



Wisdom Is as Wisdom Does

But that the object of Christianity is that we should become wise, can be proved not only from the ancient Jewish writings, which we also use, but especially from those which were composed after the time of Jesus, and which are believed among the Churches to be divine. Now, in the fiftieth Psalm, David is described as saying in his prayer to God these words: "The unseen and secret things of Thy wisdom Thou hast manifested to me." Solomon, too, because he asked for wisdom, received it; and if any one were to peruse the Psalms, he would find the book filled with many maxims of wisdom; and the evidences of his wisdom may be seen in his treatises, which contain a great amount of wisdom expressed in few words, and in which you will find many laudations of wisdom, and encouragements towards obtaining it.

So wise, moreover, was Solomon, that "the queen of Sheba, having heard his name, and the name of the LORD, came to try him with difficult questions, and spake to him all things, whatsoever were in her heart; and Solomon answered her all her questions. There was no question omitted by the king which he did not answer her. And the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the possessions which he had, and there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, The report is true which I heard in mine own land regarding thee and thy wisdom; and I believed not them who told me, until I had come, and mine eyes have seen it. And, lo, they did not tell me the half. Thou hast added wisdom and possessions above all the report which I heard."

It is recorded also of him, that "God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore. And the wisdom that was in Solomon greatly excelled the wisdom of all the ancients, and of all the wise men of Egypt; and he was wiser than all men, even than Gethan the Tzrahite, and Imad,

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and Chalcadi, and Aradab, the sons of Madi. And he was famous among all the nations round about. And Solomon spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were five thousand. And he spake of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop which springeth out of the wall; and also of fishes and of beasts. And all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of the fame of his wisdom.”

And to such a degree does the Gospel desire that there should be wise men among believers, that for the sake of exercising the understanding of its hearers, it has spoken certain truths in enigmas, others in what are called “dark” sayings, others in parables, and others in problems. And one of the prophets—Hosea—says at the end of his prophecies: “Who is wise, and he will understand these things? or prudent, and he shall know them?”

Daniel, moreover, and his fellow-captives, made such progress in the learning which the wise men around the king in Babylon cultivated, that they were shown to excel all of them in a tenfold degree. And in the book of Ezekiel it is said to the ruler of Tyre, who greatly prided himself on his wisdom, “Art thou wiser than Daniel? Every secret was not revealed to thee.” And if you come to the books written after the time of Jesus, you will find that those multitudes of believers who hear the parables are, as it were, “without,” and worthy only of exoteric doctrines, while the disciples learn in private the explanation of the parables. For, privately, to His own disciples did Jesus open up all things, esteeming above the multitudes those who desired to know His wisdom.

Origen, “Against Celsus,” Book iii, Chaps. xlvi–xlvii, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1885), Vol. 4, pp. 482–483.

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A Note From the Editor

I apologize for the delays we regularly encounter in getting *The Voice of Elijah*[®] and *The Update* out to all of you. I wish I could blame the post office for the fact that our publications often arrive well after they should, but I can't. The reality is, these delays are due partly to things we can't control but largely to the fact that what we are doing can't be rushed. Although we occasionally encounter temporary setbacks, the one consistent reason for the delay relates to the nature of what we are doing.

As you know, we claim God is now restoring the Truth of His Word—The Apostolic Teaching—through our ministry. I trust most of you believe this or at least are withholding judgment for the time being. Assuming you do believe, you should be able to see why it is imperative that all the information we present in our publications be accurate. Our concern for Truth means a great deal of time must be spent examining the text of the Scriptures in the original languages—Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek—since English translations of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures do not always convey the sense of what was originally stated. If you have been with us any length of time at all, you already know this.

We have demonstrated time and time again how translators often botch the English translation of Hebrew and Greek words and phrases because they don't understand what the Scriptures are talking about at some critical point in the text. Take this passage for example:

And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

Based on this translation, it is easy to assume that the Apostle Paul is talking about the role that Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, and Teachers play in strengthening ("building up") the faith of Christians in the Church—the Body of Christ. While there is certainly Truth in that belief, translators have, nonetheless, distorted the meaning of what Paul said in this passage because they don't know what he is talking about. They distorted the meaning by including the word *up* in Paul's statement where he is talking about the role that those called by God play in "building" the Body of Christ, i.e., "The House" of Israel, by speaking the Truth of God's Word. Translators unknowingly altered the meaning of this passage because of their ignorance of the fact that the Word of God spoken by those called by God was (and still is) "building" "The House" of God by engendering offspring for Him (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:23).

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It should not surprise you to learn that God is “building a house” for Himself (as only He can) since we have talked about that parabolic imagery before and since it is alluded to in Psalm 127. But what you may not know, and what few in the Church today understand, is that God has always built His House through the spoken Word of Truth—The Teaching—those called by God speak.

The point is, if you don’t hear the Word of Truth and believe it, you have no hope of being resurrected *in Jesus Christ*, because He is the Truth (John 14:6). That is why we can’t get overly concerned about not publishing on a strict timetable. First and foremost, we must concern ourselves with the Truth and with the certainty that everything we publish is factual. And since the Truth, like the Scriptures, is often difficult to comprehend and complex to explain, you can see why the process of uncovering the Truth and writing articles (and books) that explain the Truth is quite time-consuming.

The Elijah Project

If you have ever read the caption at the beginning of “Questions & Answers,” you have seen reference to a research group called The Elijah Project. I would like to explain the relationship that exists between *The Voice of Elijah*[®] and The Elijah Project since it relates to everything I have just said. Simply stated, The Elijah Project does all of the research into the parabolic images and Hebrew idioms that are found in the Scriptures, and it provides all of the articles related to that research that are found in *The Voice of Elijah*[®] and *The Update*.

Other than the questions in “Questions & Answers,” the comments of various editors, the reprinted writings of Early Chsurch leaders and Protestant Reformers, and a few testimonials, everything in *The Voice of Elijah*[®] and *The Update* has been written by Larry D. Harper, the head of The Elijah Project. In other words, *The Voice of Elijah*[®] has been the public outlet—the “voice,” so to speak—for The Elijah Project for the past nine years.

Although *The Voice of Elijah*[®] provides an outlet through which The Elijah Project disseminates information, we do not distribute all of their findings in our publications. For reasons that relate to Larry Harper’s calling as a Teacher and his understanding of what God expects of him, there is an extensive amount of information that he has never mentioned in any of the publications that we distribute. That does not mean, however, that this information is not available. Anyone can gain access to it by applying for The Next Step program. Since I have talked about that program in past issues of *The Update* (see “Etceteras,” June 1995 and September 1998), I won’t discuss it at this time.

For now, I just want to explain how this ministry works so you can better understand why our publications (especially the newsletters) are often delayed. Many of these delays occur because of the time required to study and research the Scriptures and to write the comprehensive articles and answers to questions you find in our newsletters. It shouldn’t surprise you to learn that uncovering the Truth hidden in the Scriptures is an ongoing process and a continual learning experience for everyone involved—including Larry.

So if you accept the premise that God has hidden the Truth behind the parabolic imagery and Hebrew idioms of the Scriptures, you should be able to see why tremendous amounts of time and research are required to restore the Truth. Larry Harper and, more recently, The Elijah Project have been engaged in this restoration process for the better part of thirty years. So if you think that uncovering the Truth hidden in the Scriptures is an easy task, you had better think again. It is an extremely time-consuming process, even for one called specifically to the task.

I sincerely appreciate your being patient. I wish I could tell you things will move along faster in the future, but I can’t. All I can tell you is, we are all doing the best we can under difficult circumstances. My prayer is that you will see enough value in The Teaching to keep on listening and learning, even if it requires a little waiting.

Allen Fries

Pay Close Attention to “*The Way*” That Woman Walks

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 the third article of the series, I briefly showed you why the Prophet Ezra wrote the Books of Chronicles. (See “God Lives in a Three-Story House,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1998.) In this, the fourth article in the series, 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.

I have already told you that the Hebrew Scriptures are a combination of history and prophecy.

The historical parts of the Scriptures tell us *what God has done*. The prophetic texts explain *what He is going to do*. It may seem easy to differentiate between what is prophecy and what is history in the biblical text, but it isn't. The Truth is, some of the most important prophecies in the Bible have been made to look like historical texts so the Truth they contain could remain concealed from prying eyes. Then there are those prophetic texts that have been cleverly made to look like something else entirely. For example, who would ever guess that the Book of Proverbs is prophecy?

Parables and Proverbs

The Hebrew word that is sometimes translated “proverb” in the Old Testament is a word that would be more accurately translated “parable.” However, Satan prefers the translation “proverb” because he doesn't want it known that the Book of Proverbs is actually a collection of parables that are speaking in terms of one thing being *LIKE* another. He knows that without knowledge of the fact that a proverb is a parable, it is not possible for anyone to understand the point of the parables of the Book of Proverbs.

It is also important to know that most of the parables of the Book of Proverbs are not the product of the author of that book. They have instead been copied from other sources. Just to make things interesting, I should tell you that the author of the Book of Proverbs made sure those parables retained the same *meaning* and *significance* they had in their original sources. Since the parables of the Book of Proverbs are in most cases much earlier than the time of the book's composition, some might assume that could not be easily accomplished. They definitely would be wrong.

The parables of the Book of Proverbs are all concerned with the importance that knowing *The Teaching* holds for the one who seeks to participate in the Resurrection of the Righteous. That was their concern in the contexts from which they were taken. It remains their concern in the Book of Proverbs. Many of those parables seem to have come from a collection of parables written by Solomon, the son of David. The parables he wrote are mentioned three times in the book:

The proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel...
(Proverbs 1:1)

The proverbs of Solomon.
A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish son is a grief to his mother.
(Proverbs 10:1)

These also are proverbs of Solomon which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, transcribed.
(Proverbs 25:1)

From those statements, we know that Solomon wrote at least some of the parables ("proverbs") that found their way into the Book of Proverbs. But the last of those three statements tells us he was not responsible for the final composition of the book. Instead, whoever compiled the parables of the Book of Proverbs must have done so some two hundred years after Solomon died.

The person responsible for the Book of Proverbs will always remain, in this life at least, anonymous. That is because the book does not clearly indicate who wrote it. However, the Prophet Isaiah is the most likely candidate. Not only did he prophesy during the time of Hezekiah—when the text indicates the parables of Solomon were copied into their current context—but the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Proverbs share a common vocabulary and a common concern for wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of "The Way" of the Lord. Not only that, but the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Isaiah explain most of what one needs to know about "The Way." However, the Book of Isaiah addresses issues other than "The Way," whereas "The Way" of the Lord is the sole concern of the Book of Proverbs.

The purpose of the Book of Proverbs is carefully outlined in the first few verses of the book. The author tells us his intent is to provide a source of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom to those who have

somehow gained insight into the *meaning* and *significance* of the parables he includes in his work:

To know wisdom and instruction,
To discern the sayings of understanding,
To receive instruction in wise behavior,
Righteousness, justice and equity;
To give prudence to the naive,
To the youth knowledge and discretion,
A wise man will hear and increase in learning,
And a man of understanding will acquire wise counsel,
To understand a proverb and a figure,
The words of the wise and their riddles.
(Proverbs 1:2–6)

After he says that, the author of the Book of Proverbs immediately gets into the *parabolic* entreaty that makes up the first nine chapters of the book. In those nine chapters, he sets forth a carefully crafted parable that speaks in terms of the same *parabolic imagery* that one finds in the writings of the Prophets. He uses that *parabolic imagery* to explain how the knowledge and wisdom contained in his collection of parables is intended to prepare the reader for the appearance of the Antichrist.

Then, beginning in Chapter 10 and continuing all the way through 22:16, he includes various *parabolic statements* he has taken from Solomon's collection of parables. After that, he quotes the parables of an anonymous Egyptian writer (Prov. 22:17–24:34) to mock those who do not understand what Solomon was *talking about*. Then he goes back to quoting the parables of Solomon (Prov. 25–29). He concludes the Book of Proverbs just as he began—with a few original parables of his own.

After he has spent twenty-nine chapters explaining what he wants his reader to know about "The Way," the author gives this mocking analysis of what he expects the average person will understand about the things he has explained:

The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, the oracle.
The man declares to Ithiel, to Ithiel and Ucal:
Surely I am more stupid than any man,
And I do not have the understanding of a man.
Neither have I learned wisdom,
Nor do I have the knowledge of the Holy One.
(Proverbs 30:1–3)

We will overlook for now how the author of that translation has blurred an extremely fine distinction by translating two entirely different words as "man." He has, nonetheless, done a creditable job of conveying the essence of what the *parabolic* fool Agur said: He has no understanding or wisdom because he lacks knowledge of what the Prophets have said about "the Holy One."

If you do not know what the Prophets have said about Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the One Who is "the Holy One of Israel," perhaps you should consider the fact that you are just as stupid as Agur. Should you come to that conclusion and have any desire at all to remedy your sad circumstance, you should first go and read what Isaiah says about the Holy One of Israel. If you do that, make sure you pay close attention to what he says concerning the Holy One as the "Redeemer" of Israel, especially the things he explains concerning Israel as the *parabolic* widow woman:

*"Fear not, for you will not be put to shame;
Neither feel humiliated, for you will not be disgraced;
But you will forget the shame of your youth,
And the reproach of your widowhood
you will remember no more.
For your husband is your Maker,
Whose name is the LORD of hosts;
And your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel,
Who is called the God of all the earth."
(Isaiah 54:4-5)*

After you are certain you understand those things, you should then take a long, hard look at this next couplet and make sure you fully understand what it means:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom,
And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
(Proverbs 9:10)*

The author of the Book of Proverbs *meant* exactly what he said in those two lines. However, to appreciate what he says, you need to know it is somewhat the same as the statement he makes at the beginning of his collection:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge;
Fools despise wisdom and instruction.
(Proverbs 1:7)*

Most folks today would never believe that the Prophet actually *meant* fear when he said "fear" in those two couplets. That is why they continue to despise the knowledge of the Holy One of Israel that is embodied in *The Teaching*. But then again, since they do not understand what the Prophets have said about Jesus Christ, the Word of God, they cannot possibly understand why He is called the Holy One of Israel. Lacking that crucial information, the best they can do is speculate as to why the author of the Book of Proverbs says this about the Word of God after giving us the frank admission of the *parabolic* fool named Agur:

*Who has ascended into heaven and descended?
Who has gathered the wind in His fists?
Who has wrapped the waters in His garment?
Who has established all the ends of the earth?
What is His name or His son's name?
Surely you know!
Every word of God is tested;
He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.
Do not add to His words
Lest He reprove you, and you be proved a liar.
Two things I asked of Thee,
Do not refuse me before I die:
Keep deception and lies far from me,
Give me neither poverty nor riches;
Feed me with the food that is my portion,
Lest I be full and deny {Thee} and say,
"Who is the LORD?"
Or lest I be in want and steal,
And profane the name of my God.
(Proverbs 30:4-9)*

The author's request that God keep deception and lies away from him never fails to get to me. That is because I realize how difficult it is for anyone to see through all the lies that Satan uses to contradict the Truth of *The Teaching*. Lacking that insight, they cannot even begin to break free from his deception. But I also feel a deep affinity for anyone who seeks to know and understand the Truth of *The Teaching*, no matter what cherished belief he may be required to relinquish in his search for the Truth. The response of the True Believer to the Truth of *The Teaching* that he has heard is completely different than the response of the fool that the author of the Book of Proverbs *parabolically* depicts as an adulterous woman:

There are three things which are too wonderful for me,
 Four which I do not understand:
The way of an eagle in the sky,
The way of a serpent on a rock,
The way of a ship in the middle of the sea,
 And *the way* of a man with a maid.
 This is *the way* of an adulterous woman:
 She eats and wipes her mouth,
 And says, "I have done no wrong."
 (Proverbs 30:18–20)

Did you understand what he said? He said, "There are four things I don't know, but one thing I know full well." Fools fail to see that his point has to do only with the one thing he knows, so they spend all their time focused on the four "throw away" items he mentions. They should take a closer look at how the Prophets use the *parabolic image* of the adulterous woman. That would not only tell them what the author of the Book of Proverbs has in mind, it would also allow them to see that the image fits them perfectly.

God Hates the Hard-Hearted Harlot

In Chapters 1–9 of the Book of Proverbs, the author—speaking by the inspiration of the Spirit—addresses the True Believer as though he were God Himself writing a letter to His Son. In that letter, the Prophet explains things that every Son of God will need to know in order to "build *The House*" of God. In the *parabolic imagery* he uses in that letter, every Son of God has a choice. He can either choose to believe the wisdom of *The Teaching*, which the author has *parabolically* depicted as a woman, a *zonah*, who is offering to help the Believer "build *The House*" of God, or he can, like the proverbial fool, choose to believe the lies that Satan has prepared for him to believe. Those lies are, like wisdom, also depicted as a woman, a *zonah*, who is offering to help the Son of God "build a house" for God.

The gist of the letter the Prophet wrote is a series of admonitions that the Son of God must constantly be careful to choose the virtuous woman—the wisdom of *The Teaching*—rather than the adulterous woman who *parabolically* represents the lies that fools choose to believe. He begins his paeon to the woman, Wisdom, by depicting her as a *zonah* who makes her appeal publicly to all sinners:

Wisdom shouts in the street,
 She lifts her voice in the square;
 At the head of the noisy {streets} she cries out;
 At the entrance of the gates in the city,
 she utters her sayings:
 "How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity?
 And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing,
 And fools hate knowledge?
 Turn to my reproof,
 Behold, I will pour out my spirit on you;
 I will make my words known to you."
 (Proverbs 1:20–23)

The following is typical of his portrayal of the woman Wisdom:

How blessed is the man who finds wisdom,
 And the man who gains understanding.
 For its profit is better than the profit of silver,
 And its gain than fine gold.
 She is more precious than jewels;
 And nothing you desire compares with her.
 Long life is in her right hand;
 In her left hand are riches and honor.
 Her ways are pleasant ways,
 And all her paths are peace.
 She is a tree of life to those who take hold of her,
 And happy are all who hold her fast.
 (Proverbs 3:13–18)

Later on, he warns against the seductiveness of the other woman, the woman who personifies all the lies that Satan has prepared for the unwary to believe:

For why should you, my son,
 be exhilarated with an adulteress,
 And embrace the bosom of a foreigner?
 For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD,
 And He watches all his paths.
 His own iniquities will capture the wicked,
 And he will be held with the cords of his sin.
 He will die for lack of instruction,
 And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.
 (Proverbs 5:20–23)

A bit later, he recounts for the Believer what it is like for the fool who happens onto one of Satan's more seductive lies:

For at the window of my house
 I looked out through my lattice,
 And I saw among the naive,
 I discerned among the youths,
 A young man lacking sense,
 Passing through the street near her corner;
 And he takes the way to her house,
 In the twilight, in the evening,
 In the middle of the night and {in} the darkness.
 And behold, a woman {comes} to meet him,
 Dressed as a harlot and cunning of heart.
 She is boisterous and rebellious;
 Her feet do not remain at home;
 {She is} now in the streets, now in the squares,
 And lurks by every corner.
 So she seizes him and kisses him,
 And with a brazen face she says to him:
 “I was due to offer peace offerings;
 Today I have paid my vows.
 Therefore I have come out to meet you,
 To seek your presence earnestly, and I have found you.
 I have spread my couch with coverings,
 With colored linens of Egypt.
 I have sprinkled my bed
 With myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.
 Come, let us drink our fill of love until morning;
 Let us delight ourselves with caresses.
 For the man is not at home,
 He has gone on a long journey;
 He has taken a bag of money with him,
 At full moon he will come home.”
 With her many persuasions she entices him;
 With her flattering lips she seduces him.
 Suddenly he follows her,
 As an ox goes to the slaughter,
 Or as {one in} fetters to the discipline of a fool,
 Until an arrow pierces through his liver;
 As a bird hastens to the snare,
 So he does not know that it {will cost him} his life.
 (Proverbs 7:6–23)

The Prophet *parabolically* describes the activities of the virtuous woman—Wisdom—and contrasts the delight that knowledge, wisdom, and understanding have to offer in comparison to belief in the lies of Satan:

Does not wisdom call,
 And understanding lift up her voice?

On top of the heights beside the way,
 Where the paths meet, she takes her stand;
 Beside the gates, at the opening to the city,
 At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:
 “To you, O men, I call,
 And my voice is to the sons of men.
 O naive ones, discern prudence;
 And, O fools, discern wisdom.
 Listen, for I shall speak noble things;
 And the opening of my lips {will produce} right things.
 For my mouth will utter truth;
 And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
 All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness;
 There is nothing crooked or perverted in them.
 They are all straightforward to him who understands,
 And right to those who find knowledge.
 Take my instruction, and not silver,
 And knowledge rather than choicest gold.
 For wisdom is better than jewels;
 And all desirable things can not compare with her.”
 (Proverbs 8:1–11)

That’s Just “The Way” It Is

Without insight into the *parabolic imagery* the Prophets have used in their writings, it is impossible to understand what the author of the Book of Proverbs had in mind when he put together his collection of parables. Since I have already explained the first nine chapters of the Book of Proverbs—in The Next Step program several years ago—I will touch mainly on the high points of the rest of the book here.

To understand the message of the Book of Proverbs, it is not enough to know that the Prophet is *parabolically* depicting wisdom, as well as stupidity, as a *zonah*, that is, as a woman who is constantly offering to help the Believer “build *The House*” of God. An even more fundamental key to the work lies in knowing it was the responsibility of the Canaanite *zonah* to show her redeemer “*The Way*” he must follow through the realm of the dead in order to arrive at the Mountain of God where he could triumph over death. Only then does it become possible to see *why* the parables the Prophet has included in his work continually *talk about The Teaching* as “*The Way*,” that is, as a path that one must follow if one seeks to be a part of the Resurrection of the Righteous. Even then, one must understand that “*The Way*” is a *parabolic image* that represents a fixed set

of beliefs. That is, it is the limited body of knowledge that is explained in *The Teaching of Moses*.

The Prophet begins by warning the Believer that he must not be enticed into finding commonality with Pretenders and accepting their foolish beliefs:

*My son, if sinners entice you,
Do not consent.
If they say, "Come with us,
Let us lie in wait for blood,
Let us ambush the innocent without cause;
Let us swallow them alive like Sheol,
Even whole, as those who go down to the pit;
We shall find all {kinds} of precious wealth,
We shall fill our houses with spoil;
Throw in your lot with us,
We shall all have one purse,"
**My son, do not walk in the way with them.
Keep your feet from their path,
For their feet run to evil,
And they hasten to shed blood.**
(Proverbs 1:10–16)*

Later on, the Prophet reminds the Believer that he has already taught him the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses*, which he, like the other Prophets, *parabolically* depicts as "The Way" one must follow through the realm of the dead. Therefore, he warns the Believer to be careful not to wander off into "the way" of those who do not believe the things that he has been fortunate enough to hear:

*Hear, my son, and accept my sayings,
And the years of your life will be many.
**I have directed you in the way of wisdom;
I have led you in upright paths.**
When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
And if you run, you will not stumble.
Take hold of instruction; do not let go.
Guard her, for she is your life.
Do not enter the path of the wicked,
And do not proceed in the way of evil men.
(Proverbs 4:10–14)*

After he says that, the Prophet concisely summarizes the point of the parables of the Book of Proverbs in the following succinct admonition:

***My son, observe the commandment of your father,
And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;
Bind them continually on your heart;
Tie them around your neck.
When you walk about, they will guide you;
When you sleep, they will watch over you;
And when you awake, they will talk to you.
For the commandment is a lamp,
and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for discipline are the way of life,
To keep you from the evil woman,
From the smooth tongue of the adulteress.
Do not desire her beauty in your heart,
Nor let her catch you with her eyelids.
For on account of a harlot {one is reduced} to a loaf of bread,
And an adulteress hunts for the precious life.
(Proverbs 6:20–26)***

One Way or the Other ...

In his letter to the True Believer, the author of the Book of Proverbs explains that his purpose in writing is to protect the Believer from the deception of the Antichrist. Speaking *parabolically* in terms of a "way" as what one chooses to believe, he explains how the wisdom of *The Teaching* will not only protect him from the lies of the Antichrist but also from the idiocy of those around him who distort the Truth of *The Teaching*:

*For the LORD gives wisdom;
From His mouth {come} knowledge and understanding.
He stores up sound wisdom for the upright;
**{He is} a shield to those who walk in integrity,
Guarding the paths of justice,
And He preserves the way of His godly ones.**
Then you will discern righteousness and justice
And equity {and} every good course.
For wisdom will enter your heart,
And knowledge will be pleasant to your soul;
Discretion will guard you,
Understanding will watch over you,
**To deliver you from the way of evil,
From the man who speaks perverse things;
From those who leave the paths of uprightness,
To walk in the ways of darkness;
Who delight in doing evil,
And rejoice in the perversity of evil;
Whose paths are crooked,***

And who are devious in their ways;
 To deliver you from the strange woman,
 From the adulteress who flatters with her words;
 That leaves the companion of her youth,
 And forgets the covenant of her God;
 For her house sinks down to death,
 And her tracks {lead} to the dead;
 None who go to her return again,
 Nor do they reach the paths of life.
**So you will walk in the way of good men,
 And keep to the paths of the righteous.**
 (Proverbs 2:6–20)

He returns to that same *parabolic imagery* a bit later when he warns the Believer not to treat lightly the things he has heard taught:

Hear, my son, and accept my sayings,
 And the years of your life will be many.
**I have directed you in the way of wisdom;
 I have led you in upright paths.**
**When you walk, your steps will not be impeded;
 And if you run, you will not stumble.**
**Take hold of instruction; do not let go.
 Guard her, for she is your life.**
**Do not enter the path of the wicked,
 And do not proceed in the way of evil men.**
 Avoid it, do not pass by it;
 Turn away from it and pass on.
 For they cannot sleep unless they do evil;
 And they are robbed of sleep
 unless they make {someone} stumble.
 For they eat the bread of wickedness,
 And drink the wine of violence.
**But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn,
 That shines brighter and brighter until the full day.**
**The way of the wicked is like darkness;
 They do not know over what they stumble.**
 (Proverbs 4:10–19)

Then, as I mentioned above, the Prophet clearly indicates that he is speaking *parabolically* concerning the importance of paying attention to *The Teaching*:

For the commandment is a lamp,
 and the teaching is light;
 And reproofs for discipline are the way of life.
 (Proverbs 6:23)

Later on, he uses the same *parabolic image* to describe the folly of a fool who chooses to believe a lie rather than the Truth of *The Teaching*:

For at the window of my house
 I looked out through my lattice,
 And I saw among the naive,
 I discerned among the youths,
 A young man lacking sense,
 Passing through the street near her corner;
And he takes the way to her house.
 (Proverbs 7:6–8)

The Prophet concludes his warning against believing the lies of the adulterous woman with a solemn reminder that belief in the Truth of *The Teaching* is not something that one should treat casually. Since only those who believe the Truth will be saved, what one believes is a matter of life and death. Those who choose to believe a lie—the “way” of the adulterous woman—will find themselves well on their “way” to Hell:

Now therefore, {my} sons, listen to me,
 And pay attention to the words of my mouth.
**Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways,
 Do not stray into her paths.**
 For many are the victims she has cast down,
 And numerous are all her slain.
**Her house is the way to Sheol,
 Descending to the chambers of death.**
 (Proverbs 7:24–27)

In describing the role that Wisdom plays in the life of the True Believers, the Prophet says that She, too, attempts to persuade them as to the Truth of Her Way:

Does not wisdom call,
 And understanding lift up her voice?
**On top of the heights beside the way,
 Where the paths meet, she takes her stand;**
 Beside the gates, at the opening to the city,
 At the entrance of the doors, she cries out:
 “To you, O men, I call,
 And my voice is to the sons of men.
 O naive ones, discern prudence;
 And, O fools, discern wisdom.
 Listen, for I shall speak noble things;

*And the opening of my lips {will produce} right things.
For my mouth will utter truth;
And wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the utterances of my mouth are in righteousness;
There is nothing crooked or perverted in them.
They are all straightforward to him who understands,
And right to those who find knowledge.
Take my instruction, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choicest gold.
For wisdom is better than jewels;
And all desirable things can not compare with her."
(Proverbs 8:1-11)*

The Prophet goes on to tell us that "The Way" of the woman Wisdom is "the way of righteousness."

*"I walk in the way of righteousness,
In the midst of the paths of justice."
(Proverbs 8:20)*

If one does not know that righteousness comes only from belief in the Truth, one can easily overlook the *significance* of that statement. Unfortunately, that is one of the more easily understood concepts. One needs an in-depth understanding of the rituals conducted by the Canaanite *zonah* before one can fully understand what the Prophet is telling us here:

*Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine;
She has also set her table;
She has sent out her maidens, she calls
From the tops of the heights of the city:
"Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!"
To him who lacks understanding she says,
"Come, eat of my food,
And drink of the wine I have mixed.
Forsake {your} folly and live,
And proceed in the way of understanding."
(Proverbs 9:1-6)*

I have already explained a few things about the *zonah* ritual in The Next Step program, and I am currently explaining the idiom "build a house" in a series of articles I have been writing for this newsletter. Therefore, I will merely point out that the Prophet indicates that the role of the *parabolic* woman, Wisdom, is to

show "the way of understanding" to all those who will consent to eat her *parabolic* food and drink her *parabolic* wine. In saying that, he is using somewhat the same *parabolic imagery* as the author of the Book of Hebrews has in mind when he says this:

*For in the case of those who have once been enlightened
and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been
made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the
good word of God and the powers of the age to come,
and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to renew
them again to repentance, since they again crucify to
themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.
(Hebrews 6:4-6)*

The author of the Book of Proverbs is warning the True Believer not only that it is possible for him to stray from the Truth but also that Satan is actively seeking to ensure that he does. That is why he repeatedly emphasizes the importance of remaining within the narrow confines of the Truth of *The Teaching*, that is, walking in "The Way" of wisdom and understanding:

*The way of the LORD is a stronghold to the upright,
But ruin to the workers of iniquity.
(Proverbs 10:29)*

*In the way of righteousness is life,
And in {its} pathway there is no death.
(Proverbs 12:28)*

*A gray head is a crown of glory;
It is found in the way of righteousness.
(Proverbs 16:31)*

*Listen, my son, and be wise,
And direct your heart in the way.
(Proverbs 23:19)*

Again and again he warns the True Believer against straying from "The Way," that is, from the Truth of *The Teaching*, by believing something that is not true. He does that several times by contrasting "The Way" of the Righteous with "the way" of the Wicked:

*The righteous is a guide to his neighbor,
But the way of the wicked leads them astray.
(Proverbs 12:26)*

*Good understanding produces favor,
But the way of the treacherous is hard.
(Proverbs 13:15)*

*The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns,
But the path of the upright is a highway.
(Proverbs 15:19)*

*The way of a guilty man is crooked,
But as for the pure, his conduct is upright.
(Proverbs 21:8)*

*Thorns {and} snares are in the way of the perverse;
He who guards himself will be far from them.
(Proverbs 22:5)*

*An unjust man is abominable to the righteous,
And he who is upright in the way is abominable
to the wicked.
(Proverbs 29:27)*

On two occasions, the author of the Book of Proverbs uses the parables of Solomon to remind his reader how easy it is for an unwary person to be convinced that a lie is the Truth:

*There is a way {which seems} right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.
(Proverbs 14:12)*

*There is a way {which seems} right to a man,
But its end is the way of death.
(Proverbs 16:25)*

He also warns his reader that the one who leaves the Truth of *The Teaching* to believe something other than the Truth will retain no credit at all for what he once believed:

*A man who wanders from the way of understanding
Will rest in the assembly of the dead.
(Proverbs 21:16)*

The Apostle Peter is even more vitriolic than the author of the Book of Proverbs in his assessment of the sinful character of anyone who could be enticed into believing a lie after having believed the Truth:

*But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the {son} of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; {for} a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant {words} of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT," and, "A sow, after washing, {returns} to wallowing in the mire."
(2 Peter 2:12–22)*

Peter is obviously talking about those who have not only left the Truth of *The Teaching*—what he calls "the way of righteousness"—but have also gone off teaching lies that contradict the Truth they once understood. However, he has quoted only a part of "the true proverb" he mentions in verse 22. Here is what the author of the Book of Proverbs said:

*{Like} the legs {which} hang down from the lame,
So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.
Like one who binds a stone in a sling,
So is he who gives honor to a fool.
{Like} a thorn {which} falls into the hand of a drunkard,
So is a proverb in the mouth of fools.*

*{Like} an archer who wounds everyone,
So is he who hires a fool or who hires those who pass by.
Like a dog that returns to its vomit
Is a fool who repeats his folly.
Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.
(Proverbs 26:7–12)*

It may not be obvious that the author of the Book of Proverbs, like the Apostle Peter, has in mind those who try to explain the parables of the Scriptures without an accurate understanding of what those parables have to say. The author's train of thought becomes a bit clearer if you know that the Hebrew verb that has been translated "repeats" actually has the sense of "to talk about." That is somewhat more obvious from the way the author uses it in this verse:

*He who covers a transgression seeks love,
But he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends.
(Proverbs 17:9)*

It is not difficult to understand why Peter quoted Proverbs 26:11 in 2 Peter 2:22. The author of the Book of Proverbs tells us that after hearing *The Teaching* explained, a fool will try to explain the parables of the Scriptures to others. That certainly qualifies as abject stupidity. But he also tells us "a man wise in his own eyes" is even more pathetic. That dullard thinks he already understands all that he needs to know. So he doesn't even bother to listen when he has opportunity to hear the Truth. The Prophet says this about those who lack the small semblance of wisdom it takes to consider that someone else might actually know something that they don't:

*Wisdom is in the presence
of the one who has understanding,
But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.
(Proverbs 17:24)*

*Every man's way is right in his own eyes,
But the LORD weighs the hearts.
(Proverbs 21:2)*

*The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes
Than seven men who can give a discreet answer.
(Proverbs 26:16)*

*The rich man is wise in his own eyes,
But the poor who has understanding sees through him.
(Proverbs 28:11)*

*There is a kind who is pure in his own eyes,
Yet is not washed from his filthiness.
There is a kind—oh how lofty are his eyes!
And his eyelids are raised {in arrogance.}
(Proverbs 30:12–13)*

In his letter to True Believers, the Prophet admonishes those who know the Truth by telling them to avoid looking at themselves and evaluating where they stand with God. Instead, they must focus on acting in accordance with the Truth they have heard:

*Do not be wise in your own eyes;
Fear the LORD and turn away from evil.
(Proverbs 3:7)*

The Book of Job Said It All

If the Book of Proverbs were only about the importance of the Believer clinging to a complete and accurate understanding of the Truth of *The Teaching*, the author would never have included couplets like these in his work:

*He is {on} the path of life who heeds instruction,
But he who forsakes reproof goes astray.
(Proverbs 10:17)*

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.
(Proverbs 12:15)*

Beyond that, if the emphasis of the Book of Proverbs were only on the importance of knowing the Truth, with no concern at all for acting in accordance with the Truth, it would have no practical value in the life of the True Believer. One should never accuse God of not being practical. The Truth is, the overriding concern of the author of the Book of Proverbs is that the True Believer not only know the Truth, but that he respond to God's admonishment and correction as a wise son. That is why, in passages like the following, he insists the True Believer will be quick to accept correction, admonishment, and discipline:

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge,
But he who hates reproof is stupid.
(Proverbs 12:1)

Poverty and shame {will come}
to him who neglects discipline,
But he who regards reproof will be honored.
(Proverbs 13:18)

A fool rejects his father's discipline,
But he who regards reproof is prudent.
(Proverbs 15:5)

The way of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD,
But He loves him who pursues righteousness.
Stern discipline is for him who forsakes the way;
He who hates reproof will die.
(Proverbs 15:9–10)

He whose ear listens to the life-giving reproof
Will dwell among the wise.
He who neglects discipline despises himself,
But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.
(Proverbs 15:31–32)

A man who hardens {his} neck after much reproof
Will suddenly be broken beyond remedy.
(Proverbs 29:1)

Those passages are all meant to emphasize the importance of heeding the admonition he issues in his letter to the True Believer:

My son, do not reject the discipline of the LORD,
Or loathe His reproof.
For whom the LORD loves He reproves,
Even as a father, the son in whom he delights.
(Proverbs 3:11–12)

The Spirit of Christ quotes a part of that passage in what He says to the angel of the church at Laodicea:

"Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent."
(Revelation 3:19)

It is difficult to understand the *parabolic imagery* the Spirit is using in what He says to the angel of the

church at Laodicea if you overlook the introduction to what He says:

"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write:
The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this..."
(Revelation 3:14)

It also helps to know that the author of the Book of Proverbs insists that wisdom was the beginning of the Creation of God:

"The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way,
Before His works of old.
From everlasting I was established,
From the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
When there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains were settled,
Before the hills I was brought forth;
While He had not yet made the earth and the fields,
Nor the first dust of the world.
When He established the heavens, I was there,
When He inscribed a circle on the face of the deep,
When He made firm the skies above,
When the springs of the deep became fixed,
When He set for the sea its boundary,
So that the water should not transgress His command,
When He marked out the foundations of the earth;
Then I was beside Him, {as} a master workman;
And I was daily {His} delight,
Rejoicing always before Him,
Rejoicing in the world, His earth,
And {having} my delight in the sons of men."
(Proverbs 8:22–31)

Now you should be able to see that the Spirit is talking about a knowledge of the Truth of *The Teaching* when He says this:

"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that

you may clothe yourself, and {that} the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."
(Revelation 3:15–21)

His point is, if one knows and understands the Truth of *The Teaching*, that person can expect God to continually admonish and correct him. That is exactly the same point that is made in the Book of Job and reaffirmed in the Book of Proverbs. However, the author of the Book of Proverbs explains that the fool could never understand or even begin to comprehend why one would want a relationship to the Creator God that would include such intimate interaction between the human and divine. The fool thinks God is supposed to be completely removed from his everyday life except when he demands that God respond to his every whim, wish, and desire. He has no idea that the relationship God tries to develop with every True Believer is one in which the Believer proves his belief in the Truth by responding appropriately when he, like Job, is tested.

The author of the Book of Hebrews has succinctly summarized the point of the Book of Proverbs. But few people understand, much less pay attention to, what he says. He concludes his well-known chapter on the importance of knowing and believing the Truth of *The Teaching* by emphasizing the necessity for the True Believer to respond appropriately to the admonishment and correction of God. To make his point, he quotes Proverbs 3:11–12—the passage we saw above:

Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding

blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "MY SON, DO NOT REGARD LIGHTLY THE DISCIPLINE OF THE LORD, NOR FAINT WHEN YOU ARE REPROVED BY HIM; FOR THOSE WHOM THE LORD LOVES HE DISCIPLINES, AND HE SCOURGES EVERY SON WHOM HE RECEIVES." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom {his} father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He {disciplines us} for {our} good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
(Hebrews 12:1–11)

Is Admonishment a Sometime Thing?

The major difficulty one faces in reading the Book of Proverbs with understanding lies in knowing what the author had in mind when he wrote his parables and put them together with the parables of Solomon and those of an anonymous Egyptian author. That hurdle is compounded by the fact that those who have produced translations of the Book of Proverbs have had very little insight into the author's mind-set. Consequently, they have been content to perpetuate the *traditional* understanding of certain key Hebrew words. That is obvious from the inconsistent way they have translated those key terms. For example, the Hebrew term *musar* means "admonishment." But in the following verses, it has been translated generally as "instruction":

*To receive **instruction** in wise behavior, Righteousness, justice and equity.*
(Proverbs 1:3)

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and **instruction**. Hear, my son, your father's **instruction**, And do not forsake your mother's teaching.*
(Proverbs 1:7–8)

Hear, {O} sons, the *instruction* of a father,
And give attention that you may gain understanding.
(Proverbs 4:1)

Take hold of *instruction*; do not let go.
Guard her, for she is your life.
(Proverbs 4:13)

And you say, "How I have hated *instruction*!
And my heart spurned reproof!"
(Proverbs 5:12)

He will die for lack of *instruction*,
And in the greatness of his folly he will go astray.
(Proverbs 5:23)

"Take my *instruction*, and not silver,
And knowledge rather than choicest gold."
(Proverbs 8:10)

"Heed *instruction* and be wise,
And do not neglect {it}."
(Proverbs 8:33)

He is {on} the path of life who heeds *instruction*,
But he who forsakes reproof goes astray.
(Proverbs 10:17)

Buy truth, and do not sell {it},
{Get} wisdom and *instruction* and understanding.
(Proverbs 23:23)

When I saw, I reflected upon it;
I looked, {and} received *instruction*.
(Proverbs 24:32)

Keep in mind the fact that the term *musar* actually means "admonishment." And in the verses quoted above, translators have come fairly close to that meaning with the translation "instruction." But that is only because they realize the term must have something to do with communication. However, the way the term is used in the following contexts has forced them to face the fact that *musar* must also have something to do with the correction of a child. Therefore, they have chosen to translate it inconsistently. In the instances above, they translated it as "instruction." Now they would have us believe it also means "discipline":

My son, do not reject the *discipline* of the LORD,
Or loathe His reproof.
(Proverbs 3:11)

For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light;
And reproofs for *discipline* are the way of life.
(Proverbs 6:23)

Suddenly he follows her,
As an ox goes to the slaughter,
Or as {one in} fetters to the *discipline* of a fool.
(Proverbs 7:22)

Whoever loves *discipline* loves knowledge,
But he who hates reproof is stupid.
(Proverbs 12:1)

A wise son {accepts his} father's *discipline*,
But a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.
(Proverbs 13:1)

Poverty and shame {will come} to him who neglects *discipline*,
But he who regards reproof will be honored.
(Proverbs 13:18)

He who spares his rod hates his son,
But he who loves him *disciplines* him diligently.
(Proverbs 13:24)

A fool rejects his father's *discipline*,
But he who regards reproof is prudent.
(Proverbs 15:5)

Stern *discipline* is for him who forsakes the way;
He who hates reproof will die.
(Proverbs 15:10)

Understanding is a fountain of life to him who has it,
But the *discipline* of fools is folly.
(Proverbs 16:22)

Listen to counsel and accept *discipline*,
That you may be wise the rest of your days.
(Proverbs 19:20)

Cease listening, my son, to *discipline*,
{And you will} stray from the words of knowledge.
(Proverbs 19:27)

*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child;
The rod of **discipline** will remove it far from him.
(Proverbs 22:15)*

*Apply your heart to **discipline**,
And your ears to words of knowledge.
Do not hold back **discipline** from the child,
Although you beat him with the rod, he will not die.
(Proverbs 23:12–13)*

The inconsistent translation of the Hebrew term *musar* is especially maddening when it occurs in back-to-back verses like these:

*He who neglects **discipline** despises himself,
But he who listens to reproof acquires understanding.
The fear of the LORD is the **instruction** for wisdom,
And before honor {comes} humility.
(Proverbs 15:32–33)*

Even when a translator maintains a fairly consistent translation of a key term, his choice for the English equivalent is not always the best. For example, the Hebrew term *tokachat*, as it is used in the Book of Proverbs, would be better translated as "correction." But because the *traditional* English translation is "reproof," the original *meaning* of the term remains blurred by the use of that antiquated English term. Even then, the problem of inconsistent translation somehow shows up in a stray verse like this one:

*Better is open **rebuke**
Than love that is concealed.
(Proverbs 27:5)*

What Matters Is What You Can't See

The author of the Book of Proverbs is concerned with helping the True Believer understand and successfully deal with a complex psychological process that every person is forced to confront on a regular basis. The accepted term for that psychological process is *rationalization*. *Rationalizing* is what a person does when his conscience will not allow him to do something he desperately wants to do. So, to do what he knows he shouldn't, he *rationalizes* by telling himself he is doing it for the right reason rather than the wrong one. Some folks are more adept at *rationalizing* their

actions than others. But I venture to say that we have all done it at one time or another.

Fortunately for those who believe the Truth, the Spirit of God stands in "*The Way*" of the True Believer, shedding *Light* on his true motives and providing the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom necessary for him to "see" "*The Way*" he should go. If the True Believer still wants to believe a lie so that he can do what he knows he should not do, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding that resides in *The Teaching* begins to admonish and correct him. That Spirit sternly warns him of the consequences he will face if he continues to refuse to listen to admonishment and correction.

That is the message of the Book of Proverbs. But before one can even begin to understand what the Prophet is *talking about*, one must first understand that "*The Way*" is not the way we act. It is "*The Way*" we think. Only then do the parables of Solomon begin to make sense. Yet fools will continue to insist that verses like this one are *talking about* external behavior:

*Train up a child in **the way** he should go,
Even when he is old he will not depart from it.
(Proverbs 22:6)*

"*The Way*" mentioned in that verse is the same "way" that one finds in this one:

*Listen, my son, and be wise,
And direct your heart in **the way**.
(Proverbs 23:19)*

That verse makes sense only if one understands that the "heart" of a person is the mind. The heart always has been the mind, and it always will be, in spite of the fact that Satan has confused the issue with his "heart as the seat of the emotions" nonsense. And in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, the dwelling-place that God desires is not the physical "tent" in which we all live, it is the spiritual "house" He seeks to "build" within us. That is what the author of the Book of Proverbs had in mind when he included this parable:

*By wisdom a house is built,
And by understanding it is established;
And by knowledge the rooms are filled
With all precious and pleasant riches.
(Proverbs 24:3–4)*

The *parabolic imagery* the author of the Book of Proverbs had in mind may be easier to see in what the Apostle Paul says here:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this {house} we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.
(2 Corinthians 4:16–5:4)

I don't know about you, but I find it more than a little exasperating when the biblical text implies one thing and the translator supplies a word that is completely inappropriate. Did you notice he does that in the passage above? He says this:

For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this {house} we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven.
(2 Corinthians 5:1–2)

Paul is not depicting the physical, fleshly body as a "house." It is instead a "tent" in which "we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven." He portrayed it that way because in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, the body is a "tent" and the eternal dwelling we *receive* from Heaven is "The House" of God in which all True Believers will dwell together forever. Just as the author of the Book of Proverbs indicates, the *parabolic* woman Wisdom "builds" that "house" within everyone who hears and chooses to believe the Truth of *The Teaching*, which is Jesus Christ, the Word of God. But you undoubtedly already knew that since Paul explains it here:

Yet we do speak wisdom among those who are mature; a wisdom, however, not of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are passing away; but we speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden {wisdom,} which God predestined before the ages to our glory; {the wisdom} which none of the rulers of this age has understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but just as it is written,

"THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN

AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD,

AND {which} HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN,

ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."

For to us God revealed {them} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God.

For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom,

but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.} But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them,

because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD,

THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.

(1 Corinthians 2:6–16)

Did you ever wonder how Paul could say that "we have the mind of Christ"? What do you think he meant by that? I realize the fool will respond off the top of his pointy little head with some nonsense. But Paul already told you by his allusion to Proverbs 2:3–4:

For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf, and for those who are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face, that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and {attaining} to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, {resulting} in a true knowledge of God's mystery, {that is,} Christ {Himself}, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

(Colossians 2:1–3) ■



The Voice of Elijah® includes this column to show you how some of the underlying parabolic images of the Gospel message of the Old Testament speak to the times in which we find ourselves. There are a variety of weather images to be found in the parables of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Most are associated in some way with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Windy: If you are accustomed to reading an English translation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, you probably have no idea how many statements in the original text carry a *meaning* that has never been accurately translated into English. You are most likely also ignorant of the fact that translators don't have a clue as to the ancient mind-set or the *parabolic imagery* that gave rise to those statements. Consequently, you have no way of knowing where the *meaning* of the biblical text remains hidden—to this very day—in the original language in which it was written.

The Apostle John includes several such enigmatic statements in his Gospel. For example, he tells us Jesus said this to Nicodemus:

"The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."
(John 3:8)

The English reader would never for a moment suspect that the word translated "wind" actually occurs twice in that verse. But it does. However, in the second instance, it has been translated "Spirit." Now that you know the Truth in that regard, let me ask you this, Does what Jesus said make any sense? Be honest; you'll go to Hell for lying—especially if you lie to yourself. The term that has been translated both "wind" and "Spirit" in that verse is the Greek noun *pneuma*. To further complicate what appears to be—in the English—a

simple statement of fact, the term translated "blows" is a verbal form of that same noun. So the puzzling question that translators should try to evoke in the mind of any reader of their translation is, Why did Jesus use the word *pneuma* to compare the Spirit of God to the wind? But they don't even bother. Instead, they intentionally conceal the Truth concerning what Jesus said by trying to make their translation more *readable*. Since translators have done that repeatedly, their ignorance gets compounded daily, resulting in an overwhelming abundance of stupidity on the part of Church leaders who have never bothered to master the languages in which the Scriptures were written.

The Greek word that is normally used to refer to the wind is not *pneuma*, the word that Jesus used. It is instead the one that Paul uses in this verse:

As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.
(Ephesians 4:14)

James uses that same Greek word when he says this about the wind:

But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.
(James 1:6)

Were you able to "see" the *parabolic imagery* that both Paul and James had in mind when they talked in terms of the wind and the Sea? You weren't? Well, maybe this next passage will help. In speaking *parabolically* concerning Pretenders, Jude says this:

These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.
(Jude 1:12–13)

I won't bother to explain the origin of the *parabolic imagery* these three men had in mind when they wrote

those things. I will just challenge you to consider what they are saying through their use of the *parabolic imagery*: People who do not—or cannot—believe the Truth are LIKE water; specifically, they are LIKE the waves of the Sea which are driven by the wind.

The fool who “knows” his Bible will undoubtedly claim that Paul, James, and Jude got the *parabolic imagery* they used from what Isaiah says in this verse:

*But the wicked are like the tossing sea,
For it cannot be quiet,
And its waters toss up refuse and mud.
(Isaiah 57:20)*

If I might be so bold as to offer a bit of advice: Don’t be so myopic as to suppose that Isaiah is using a simple metaphor that Paul, James, and Jude borrowed. The Truth is, the “Sea” that all four of these men had in mind is the *parabolic* Prince Sea that the Body of Christ must—LIKE Baal—overcome before He can enter the Resurrection. It is the same Sea that Jesus had in mind when He—in *parabolic pantomime*—went out walking—at night—on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:22–32; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:16–21). That, in turn, is the same *parabolic* Sea that Jesus commands to be still in the *parabolic pantomime* where He depicts the sleeping Body of Jesus Christ awakening (Mark 4:35–41; Luke 8:22–25).

From the way that Isaiah, Paul, James, and Jude use the *parabolic image* of the Sea, it is clear that the Sea is all those (waves) who have *chosen* to believe Satan’s lies. The question is, What does the *parabolic image* of the wind depict? If you have ears to hear, Jesus has already told you. Listen to what He says to Nicodemus:

Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews; this man came to Him by night, and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You have come from God {as} a teacher; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.” Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born

again.’ The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” Nicodemus answered and said to Him, “How can these things be?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not understand these things?”

(John 3:1–10)

Keep in mind that Jesus did not say either “wind” or “spirit,” much less make the artificial distinction between the two that translators make. He said *pneuma*. And He did that because He was speaking *parabolically*, describing what it IS LIKE to be born again. That is, He was speaking in terms of the *pneuma* of God as a “wind” that “blows” on people when they hear the Truth of the Word of God explained. I know that, however, only because later on, Jesus explains what the *pneuma* (“Spirit”) of God actually is:

“It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.”

(John 6:63)

In that verse, Jesus openly explains that *The Teaching* He *handed down* to His disciples was *pneuma*. However, one needs to know what the Greeks were thinking when they used the word *pneuma* before it becomes clear that they considered all teaching to be *pneuma*. When one knows that, this next passage begins to make a bit more sense:

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

(Ephesians 2:1–2)

You would do well to read that sentence, then go back and parse it carefully. You will find that the phrase “of the spirit” can only be a restatement of one of two other phrases. It must be restating either the prepositional phrase “of the air” or the larger phrase of which that phrase is but a part—“of the power of the air.” If you have insight into the Greek mind-set in regard to a *pneuma*, you should already know that the phrase “of the spirit” is a simple restatement of the phrase “of the air.” The “air” that Paul had in mind is the “spirit” that

“blows” on “the sons of disobedience” every time they hear a lie that they *choose* to believe. That probably makes no sense at all to “the sons of disobedience,” but those who have been born of the gently blowing Spirit will understand.

Now that I have explained a small bit about the *parabolic image* of the “winds,” that is, the *pneuma* that “blows” through the minds of men, you should be able to see what Paul *means* when he writes this:

And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.
(Ephesians 4:11–14)

If you still don't know what you, as a Believer in Christ, should believe, you are obviously still being “carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming.” That is an extremely sad situation, considering the fact that you would know exactly what you should believe if you had an Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor (Shepherd), or Teacher who could confirm the Truth of the *pneuma* that inhabits the words he speaks. Lacking that, I suppose you will just have to continue being driven by the wind, like the waves of the Sea or the chaff that the psalmist mentions in this passage:

*Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life;
Let those be turned back and humiliated
who devise evil against me.
Let them be like chaff before the wind,
With the angel of the LORD driving {them} on.
Let their way be dark and slippery,
With the angel of the LORD pursuing them.*
(Psalm 35:4–6)

The *parabolic imagery* the Prophet had in mind when he wrote that is not all that obvious unless you are thinking in terms of angels as “winds,” that is, as

pneuma. In case you were not aware that is what they are, let me be the first to point out this verse:

*And of the angels He says,
“WHO MAKES HIS ANGELS WINDS,
AND HIS MINISTERS A FLAME OF FIRE.”
(Hebrews 1:7)*

The word translated “winds” in that verse is—you guessed it—*pneuma*. However, you should also note that the author of the Book of Hebrews is quoting Psalm 104:4, where the psalmist uses the normal Hebrew word for “spirit.” Like the Greek *pneuma*, the Hebrew word *ruach* can also be used to refer to either “wind” or “spirit.” The Truth is, that last statement is not entirely accurate. Both terms refer only to “wind,” but how can I explain the mind-set of the ancients to a people so completely enamored by the lie that Satan has disseminated concerning the nature of a “spirit”?

God's People will never be able to cast off the bondage of Satan's lies until they are strong in faith. Yet the faith that God desires of His People is not faith in the sense of *that* they believe; it is faith in the sense of *what* they believe. So how can God's People be strong in faith if they do not know *what* to believe? Without knowledge of the Truth, they will continue to be, as Paul says, “carried about by every wind of doctrine,” completely unable to ask even for the wisdom that God demands of His every Child:

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, {being} a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.
(James 1:5–8)

If you are still doubting the truthfulness of the things I have explained here, you had better get ready for one wild ride:

*The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,
But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,
And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,
Or like whirling dust before a gale.*
(Isaiah 17:13) ■



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: I recently read the comments of a Bible “scholar” who was trying to explain why God not only allowed but oftentimes demanded the killing of so many people in the Old Testament. The obstacle he was trying to overcome in his explanation is the same obstacle most people encounter when dealing with this subject: Why did God seem to have such a callous disregard for human life in the Old Testament when He has unconditional love for everyone? The answer must be, at least in part, that God doesn’t have unconditional love for everyone. But that still doesn’t explain why He often instructed the Israelites to annihilate their enemies and not leave one man, woman, or child alive. Would you explain to our readers the significance of what God sought to accomplish through this?

Elijah: It is impossible to explain—to the satisfaction of fools—what you just mentioned because they insist on believing that God is just like them. That is in part because over the past 150 years, Pretenders in the Church have created the goofy god of unconditional love in their own image and likeness. So they have no idea that the angry God of Israel is a God of unmitigated wrath. But they would refuse to believe that even if you told them because they prefer to believe the lie that tells them they have nothing to fear. As a matter of fact, they are so stupid as to believe it would verge on sacrilege if

they were to fear the God Who is. I can only imagine the sickening feeling that will envelope them when they suddenly realize they are going to face the flip-side of God’s mercy and compassion—forever.

Let me give you an example of how effective the Satan-inspired lie that God is a god of unconditional love is at preventing people from even considering the Truth. A week or so ago, I came across a copy of Jonathan Edwards’ sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” (See Order Form.) That sermon has long been considered the most famous sermon ever preached in America. Yet as I was reading it, I was struck by the fact that Edwards felt no need at all to explain or defend the wrath of God. He assumed his listeners already knew that hell-fire and everlasting damnation—the wrath of God—are just as much a part of the Christian message as are Heaven and eternal bliss. When I saw that he automatically presumed his listeners understood that, I realized how drastically Christian beliefs concerning the nature of God have changed over the two and a half centuries since he delivered that sermon in July 1741.

The people of Edwards’ day responded to his preaching of the Truth about the God of wrath with an open and honest repentance before God. But folks today would never respond that way. They have been told a lie concerning Who God is, and they firmly believe that lie—because they want to. So they have no idea that God is a God of unqualified wrath Who harbors a deep-seated hatred toward sinners. The Truth is, the sovereign God of Israel Who created us can do whatever He decides to do with us and nobody has the right to judge Him or to question what He does in that regard. Nevertheless, imbeciles continue to do precisely that because—surprise!—that is what imbeciles do best. The Prophet Isaiah said they are even stupid enough to think God does not know who they really are inside:

*Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD,
And whose deeds are {done} in a dark place,
And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?”
You turn {things} around!
Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay,
That what is made should say to its maker,
“He did not make me”;
Or what is formed say to him who formed it,
“He has no understanding”?
(Isaiah 29:15–16)*

Later on, Isaiah implies that only an idiot would find fault with God for doing what He has done, and is doing, with us. He says this:

*“Woe to {the one} who quarrels with his Maker—
An earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth!
Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’
Or the thing you are making {say,} ‘He has no hands’?
Woe to him who says to a father,
‘What are you begetting?’
Or to a woman,
‘To what are you giving birth?’”*
(Isaiah 45:9–10)

Isaiah’s point is not at all obvious to the one who has no insight into the *parabolic imagery* related to how God, the Potter, is creating “*The Man*” in His Own image and likeness. But it should at least be obvious to anyone with an average IQ that the Prophet is using the *parabolic image* of clay to *talk about* the creation of mankind as a work in progress. That is, a potter does not let the wet clay he is forming start to dry until he is finished working with it; he keeps it wet and pliable. Then, when he is satisfied with the vessel he has formed, he stops working with the wet clay and sets his handiwork aside to dry. After it has dried, he begins working with the dried earthenware vessel—the *bisque*—it has become.

Isaiah’s point is, until God’s process of creation is complete, mankind is not yet what God intends us to be. We remain nothing more than wet clay in the hands of God, the Potter, Who will do with us as He pleases. Under those circumstances, what right does an unfinished lump of clay have to question what God, the Potter, is going to make with him or how He is going to do it? None whatsoever. Yet the ignorant among us go on stupidly assuming they do.

I have no doubt my point will be completely lost on all those who foolishly want to believe they have some unalienable right before God. Those fools fail to understand they have nothing more than the existence that God has granted. God gave them a semblance of life in their mortal flesh, and it should be obvious to them that He can—and does—take that life from each and every one of us whenever He so desires. Considering that, we should all stand in awe of His tremendous power and grace. Instead, fools everywhere ignorantly continue to presume on His mercy.

I mentioned Isaiah’s use of the *parabolic image* of God as the Potter because the answer to your question concerning why God demanded that the sons of Israel annihilate certain people is inextricably connected to the *parabolic imagery* that Moses and the Prophets used to describe how the holiness of God fits into His creation of “*The Man*” in His Own image and likeness. I am not yet prepared to explain all of that *parabolic imagery* publicly. But I can at least show you how the holiness of God is related to the demand that the sons of Israel mercilessly kill people.

Let’s *talk* first about God’s demand that the sons of Israel must sometimes kill one of their own. You are aware, no doubt, that *The Law of Moses* stipulated that anyone *in Israel* who committed certain acts had to be put to death for those actions. But have you ever asked yourself *why* God required those people to die? That is, have you ever considered *why* God deemed specific acts to be worthy of death while He let other acts go unpunished? For example, have you ever thought about why God would emphatically insist that the sons of Israel had to kill a man whose only crime was to gather wood on the Sabbath? Or maybe you didn’t know that He did. Moses says this:

Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. And those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation; and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. Then the LORD said to Moses, “The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” So all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him to death with stones, just as the LORD had commanded Moses.
(Numbers 15:32–36)

Now I realize there are those dullards who call themselves “Christian” and still insist we must observe the Sabbath, or at least observe one day of the week—Sunday—above the rest. Some of them are so insistent in that regard that they would probably even impose the death penalty on offenders if they could. They don’t know it, but they already have—and committed murder in the process—as far as God is concerned. They do it every time they judge others as guilty of some great sin for not slavishly following them in their

mindless idiocy. And they do it in spite of the fact that Paul plainly says it no longer matters whether we observe one day of the week above another, and even if we do, we are not to condemn someone else if they don't:

*Now accept the one who is weak in faith, {but} not for {the purpose of} passing judgment on his opinions. One man has faith that he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats vegetables {only.} Let not him who eats regard with contempt him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats, for God has accepted him. Who are you to judge the servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls; and stand he will, for the Lord is able to make him stand. **One man regards one day above another, another regards every day {alike.}** Let each man be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it for the Lord, and he who eats, does so for the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who eats not, for the Lord he does not eat, and gives thanks to God.*
(Romans 14:1–6)

That passage should clue the thinking person in to the fact that the *parabolic pantomime* of observing the Sabbath, which was required under the Old Covenant, is no longer mandated under the New. Legalists will undoubtedly argue that point because they start feeling insecure whenever any individual item on their beloved list of do's and don'ts is threatened. That's understandable. Their inane spouting of meaningless clichés and their silly insistence on behavioral norms is the only way they have to distinguish one of their own from all the other sinners in the world. They don't know—and find it impossible to believe—that faith is *what you believe* God is rather than *that you believe* He is. So let's not tell them, okay? They will eventually find out the hard way.

I don't suppose the myopic legalists can see that the Apostle Paul said that the one who is weak in faith is the one who thinks he must still observe the Sabbath, not the one who doesn't. I thought I should point that out since some folks get those two so completely turned around in their minds that they end up with their knickers in a twist and start blaming others rather than their own mental deficiency.

Even if Paul had not said what he said about there no longer being any need for Christians to

observe the Sabbath, there would still be that wickedly sticky issue of what Jesus said about His disciples' observance of the Sabbath. Luke puts it this way:

*Now it came about that on a {certain} Sabbath He was passing through {some} grainfields; and **His disciples were picking and eating the heads {of grain,} rubbing them in their hands.** But some of the Pharisees said, "Why do you do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?" And Jesus answering them said, "Have you not even read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him, how he entered the house of God, and took and ate the consecrated bread which is not lawful for any to eat except the priests alone, and gave it to his companions?" And He was saying to them, "The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."
(Luke 6:1–5)*

I gave you Luke's account of what Jesus said rather than Matthew's or Mark's account (Matt. 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28) because Luke adds one small detail that the other two omit. He says the disciples were "rubbing them in their hands." That sort of activity was not allowed on the Sabbath because it was considered to be work. If the men had just picked the heads of grain and eaten them chaff and all, there might have been some doubt as to whether or not they were working for the food they were eating. But in picking the heads of grain and rubbing them in their hands to separate the grain from the chaff, they were definitely harvesting and threshing grain.

Harvesting and threshing are, by any knowledgeable person's definition, work. (If you doubt that, just ask anyone who has worked on a farm.) And *The Law of Moses* prohibited all kinds of work on the Sabbath. That is why Jesus did not even bother arguing with the Pharisees over the legality of what His disciples had done. He merely pointed out that David had, likewise, done an unlawful thing when he went into the sanctuary and ate the showbread. That bread was holy to the Lord. So I'll let you figure out what *parabolic imagery* Jesus had in mind when He said that. Jesus' main point is, just as God let David get away with what he did, He has granted His Own disciples the right to work on the Sabbath because, as He says, He is Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus' flippant response to the Pharisees doesn't do anything to solve our problem. I pointed it out only because it highlights the difficulty one faces in trying to

excuse God for demanding that certain people be put to death in the Old Testament: He lets others in seemingly similar circumstances get off scot-free. If you haven't yet gotten the point, consider this: Prior to the death of Christ, a member of Israel could get himself killed just for rubbing his hands together on the Sabbath. Yet those of us who are members of Israel—the Body of Jesus Christ—today have no such burden imposed on us. So I ask you: Is that fair? If you look at it from a purely human perspective, I don't think so. But fortunately for those who will be redeemed from the God-forsaken insanity of our present circumstances, God does not look at things the way we do.

The one thing that ties everything related to the death penalty together in one tidy little bundle is knowledge of the fact that the *parabolic imagery* related to the holiness of God stands behind every stipulation in *The Law of Moses* that demanded someone be put to death. In the case of the *parabolic pantomime* in which the sons of Israel were required to rest on the seventh day, Moses plainly tells us the death penalty was imposed because the Sabbath was holy:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for {this} is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. For six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there is a sabbath of complete rest, holy to the LORD; whoever does any work on the sabbath day shall surely be put to death. So the sons of Israel shall observe the sabbath, to celebrate the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.' It is a sign between Me and the sons of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day He ceased {from labor,} and was refreshed."
(Exodus 31:12–17)

As I explained in *Not All Israel Is Israel*, God expected the sons of Israel to "cut off from Israel" anyone who transgressed certain laws. They were to do that by executing the offender. I briefly mentioned in that context that God required them to do that because He considered the sons of Israel to be holy. (See *Not All*

Israel Is Israel, p. 119.) But I did not emphasize the importance of the holiness of God at that time. I will do so now.

Although God demanded that the sons of Israel maintain the holiness of the *corporate* Body of Israel by executing any member of that Body who had become defiled by some specified action, it would take quite a bit of explaining to show you how the holiness of God relates to all the activities for which God required the death penalty. I don't have time to do that here. Nevertheless, you should at least be able to see that God's holiness is in view in connection with the two capital crimes mentioned in the following passage:

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "You shall also say to the sons of Israel, 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel, who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family; and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech. As for the person who turns to mediums and to spiritists, to play the harlot after them, I will also set My face against that person and will cut him off from among his people. You shall consecrate yourselves therefore and be holy, for I am the LORD your God. And you shall keep My statutes and practice them; I am the LORD who sanctifies you.'"
(Leviticus 20:1–8)

It isn't obvious from that passage that the holiness of God is the determining factor in every other instance where the death penalty is invoked. However, Moses says a few things in the Book of Deuteronomy that clarify that fact. In describing the actions that must be taken when an entire community has turned aside from the Truth and adhered to the lies taught concerning other gods, Moses says this:

"If you hear in one of your cities, which the LORD your God is giving you to live in, {anyone} saying {that}

some worthless men have gone out from among you and have seduced the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' (whom you have not known), then you shall investigate and search out and inquire thoroughly. And if it is true {and} the matter established that this abomination has been done among you, **you shall surely strike the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying it and all that is in it and its cattle with the edge of the sword.** Then you shall gather all its booty into the middle of its open square and burn the city and all its booty with fire as a whole burnt offering to the LORD your God; and it shall be a ruin forever. It shall never be rebuilt. **And nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand,** in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have compassion on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers, if you will listen to the voice of the LORD your God, keeping all His commandments which I am commanding you today, and doing what is right in the sight of the LORD your God."
(Deuteronomy 13:12-18)

The statement "and nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand" reveals the way that God looks at the death penalty: It applies to anyone who has somehow become dedicated to Him. That is what the Hebrew verb *herem*—which has here been translated "put under the ban"—actually means. Anything "put under the ban" belongs to God. Animate and inanimate objects could fall under the ban, that is, become God's possession. If the animate object that had become devoted to God happened to be a person, God demanded that it be killed—without exception. That is made clear by the context in which one finds the following verse, where the Hebrew verb *herem* has been rather ambiguously translated "set apart":

"No one who may have been set apart among men shall be ransomed; he shall surely be put to death."
(Leviticus 27:29)

The context tells us that prescription is obviously intended to apply to the members of Israel who have, by transgressing specific stipulations in the Mosaic Law, stupidly placed themselves under the ban (*herem*). But Moses makes it clear by what he says in

Deuteronomy 20 that the ban also covers all those outside Israel who have somehow become devoted to God. To see that, however, one must pay close attention to what he says. He first outlines the guidelines under which the sons of Israel were to conduct military campaigns:

"When you approach a city to fight against it, you shall offer it terms of peace. And it shall come about, if it agrees to make peace with you and opens to you, then it shall be that all the people who are found in it shall become your forced labor and shall serve you. However, if it does not make peace with you, but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it. **When the LORD your God gives it into your hand, you shall strike all the men in it with the edge of the sword.** Only the women and the children and the animals and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourself; and you shall use the spoil of your enemies which the LORD your God has given you. Thus you shall do to all the cities that are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations nearby."
(Deuteronomy 20:10-15)

The ban (*herem*) is not mentioned in that passage. So it is not at all evident that it is the basis on which God has issued the command that all the men in the city must die if their leaders refuse to surrender. Nonetheless, it is. That can be determined from what Moses says next:

"Only in the cities of these peoples that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, **you shall not leave alive anything that breathes. But you shall utterly destroy them, the Hittite and the Amorite, the Canaanite and the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite,** as the LORD your God has commanded you, in order that they may not teach you to do according to all their detestable things which they have done for their gods, so that you would sin against the LORD your God."
(Deuteronomy 20:16-18)

Even though Moses does not mention the ban (*herem*) in that passage, we can be sure that these people had been placed under the ban from what he says in another context:

"If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' you shall not

*be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover, the LORD your God will send the hornet against them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you perish. You shall not dread them, for the LORD your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. And the LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. But the LORD your God shall deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you shall make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods you are to burn with fire; you shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it, for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. **And you shall not bring an abomination into your house, and like it come under the ban; you shall utterly detest it and you shall utterly abhor it, for it is something banned.**"*

(Deuteronomy 7:17–26)

You can see from that passage that not only did God explicitly put these six different peoples under the ban; He included their idols as well. And the only thing a member of Israel had to do to include himself as one of those under the ban was to keep some of the gold or silver of an idol for himself.

In the last two passages I cited, Moses makes it clear that God demanded that the sons of Israel completely exterminate the peoples who were living in the land He had *promised* He would give to Abraham's *Seed* as an *inheritance*. He tells the sons of Israel that is necessary because if they don't eradicate those people, they will eventually cause them to sin against Him. That is, the Canaanites and five other peoples will entice the sons of Israel into doing all the things that they were doing in the worship of their gods. The fool who takes Moses' statement in that regard at face value without bothering to ask "What did God find so detestable about the religious beliefs and practices of these peoples?" will never understand the Truth. That

is because there is a whole lot more to the religious beliefs and rituals of these six peoples than will ever catch the eye of the casual reader or, for that matter, the eye of the biblical scholar. Yet the Prophets of Israel have written volumes concerning Jesus Christ, always speaking in terms of a complex *parabolic imagery* that mocks and ridicules those religious beliefs and rituals.

The following verse confirms that the six peoples mentioned in the passage above were indeed occupying the land that God had *promised* to give to the *Seed* of Abraham:

"So I have come down to deliver them from the power of the Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and spacious land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite."

(Exodus 3:8)

It is interesting to note that on another occasion, Moses tells us four of the six peoples mentioned in that passage had descended from Canaan, the son of Ham:

And Canaan became the father of Sidon, his first-born, and Heth and the Jebusite and the Amorite and the Girgashite and the Hivite and the Arkite and the Sinite and the Arvadite and the Zemarite and the Hamathite; and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad.

(Genesis 10:15–18)

One could erroneously assume on the basis of that passage that God held some underlying hatred for the descendants of Canaan because of Ham's sin or, knowing what went on at the Tower of Babel, because of the role they played in that fiasco. That is not so. The only reason God demanded the extermination of the descendants of Canaan was because their religious beliefs and practices posed a threat to the integrity of *The Teaching* that Moses had *handed down* to the sons of Israel. However, I can tell you—without going into any great detail—that the most threatening of the beliefs and practices of these six peoples were, in fact, those related to the *zonah* ritual. That religious practice is how the Canaanites got lots of other folks into trouble at the Tower of Babel. (See "The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1996;

“Questions & Answers,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1997; and “So Why Would a Nomad ‘Build a House’ and Settle Down?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1997.) And God knew they were about to do it again with the sons of Israel. But that is not the only reason He put them under the ban. They had some other religious beliefs and practices that would eventually prove rather deleterious to what God demanded of the sons of Israel in keeping their covenant with Him.

Although God had no great ulterior motive in demanding the destruction of the Canaanites, that does not *mean* their annihilation was not *meant* to be a part of the *parabolic pantomime* that I have termed “the Passover Parable.” Indeed, it was. The Canaanites were occupying the land that God had *promised* would one day be the *inheritance* of His Firstborn Son Israel.

The sons of Israel were supposed to annihilate the Canaanites and their compatriots to demonstrate what it would be LIKE when Israel—Jesus Christ—*inherits what was promised*. He will annihilate all those folks who are currently residing in the land that God *promised* Abraham his *Seed* would *inherit*. God’s Firstborn Son Israel—the resurrected Body of Jesus Christ—will *inherit* that land when the time comes to *fulfill* that part of *the promise*. If you don’t know what I am *talking about*, I suggest you consider what Paul said concerning the extent of *the promise* that God gave to Abraham. Otherwise, you might have the misfortune of being in the wrong place at the wrong time:

For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith.
(Romans 4:13)

The *parabolic imagery* that the Prophets borrowed from the Canaanite myth concerning the death and resurrection of the god Baal applies specifically to the *parabolic pantomime* in which Joshua (that is, the one that Moses *parabolically* named “Jesus”) led the sons of Israel into the land of the Canaanite, the Hivite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Jebusite, and the Amorite. Knowing that, you can perhaps better understand what Zephaniah is *talking about* when he says this:

*Near is the great day of the LORD,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of the LORD!*

*In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
A day of trumpet and battle cry,
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.
And I will bring distress on men,
So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against the LORD;
And their blood will be poured out like dust,
And their flesh like dung.
Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to deliver them
On the day of the LORD’s wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth.
(Zephaniah 1:14–18)*

In light of the fact that the Day of the Lord—the time when all Israel will be resurrected to *inherit the promise*—is rapidly approaching, I hardly see the need for some dense fellow to try to explain or defend God’s destruction of a few hundred thousand folks in olden days. That fool may not know it, but he will soon have occasion to explain and defend God’s annihilation of billions. Of course, since God will bring all those folks back to life on Judgment Day, the only thing that really matters in the long run is not how they died in the flesh but whether or not they will be allowed to live in the spirit. Now *that* is certainly an issue that fools can get their teeth into and argue this way and that, like two dogs fighting over a dead squirrel.

Editor: While we are on the subject of violent death at God’s command, it appears that the Scriptures, Psalms and Proverbs especially (e.g., Ps. 27:12; Prov. 4:17; 10:11; 24:2), often use violence as a parabolic image to refer to false teachers and/or those who seek to destroy the Truth. Can you explain a bit more about the basis for violence as a parabolic image, if indeed it is one? How does it fit together with other parabolic images taken from ancient mythology?

Elijah: The *parabolic image* you have noticed actually involves much more than just simple violence. The Prophets appropriated the *parabolic imagery* in which violence plays a part from the various ancient Near Eastern mythological accounts of creation. In that mythological context, it describes the violent conflict that stems from the waters of chaos—the salt-water Sea—constantly seeking to suck up and destroy the waters of life—that is, the waters that come down as rain and/or the subterranean waters that flow out of the springs of the Earth.

On the basis of what little I have told you about the Canaanite myth regarding the death and resurrection of Baal, you should be able to see how he and his adversaries, Prince Sea and Judge River, fit into that general scheme. [See “They Got God at a Fire Sale Price (and a Whole Lot More Than They Bargained For)—Part I and Part II,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April and July 1999.]

An understanding of the Baal myth is absolutely essential to one’s comprehension of what the Prophets have said about the death and Resurrection of “*The Man*” that God is currently in the process of creating in His Own image and likeness. However, you can find the *parabolic imagery* the Prophets had in mind depicted most vividly in the ancient Akkadian myth *Enuma Elish*. An Egyptian variant of that myth fills in some of the more interesting details by describing how the serpent Apophis takes his station every night so as to swallow the sun god Re as he traverses the realm of the dead and thereby defeat the resurrection of Osiris. But that’s another story.

If you know anything at all about the Akkadian myth *Enuma Elish*, you probably already know it is a royal hymn that explains how the god Marduk became king of the gods after he triumphed over Tiamat—the watery Deep. That is essentially the same story the Canaanites told about Baal’s triumph over Prince Sea. Although the Akkadian version is obviously a story about creation, scholars have so far failed to agree on the Canaanite motif inherent in the myth of Baal—which explains how he got his “house built” after his triumph over Prince Sea and Judge River. That’s not surprising. Scholars have no idea what either myth is *talking about*. The Truth is, both of them are trying to explain the same thing—how the Resurrection of “*The Man*” Whom God has *promised* authority over all things fits in with His ongoing process of Creation.

Psalm 2 is one of the most succinct statements of that part of *The Teaching* which the ancients have distorted in the two myths I mentioned above. Listen to what the psalmist says:

*Why are the nations in an uproar,
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of the earth take their stand,
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the LORD and against His Anointed:
“Let us tear their fetters apart,
And cast away their cords from us!”
He who sits in the heavens laughs,
The Lord scoffs at them.
Then He will speak to them in His anger
And terrify them in His fury:
“But as for Me, I have installed My King
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”
(Psalm 2:1–6)*

The *parabolic imagery* the psalmist had in mind is one in which the violence of mankind is directed at everything that God seeks to accomplish through the Creation of “*The Man*” in His Own image and likeness. However, one must understand that the hatred of fools is directed at all those who know and believe the Truth concerning the statement I just made. Jesus concisely stated the Truth of the matter when He said this:

*“If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. He who hates Me hates My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would not have sin; but now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But {they have done this} in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘THEY HATED ME WITHOUT A CAUSE.’ When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, {that is} the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me, and you {will} bear witness also, because you have been with Me from the beginning. These things I have spoken to you, that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me.”
(John 15:22–16:3)*

The Pretenders in the Church today would never admit—even to themselves—the absolute hatred they feel toward anyone who would deign to speak the Truth concerning the impending wrath of the God Who is, rather than agree with them in their belief in the absolute benevolence and grace of their goofy god of unconditional love. Yet they feel it just the same. And the hatred they feel toward all those who would dare to believe in the God Who is will one day manifest itself against those of us who know and understand the Truth. Too late will fools discover that they have stupidly allowed themselves to be duped into going along with Satan’s last desperate attempt at thwarting God’s completion of this Creation according to the specifications He has outlined in the Word of God. God’s plan is that “*The Man*” Whom He is creating in His Own image and likeness will rule as King forever over all of His Creation. The psalmist who wrote Psalm 2 goes on to describe God’s plan this way:

*“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:
He said to Me, ‘Thou art My Son,
Today I have begotten Thee.
Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations
as Thine inheritance,
And the {very} ends of the earth as Thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron,
Thou shalt shatter them like earthenware.”
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 2:7–12)*

Editor: *The fact that you have not discussed the parabolic image of violence before suggests there are probably a lot of other parabolic images in the Scriptures that you have yet to discuss. Can you pick one or two of these images and tell us how they are used in The Teaching? That is, tell us what they parabolically represent and why they are significant?*

Elijah: I cannot recall a lot of the things I have written over the past decade because I have been struggling

the entire time with the impaired memory and mental “fuzzies” that accompany fibromyalgia, that is, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. But I would imagine I have mentioned, or at least alluded to, most of the *parabolic images* that I currently understand. For example, I have mentioned the *parabolic image* of the serpent on various occasions. But I doubt that I have said much more than that it is a *parabolic image* of Satan, which should be obvious to anyone who has read the Book of Revelation or Moses’ account of the Fall of Adam and Eve. To be specific, the serpent is an image that describes what Satan IS LIKE when he takes on the form of a man. Obviously, that must include the time in the near future when he is going to appear in the person of the Antichrist. But one must understand the source of all the *parabolic imagery* of which that one *parabolic image* is a part before one can grasp its *meaning* and *significance*. The following verse provides the information one needs to know to be able to gain insight into the Prophets’ use of the *image*:

*In that day the LORD will punish Leviathan
the fleeing serpent,
With His fierce and great and mighty sword,
Even Leviathan the twisted serpent;
And He will kill the dragon who {lives} in the sea.
(Isaiah 27:1)*

That verse is an excellent example of how translators have inadvertently hidden the Truth from the English reader. The noun translated “dragon” is exactly the same noun that has been translated “serpent” in the following context, where it occurs three times:

*Now the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying, “When Pharaoh speaks to you, saying, ‘Work a miracle,’ then you shall say to Aaron, ‘Take your staff and throw {it} down before Pharaoh, {that} it may become a **serpent**.”” So Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh, and thus they did just as the LORD had commanded; and Aaron threw his staff down before Pharaoh and his servants, and it became a **serpent**. Then Pharaoh also called for {the} wise men and {the} sorcerers, and they also, the magicians of Egypt, did the same with their secret arts. For each one threw down his staff and they turned into **serpents**. But Aaron’s staff swallowed up their staffs. Yet Pharaoh’s heart was hardened, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had said.
(Exodus 7:8–13)*

Obviously, some *oral tradition* demands that translators translate the Hebrew word *tanin* as “serpent” in that passage. Otherwise, they would choose another word. There is no way of knowing whether or not the tradition that the *tanin* was a serpent is valid, but there is every indication that it is. The Septuagint—which is the earliest Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures—has translated it as “dragon.” That same Greek word has been translated “dragon” in this verse:

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.
(Revelation 12:9)

We do know for a fact that Moses’ staff had been turned into a snake on at least one other occasion. God Himself refers to it in the following verse:

Then the LORD said to Moses, “Pharaoh’s heart is stubborn; he refuses to let the people go. Go to Pharaoh in the morning as he is going out to the water, and station yourself to meet him on the bank of the Nile; and you shall take in your hand the staff that was turned into a serpent.”
(Exodus 7:14–15)

The word translated “serpent” in verse 15 is not the same word (*tanin*) translated “serpent” in the immediately preceding verses. It is the Hebrew word (*nachas*) that is ordinarily used to designate a serpent. However, in using that term, God is not necessarily referring to the fact that Moses’ staff had been turned into a *tanin* before Pharaoh. He could just as easily have in mind an earlier occasion on which Aaron threw down Moses’ staff. There the text plainly states it turned into a snake:

*Then Moses answered and said, “What if they will not believe me, or listen to what I say? For they may say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’” And the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” And he said, “A staff.” Then He said, “Throw it on the ground.” So he threw it on the ground, and it became a **serpent**; and Moses fled from it. But the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand and grasp {it} by its tail”—so he stretched out his hand and caught it, and it became a staff in his hand—*

“that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.” And the LORD furthermore said to him, “Now put your hand into your bosom.” So he put his hand into his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous like snow. Then He said, “Put your hand into your bosom again.” So he put his hand into his bosom again; and when he took it out of his bosom, behold, it was restored like {the rest of} his flesh. “And it shall come about that if they will not believe you or heed the witness of the first sign, they may believe the witness of the last sign. But it shall be that if they will not believe even these two signs or heed what you say, then you shall take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground; and the water which you take from the Nile will become blood on the dry ground.”
(Exodus 4:1–9)

We can be certain that God did not have in mind the occasion on which Aaron threw down Moses’ staff and it became a *tanin* when He showed Moses these three signs. That much at least is obvious from the following passage, which tells us Moses used the signs as God intended and they had their desired effect:

Then Moses and Aaron went and assembled all the elders of the sons of Israel; and Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. He then performed the signs in the sight of the people. So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD was concerned about the sons of Israel and that He had seen their affliction, then they bowed low and worshiped.
(Exodus 4:29–31)

Since there is not—to my knowledge—anyone alive today who saw what Aaron’s staff became when he threw it down before Pharaoh, we have no way of knowing whether it actually was a serpent and, if so, what kind of serpent a *tanin* was. However, one thing is fairly certain: If it was a serpent (which I have no doubt it was), it must have been some sort of sea serpent. I say that not only because Isaiah 27:1 plainly tells us the *tanin* lived in the sea, but also because Moses does the same thing:

Then God said, “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens.” And God created the great sea

monsters, and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarmed after their kind, and every winged bird after its kind; and God saw that it was good. And God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth."

(Genesis 1:20–22)

In that verse, the translator has translated the Hebrew *tanin* as "sea monster" because he could see that Moses is obviously referring to a creature that dwells in the sea. That same creature is in view in Ezekiel 29, where Ezekiel uses the Hebrew term *tanin* to speak *parabolically* about the Antichrist. In this case, the translator has translated *tanin* as "monster" in spite of the fact that the *parabolic image* most likely points to an ordinary water snake that could be found slithering around the salt-water marshes of the Nile River delta:

"Son of man, set your face against Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and prophesy against him and against all Egypt. Speak and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD,

"Behold, I am against you, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, The great monster that lies in the midst of his rivers, That has said,

'My Nile is mine, and I myself have made it.' And I shall put hooks in your jaws, And I shall make the fish of your rivers cling to your scales. And I shall bring you up out of the midst of your rivers, And all the fish of your rivers will cling to your scales. And I shall abandon you to the wilderness,

you and all the fish of your rivers; You will fall on the open field; you will not be brought together or gathered. I have given you for food to the beasts of the earth and to the birds of the sky.

Then all the inhabitants of Egypt will know that I am the LORD, Because they have been {only} a staff {made} of reed to the house of Israel.'"

(Ezekiel 29:2–6)

Ezekiel uses the *tanin* as a *parabolic image* again in Chapter 32, where he continues *talking about* what God plans to do with Satan after he appears as the Antichrist:

And it came about in the twelfth year, in the twelfth {month,} on the first of the month, that the word of the LORD came to me saying, "Son of man, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh king of Egypt, and say to him, 'You compared yourself to a young lion of the nations, Yet you are like the monster in the seas; And you burst forth in your rivers, And muddied the waters with your feet, And fouled their rivers.'"

Thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will spread My net over you With a company of many peoples, And they shall lift you up in My net. And I will leave you on the land; I will cast you on the open field. And I will cause all the birds of the heavens to dwell on you, And I will satisfy the beasts of the whole earth with you. And I will lay your flesh on the mountains, And fill the valleys with your refuse. I will also make the land drink the discharge of your blood, As far as the mountains, And the ravines shall be full of you. And when {I} extinguish you, I will cover the heavens, and darken their stars; I will cover the sun with a cloud, And the moon shall not give its light. All the shining lights in the heavens I will darken over you And will set darkness on your land," Declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 32:1–8)

The psalmist says much the same thing about the destruction of the Antichrist in Psalm 74. However, instead of using the Hebrew term *tanin* as Ezekiel does, he uses the term *Leviathan*, which—if you will remember—Isaiah used as a synonym for *tanin* in Isaiah 27:1. The psalmist says this:

Yet God is my king from of old, Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth. Thou didst divide the sea by Thy strength; Thou didst break the heads of the sea monsters in the waters. Thou didst crush the heads of Leviathan; Thou didst give him as food for the creatures of the wilderness. Thou didst break open springs and torrents;

*Thou didst dry up ever-flowing streams.
(Psalm 74:12–15)*

Toward the end of the Book of Job, when God finally confronts Job, He mentions his total inability to take on the serpent:

*“Can you draw out Leviathan with a fishhook?
Or press down his tongue with a cord?
Can you put a rope in his nose?
Or pierce his jaw with a hook?
Will he make many supplications to you?
Or will he speak to you soft words?
Will he make a covenant with you?
Will you take him for a servant forever?
Will you play with him as with a bird?
Or will you bind him for your maidens?
Will the traders bargain over him?
Will they divide him among the merchants?
Can you fill his skin with harpoons,
Or his head with fishing spears?
Lay your hand on him;
Remember the battle; you will not do it again!
Behold, your expectation is false;
Will you be laid low even at the sight of him?
No one is so fierce that he dares to arouse him;
Who then is he that can stand before Me?”
(Job 41:1–10)*

God is speaking *parabolically* concerning Satan. But it is impossible to understand how that is or what the Prophets have said about the Lord—that is, Jesus Christ, the God “He will become”—killing Leviathan, the Serpent that lives in the Sea, if one does not know that Baal had to kill that mythological creature before his triumph over Prince Sea and Judge River could be deemed complete. In fact, the Canaanite myth that describes the conflict between Baal and Prince Sea uses the same two words that we have been looking at—*tanin* and *leviathan*—to tell us that only after defeating this mythological serpent could Baal be resurrected. That is what the Prophet Isaiah is *talking about* when he *parabolically* calls to the Body of Jesus Christ, imploring Him to awaken on the Morning of the Resurrection:

*Awake, awake, put on strength,
O arm of the LORD;
Awake as in the days of old, the generations of long ago.*

*Was it not Thou who cut Rahab in pieces,
Who pierced the dragon?
Was it not Thou who dried up the sea,
The waters of the great deep;
Who made the depths of the sea a pathway
For the redeemed to cross over?
So the ransomed of the LORD will return,
And come with joyful shouting to Zion;
And everlasting joy {will be} on their heads.
They will obtain gladness and joy,
And sorrow and sighing will flee away.
(Isaiah 51:9–11)*

In that passage, Isaiah has several different *parabolic images* in mind. The two most obvious are the image of the serpent and the image of “*The Way*.” If you are familiar with what I have written about “*The Way*,” you should at least be able to see how he is using that *mythological image* in conjunction with the *parabolic image* of the Serpent that dwells in the Sea. As I told you in *The Way, The Truth, The Life*, the ancients believed there was a “way” the deceased could follow to pass through the Sea without even getting their feet wet. The tongue-in-cheek part of that particular *parabolic image* lies in the fact that to find that “way,” the ancients believed the deceased had to have some special knowledge of the lay of the land of the dead. As far as the Prophets were concerned in their ridicule of these myths, that esoteric knowledge of death was, in and of itself, “*The Way*.” That is, “*The only Way*” to make it through death and find one’s way to the Mountain of God was *The Teaching of Moses*. But that is not what we are *talking about* here.

In Isaiah 51:9, Isaiah has paralleled the Hebrew noun *tanin* (“sea serpent”) with a Hebrew noun that is not normally even translated (*rahab*). Instead, it is transliterated as *Rahab*. That noun occurs in yet another context where it, too, is linked to the Sea:

*A Maskil of Ethan the Ezrahite.
I will sing of the lovingkindness of the LORD forever;
To all generations I will make known Thy faithfulness
with my mouth.
For I have said, “Lovingkindness will be built up forever;
In the heavens Thou wilt establish Thy faithfulness.
I have made a covenant with My chosen;
I have sworn to David My servant,
I will establish your seed forever,*

*And build up your throne to all generations.”
Selah.
And the heavens will praise Thy wonders, O LORD;
Thy faithfulness also in the assembly of the holy ones.
For who in the skies is comparable to the LORD?
Who among the sons of the mighty is like the LORD,
A God greatly feared in the council of the holy ones,
And awesome above all those who are around Him?
O LORD God of hosts, who is like Thee, O mighty LORD?
Thy faithfulness also surrounds Thee.
Thou dost rule the swelling of the sea;
When its waves rise, Thou dost still them.
Thou Thyself didst crush Rahab
like one who is slain;
Thou didst scatter Thine enemies
with Thy mighty arm.
(Psalm 89:1–10)*

If you were paying close attention when you read that psalm, you should have noticed that the psalmist is talking about *the promise* that God gave to David through the Prophet Nathan (2 Sam. 7). That prophecy not only speaks concerning the first occasion on which God “built a house” for David, it speaks concerning the second as well. However, the second time around God not only “built *The House*” of David, He “built” His “house” as well. That is what the psalmist has in mind when he mentions the crushing of Rahab—that is, Leviathan, the serpent that dwells in the Sea. In so doing, he is *parabolically* alluding to those events that will immediately precede the Resurrection of the Body of Jesus Christ as the King of all Creation. Notice I said, “will immediately precede.” Verbal tense is important.

Job discloses his detailed knowledge of *The Teaching* by describing the awesome power of Jesus Christ, the Word of God:

*“The pillars of heaven tremble,
And are amazed at His rebuke.
He quieted the sea with His power,
And by His understanding He shattered Rahab.
By His breath the heavens are cleared;
His hand has pierced the fleeing serpent.
Behold, these are the fringes of His ways;
And how faint a word we hear of Him!
But His mighty thunder, who can understand?”
(Job 26:11–14)*

Job is obviously using the *parabolic image* that the Prophets based on the mythological serpent who lived in the Sea, where he sought to thwart the resurrection of Baal. Job’s mention of thunder is a mocking allusion to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* in which the Prophets ridiculed the ancients’ belief that when Baal—the “Rider on the Clouds”—entered into the resurrection and spoke, it thundered. You should at least be able to understand those things on the basis of what I have explained elsewhere. However, it may not have occurred to you that Job, as the Prophets are wont to do, is using the Prophetic Perfect to speak concerning the future. He is *talking about* the same events that the Apostle John *parabolically* describes this way:

*And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon. And the dragon and his angels waged war, and they were not strong enough, and there was no longer a place found for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, “Now the salvation, and the power, and the kingdom of our God and the authority of His Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them before our God day and night. And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has {only} a short time.” And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male {child.} And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.
(Revelation 12:7–17)*

Those True Believers who can see the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* with “the eyes of the heart” already know what I am *talking about*. *Parabolically speaking*, the Body of Jesus Christ has not yet been resurrected. It is still lying in state, awaiting the outcome of that great battle between “*The Man*” and the serpent who lives in the Sea. And those who are preparing themselves for that battle already know the answer to the question that Jesus asked after He told this parable about the Antichrist:

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, “There was in a certain city a judge who did not fear God, and did not respect man. And there was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, ‘Give me legal protection from my opponent.’ And for a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, lest by continually coming she wear me out.’” And the Lord said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now shall not God bring about justice for His elect, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? I tell you that He will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”
(Luke 18:1–8)

Now that I’ve explained the *parabolic image* in which Satan IS LIKE a sea serpent, I’ll let you figure out what the *parabolic image* of the Sea represents. Here’s your first clue. Habakkuk is *talking about* the defeat of the Antichrist:

*Did the LORD rage against the rivers,
Or {was} Thine anger against the rivers,
Or {was} Thy wrath against the sea,
That Thou didst ride on Thy horses,
On Thy chariots of salvation?
Thy bow was made bare,
The rods of chastisement were sworn.
Selah.
Thou didst cleave the earth with rivers.
The mountains saw Thee {and} quaked;
The downpour of waters swept by.
The deep uttered forth its voice,
It lifted high its hands.
Sun {and} moon stood in their places;*

*They went away at the light of Thine arrows,
At the radiance of Thy gleaming spear.
In indignation Thou didst march through the earth;
In anger Thou didst trample the nations.
Thou didst go forth for the salvation of Thy people,
For the salvation of Thine anointed.
Thou didst strike the head of the house of the evil
To lay him open from thigh to neck.
Selah.*

*Thou didst pierce with his own spears
The head of his throngs.
They stormed in to scatter us;
Their exultation {was} like those
Who devour the oppressed in secret.
Thou didst tread on the sea with Thy horses,
On the surge of many waters.
(Habakkuk 3:8–15)*

If you need another clue, here’s one that should help: Investigate the Prophets’ use of the phrase “many waters”—which Habakkuk has clearly identified as a synonym for “the sea.” Among others, you will find this interesting verse:

*Alas, the uproar of many peoples
Who roar like the roaring of the seas,
And the rumbling of nations
Who rush on like the rumbling of mighty waters!
The nations rumble on like the rumbling of many waters,
But He will rebuke them and they will flee far away,
And be chased like chaff in the mountains before the wind,
Or like whirling dust before a gale.
(Isaiah 17:12–13)*

Editor: *We have heard from several subscribers in the last year who have wondered what you think of Y2K. Since the new year is almost upon us, would you share your thoughts on this matter? Do you think Y2K will create the sort of chaos some are suggesting, or do you think the whole matter has been blown out of proportion?*

Elijah: Doomsayers have had a field day with the Y2K goofiness. And I’m sure that more than one gullible sort has spent more than his fair share on survival gear. Fortunately, those things will not see much use this time around. But it might be a good idea for you to pick up a few when they make their way into the garage sales. They could come in handy before long. ■