the fact that folks no longer know *why* the Prophets used the Hebrew Prophetic Perfect to speak of the future as though it were the past. So let me tell you *why* they did that. They did it to mislead fools who have no interest in a knowledge of the Truth. And the Sabbath day ritual is but one example that clearly illustrates that fact. So listen carefully; I'm only going to say it once: The Truth is, *God has not yet completed the first six "days" of Creation*. That is *why* the author of the Book of Hebrews says this concerning the Sabbath rest:

Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says,

*"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS
AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME,
AS IN THE DAY OF TRIAL IN THE WILDERNESS,
WHERE YOUR FATHERS TRIED {Me} BY TESTING {Me},
AND SAW MY WORKS FOR FORTY YEARS.
THEREFORE I WAS ANGRY WITH THIS GENERATION,
AND SAID, 'THEY ALWAYS GO ASTRAY IN THEIR HEART;
AND THEY DID NOT KNOW MY WAYS';
AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
'THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.'"*

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; while it is said,

*"TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS,
AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME."*

For who provoked {Him} when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt {led} by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And

{so} we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said,

“AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH,
THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST,”

although His works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has thus said somewhere concerning the seventh {day}, “AND GOD RESTED ON THE SEVENTH DAY FROM ALL HIS WORKS”; and again in this {passage}, “THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST.” Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly had good news preached to them failed to enter because of disobedience, He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David after so long a time just as has been said before,

“TODAY IF YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,
DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEARTS.”

For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken of another day after that. There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through {following} the same example of disobedience.
(Hebrews 3:7–4:11)

The author of that passage understood full well the *parabolic imagery* of the six “days” of Creation. He clearly knew that he and his intended audience were still living in the sixth “day”—which he continually refers to as “today”—and therefore still had a chance to become a part of God’s eternal Creation before He entered His rest on the seventh “day.” Unfortunately, it is necessary to understand a whole lot more about what Moses wrote in the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis before the full *significance* of this passage from the Book of Hebrews comes into focus. So I won’t bother to go beyond that bare statement. If anyone is interested in learning such things, I’ve already begun to explain them in The Next Step program.

Editor: In the October 1997 newsletter, you presented your own translation of numerous passages from the Old Testament. I’m sure many of your critics will look at this as a sign of arrogance or, worse yet, blasphemy on your part. They will no doubt accuse you of profaning the Holy Scriptures, yet never consider the possibility that today’s Bible translations often profane the original meaning of various Hebrew and Greek words. Since I suspect you are going to continue presenting your own translation of the Scriptures whenever you feel it’s necessary, it might help if you stated some of your credentials in the area of ancient Near Eastern languages. It might also be helpful if you gave us your thoughts on what it takes to accurately translate the Scriptures. Would you do this for us?

Elijah: I would prefer to say that the only credentials I have or need are the calling God placed on my life on August 17, 1966. But that would not be true. If it were, God would have long since summoned rocks and stones to testify against us. Mercifully, He hasn’t done that—yet. Instead, He has called average, ordinary people to do extremely unusual things in order to mock the smug and arrogant among us who ignorantly assume that their opinion, or some other foolishness they have heard in passing, is God-given Truth.

Some of the reasons why God chooses people are totally contrary to what one would ordinarily assume. Still others are completely in line with reason. For example, Moses was the greatest Prophet who ever lived. Yet he evidently had a serious speech impediment or, at the very least, thought he did. Now I don’t know about you, but I don’t consider difficulty in speaking something that would commend a person as a Prophet, Evangelist, or Teacher. Nevertheless, God called Moses as a Prophet with authority to teach the sons of Israel the intricate details of *The Teaching*.

On the other hand, I can clearly see that Moses was precisely the man that God needed for the job He had in mind. Stephen mentions that Moses had been educated in all the arts and sciences known to man at that time (Acts 7:22). I assume that is why God called him. God needed someone who understood Egyptian culture, especially Egyptian religion, so that he could intelligently stand against it. I find it intriguing that God called the Apostle Paul for exactly the same reason: He needed someone who thoroughly understood Rabbinic Judaism so that he, too, could intelligently

refute that particular embodiment of all ignorance. I'm sure it also didn't detract from Moses' qualifications that he was familiar with the Sinai desert, having lived there for forty years. I doubt a city boy would have been as qualified as he was to lead a crowd of crybabies out of Egypt and into the wilderness.

Needless to say, I take great consolation in the fact that Moses had difficulty speaking in front of people, since I am no great orator myself. I also find comfort in knowing the importance God attaches to a good education, since I somehow managed to acquire one. But for a long time after I completed my formal education, I didn't fully appreciate the educational process God had put me through. In contrast to Moses and the Apostle Paul, who were called after they completed their coursework, God called me when I was an ignorant teenager barely out of high school. Then He enticed me into situations where I could learn the things I needed to know to be able to stand against the lies in the Church today.

I began my formal training in ancient Near Eastern languages in 1970, when I transferred into the classical Greek program at William Jennings Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee. After spending my last two years of college studying classical Greek and Biblical Hebrew, I graduated from Bryan with a B.A. in classical Greek and went on to Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. Two years later, I finished my studies there with a master of arts degree in biblical studies.

The master's program at Trinity required me to take a well-rounded theological curriculum, so I gained a fairly good understanding of Christian theology. But I took elective courses mainly in the areas of Old Testament and Biblical Hebrew. I assume that was why I was asked to return the year following my graduation to teach Hebrew to first-year students. But to tell the truth, I'm not exactly sure why I was chosen. I certainly did not consider myself qualified for the job. Nonetheless, I taught Biblical Hebrew five days a week, while working toward the master of divinity degree. I quickly discovered that teaching Hebrew to college graduates is no easy task, however, and I consequently fell about fifteen hours shy of the M. Div. degree.

By the end of that school year, however, I had been accepted into the doctoral program at the University of California, Berkeley. So rather than taking the summer school courses necessary to complete

the M. Div. program, I spent my time working to get together the money I needed to move to the San Francisco Bay Area.

Bonnie, Matthew, and I arrived in Berkeley around five o'clock on July 27, 1975, just as the fog was starting to roll in. I immediately understood why Will Rogers said the coldest winter he ever spent was a summer in San Francisco. The temperature had been a stifling 112 degrees when we drove through Sacramento that afternoon in a rental truck with no air-conditioner. It was not much cooler in Concord and Orinda, just east of the Berkeley hills. But when we drove out of the Caldecott Tunnel into Berkeley, it was 65 degrees and the wind was blowing. I spent the next five years trying to get used to that kind of weather, and I never did. But I certainly did get a good education at Cal.

Up to that point, I had been exposed primarily to the parochial views of various fundamentalist and evangelical Christian groups. I had already learned from them all about the obvious weaknesses in the liberal view of the Scriptures, but they had conveniently forgotten to mention the fact that they were hiding similar skeletons in their own closet. So it was not until I started classes at Berkeley that I realized conservatives were, for the most part, just pretending to conduct scholarly inquiry into the *meaning* of the Scriptures. I saw right away that they were ill-equipped for that task because they were too busy defending whatever theological tradition had been *handed down* to them.

I could also see that I had a lot of work to do if I was ever going to compete with liberal scholars at the doctoral level. I never did attain that level of "scholarship," however, because I realized it would be a waste of time. Those folks are just as bound by the obsessive need to bow at the altar of tradition as conservative Christians are. In most cases, mastery of the secondary literature—that is, the various written opinions and theories about the Bible—is considered more important than a solid knowledge of the primary literature—the Hebrew language and the biblical text itself. That's why liberal theologians are still caught up in one of the most idiotic theories ever propounded—Julius Wellhausen's documentary hypothesis.

Enough sarcasm. You specifically asked me about my credentials as a translator of the biblical text. Since I have already given you a brief overview of my educational background, I'll concisely state my qualifications

as a translator. I studied Biblical Hebrew as well as classical and Koine Greek for two years at Bryan. I then studied Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, and Koine Greek at Trinity for another two years before teaching Biblical Hebrew there the following year. Finally, I spent five years at Berkeley studying Biblical Hebrew, Ugaritic (an ancient Canaanite dialect), Akkadian (ancient Babylonian and Assyrian), and modern Arabic. While working toward a doctoral degree in Mediterranean studies at Berkeley, I taught Biblical Hebrew to undergraduates both at the University and at a small Christian liberal arts college in San Francisco.

Now let me respond to your question concerning what it takes to accurately translate the Scriptures. It takes a lot of time and a willingness to look at things from the perspective of the author of whatever text you happen to be translating. You must be humble enough to admit your own ignorance in regard to the biblical author's mind-set, and at the same time be willing to listen to and learn from him.

As I recall, I've already mentioned on *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes (see the Order Form in this issue) how I came to see the difference between "doing exegesis" and just reading the biblical text in the original languages. That was an eye-opening experience for me. I suddenly realized that the author of any ancient text—including the Scriptures—would speak to you if you were only willing and able to listen. So that's what I have tried to do ever since—just listen to the author of the text as I read the Scriptures.

The Truth is, a good Bible translator has to become a disciple of whichever Prophet or Apostle wrote the text he is translating. That *means* he must ultimately become Moses' disciple and submit himself to *The Teaching of Moses* by listening to what Moses included in the five books of the Bible that he wrote. Only then can he truly be a disciple of any of the other Prophets or the Apostles, because they all honed their basic understanding of the Truth by reading Moses.

Understanding the message of the Pentateuch is not an easy thing to do, however, and it certainly cannot be done in a few weeks, months, or years. I have spent the past twenty-eight years trying to submit to the biblical text rather than bending that text to fit in with my own misguided assumptions and presuppositions. So I can tell you without reservation that the Pentateuch contains the key to the message of the Scriptures. If you understand what Moses wrote, the rest of the Scriptures

fall in line. But to understand Moses, you have to begin at the beginning. That's why I have spent so much time discussing the first chapter of Genesis in The Next Step program.

Over the years, I have gradually come to understand that the One I hear speaking when I read the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures is none other than the *Living Word of God* Who is hidden there. It has never been all that easy for me to hear that Word, but as I have discarded the goofy notions that Satan has inculcated in the Church, it has gotten a bit easier for me to see how the Prophets accomplished their assigned task of hiding the Truth in the Scriptures. That helps me to see where I should be looking for the missing pieces of the various *parabolic images* that God has painted on the Hebrew text. However, I still find myself holding on to an unfounded assumption every once in a while, and when I do, I have to go back and look at everything that I have built on that particular assumption. The more of those faulty assumptions and presuppositions I tear down, however, the easier it becomes for me to see the Truth.

As an example of what I am *talking about*, I could mention the goofy notion that Adam was created on the sixth "day" of Creation. I have already refuted that idiocy and have shown you how the biblical text obviously intends us to understand he was created on the third "day." (See "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1997.) But I point to that particular bit of goofiness only because the Scriptures will withhold their Truth from anyone who clings to the traditional view in which Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. If they choose to believe that lie, they absolutely cannot understand the things that Moses and the other Prophets wrote later on.

I have been pursuing my calling for nearly a third of a century now, yet it was not until three years ago that I began to sense the biblical text was finally ready to allow me complete insight into its *meaning*. Since that time, I have seen more astounding things hidden there than I had ever been able to see up to that time. I have been teaching some of those things in The Next Step program. I have kept most of what I have seen to myself, however, because I am not exactly sure how they fit in with all the other idioms and *parabolic images* I understand. When I finally see how those things fit together, I'll integrate that information into what I teach as well.

While I'm on the subject of things that I teach, I probably should explain a bit more about what I am teaching in The Next Step program. You and I know that the participants in that program are the backbone of your ministry. Without them, *The Voice of Elijah*® would still be struggling for survival. Some of those people contribute what I consider to be astonishing amounts of money every month—much more than the \$200 minimum required for the privilege of hearing things in advance of their publication in written form. Yet they do that knowing full well that the things I teach on the audiotapes and videotapes that they receive will eventually be made available in written form to anyone who has an interest in them.

Several weeks ago, however, it occurred to me that I have not been completely forthright about the things I have taught on The Next Step tapes. I have repeatedly told The Next Step participants that the things they hear and see on those tapes will one day be available in a relatively inexpensive book form. But the Truth is, that information will never appear anywhere else in exactly the same *context*. That is, when I finally publish it, I am going to separate it from its current *context* and scatter it throughout the various books that I plan to write. Although everything will continue to carry the same *meaning* in its new *context*, it will not carry exactly the same *significance*.

If you understand the things I have taught you about *meaning* and *significance*, you can understand what I *mean* when I say that. The point is, the reason *why* I have included certain things on The Next Step tapes will not be the same reason *why* I include them in the books I write. I thought perhaps I should state that more plainly than I have up until now.

Editor: Since you continually stress the fact that The Teaching is set in a parabolic context, it occurred to me that I should ask you to explain some of Jesus' parables from time to time. So let me start by asking you to explain the Parable of the Talents (Matt. 25:14–30). I chose this parable first because there is a well-known "Christian" financial advisor who believes this parable sets forth financial principles that Christians should follow. I find it laughable that he thinks the parable is actually about money, but it's not funny that many True Believers undoubtedly buy his explanation. So would you, please, set the record straight and explain what Jesus is talking about in this parable?

Elijah: The Truth is, the Parable of the Talents *is* about money, and it *does* set forth financial principles that Christians should follow. But to understand how that is, you have to rethink your view of money and put it in its proper perspective. Consider this: Money has no intrinsic value in and of itself. It is merely an accepted *store of value*. If you don't believe that, just ask anyone who has ever lived through a time of rapid currency devaluation. One story I've heard concerning Hitler's rise to power in Germany relates to the fact that folks got tired of hauling a wheelbarrow full of money down to the store to buy a loaf of bread. As those poor folks discovered, government-issued currency is not an *absolute* store of value. But neither are stocks and bonds, a bank account, real estate, or anything else denominated in terms of legal tender. Some folks try to get around that sad fact by storing value in a universal standard such as gold and silver. But even that is no guarantee that the value you store will be there when you go back to retrieve it. Jesus said this concerning such idiocy:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal."
(Matthew 6:19–20)

That's a fairly straightforward statement, isn't it? Jesus tells us that instead of storing up wealth for a rainy day down here, we should store it up for the sunny "Day" up there. Nowhere does He plainly tell us how to do that. But He does tell us *parabolically*, so let me explain what He *meant* by what He said.

The first thing you need to know is this: Rich folks—that is, folks who have more than their fair share of wealth stored up somewhere down here—don't hold much favor in the eyes of God. As a matter of fact, Jesus didn't offer them a whole lot of hope of ever making it into the Kingdom. He said this:

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."
(Mark 10:25)

Statements like that should be sufficient to convince "Christians" not to place any extraordinary

emphasis on saving up for a rainy day. But they don't. Most folks discount what Jesus said in favor of things that allow them to feel secure in placing their trust in accumulated wealth instead of in God. Therefore, I should quickly point out that James said something similar about those folks as well:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure!
(James 5:1-3)

I don't know about you, but I wouldn't feel comfortable reading that if I knew I was sitting on a stack of money that might be better spent feeding the poor or comforting the sick. But everybody has his own peculiar view of how to store value. Jesus gives us His view of how the True Believer should go about it in this parable:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field."
(Matthew 13:44)

The point of that parable is easy to understand once you know that the Kingdom of Heaven is Israel, that is, Jesus Christ, the *Living Word* of God. Jesus is talking about the fact that *The Teaching*, which has been hidden in the Scriptures, is the only *absolute* store of value anyone in this world has available to them. If they "find" that treasure by hearing it taught, they should immediately give up anything and everything that would keep them from attaining *the promise* they have heard explained. That is *why* He said what He said to the rich, young ruler concerning the miserly things in which fools go about trying to store value:

And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him, "Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is {only} One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER; YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY; YOU SHALL

NOT STEAL; YOU SHALL NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS; HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER; and YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go {and} sell your possessions and give to {the} poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."
(Matthew 19:16-21)

Now I am well aware that any number of morons will vehemently assert that Jesus did not actually *mean* the man should sell *everything*, but the Truth is, He did. And if you were to need to swallow that particular pill in order to be born again, I'm sure Jesus Christ would not hesitate to prescribe it. Luke makes it clear that Christ has no use for anyone who has fallen into the grip of greed:

And someone in the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the {family} inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbiter over you?" And He said to them, "Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not {even} when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years {to come;} take your ease, eat, drink {and} be merry.'" But God said to him, 'You fool! This {very} night your soul is required of you; and {now} who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

And He said to His disciples, "For this reason I say to you, do not be anxious for {your} life, {as to} what you shall eat; nor for your body, {as to} what you shall put on. For life is more than food, and the body than clothing. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap; and they have no storeroom nor barn; and {yet} God feeds them; how much more valuable you are than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a {single} cubit to his life's span? If then you cannot do even a very little thing, why are you anxious about other matters?"

Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; but I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not clothe himself like one of these. But if God so arrays the grass in the field, which is {alive} today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, how much more {will He clothe} you, O men of little faith! And do not seek what you shall eat, and what you shall drink, and do not keep worrying. For all these things the nations of the world eagerly seek; but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. **Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.** Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. **For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**"
(Luke 12:13–34)

Did you see what He said about the Father choosing to give the Kingdom to some and people's hearts being where their treasure is? He is again *talking about The Teaching* as the only *absolute* store of value. The one who hears and believes the Truth has an absolutely incredible opportunity to store up treasure in Heaven. But they can only do that by diligently mastering the Truth they hear taught—that is, by packing it away in their "heart." And that is where the parable you mentioned comes in.

If you compare the things Jesus said immediately after the passage I just quoted from the Gospel of Luke, you will find that He is *talking about* exactly the same things that He *talked about* on the occasion that Matthew describes in Matthew 24 and 25. This is Luke's account:

"Be dressed in readiness, and {keep} your lamps alight. And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open {the door} to him when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself {to serve,} and have them recline {at the table,} and will come up and wait on them. Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds {them} so, blessed are those {slaves.} And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have allowed his house to be broken into. You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an

hour that you do not expect." And Peter said, "Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone {else} as well?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, 'My master will be a long time in coming,' and begins to beat the slaves, {both} men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect {him,} and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. **And that slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, but the one who did not know {it,} and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.**"

(Luke 12:35–48)

I won't bother to quote the entirety of Matthew's account. You can read it for yourself and compare it to what Luke says. My point is, Jesus *talked about* many of the same things on both occasions. That is due to the nature of the subject matter. Certain topics always evoked the same *parabolic imagery* in the mind of Christ because the *parabolic images* in *The Teaching* that relate to those things have a specific interconnection. That is, one image automatically evokes the other.

The part of Luke's account that corresponds to the Parable of the Talents is the part about the "slave who knew his master's will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will." In both cases, Jesus is *talking about* how important it will be that True Believers have a complete knowledge of the Truth of *The Teaching* when He returns. Keep that in mind as you read Matthew's account. The context in both cases is one in which Jesus is warning His disciples to be prepared for His sudden Return. But He is *talking about* their knowledge of the Truth when He says this:

"Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour. For {it is} just like a man {about} to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and

to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who {had received} the two {talents} gained two more. But he who received the one {talent} went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, 'Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.' The one also who {had received} the two talents came up and said, 'Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no {seed.} And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.' But his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no {seed.} Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my {money} back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' **For to everyone who has shall {more} be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away.** And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

(Matthew 25:13-30)

The *parabolic image* of the talents in that parable represents exactly the same thing that the *parabolic image* of treasure does elsewhere in the Scriptures. It depicts a knowledge of the Truth. In this case, however, Jesus is using that particular *parabolic image* to point to the fact that, although He established various offices in the Church to protect and preserve the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* after He ascended, He knew that not all of the men who occupied those offices would have

exactly the same amount of knowledge of the Truth. And His point is, those who understand the least amount of Truth on the eve of His Return stand the far greatest danger of losing everything their belief in the Truth ever gained them.

For the benefit (or detriment) of those who cannot see how Jesus used the *parabolic image* of money to talk about a knowledge of the Truth, let me point to one final passage where He makes the connection a bit more obvious:

And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man, can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? **A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.** And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye. For there is no good tree which produces bad fruit; nor, on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. **The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil {man} out of the evil {treasure} brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.**"

(Luke 6:39-45)

The context in this case is obviously one in which Jesus is *talking about* the ignorant things a teacher teaches and his followers choose to believe. His point is, *you are what you believe*. Therefore, you had better be careful whom you listen to and *what you believe* because your belief in a lie makes it just that much more difficult for you to see the Truth. But, to understand what He has said, you first have to know that the "heart" is the mind. Most people don't know that, and those who do, don't know what to do with it.

Just for the record, the Apostle Paul also *talks about* these same things in his first letter to Timothy. It is obvious that he understands the *parabolic imagery* in which the Truth of *The Teaching* is depicted as the ultimate store of value. That is what prompted him to shift from

a blanket rejection of fools who cannot see the incredible value of knowing the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* to the need for one to be content with a knowledge of that Truth alone. His words are good advice for anyone who seeks to store up treasure in Heaven:

If anyone advocates a different doctrine, and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited {and} understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. But godliness {actually} is a means of great gain, when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang.
(1 Timothy 6:3–10)

The point of all this is, the wise know better than to try to store up treasure down here. Those folks have already found a far better use for their money than to store it up in something that is going to perish along with fools. They have a basic understanding of the advice Jesus gave on another occasion:

Now He was also saying to the disciples, "There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this {steward} was reported to him as squandering his possessions. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.' And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I shall do, so that when I am removed from the stewardship, they will receive me into their homes.' And he summoned each one of his master's debtors, and he {began} saying to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit

down quickly and write fifty.' Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.' And his master praised the unrighteous steward because he had acted shrewdly; for the sons of this age are more shrewd in relation to their own kind than the sons of light. And I say to you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; that when it fails, they may receive you into the eternal dwellings. He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the {use of} unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true {riches} to you? And if you have not been faithful in {the use of} that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."
(Luke 16:1–13)

Do I think fools will for a moment consider the radical view of money I have just presented? Of course not! They will scoff and ridicule because everyone knows that saving for retirement is the "smart" thing to do. But those who cling tightly to "conventional wisdom" in this regard merely disclose the fact that their spiritual father is not the One they claim he is. Their father is instead the same one who engendered the Pharisees. That can be seen from Luke's description of the Pharisees' reaction to what Jesus said:

Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things, and they were scoffing at Him. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is detestable in the sight of God."
(Luke 16:14–15)

Having said all these things, however, I advise anyone against contributing their entire life savings to your ministry, or to any other ministry, for that matter. The things I have mentioned apply only to born-again Believers, and born-again Believers will know how they apply. Nobody can buy their way into Heaven, and they certainly should not try.

I doubt that God cares all that much whether True Believers have a comfortable retirement. But I know for a fact that He is concerned about what their comfort level will be when their retirement ends. That's when they will need protection from the burning wrath of God. My point is simply that they need to examine themselves while they still have time to acquire that protection and determine where their confidence actually lies. Is it in the almighty dollar or in the Almighty God?

Editor: During a recent conversation, you said something that surprised me somewhat. You said you don't fully grasp the magnitude of God's wrath, even though it's something you talk about often. I can relate to what you said because I know I don't fully grasp the magnitude of God's wrath either. And I'm sure our readers are in the same boat. That's why I would like you to repeat some of the things you said to me during our conversation. I have in mind what you see happening in the world today that you believe are manifestations of God's wrath. I think your comments in this area will help our readers become more aware of how God's wrath is being, and will continue to be, manifested in these Last Days. Would you do that?

Elijah: To understand what I said, one must first understand that we are all the product of our own experience. That is, *we are what we believe* concerning the things to which we have been exposed. My point was simply this: To a certain extent, the entire world—myself included—shares the same life experience today because of the pervasive influence of television and radio. And what most people believe concerning things they hear on radio and television is what they have been told the majority of other people believe. That's how the media are able to shape and influence what people believe. They either infer or tell us outright that most people believe this, that, or the other. And people blindly go along with the media's assessment of a situation because they don't consider their personal beliefs to be all that important. They feel more comfortable believing what the majority believes.

In case you hadn't realized the media were using public opinion polls in that way, let me be the first to tell you: The media lie about the beliefs of the majority to shift majority opinion to their view. For a long time I thought they were doing that intentionally. Then it

suddenly dawned on me that the Truth was much more insidious: They are not doing it intentionally; they are doing it ignorantly. They have absolutely no idea of how they are being manipulated by Satan to shape public opinion to his liking.

Let me give you an example of the kind of thing I *mean*. I recently saw a public opinion poll conducted by a cable news organization and a major news magazine in which participants were asked something like, Should the President's private life be off-limits to the special prosecutor's grand jury investigation? When I first saw that question, I wondered why anything so stupid would be broadcast unless it was done to intentionally mislead. But then I realized that journalists—those among us who should value most the use of words to convey precise *meaning*—are actually wandering around in a daze just like everyone else.

The questions that public opinion pollsters ask people are a lot like me asking you, Have you stopped beating your wife yet? You are damned if you say you have and damned if you say you haven't. Before you even answer, the question implies that you were, indeed, beating your beloved. It's the same with the leading questions the media use to sway public opinion. The ignorance of the question I mentioned can easily be seen if you put it in a different context: Should the private life of an accused serial killer be off-limits to the prosecutor's grand jury investigation? Anybody with a shred of common sense would immediately respond, Of course not! The point is, when someone—including the President—is suspected of breaking the law, investigators have the right to do whatever is necessary to determine guilt or innocence. A multitude of innocent people who have been accused unjustly are well aware of that harsh reality. Evidently, some in the media aren't.

The most frightening thing about television, radio, and the print media is the fact that the ignorant beliefs and opinions of the majority—what some call “conventional wisdom”—are continually represented as though they were established fact. For example, I hear the “leap of faith” nonsense bandied about all the time. I also hear a multitude of folks—some who have never graced the door of a church, synagogue, or mosque—talk about their goofy god of unconditional love. And every time I hear those things, I cringe. I know that those people don't know anything at all about the God of wrath Who actually is. But they don't know that they

don't know; and since *we are what we believe*, I know that those people have no hope at all.

The sorry circumstances that exist in the Church today can be traced back to “evangelists” like D. L. Moody, a man who openly ridiculed the concept of an angry God. Men like him had no use for that kind of God because they knew He did not have as much appeal to the masses as their goofy god of unconditional love did. So they opted for the easy way to fill church pews and coffers. It didn't matter to them that their “converts” had never experienced the life-transforming change of the new birth. The evidence leads me to believe they had never even had that experience themselves.

The impact that evangelistic Pretenders have had on Christian theology over the past century has been both immense and far-reaching. Not long after Moody's time, most of the Church lost interest in *talking about* the wrath of God and its logical corollary—the brightly burning fires of Hell. That's why the current revival of interest in the subject strikes many as a novelty. They don't know what millions of True Believers already understand: God not only has an abounding love for His friends, He also has an intense hatred for His enemies. And He is perfectly able to determine for Himself who is His friend and who is His enemy without any help from anyone else. Fools can eulogize their dearly departed friends and neighbors until Hell freezes over if they want to, but their high opinion of the dead will have no influence at all on God's opinion. Pretenders will choose to lie to themselves about that in this life. They won't be able to in the next.

The single most ignorant concept to ever come up the pike from Hell, however, is the absolutely moronic belief that God cannot be righteous and just unless He abides by His Own Law. That is, fools believe He must always turn the other cheek and never seek vengeance for Himself. I find it absolutely incomprehensible that any rational person who believes in the sovereign God of the Bible could ever subscribe to that myth. And that's all it is—a myth. Yet it is common knowledge that theologians have endlessly argued the question back and forth: How can sin and suffering be reconciled with the concept of a righteous, just, and loving God? And in the question we see the same stupid propensity that the media display in their public opinion polls. Because theologically minded fools believe that God is like them, they imply by their questions

that He cannot be righteous and just unless He abides by the same Law that He imposed on mankind.

The Truth is, the eternal God proved Himself to be a righteous, just, and loving God—as defined by the Law—during the time He dwelt among us. However, He made Himself subject to His Own Law in order to free the Elect from that Law. So what do you think He did when, after His Resurrection, He found Himself completely free from the obligation of that Law? Well, contrary to what imbeciles believe the goofy god of unconditional love would have done, Jesus Christ went back to laying snares and plotting revenge against His enemies. If anyone finds that view of God to be a foreign concept, they obviously have not been reading their Bible. Let me show you what the psalmist wrote about such things. The following is typical:

*For the king trusts in the LORD,
And through the lovingkindness of the Most High
he will not be shaken.
Your hand will find out all your enemies;
Your right hand will find out those who hate you.
You will make them as a fiery oven in the time of your anger;
**The LORD will swallow them up in His wrath,
And fire will devour them.
Their offspring Thou wilt destroy from the earth,
And their descendants from among the sons of men.**
Though they intended evil against Thee,
{And} devised a plot,
They will not succeed.
For Thou wilt make them turn their back;
Thou wilt aim with Thy bowstrings at their faces.
Be Thou exalted, O LORD, in Thy strength;
We will sing and praise Thy power.
(Psalm 21:7–13)*

You can see from that translation that the translator is trying to soften the wrath of God by attributing some of the more vengeful statements to “the king.” That's why he has sometimes translated the second personal pronoun “you” and sometimes “Thou.” In this case, all he did was attribute those things to Jesus Christ, “the King” to Whom the psalmist is referring, just as he is in Psalm 2 where he says this:

*Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
Worship the LORD with reverence,*

And rejoice with trembling.

*Do homage to the Son, lest He become angry,
and you perish {in} the way,
For His wrath may soon be kindled.*

*How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!
(Psalm 2:10–12)*

I assume you can understand what the psalmist is *talking about* when he refers to the wrath of Jesus Christ in that passage. Most folks in the Church today can't. All they want to *talk about* is how loving, kind, and good He is. They fail to understand that even loving, kind, and "good" people who wouldn't otherwise hurt a fly are sometimes called upon to kill a snake in the grass. In this case, the Serpent and his offspring pose a threat that God must deal with. And the King of all Creation—Jesus Christ—is more than up to the task. The eternal God of all Creation once said this about that *Living Word of God*:

*"Is it not laid up in store with Me,
Sealed up in My treasuries?
Vengeance is Mine, and retribution,
In due time their foot will slip;
For the day of their calamity is near,
And the impending things are hastening upon them."
For the LORD will vindicate His people,
And will have compassion on His servants;
When He sees that {their} strength is gone,
And there is none {remaining,} bond or free.
(Deuteronomy 32:34–36)*

Interestingly enough, that passage is *talking about* the tremendous value there is in knowing about the wrath of God that is described in detail in the *Living Word of God*. It *parabolically* depicts the Truth that the Prophets hid in the Hebrew Scriptures as the ultimate store of value. Those who have insight at the End will know that the entire wealth of that vast treasury is about to be poured out on an unsuspecting multitude—after it is too late to do them any good. When those events start to unfold, the multiplied millions spent on the smart bombs and cruise missiles that destroyed Iraq during the Gulf War will become a mere pittance in comparison.

While saying that, I am absolutely certain that I still have no accurate comprehension of the anger, the wrath, the rage, that compels God to seek vengeance

against the liars who assure one and all that their goofy god of unconditional love is the God Who is. In other words, I am still struggling to free myself from the influence of some of Satan's most compelling lies.

The things I mentioned regarding the wrath of God in the conversation you referred to all pertain to things I see going on all around us. I find it absolutely astounding that the elderly can watch their bodies wither away to skin and bones and never once realize they are subject to the wrath of an angry God. I cannot help but stop to ponder that same thing when I see a small child suffering from some incurable disease. Why can't people see that the wrath of God is burning against us all? Don't they have a clue? What does it take to break through the lies that Satan has used to lull us into such a deep sleep?

I am at a total loss for words when I think of the incredible rage that would allow millions of children to suffer from poverty, disease, famine, and natural disasters. What could they have possibly done in their short lives to deserve such things? I fully understand what the historic Christian doctrine of original sin has to say about such things, but most folks today have tossed that view into the trash. They are instead totally enthralled by their goofy god of unconditional love. So on and on the burning goes, year after year, and nobody pays attention. The sad fact is, those things are happening today just as Isaiah described them some 2700 years ago (Is. 42:25b).

It is impossible for me to fully comprehend the wrath that is coming. Perhaps that is because I would rather keep my head in the sand like everyone else and pretend that what I can't see won't hurt me. But I can't do that. The calling of God will not allow me to ignore the things I see in the Scriptures. So I go on stating what I see as though I understand completely. More often than not, I know I don't. The Truth is, I continue to be my own disciple. When I go back to read what I have written, or listen to what I have said, I realize I said exactly what I *meant* to say, but I can also see that, at the time, I did not fully understand the *significance* of what I said. I am absolutely convinced that is the case with the impending wrath of God. I doubt that anyone could ever imagine the phenomenal terror that will engulf mankind when Christ finally appears. But then again, how could anyone ever comprehend a rage so great that it would demand the complete destruction of this civilization? ■