



## THE VOICE of ELIJAH

### Which Is More Important? The Name or the Person?

Therefore neither would the Lord, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the apostles, have ever named as God, definitely and absolutely, him who was not God, unless he were truly God; nor would they have named any one in his own person Lord, except God the Father ruling over all, and His Son who has received dominion from His Father over all creation, as this passage has it: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool."

Here the [Scripture] represents to us the Father addressing the Son; He who gave Him the inheritance of the heathen, and subjected to Him all His enemies. Since, therefore, the Father is truly Lord, and the Son truly Lord, the Holy Spirit has fitly designated them by the title of Lord. And again, referring to the destruction of the Sodomites, the Scripture says, "Then the LORD rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone from the LORD out of heaven."

For it here points out that the Son, who had also been talking with Abraham, had received power to judge the Sodomites for their wickedness. And this [text following] does declare the same truth: "Thy throne, O God; is for ever and ever—the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity: therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee." For the Spirit designates both [of them] by the name of God—both Him who is anointed as Son, and Him who does anoint, that is, the Father.

And again: "God stood in the congregation of the gods, He judges among the gods." He [here] refers to the Father and the Son, and those who have received the adoption; but these are the Church. For she is the synagogue of God, which God—that is, the Son Himself—has gathered by Himself. Of whom He again speaks: "The God of gods, the Lord hath spoken, and hath called the earth." Who is meant by God? He of whom He

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has said, "God shall come openly, our God, and shall not keep silence;" that is, the Son, who came manifested to men, who said, "I have openly appeared to those who seek Me not." But of what gods [does he speak]? [Of those] to whom He says, "I have said, Ye are gods, and all sons of the Most High." To those, no doubt, who have received the grace of the "adoption, by which we cry, Abba Father."

Wherefore, as I have already stated, no other is named as God, or is called Lord, except Him who is God and Lord of all, who also said to Moses, "I AM THAT I AM. And thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: He who is, hath sent me unto you;" and His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who makes those that believe in His name the sons of God.

And again, when the Son speaks to Moses, He says, "I am come down to deliver this people." For it is He who descended and ascended for the salvation of men. Therefore God has been declared through the Son, who is in the Father, and has the Father in Himself—He WHO IS, the Father bearing witness to the Son, and the Son announcing the Father.—As also Isaiah says, "I too am witness," he declares, "saith the LORD God, and the Son whom I have chosen, that ye may know, and believe, and understand that I AM."

When, however, the Scripture terms them [gods] which are no gods, it does not, as I have already remarked, declare them as gods in every sense, but with a certain addition and signification, by which they are shown to be no gods at all.

Irenaeus, "Against Heresies," Book iii, Chap. vi, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1867), Vol. 1, pp. 418–419.

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## *A Note From the Editor*

I am pleased to announce that The Elijah Project, in conjunction with *The Voice of Elijah*<sup>®</sup>, will be hosting a seminar on the Book of Isaiah on October 23 and 24 of this year. Like *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar six years ago, *The Isaiah Seminar* will be held in Dallas and is open to any and all who wish to attend. The sessions are scheduled for all day Saturday, October 23 (most likely beginning at 9 a.m.) and half a day on Sunday, October 24 (probably ending around noon). The registration fee is \$50 per person or \$75 for two. This price entitles each attendee to receive a syllabus the day of the seminar and each registered individual or couple to receive a copy of the audiotapes, transcript, and Larry Harper's translation of relevant portions of the Book of Isaiah, when these items become available. The tapes, transcript, and translation will probably be available by the summer of 2000.

To help us gauge the level of interest in *The Isaiah Seminar* and better determine the size of the facility we will need, we ask that you contact us as soon as possible if you think you might be attending. Note that I said "might." You are not obligating yourself in any way by contacting us. We just need to have some idea how many people have serious thoughts of attending so we can plan accordingly. We only need to hear from those who have a realistic expectation of attending. If this describes you, we really need to hear from you. You can contact us by mail using the flyer and pre-addressed envelope included with this newsletter, or you can call us at (972) 635-2021 and leave a brief message. Please be sure to state your name, address, and the number of persons who might be attending. We will contact you with more information and seek confirmation at a later time.

If you would like to attend *The Isaiah Seminar* but can't, don't fret. You will have every opportunity to receive your own copy of the audiotapes, transcript, and Larry's translation of Isaiah when they become available. I know many of you are anxious for this information now, but I promise you that your patience will be rewarded. For now, the "Questions & Answers" section of this newsletter provides greater insight into what to expect from *The Isaiah Seminar*.

Many of you are aware that we recently revamped *The Way, The Truth, The Life* audiotapes. Not only did we enhance the quality of the sound through a process called digital remastering, we also published a complete transcript of the tapes in book form. The additional benefit of this transcript is that you can take it practically anywhere, make notes in it, highlight it, and locate specific information faster and easier than is possible with tapes. Of course, the audiotapes remain important in their own right because you can listen to them while driving or doing other activities and because the spoken word conveys information with greater authority than the written word, due to the emotion, inflection, and emphasis of the speaker.

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If you have not yet had the privilege of hearing *The Way, The Truth, The Life*, now is the perfect opportunity for you to do so. We are currently offering *The Way, The Truth, The Life*—eight audiotapes housed in a handy cassette binder with a transcript containing footnotes and graphics—at a special price of \$30. This is a savings of \$10 and is only valid until October 1, 1999. So don't wait to order. As many have learned already, *The Way, The Truth, The Life* provides True Believers with tremendous insight into things they need to know to understand what God is doing in these Last Days.

### *Send in Your Questions*

For the past four years, I alone have submitted questions that The Elijah Project has answered in the "Questions & Answers" section of this newsletter. However, I now invite you to submit your own questions for consideration. I know many of you have questions you would like answered. And since your question may be a question that other subscribers have as well, everyone would benefit from your seeking an answer.

I can't promise that every question submitted will appear in the newsletter. But I can promise you that every question will be carefully considered. Don't be concerned about asking "dumb" questions. If you are sincerely seeking Truth, no question is dumb. And even if it were, I doubt that anyone could possibly surpass the number of "dumb" questions I have asked since the fall of 1991, when I first became a subscriber. So, please, send questions using the pre-addressed envelope in this newsletter. All I ask is that you make your questions legible. I would prefer you use a computer or typewriter. If you must write out your question(s), please be as neat as possible. I will do my best to submit each question just as you ask it. However, I must reserve the right to make minor edits.

Bear in mind that we cannot answer any of your questions personally. They will be answered in the newsletter where everyone can benefit from them. It's possible that a question submitted today

may not be answered for years, yet a question submitted six months from now may be answered right away. It all depends on the question. So don't stop sending in questions just because none of your previous questions have yet been answered. Your next question may be the one.

### *Rereading Past Newsletters*

If it has been a while since you went back and reread some of the early (but never old) newsletters, I would encourage you to take some time now to do it. I do so periodically and find that each new reading teaches me something new, reinforces what I learned previously, or reminds me of things I had forgotten. I also find that many of the things I didn't understand the first time through, or only vaguely understood, make a lot more sense in light of things I have learned in the meantime. Even though I thought I understood most of what I read initially, each new reading makes me aware there is always something relevant I didn't pick up on earlier.

The Truth is, a newsletter often presents so much new information that few, if any, of us can absorb it all on first reading. Information overload simply gets the better of us. That's why I encourage you, if you haven't already, to reread past newsletters several times to make sure you glean as much information as possible from each one.

Now that many of you can see there is a larger framework into which everything else fits, you should be able to piece together some of the more intricate details that fit into that framework. If you haven't figured it out yet, many of those details have been (intentionally) scattered throughout the various newsletters dating back to the first issue (October 1990). If you have all these back issues, I encourage you to read them again and again. If you don't, I encourage you to get them (see the Order Form in this issue) because they certainly contain information essential to mastering The Teaching.

*Allen Fries*

# They Got God at a Fire Sale Price (and a Whole Lot More Than They Bargained For)—Part I

*In the “Questions & Answers” section of this issue of **The Voice of Elijah**®, I was asked to explain where the quote found in Matthew 27:9–10 can ostensibly be found in the Old Testament. The text appears to be pointing to Zechariah 11:12–13, yet Matthew seems to indicate he has taken it from Jeremiah. Since scholars have had tremendous difficulty in explaining what Matthew intended, one should not expect an easy resolution to the problem. I will address the issue of what Matthew was talking about in two articles—one in this issue and one in the next.*

In Matthew 27, Matthew is describing what happened when Judas saw that his betrayal of Jesus could easily lead to His Crucifixion:

*Now when morning had come, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death; and they bound Him, and led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate the governor. Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.” But they said, “What is that to us? See {to that} yourself!” And he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, “It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood.” And they counseled together and with the money bought the Potter’s Field as a burial place for strangers. For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled,*

*saying, “AND THEY TOOK THE THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER, THE PRICE OF THE ONE WHOSE PRICE HAD BEEN SET by the sons of Israel; AND THEY GAVE THEM FOR THE POTTER’S FIELD, AS THE LORD DIRECTED ME.”  
(Matthew 27:1–10)*

The question that has puzzled biblical commentators for centuries is why, in Matthew 27:9–10, Matthew attributes a statement to Jeremiah when it cannot be found anywhere in the Book of Jeremiah. Even more perplexing is the fact that a statement similar to the one Matthew attributes to Jeremiah occurs in Zechariah 11:12–13. So on the surface, it appears that Matthew is referring to what Zechariah wrote and has mistakenly attributed it to Jeremiah. Some mentally lazy “scholars” assume that to be the case, but they are mistaken.

Conservative scholars—especially those who favor the literal interpretation of the Scriptures—are hesitant to admit that Matthew might be quoting Zechariah. After all, where would that leave their cherished belief that the Scriptures are completely inerrant in the original autographs? Evidently, somewhere in limbo. They don’t know it, but the literal interpretation of Scripture to which they cling so tightly leaves them there too. (See “Did You Mean That Literally?” and “The Origen of Folly,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1993.) So why would they bother quibbling over a relatively minor mistake like forgetting which book a quote comes from?

The Truth is, Matthew is pointing to Zechariah 11:12–13, but he is not *quoting* what the Prophet wrote; he is using it to paraphrase what Zechariah said in the *parabolic pantomime* described in that passage. Matthew is able to do that because he understands the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the *parabolic pantomime*

Zechariah conducted. He attributes his paraphrase of Zechariah to Jeremiah only because he knows that Jeremiah is the one Prophet who has the most to say about the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind Zechariah's *parabolic pantomime*.

Before we look at Zechariah and Jeremiah, there are a couple of things you need to know about the way Matthew 27:1–10 is normally translated. I just mentioned the first: Matthew is not quoting Zechariah; he is paraphrasing what Zechariah said by means of *parabolic pantomime*. He did that to show how the *parabolic imagery* in that *parabolic pantomime* fits the circumstances in which Judas committed suicide. So the SMALL CAPS that publishers use to indicate to the reader that Matthew was intending to quote the Greek Septuagint are more than just misleading. They completely conceal the Truth. Matthew paraphrases Zechariah 11:12–13 and attributes the fulfillment of the statement to Jeremiah only because in his *parabolic pantomime*, the Prophet Zechariah alludes to the same *parabolic imagery* that Jeremiah explains more fully.

The second crucial thing about Matthew 27:1–10 that you need to know is that the phrase “Potter’s Field” in verses 7 and 10 should actually be translated “the field of the potter.” Matthew is telling us that since the chief priests could not accept the money they had paid Judas to betray Christ, they used it to buy a piece of property from a potter. They then made that land a public cemetery in which Gentiles were buried. Subsequently, that cemetery became known as “the Field of Blood.”

Matthew seems to infer that the designation “the Field of Blood” came from what the chief priests said about the silver being “the price of blood.” Although some commentators believe otherwise, in the following passage, Luke also indicates the field was bought with the “blood money” that Judas received:

*And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said, “Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry.” (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became*

*known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) “For it is written in the book of Psalms, ‘LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO MAN DWELL IN IT’; and, ‘HIS OFFICE LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE.’*

*It is therefore necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—beginning with the baptism of John, until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these should become a witness with us of His resurrection.” And they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, “Thou, Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two Thou hast chosen to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:15–26)*

The key sentence you need to pay attention to in that passage is this: “This man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness.” In the minds of Early Christians, Judas himself—not the priests—bought the Field of Blood with the money he got for betraying Jesus. Since the chief priests could not bring themselves to accept the money, they were merely acting as his agents in a real estate transaction with a potter.

To understand the mind-set of Christians in this regard, you must consider the *context* in which Luke mentions this bit of information: The disciples of Jesus were trying to determine who should replace Judas as one of the twelve Apostles. They knew that Jesus had previously designated Judas as one of the Twelve, who were the *parabolic* shepherds of Israel. That, in turn, explains *why* Matthew connected Judas’ betrayal to the following passage from the Book of Zechariah. As you read what the Prophet Zechariah wrote, keep in mind the fact that he is describing a *parabolic pantomime* God told him to conduct. In it, he is portraying the actions of a foolish shepherd—in this case, Judas—who had been chosen to shepherd the sons of Israel:

*Thus says the LORD my God, “Pasture the flock {doomed} to slaughter. Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and {each of} those who sell them says, ‘Blessed be the LORD, for I have become rich!’ And*

their own shepherds have no pity on them. For I shall no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land," declares the LORD; "but behold, I shall cause the men to fall, each into another's power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I shall not deliver {them} from their power." So I pastured the flock {doomed} to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. **And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor, and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock.** Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me. Then I said, "I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another's flesh." **And I took my staff, Favor, and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples.** So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the LORD. **And I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give {me} my wages; but if not, never mind!"** So they weighed out thirty {shekels} of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, {that} magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty {shekels} of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD. Then I cut my second staff, Union, in pieces, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

(Zechariah 11:4–14)

Without telling you *what* Zechariah has said in that passage or explaining *why* he said it, I will tell you he is *talking about* the way God views what happened when the betrayal of Jesus Christ by Judas resulted in His Crucifixion. God's "Favor" and "Union" with "The House" of Israel—Jesus Christ—were broken. That's when the fate of Christ was sealed. But to fully understand what those two staffs *signify*, you need to know a whole lot more about the *parabolic imagery* related to the message of "The House" than I have explained to this point.

For now, there is only one thing you need to note about the passage above: At the command of the Lord, Zechariah conducted a *parabolic pantomime* of events that occurred some five hundred years after his day. In that *parabolic pantomime*, he tells us how a worthless *parabolic* shepherd of Israel would be paid thirty pieces of silver—or as the Lord says, "{that} magnificent price at which I was valued by them"—for

not having shepherded the people of Israel as he was expected to. He would then take that money and toss it to a potter—in the Temple.

Matthew clearly understood the *meaning* and *significance* of Zechariah's *parabolic pantomime*. That's *why* he reminds us of what Zechariah said in that pantomime by paraphrasing the text of Zechariah 11:12–13 so that it points directly to Judas as the worthless shepherd who cast thirty pieces of silver to a potter in the sanctuary of the Temple. But Matthew did that because he understood the much larger *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic pantomime* in which Jesus Christ died on a cross as the Passover Lamb of God. That's *why* he attributes his paraphrase of Zechariah's prophecy to Jeremiah.

Matthew assumes his reader knows that the Prophet Jeremiah has said a lot more about the *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic imagery* of the Passover Parable that Zechariah used in his *parabolic pantomime*. In the overall scheme of things, Judas was nothing more than a harbinger of that worthless individual who is yet to come, pretending to be the One True Shepherd of Israel. That imbecile is the one of whom Zechariah spoke when he said this:

*And the LORD said to me, "Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing, but will devour the flesh of the fat {sheep} and tear off their hoofs.*

*Woe to the worthless shepherd*

*Who leaves the flock!*

*A sword will be on his arm*

*And on his right eye!*

*His arm will be totally withered,*

*And his right eye will be blind."*

(Zechariah 11:15–17)

## Let's Think "Parabolic" for a While

Now that I have explained a few of the more superficial things about Matthew 27:1–10, let me explain a bit more about the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the *parabolic pantomime* Matthew had in mind when he wrote it. In that *parabolic pantomime*, Jesus played the role of the Passover Lamb of God, and

Judas unwittingly played the vital role of the shepherd who sold Him to those who had Him slain. I could spend an inordinate amount of time explaining how the *parabolic imagery* of the Passover and the Exodus from Egypt mirrors the *parabolic imagery* of the Babylonian Captivity, but I won't. I will merely tell you that Joshua leading the sons of Israel into the Promised Land, as well as the return of "The Remnant" of Israel from seventy years of captivity in Babylon, are nothing more than *parabolic images* of the same—but completely other—spiritual reality. In the spiritual reality which each of these two events *parabolically* represents, the members of Israel—that is, the members of the Body of Jesus Christ, the One Who is Israel—will one day "go up" to *inherit* the land that God *promised* Abraham he and his *Seed* would *inherit*. When that day arrives, only those who have securely tucked away title to that land will be allowed to *inherit*. That is what Jeremiah is *talking about* in the *parabolic pantomime* he describes in this passage:

*And Jeremiah said, "The word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle is coming to you, saying, "Buy for yourself my field which is at Anathoth, for you have the right of redemption to buy {it}.'" Then Hanamel my uncle's son came to me in the court of the guard according to the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Buy my field, please, that is at Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin; for you have the right of possession and the redemption is yours; buy {it} for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD. And I bought the field which was at Anathoth from Hanamel my uncle's son, and I weighed out the silver for him, seventeen shekels of silver. And I signed and sealed the deed, and called in witnesses, and weighed out the silver on the scales. Then I took the deeds of purchase, both the sealed {copy containing} the terms and conditions, and the open {copy;} and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Mahseiah, in the sight of Hanamel my uncle's {son,} and in the sight of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, before all the Jews who were sitting in the court of the guard. And I commanded Baruch in their presence, saying, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Take these deeds, this sealed deed of purchase, and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, that they may last a long time." For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, "Houses and fields and*

*vineyards shall again be bought in this land.'"*  
(Jeremiah 32:6–15)

Now you need to make sure you accurately understand the *significance* of what the Lord had Jeremiah do in that *parabolic pantomime*. At the time when Jeremiah bought his cousin's property, the army of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, had already laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah tells us that in the verses immediately preceding the passage you just read. The Prophet also tells us he was under lock and key in the guardhouse in Jerusalem because Zedekiah, the king of Judah, did not care all that much for the prophecies the Lord had been having Jeremiah *deliver*.

Jeremiah had repeatedly warned Zedekiah that it was futile for him to resist Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. He told him he should give up even trying, because the Babylonians were eventually going to get what they wanted anyway. But Zedekiah, like a lot of fools in our own day, had never been all that good at listening. So to solve what he perceived as his primary problem, he had Jeremiah arrested and locked up downtown. That's when Jeremiah's sly cousin showed up wanting to sell him a piece of property.

Now I ask you: If a foreign king had already occupied nearly every metropolitan area in your homeland except the capital city and was in the process of shipping your friends and relatives back to his fatherland while you sat locked up in the city jail, would you rather have your assets tied up in real estate or in something a bit more portable? Jeremiah's cousin Hanamel knew exactly which of those two he preferred. He wanted a portable asset—silver coins—that he could take with him if and when he chose to flee. Jeremiah, by contrast, had no choice. He had to buy the property because he was under compulsion to do what the Lord told him to do. But he tells us he held more than a few misgivings about buying property in Anathoth when a lot of his friends and relatives were already being taken away in slave trains to Babylon:

*"After I had given the deed of purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, then I prayed to the LORD, saying, 'Ah Lord GOD! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee, who showest lovingkindness to thousands, but repayest the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them, O great and mighty*



God. The LORD of hosts is His name; great in counsel and mighty in deed, whose eyes are open to all the ways of the sons of men, giving to everyone according to his ways and according to the fruit of his deeds; who hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, {and} even to this day both in Israel and among mankind; and Thou hast made a name for Thyself, as at this day. And Thou didst bring Thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs and with wonders, and with a strong hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terror; and gavest them this land, which Thou didst swear to their forefathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey. And they came in and took possession of it, but they did not obey Thy voice or walk in Thy law; they have done nothing of all that Thou commandedst them to do; therefore Thou hast made all this calamity come upon them. Behold, the siege mounds have reached the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans who fight against it, because of the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; and what Thou hast spoken has come to pass; and, behold, Thou seest {it.} **And Thou hast said to me, O Lord GOD, "Buy for yourself the field with money, and call in witnesses"—although the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans."** Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying, "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me?" Therefore thus says the LORD, "Behold, I am about to give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it. And the Chaldeans who are fighting against this city shall enter and set this city on fire and burn it, with the houses where {people} have offered incense to Baal on their roofs and poured out libations to other gods to provoke Me to anger. Indeed the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah have been doing only evil in My sight from their youth; for the sons of Israel have been only provoking Me to anger by the work of their hands," declares the LORD. "Indeed this city has been to Me {a provocation of} My anger and My wrath from the day that they built it, even to this day, that it should be removed from before My face, because of all the evil of the sons of Israel and the sons of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me to anger—they, their kings, their leaders, their priests, their prophets, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And they have turned {their} back to Me, and not {their} face; though {I} taught them, teaching again and again, they would not listen and receive instruction. But they put their detestable things in the house which is called by My name,

to defile it. And they built the high places of Baal that are in the valley of Ben-hinnom to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through {the fire} to Molech, which I had not commanded them nor had it entered My mind that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin. Now therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel concerning this city of which you say, 'It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence.' Behold, I will gather them out of all the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. And they shall be My people, and I will be their God; and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for {the good of} their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me. And I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will faithfully plant them in this land with all My heart and with all My soul. For thus says the LORD, 'Just as I brought all this great disaster on this people, so I am going to bring on them all the good that I am promising them. And fields shall be bought in this land of which you say, "It is a desolation, without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans." Men shall buy fields for money, sign and seal deeds, and call in witnesses in the land of Benjamin, in the environs of Jerusalem, in the cities of Judah, in the cities of the hill country, in the cities of the lowland, and in the cities of the Negev; for I will restore their fortunes,' declares the LORD."

(Jeremiah 32:16–44)

It may be difficult to understand *why* God had Jeremiah buy his cousin's property if you cannot comprehend the fact that Jeremiah was conducting a *parabolic pantomime*. By his actions, he was saying, "This IS LIKE that." Moreover, if you do not know that he is quoting bits and pieces of what Moses said in Deuteronomy 30, you have no basis for understanding the focus of his comparison. You certainly will not be able to see that he is *parabolically talking about* the time when the sons of Israel will at long last *inherit what was promised* to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That is, after all, what Moses is *talking about* in Deuteronomy 30.

(That much at least is obvious from his careful use of the second and third person personal pronouns.)

If you understand the few things I just mentioned, a *parabolic image* should slowly begin to take shape in your mind, an image of the time when the king who rules Babylon the Great—the *harlot* who sits astride a scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns—has *parabolically* laid siege to “Jerusalem.” At that time, those who know who the king of Babylon is and what he is about should do as Jeremiah did. They should *parabolically* acquire title to a piece of property in the land which is their *heritage* and make sure that title is securely hidden in an earthenware jar.

## Go Down to the Potter’s House

Now the *parabolic image* of the Potter comes into view. The One Who holds title to the land purchased with the “blood money” that was paid for the sacrificial Lamb of God is the Potter. (Notice I did not say, “the potter.” I said, “the Potter.”) That “Potter” also *forms* the earthenware jar in which title to *the promise* must be hidden. And in the *parabolic image*, Israel is the earthenware jar the Potter has *formed*. Jeremiah also explains the *significance* of that bit of *parabolic imagery*:

*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD saying, “Arise and go down to the potter’s house, and there I shall announce My words to you.” Then I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter {does?}” declares the LORD. “Behold, like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy {it;} if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant {it;} if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will think better of the good with which I had promised to bless it. So now then, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem saying, “Thus says the LORD,*

*“Behold, I am fashioning calamity against you and devising a plan against you. Oh turn back, each of you from his evil way, and reform your ways and your deeds.” But they will say, ‘It’s hopeless! For we are going to follow our own plans, and each of us will act according to the stubbornness of his evil heart.’*

*Therefore thus says the LORD,  
‘Ask now among the nations,  
Who ever heard the like of this?  
The virgin of Israel  
Has done a most appalling thing.  
Does the snow of Lebanon forsake  
the rock of the open country?  
Or is the cold flowing water  
{from} a foreign {land} ever snatched away?  
For My people have forgotten Me,  
They burn incense to worthless gods  
And they have stumbled from their ways,  
From the ancient paths,  
To walk in bypaths,  
Not on a highway,  
To make their land a desolation,  
{An object of} perpetual hissing;  
Everyone who passes by it will be astonished  
And shake his head.  
Like an east wind I will scatter them  
Before the enemy;  
I will show them  
My back and not {My} face  
In the day of their calamity.’”  
(Jeremiah 18:1–17)*

The *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic pantomime* the Lord showed Jeremiah on that occasion will completely elude the one who does not know what it *means* to be created in the image and likeness of God. That is what God is *talking about* in that passage. But He does so cryptically by alluding to Jeremiah’s calling (Jer. 1:10), where He *talks about* the Resurrection of Israel in terms of the Hebrew idioms “build a house” and “raise up a seed.”

The one who understands the *meaning* and *significance* of the two idioms “build a house” and “raise up a seed” should be able to immediately recognize that God is *talking about* the Resurrection of Israel—that is, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, the One Who became Israel at the time of His Baptism by John the Baptist. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel.*)

A bit later, God is going to refer to the flip side of Jeremiah's calling—the “uproot,” “pull down,” and “destroy” part. That's the part that *talks about* the death of Israel as the *parabolic* Lamb of God. At this point, God is assuring Jeremiah that even though He is going to “uproot,” “pull down,” and “destroy” Israel, that is nothing more than part of the *re-forming* process. Israel will eventually be “built” and “planted” again on the Mountain of God.

To understand what God has stated in terms of the *parabolic image* in which He is the Potter and Israel is the clay, one needs to know that the noun translated “potter” is sometimes used as a synonym for *creator* in the Hebrew language. It also doesn't hurt to know that Moses uses the verbal form of that noun when he describes how the Lord *formed* (*created*) Adam from the dust of the ground:

*Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.*  
(Genesis 2:7–8)

Moses uses the same verb a little later in that same chapter when he relates how God also *formed* (*created*) the animals and birds:

*Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought {them} to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name.*  
(Genesis 2:18–19)

In what God says to Jeremiah about Himself as a *parabolic* Potter, He explains that He is in the process of *re-forming* Israel, the *parabolic* clay, into an entirely new earthenware vessel. He tells the Prophet that He is doing that because the first vessel He made Israel into was not pleasing to Him. However, if one does not know the Hebrew Scriptures very well, one is unaware that God is merely adding new information to what He has already told the Prophet Isaiah about the *re-forming* of Israel:

*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)*

The Hebrew words translated “potter,” “what is formed,” and “formed” in verse 16 are all forms of the same verb that Moses used in Genesis 2:7–8 and 2:18–19. You can see from that how the Prophet Isaiah is pointing back to the creation of Adam and *LIKENING* it to a potter working with clay. It isn't obvious from the passage just quoted that he is addressing Israel in specific rather than mankind in general, but he is. That is because mankind has already been formed. But God the Potter is still working on *re-forming* Israel. Later on, He says this about that same *parabolic image*:

*But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob,  
And He who formed you, O Israel,  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are Mine!  
When you pass through the waters,  
I will be with you;  
And through the rivers, they will not overflow you.  
When you walk through the fire, you will not be scorched,  
Nor will the flame burn you.  
For I am the LORD your God,  
The Holy One of Israel, your Savior;  
I have given Egypt as your ransom,  
Cush and Seba in your place.  
Since you are precious in My sight,  
{Since} you are honored and I love you,  
I will give {other} men in your place  
and {other} peoples in exchange for your life.  
Do not fear, for I am with you;  
I will bring your offspring from the east,  
And gather you from the west.  
I will say to the north, ‘Give {them} up!’  
And to the south, ‘Do not hold {them} back.’  
Bring My sons from afar,  
And My daughters from the ends of the earth,  
Everyone who is called by My name,*

*And whom I have created for My glory,  
 Whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”  
 Bring out the people who are blind,  
     even though they have eyes,  
 And the deaf, even though they have ears.  
 All the nations have gathered together  
 In order that the peoples may be assembled.  
 Who among them can declare this  
 And proclaim to us the former things?  
 Let them present their witnesses  
     that they may be justified,  
 Or let them hear and say, “It is true.”  
 “You are My witnesses,” declares the LORD,  
 “And My servant whom I have chosen,  
 In order that you may know and believe Me,  
 And understand that I am He.  
 Before Me there was no God formed,  
 And there will be none after Me.  
 I, even I, am the LORD;  
 And there is no savior besides Me.  
 It is I who have declared and saved and proclaimed,  
 And there was no strange {god} among you;  
 So you are My witnesses,” declares the LORD,  
 “And I am God.  
 Even from eternity I am He;  
 And there is none who can deliver out of My hand;  
 I act and who can reverse it?”  
 Thus says the LORD your Redeemer,  
     the Holy One of Israel,  
 “For your sake I have sent to Babylon,  
 And will bring them all down as fugitives,  
 Even the Chaldeans, into the ships in which they rejoice.  
**I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
 The Creator of Israel, your King.”**  
 Thus says the LORD,  
 Who makes a way through the sea  
 And a path through the mighty waters,  
 Who brings forth the chariot and the horse,  
 The army and the mighty man  
 (They will lie down together {and} not rise again;  
 They have been quenched {and} extinguished like a wick):  
 “Do not call to mind the former things,  
 Or ponder things of the past.  
 Behold, I will do something new,  
 Now it will spring forth;  
 Will you not be aware of it?  
 I will even make a roadway in the wilderness,  
 Rivers in the desert.*

*The beasts of the field will glorify Me;  
 The jackals and the ostriches;  
 Because I have given waters in the wilderness  
 And rivers in the desert,  
 To give drink to My chosen people.  
 The people whom I **formed** for Myself,  
 Will declare My praise.”  
 (Isaiah 43:1–21)*

Taking into account the fact that the translator of that text obviously had no idea what Isaiah is *talking about*, that is not a bad first pass at translating what the Prophet said. But you need to make note of the fact that there are several Prophetic Perfects in the passage that the translator would have you understand as pointing to past events when they actually point to the future. (For an explanation of the Prophetic Perfects, see “The Holy Bible: What Is It? What Does It Mean? Who Wrote It? When and Why?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1997, and The Next Step tapes.) Knowing what it *means* to be created in the image and likeness of God also comes in handy. It can help you identify the verbs that point to events that are still future to the Prophet’s own day. (See The Next Step tapes.)

You can see that the words translated “potter” and “creator” are synonyms from the fact that they are paralleled in verse 1. But that is beside the point. In verses 1, 7, 10, and 21, Isaiah once again uses the same verb that Moses used in Genesis 2:7–8 and 2:18–19 to describe the creation of Adam and the animals. That tells us he intends his statements to be understood in terms of the *parabolic imagery* in which God is still in the process of *re-forming (creating)* Israel into a vessel more to His Own liking. That is further confirmed by his use of the term *creator* in the following two verses:

*But now, thus says the LORD, your **Creator**, O Jacob,  
 And He who formed you, O Israel,  
 “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
 I have called you by name; you are Mine!”  
 (Isaiah 43:1)*

*“I am the LORD, your Holy One,  
 The **Creator** of Israel, your King.”  
 (Isaiah 43:15)*

Again, it is not obvious that the Prophet Isaiah is *talking about* the creation of Israel—Jesus Christ—in the

image and likeness of God. So if one does not know what it *means* to be *created* in the image and likeness of God, one has no basis for understanding what the Prophet has stated. The *meaning* and *significance* of his statements lie hidden behind the *parabolic image* in which God is the Potter and Israel is the still-wet clay. As God told Jeremiah, He has every right to *re-form* Israel into a vessel that is more pleasing to Him, the Potter.

[Since I am—at this writing—already explaining the *parabolic imagery* associated with the creation of mankind in the image and likeness of God in The Next Step program, I see no reason to cover that same ground here. That information is available on audio and videocassette to anyone with an interest sufficient enough to prompt them to participate in that program. It will one day be available in a relatively inexpensive written form to those who choose not to assist *The Voice of Elijah*® ministry with a greater monthly contribution at this time.]

It is not apparent to the casual reader, but Isaiah continues to *talk about* God's *creation* of Israel in His Own image and likeness throughout the remainder of his book. That can be seen from the fact that he uses a verbal form of the noun *potter* six times in Chapter 44 (verses 2, 9, 10, 12, 21, and 24), four times in Chapter 45 (verses 7, 9, 11, and 18), and once each in Chapters 46, 49, and 54 (46:11; 49:5; and 54:17). In addition to that, the Prophet uses a form of the Hebrew verb normally translated "create" twenty times in Chapters 40–66 (Is. 40:26, 28; 41:20; 42:5; 43:1, 7, 15; 45:7, 8, 12, 18; 48:7; 54:16; 57:19; 65:17, 18). Moreover, in the final chapter of his book, he concludes his explanation of the *creation* of Israel in the image and likeness of God with the following description of the only One Whom God will ever accept as qualified to "build *The House*" of God:

*Thus says the LORD,*  
*"Heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool.*  
***Where then is a house you could build for Me?***  
*And where is a place that I may rest?*  
*For My hand made all these things,*  
*Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD.*  
*"But to this one I will look,*  
*To him who is humble and contrite of spirit,*  
*and who trembles at My word."*  
*(Isaiah 66:1–2)*

Two chapters before that succinct *parabolic statement* that only Jesus Christ could qualify to "build *The House*" of God, Isaiah makes the following plaintive plea in terms of the *parabolic image* in which God is the Potter Who is busy *re-forming* Israel according to His liking:

***But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father,***  
***We are the clay, and Thou our potter;***  
***And all of us are the work of Thy hand.***  
*Do not be angry beyond measure, O LORD,*  
*Neither remember iniquity forever;*  
*Behold, look now, all of us are Thy people.*  
*(Isaiah 64:8–9)*

It would be best that those who read the Hebrew Scriptures only in translation not speculate concerning the *significance* of the things I have just explained. There are various other passages, as well as several relevant *parabolic images*, that one must take into account to understand all that the Prophet Isaiah says about *how* and *why* God *re-formed* Israel into His Own image and likeness. I have not yet explained those things and have no intention of doing so in the near future. So, for the time being, a word to the wise ...

## ***An Almond Branch and a Boiling Pot***

In the first chapter of his work, the Prophet Jeremiah gives us a succinct account of what God said to him when He called him as a Prophet. He tells us this:

*Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,*  
*"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,*  
*And before you were born I consecrated you;*  
*I have appointed you a prophet to the nations."*  
*Then I said, "Alas, Lord GOD!*  
*Behold, I do not know how to speak,*  
*Because I am a youth."*  
*But the LORD said to me,*  
*"Do not say, 'I am a youth,'*  
*Because everywhere I send you, you shall go,*  
*And all that I command you, you shall speak.*  
*Do not be afraid of them,*  
*For I am with you to deliver you," declares the LORD.*  
*Then the LORD stretched out His hand*  
*and touched my mouth, and the LORD said to me,*

*"Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.  
See, I have appointed you this day  
over the nations and over the kingdoms,  
To pluck up and to break down,  
To destroy and to overthrow,  
To build and to plant."  
(Jeremiah 1:4–10)*

The "building" and "planting" part of Jeremiah's calling as a Prophet are an allusion to the fact that his ministry had to do with explaining how Jesus Christ would one day "raise up a seed" and "build a house" for God, just as Nathan told David He would (2 Sam. 7:12–13). (See "The Sad, Sordid History of the People of God," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1996; "So Why Would a Nomad 'Build a House' and Settle Down?" *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1997; "Contrary to What You May Have Heard, Jeremiah Was No Bullfrog," *The Voice of Elijah*®, July 1997; and "Questions & Answers," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1997.) But it is the "pluck up," "break down," "destroy," and "overthrow" parts of Jeremiah's calling that we are most interested in here. Those allude to the *parabolic image* in which a foolish shepherd betrayed the sheep he had been called to shepherd and ended up purchasing a field from the Potter.

After Jeremiah describes what God said to him when He called him as a Prophet, he tells us what God said next. In that brief exchange between God and man, one finds the information most necessary to an understanding of the message God called Jeremiah to *deliver*. Keep in mind, Jeremiah was speaking to a people who had long since lost insight into the *parabolic imagery* of "The Way" of the Lord that Moses had explained in detail to their fathers. (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes.)

Jeremiah tells us God twice asked him what he saw concerning the future of Israel. Jeremiah's response and God's enigmatic explanation of the *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic images* Jeremiah saw provide the context in which God concealed the purpose of Jeremiah's ministry. This is how the Prophet describes their first exchange:

*And the word of the LORD came to me saying, "What do you see, Jeremiah?" And I said, "I see a rod of an almond tree." Then the LORD said to me, "You have seen well, for I am watching over My word to perform it."  
(Jeremiah 1:11–12)*

That's a rather enigmatic passage, isn't it? And it will remain that way to the one who does not understand the *significance* of the scepter/staff of God. That *significance* has to do with the immutable decree that God pronounced from His throne concerning the *creation* of Israel—the "building" and "planting" of Him—in His Own image and likeness. If you know where to find that decree in the Hebrew Scriptures, you may well stand a chance of participating in that great event. Otherwise, you will end up part of a shattered clay pot whose usefulness to God has ended. That is what Isaiah is *talking about* in this passage:

*The oracle concerning the beasts of the Negev.  
Through a land of distress and anguish,  
From where {come} lioness and lion, viper and flying serpent,  
They carry their riches on the backs of young donkeys  
And their treasures on camels' humps,  
To a people who cannot profit {them;}  
Even Egypt, whose help is vain and empty.  
Therefore, I have called her  
"Rahab who has been exterminated."  
Now go, write it on a tablet before them  
And inscribe it on a scroll,  
That it may serve in the time to come  
As a witness forever.  
For this is a rebellious people, false sons,  
Sons who refuse to listen  
To the instruction of the LORD;  
Who say to the seers,  
"You must not see {visions}";  
And to the prophets,  
"You must not prophesy to us what is right,  
Speak to us pleasant words,  
Prophesy illusions.  
Get out of the way, turn aside from the path,  
Let us hear no more about the Holy One of Israel."  
Therefore thus says the Holy One of Israel,  
"Since you have rejected this word,  
And have put your trust in oppression and guile,  
and have relied on them,  
Therefore this iniquity will be to you  
Like a breach about to fall,  
A bulge in a high wall,  
Whose collapse comes suddenly in an instant.  
And whose collapse is like  
the smashing of a potter's jar;  
So ruthlessly shattered*

*That a sherd will not be found among its pieces  
To take fire from a hearth,  
Or to scoop water from a cistern.”*  
(Isaiah 30:6–14)

Talk about Humpty Dumpty and all the king’s men! They don’t even compare. But just for the record, I should tell you Isaiah is *parabolically* describing the rapidly approaching events that will result in the complete eradication of civilization from the face of the Earth. The Prophet Zephaniah describes it this way:

*“I will completely remove all {things}  
From the face of the earth,” declares the LORD.  
“I will remove man and beast;  
I will remove the birds of the sky  
And the fish of the sea,  
And the ruins along with the wicked;  
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth,”  
declares the LORD.*  
(Zephaniah 1:2–3)

Believe it if you care to; disbelieve it if you dare to. It’s no concern of mine what you choose to believe. God is going to utterly “uproot,” “pull down,” and “destroy” what He has crafted, in spite of what you believe. Then He is going to “build” and “plant” something entirely new in its place.

Jeremiah’s vision of the almond branch is interesting, but that is not the exchange between God and Jeremiah that we are most interested in understanding at this time. God asked Jeremiah again what he saw concerning the future of Israel, and in this second exchange, one finds the information necessary to understand the prophecies in which Jeremiah uses the *parabolic image* of the destruction that will be wrought by the worthless shepherd who is yet to come:

*And the word of the LORD came to me a second time saying, “What do you see?” And I said, “I see a boiling pot, facing away from the north.” Then the LORD said to me, “Out of the north the evil will break forth on all the inhabitants of the land. For, behold, I am calling all the families of the kingdoms of the north,” declares the LORD; “and they will come, and they will set each one his throne at the entrance of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all its walls round about, and against all the cities of Judah. And I will pronounce My judgments on them concerning all*

*their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.”*  
(Jeremiah 1:13–16)

In that passage, God details the basic *parabolic imagery* related to the darker side of Jeremiah’s ministry: He was to “pluck up,” “break down,” “destroy,” and “overthrow.” That is, by publicly declaring the Word of God, Jeremiah would—through that Word—bring about the results that Word describes. But to understand the *significance* of that seemingly nonsensical statement, it is necessary to view the matter from a slightly different perspective. That is, one must intentionally take on “the heart of the fathers” (Mal. 4:6). If you find that difficult to do, you might want to check the density of your own “heart.” But don’t be surprised if you find it as hard as a rock.

## *The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*

Before one can understand the prophecies of any of the Prophets of Israel, it is necessary to get inside the minds of the ancient people to whom they were speaking and learn to view the world from their perspective. So let me make this one thing perfectly clear: The mind-set of the sons of Israel in Jeremiah’s time was, for the most part, a Canaanite mind-set. That is, they were still worshiping the gods of the Canaanites and adhering to Canaanite religious beliefs and rituals. That is why Jeremiah uses Canaanite religious beliefs to mock the people for refusing to believe *the promise* that God made to Abraham and later confirmed to Isaac and Jacob. Therefore, if you want to understand what Jeremiah has said, it is an absolute must that you know what the Canaanites were thinking in regard to the spiritual realm.

From the extant Canaanite mythological texts, we learn that the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon was a god named El. That would not be overly *significant* except for the fact that the name El (“God”) is exactly the same name that the God of the Bible used when He revealed Himself to Abraham:

*Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him,  
“I am God Almighty;  
Walk before Me, and be blameless.*

*And I will establish My covenant between Me and you,  
And I will multiply you exceedingly.”  
(Genesis 17:1–2)*

One could argue that the compound name “God Almighty” (Hebrew: *El Shaddai*) does not point to the same “God” (*El*) as the Hebrew/Canaanite term *El* alone. That argument might hold water except for one simple fact: Later on, Abraham’s grandson, Jacob, along with his two wives, Rachel and Leah, use the name *El* (“God”) alone as the proper name of the God Who had revealed Himself to Jacob’s grandfather Abraham:

*Now Jacob heard the words of Laban’s sons, saying, “Jacob has taken away all that was our father’s, and from what belonged to our father he has made all this wealth.” And Jacob saw the attitude of Laban, and behold, it was not {friendly} toward him as formerly. Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your fathers and to your relatives, and I will be with you.” So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah to his flock in the field, and said to them, “I see your father’s attitude, that it is not {friendly} toward me as formerly, but the **God** of my father has been with me. And you know that I have served your father with all my strength. Yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times; however, **God** did not allow him to hurt me. If he spoke thus, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth speckled; and if he spoke thus, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock brought forth striped. Thus **God** has taken away your father’s livestock and given {them} to me. And it came about at the time when the flock were mating that I lifted up my eyes and saw in a dream, and behold, the male goats which were mating {were} striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of **God** said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am.’ And he said, ‘Lift up, now, your eyes and see {that} all the male goats which are mating are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban has been doing to you. I am the **God** {of} Bethel, where you anointed a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.” And Rachel and Leah answered and said to him, “Do we still have any portion or inheritance in our father’s house? Are we not reckoned by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and has also entirely consumed our purchase price. Surely all the wealth which **God** has taken away from our father belongs to us and our*

*children; now then, do whatever **God** has said to you.”  
(Genesis 31:1–16)*

That is an extremely interesting passage, isn’t it? It tells us that the “God” (Hebrew: *El*) Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob was the same god (*El*) the Canaanites believed to be the supreme god (*El*) of their pantheon. Satan doesn’t want you to know that, and he will go to great lengths to convince you such a notion is blasphemy. But that is only because the Truth concerning the Word of God lies hidden behind God’s identification of Himself to the Patriarchs as *El*, the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon of gods. So, if you are one of those who wants to understand the Truth, it won’t matter all that much what Satan wants you to believe. What I have just told you is the only thing that makes sense. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not live in a cultural vacuum. They lived among a people known as the Canaanites. Those people worshiped a god named *El*. That is the same name by which God revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

But now we come to the real crux of the issue: Did the Canaanites know, understand, and believe the Truth about *El*, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? That is an entirely different matter. And the answer is no, they did not. To understand what I am getting at, look at it this way: Muslims, Christians, and Jews all claim to worship the same God—the God of the Old Testament Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses. But do they really? Of course not! Many Muslims believe God to be a vindictive god who allows them to murder and commit all sorts of other sanctioned mayhem against infidels, with His full approval. By contrast, most Christians believe Him to be a gentle god of unconditional love who loves them so much that He sent His Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for their sins so that they could go on living any hell-bent way they want to live. And then there is the middle ground staked out by the tradition of the Jews. They believe the God of the Old Testament has made them (rather than their fathers) an iron-clad commitment, and He certainly would never do them out of (what they see as) their rightful *inheritance* by sending His Son Jesus Christ as the *Heir of the promise*.

These three religions all claim to worship the same God, the God that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob called “God” (*El*). But do all the various sects and



denominations in those three religions actually worship that God? I don't think so. And you will probably agree, unless of course you enjoy being contentious just to give meaning and purpose to your miserable existence. But you can believe what I just told you if you care to; disbelieve it if you dare to. I'm not the one who asked for an explanation of Matthew 27:9–10.

If Muslims, Christians, and Jews don't worship the same God, yet claim their god is the God (*El*) of the Bible, how is that any different than the Canaanites believing one thing about God (*El*) and the Patriarchs believing something other? I don't see how anyone could think that it is.

Satan has an extremely good reason for not wanting you to know that the God Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as *El* is—in name only—the same god the Canaanites worshiped as the supreme god of their pantheon. So let me tell you what Satan's reason for deceiving you is: He knows there is no way—in this Hell in which we live—that you can understand what Moses and the other Prophets of Israel wrote until you understand what the Canaanites believed about their god (*El*) and start thinking in those same terms. That is, you need to envision—see a mental image of—the God named *El* in exactly the same way that the Canaanites saw a mental image of Him. The only difference is, where the Canaanites saw a *mythological image* which they believed described what God actually is, you must see a *parabolic image* that does nothing more than explain what He is LIKE. The difference between those two mind-sets is subtle, but it is incredibly important. If you fail to adhere to it, you will slip off into paganism. And fools who can't understand what I just said will claim you already have.

The key to understanding the *significance* of what I just told you about the *parabolic imagery* of the Scriptures is this: The ancient peoples known as the Egyptians, Canaanites, and Babylonians used specific *mythological imagery* to describe the gods and the realm in which they supposedly lived. They believed that imagery somehow accurately described what spiritual reality actually is. Moses and the other Prophets of Israel mocked their belief in such goofy *mythological imagery* by using it to *parabolically* describe spiritual reality. That is, the Prophets—at the specific direction of God Himself—used the mythological beliefs of the ancients to tell us what spiritual reality is LIKE rather than what it actually is. (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes.) Once

you understand that important Truth, the *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic imagery* of the Prophets becomes much easier to recognize and understand.

## The God Who Called Moses

In the account of Moses and the burning bush, one finds another enigmatic exchange between God and man. Although scholars have wrestled with the text for centuries, they are no closer to understanding its *meaning* and *significance* today than they were when they started. That is because Satan has once again managed to cover up an extremely important facet of the Truth. Knowing that the Liar has been hard at work in this area, one should take a much closer look at what Moses tells us about “*The Name*” of the God Who called him:

*Then Moses said to God, “Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them?” And God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM”; and He said, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” And God, furthermore, said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘The LORD, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.’ This is My name forever, and this is My memorial-name to all generations.” (Exodus 3:13–15)*

Without getting maudlin about it, the usual translation of God's name as “I am” is a gross distortion of the point that God made in explaining *why* Moses was to tell the sons of Israel that was His name. In the Hebrew language, the present stative sense—that is, “I *am* (in the state of being) old,” “He *is* (in the state of being) rich,” etc.—is conveyed by either a stative verb (that is, one that denotes a state of being, such as, “to be small”) or a verbal noun/predicate adjective combination (that is, the participial form of the verb “to be” combined with an adjective that denotes a state of being). The linguistic construction translated “I am” in verse 14 is neither. It is a finite verb (an imperfect form of the Hebrew verb *hayah*) that could normally be expected to carry the sense “I will be.”

The point God makes when He says “I will be *Whoever* I will be” is “I will be” *parabolically*—I will assume the role of—whatever god I need to in order to

*parabolically* explain the Truth about spiritual reality. He then leads Moses and the sons of Israel through a *parabolic pantomime* in which He assumes the role of the Egyptian god Osiris and *parabolically* depicts Israel as His Firstborn Son, Horus, the king of Egypt who died on that first Passover. (See *The Passover Parable*.)

The only reason I bring up such a controversial issue at this time is because you need to understand that God *parabolically* assumed the identity of various ancient gods (and goddesses) for the specific purpose of teaching the sons of Israel the Truth concerning Jesus Christ and His Resurrection from the dead. He could do that easily because, as I have explained elsewhere, ancient Near Eastern religions were all—in one way or another—a distortion of *The Teaching* that God *delivered* to Adam and told him to *hand down* to his sons after him. (See “So Why Would a Nomad ‘Build a House’ and Settle Down?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1997.) While bits and pieces of the Truth still remained in these various mythologies, mankind had long since taken the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* to be a literal depiction of spiritual reality rather than a *parabolic* one. All God did was have Moses point out which parts of those mythologies still accurately represented the Truth as to what spiritual reality IS LIKE. That is how Moses *restored* *The Teaching* that Adam, Enoch, and Abraham had understood before him.

In some ways, Moses and his generation faced the same circumstance that you and I face in being confronted with the multiplied thousands of Christian churches and denominations in existence today. If you look long and hard enough, you can still find at least a smattering of the Truth in every one of them. More Truth remains in some than in others. But in every case, that Truth has been distorted by being mixed with a whole lot of fiction. So the sum total of what each sect teaches bears little resemblance to *The Apostolic Teaching* the Church was charged with *handing down* from generation to generation.

Without an accurate understanding of what God *meant* when He explained that His Name was “I will be” because “I will be *Whomever* I will be,” one cannot possibly grasp the *significance* of what God told Moses on another occasion when He *talked* to him *about* another of His (many) names:

*God spoke further to Moses and said to him, “I am the LORD; and I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,*

*as God Almighty, but {by} My name, LORD, I did not make Myself known to them. And I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they sojourned.”*  
(Exodus 6:2–4)

The name of God that has been translated “Lord” in that passage is the name that is also translated “Jehovah” or “Yahweh” by those who claim to be purists. But it really doesn’t matter all that much which translation of the name you prefer; some fool is bound to come along and tell you it should not be pronounced at all. I say “fool” with some relish because those folks have no idea how ridiculous their beliefs in that regard actually are. They are hide-bound traditionalists who mistakenly assume one should not tamper with the Jewish vocalization of the original Hebrew text of the Scriptures. Since the Jews added vowels to that Hebrew text a thousand years after Malachi recorded his prophecies, and since I’m not all that fond of blind adherence to tradition just for the sake of tradition, I tend to ignore the vowels the Massorettes added. That sometimes makes it easier for me to get inside the mind of an ancient people who wrote using only consonants and a few helping vowels.

Scholars really should pay closer attention to the morphological construction translated variously as “Lord,” “Jehovah,” or “Yahweh.” Maybe then they would realize that its pronunciation is not nearly as important as its *meaning* and *significance*. But I doubt they will. The machinations of the Liar prevent them. The name has the obvious marking of a verbal form. But this new verb—*hawah*—has the *meaning* “become.” And the name of God in this case is a third person singular form of a verb (Hebrew: *hawah*) that is somewhat parallel in *meaning* to the verb that God used (Hebrew: *hayah*) when He told Moses His Name was “I will be.”

So now we find God speaking of Himself in the third person when He says “I am ‘He will become.’” But He tells Moses that in spite of His using this new name, He is actually still God Almighty—*El Shaddai*—the God Who revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore, He has told Moses He has at least three different names: “God Almighty,” “I will be,” and “He will become.” Yet from the passage above, it is clear He wants Moses to know that He never got around to making Himself known to the Patriarchs by the name “He will become.” That statement has sent more than one blind fool racing down a road of endless

speculation after someone pointed out the fact that God plainly used that name to identify Himself to Abraham in the following passage:

*After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying,*

*“Do not fear, Abram,*

*I am a shield to you;*

*Your reward shall be very great.”*

*And Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what wilt Thou give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Since Thou hast given no offspring to me, one born in my house is my heir.” Then behold, the word of the LORD came to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.” And He took him outside and said, “Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” Then he believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness. **And He said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess it.”***

*(Genesis 15:1–7)*

When the words *Lord* or *God* have SMALL CAPS, they are a translation of the name translated by some as “Jehovah” or “Yahweh”—the name that I have told you actually *means* “He will become.” So you can see that God plainly identified Himself to Abraham by the name that some simple-minded folks would have us believe Moses said the Patriarchs never knew. Their goofy beliefs in that regard are obviously misguided since Abraham not only addressed God using the name “He will become,” he even used it as part of the place name “The Lord Will Provide”:

*And Abraham called the name of that place The LORD Will Provide, as it is said to this day, “In the mount of the LORD it will be provided.”*

*(Genesis 22:14)*

The Truth is, God was making the point that He did not use the name “He will become” to reveal any information about His nature or character to Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. For that purpose, He always assumed the identity of the Canaanite god El. If one understands how the nature of the God named El differs from the characteristics of the God “He will become,” it

is not all that difficult to see why God did that. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob knew Him as El, but He explained to Moses all about the God “He will become.” That’s why Moses constructed his account of Creation the way he did. First, he uses a plural form of the proper name El to tell us “gods” did the work:

*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

*(Genesis 1:1)*

Then he combines that plural noun with the verb “He will become” to tell us the God named “He will become gods” did the work:

*This is the account of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made earth and heaven.*

*(Genesis 2:4)*

Of course, Moses doesn’t start using the name “He will become” as part of a compound name until he has given an account of how God said He was going to create a man in His Own image and likeness. That is because one has no basis for understanding the *significance* of the name “He will become” without that bit of information. And then, of course, there is the account of Jesus mocking the Jews because they had not a whit of insight into the *parabolic imagery* related to the God “He will become”:

*At that time the Feast of the Dedication took place at Jerusalem; it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple in the portico of Solomon. The Jews therefore gathered around Him, and were saying to Him, “How long will You keep us in suspense? If You are the Christ, tell us plainly.” Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe; the works that I do in My Father’s name, these bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they shall never perish; and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given {them} to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch {them} out of the Father’s hand. **I and the Father are one.**” The Jews took up stones again to stone Him. Jesus answered them, “I showed you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you stoning Me?” The Jews answered Him, “**For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and***

because You, being a man, make Yourself out {to be} God." Jesus answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I SAID, YOU ARE GODS'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'? If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father." Therefore they were seeking again to seize Him, and He eluded their grasp. (John 10:22–39)

In light of the *parabolic imagery* that Moses used to explain the nature of the God "He will become," that passage is rather humorous. But for our purposes here, we have no further interest in the things God revealed to Moses in connection with the God named "He will become." We are only interested in what He revealed concerning Himself as the God named El. That One is the Potter Who is—*parabolically*—in the process of *re-forming* His Son Israel into an earthenware vessel that is far more pleasing to Him than anything fools will ever be willing to accept. The Apostle Paul has that *parabolic imagery* in mind when he says this:

You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And {He did so} in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, {even} us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

(Romans 9:19–24)

## How 'Bout That Funky Old Tent?

In Canaanite mythology, El was the father of all the other gods. According to a literal translation of the Canaanite texts, he was "the builder of those who are

built." Scholars prefer a much more general translation of that epithet, something on the order of "the creator of created things." But that is only because they do not understand the *significance* of the Hebrew/Canaanite idiom "build a house" and its relevance to the myth in which Baal could be resurrected only after El decreed his "house" could be "built."

According to Canaanite myth, both El and Baal lived on mountains located somewhere to the north of Canaan. The name of the mountain on which El resided is unknown. On water-damaged clay tablets, it appears, appropriately enough, as "the mountain ..." However, after his resurrection, the god Baal also went to live on a mountain (in the "house" that had been "built" for him). We are certain as to the name of Baal's mountain. It is *Zaphon*. That is made clear by the following passage:

*The mountain of Baal will weep for you, father;  
Zaphon, the holy fortress,  
The glorious fortress will mourn,  
The vast span of the fortress.*

— my translation

(Cf. Michael David Coogan, *Stories From Ancient Canaan* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978], p. 68)

Remember the name of Baal's mountain—*Zaphon*. It is mentioned several times in the Hebrew Scriptures as the Mountain on which the God "He will become" dwells. You can see from that how God was staking out the claim that He—not Baal—was the God of the Resurrection Who will bring the *parabolic* "rain" after His "house" has been "built." Later, we are going to look at how the Prophet Jeremiah uses the Hebrew term *zaphon* to both reveal and conceal the things he said about the Potter *re-forming* Israel into a new vessel. So just make a note of it for now.

There is one thing more you need to know before you can understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic pantomime* in which a foolish shepherd sold the Lamb of God to the leaders of the Jews as a sacrifice for the Passover: The Canaanites believed the dead were judged at the foot of the Mountain of El. Evidence indicates the verdict rendered was determined by their passage through at least one of the rivers that flowed down from (or out of the side of) the Mountain of God. To understand how God used this *mythological imagery* in *The Teaching of Moses*, just think

in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of the Passover Parable: Pharaoh and his minions drowned in the Sea of Reeds in front of Baal-Zaphon—there's that name *Zaphon* again—while Israel was permitted to cross over on dry ground (Ex. 14:2, 9; Num. 33:7).

If you think in terms of *Corporate* Israel—the Firstborn Son of God—having died in Egypt on the night before the members of that eternal Body crossed the Reed Sea, the *parabolic imagery* of the dead being judged by passage through a body of water stands out a bit better. (See *The Passover Parable*.) Then you can take that *parabolic imagery* and superimpose it over the *parabolic pantomime* in which Moses died right before the sons of Israel crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Finally, compare the *parabolic imagery* of those two pantomimes with that of the *parabolic pantomime* in which Jesus Christ was baptized by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) That gives you a bit of insight into the *meaning and significance* of all three *parabolic pantomimes*, even though you still don't know what spiritual reality they are describing. Nonetheless, you are better prepared to understand what the Apostle Paul was *talking about* when he wrote this about the *meaning and significance* of the *parabolic pantomime* of Christian baptism:

*What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace might increase? May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it? Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with {Him} in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall be also {in the likeness} of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with {Him,} that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

(Romans 6:1–11)

The *parabolic imagery* I have just pointed out should also help you better understand what Paul was *talking about* when he wrote this about the *parabolic imagery* of the Passover Parable:

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

(1 Corinthians 10:1–2)

Conveniently enough, the ancient Canaanites believed the Mountain of El stood at the entrance into both Heaven and Hell. The dead who survived the river ordeal were allowed to ascend the Mountain of El (to enter Heaven). Those who drowned in “Judge River” were carried off by him into “Prince Sea”—the Sea of El (Hell). Don't let the *mythological imagery* confuse you; “Prince Sea” and “Judge River” are apparently one and the same god. In Baal's case, “Prince Sea” evidently felt he had been cheated out of a soul that was rightfully his. Perhaps he thought Baal had somehow been unfairly helped across “Judge River.” In any event, when “Prince Sea” sent messengers to the supreme god El to complain about the situation, the mythology tells us El sold Baal down the river:

*After the messengers of Sea arrived,  
The emissaries of Judge River,  
They fell at the feet of El;  
They worshipped the council meeting.  
On standing, they delivered their message;  
They repeated their knowledge.  
They appeared as one fire, then two;  
Sharpened swords were their tongues.  
They said to the Bull, his father El:  
“The message of Sea, your lord,  
Of your master, Judge River.  
Give up, O gods, the one you are protecting,  
The one you are protecting, O multitude.  
Give up Baal and his minions,  
The son of Dagon, **that I may inherit his wealth.**”  
Then the Bull, his father El, spoke:  
“Baal is your servant, O Sea!  
Baal is your servant, O River!  
The son of Dagon is your prisoner.  
He must bring your tribute,  
When the gods bring your tribute,*

*And the holy ones your offerings.”*  
 —my translation  
 (Cf. Coogan, pp. 87–88)

If you read that text carefully, you can see the myth was concerned with whether “Prince Sea,” that is, the Sea of El (Hebrew: *Sheol*—see The Next Step tapes), would *inherit* what rightfully belonged to Baal. So when El decreed that the fate of Baal was that he should end up heading downstream toward the Sea of El without benefit of a boat or a paddle, Baal set out to defend his claim to his rightful *inheritance*. The god of wisdom—Kothar-wa-Hasis—assisted him in his victory over “Judge River” and “Prince Sea”:

*Then Kothar-wa-Hasis spoke:  
 “I tell you, O Prince Baal,  
 I repeat, O Rider on the Clouds:  
 Your enemy, O Baal!  
 You must slay your enemy!  
 You must quell your foe!  
 You must take your eternal kingdom,  
 Your dominion for ever and ever.”  
 Kothar brought down two clubs,  
 And he proclaimed their names:  
 “As for your name, you are Chaser.  
 Chaser, chase Sea,  
 Chase Sea from his throne,  
 River from the seat of his dominion.  
 Dance in the hand of Baal,  
 Like an eagle from his fingers.  
 Strike the shoulders of Prince Sea,  
 Between the arms of Judge River.”  
 The club danced in the hand of Baal,  
 Like an eagle from his fingers.  
 It struck the shoulders of Prince Sea,  
 Between the arms of Judge River.  
 Sea was strong; he did not slump;  
 His joints did not tremble,  
 His shape did not decline.  
 Kothar brought down two clubs,  
 And he proclaimed their names:  
 “As for your name, you are Driver.  
 Driver, drive Sea,  
 Drive Sea from his throne,  
 River from the seat of his dominion.  
 Dance in the hand of Baal,  
 like an eagle from his fingers.*

*Strike the skull of Prince Sea,  
 Between the eyes of Judge River.  
 Sea will buckle,  
 He will fall to the earth.”  
 The club danced in the hand of Baal,  
 Like an eagle from his fingers.  
 It struck the skull of Prince Sea,  
 Between the eyes of Judge River.  
 Sea buckled,  
 He fell to the earth,  
 His joints trembled,  
 His shape declined.  
 Baal seized and drank Sea;  
 He finished Judge River.  
 Astarte rebuked the Name:  
 “Shame {on you}, O Mighty Baal!  
 Shame {on you}, O Rider on the Clouds!  
 For Prince Sea was our captive,  
 Judge River was our captive.”  
 —my translation  
 (Cf. Coogan, pp. 88–89)*

After Baal had proved himself by triumphing over “Judge River,” the gods and goddesses suddenly realized he had gotten caught flat-footed on judgment day. He desperately needed to have a “house built” for him. Otherwise, he could not come back from the dead. That’s when Anat and Asherah stepped in to intercede for Baal with El.

The Canaanite texts tell us El was the god who was ultimately responsible for “building *The House*” of each individual god. He did that by speaking the Word so that the craftsman god, the god of wisdom—Kothar-wa-Hasis—could go to work. That much at least is clear from the texts that deal with the trials and travails that Baal had to go through to get a decree from El that his “house” could be “built.”

In the following passage, the goddess Anat tries—and fails—to attain the decree of El by threatening him with violence:

*Then the Virgin Anat spoke:  
 “The Bull El, my father, will respond to me;  
 He will respond to me, and I to him.  
 I’ll drag him to the ground like a lamb.  
 I’ll make blood run through his gray hair,  
 Gore through the gray hair of his beard,  
 If he does not give Baal a house like the gods’,*

And a court like the sons of Asherah."  
 She stamped her feet and the earth quaked;  
 Then she (Anat) set her face  
 Toward El at the source of the rivers  
 In the midst of the springs of the deep.  
 She reached the tent of El;  
 She entered the pavilion of the King, the elderly father.  
 Then the Virgin Anat spoke:  
 "In the building of your house, O El!  
 In the building of your house do not rejoice!  
 Do not rejoice in the erecting of your palace! ...  
 I'll make blood run through your gray hair,  
 Gore through the gray hair of your beard."  
 El spoke from the seven chambers,  
 From the eight entrances of the compound:  
 "I know you, daughter, are like men.  
 And among the goddesses you are not despised.  
 What is your desire, Virgin Anat?"  
 Then the Virgin Anat spoke:  
 "Your decree, O El, is wisdom;  
 Your wisdom is eternal.  
 Your decree is a life of good fortune.  
 The mighty Baal is our king,  
 Our judge, there is none over him.  
 All of us would carry his chalice;  
 All of us would carry his cup."  
 —my translation  
 (Cf. Coogan, pp. 94–95)

When Anat's threats didn't work, the goddess Asherah took a different tack. She turned on the charm and used a little persuasive logic:

Then she (Asherah) set her face  
 Toward El at the source of the rivers,  
 In the midst of the springs of the deep.  
 She reached the tent of El;  
 She entered the pavilion of the King, the elderly father.  
 At the feet of El she knelt and bowed down.  
 She worshiped and magnified him.  
 Behold! When El saw her,  
 He opened his mouth and laughed.  
 He put his feet up on the footstool.  
 He tapped with his fingers.  
 He raised his voice and cried out:  
 "How did the Lady, Asherah-of-the-Sea, arrive?  
 How did the Creatress of the gods come?  
 Are you tired and hungry?

Are you parched and thirsty?  
 Eat or drink {something}.  
 Eat food from the table;  
 Drink wine from the flask,  
 The blood of trees from a cup of gold.  
 Or do you care for the masculinity of El, the king?  
 Does the love of the Bull arouse you?"  
 The Lady Asherah-of-the-Sea spoke:  
 "Your decree, O El, is wisdom,  
 Your wisdom is eternal.  
 Your decree is a life of good fortune.  
 The mighty Baal is our king,  
 Our judge, there is none over him.  
 All of us would carry his chalice;  
 All of us would carry his cup."  
 To the Bull El, her father, she groaned and cried out;  
 To El, the king who could establish him,  
 Asherah and her sons cried out,  
 The goddess and her band of companions:  
 "But Baal doesn't have a house like the gods',  
 Or a court like the sons of Asherah.  
 The dwelling of El is the shelter of his son,  
 The dwelling of Lady Asherah-of-the-Sea,  
 The dwelling of the established brides,  
 The dwelling of Pidray, daughter of light,  
 The shelter of Tallay, daughter of rain.  
 The dwelling of Arsay, daughter of ..."  
 —my translation  
 (Cf. Coogan, pp. 99–100)

El responded favorably to Asherah's request and gave the decree so the god of wisdom could begin "construction" of Baal's "house":

Then Kindly El, the Merciful One, responded:  
 "So, am I a servant, a companion of Asherah?  
 Am I indeed a servant, handling a trowel?  
 Or a servant-girl, making bricks?  
**Let a house be built for Baal like the gods,  
 And a court like the sons of Asherah."**  
 Then Lady Asherah-of-the-Sea spoke:  
 "You are exalted, El, you are wise;  
 The gray hair of your beard instructs you. ...  
 Now at last Baal will appoint a time of rain,  
 A time when he comes in the snow.  
 He will grant his voice in the clouds,  
 Release his lightning to the earth.  
 Let him complete his house of cedar!

*Indeed, let him construct a house of bricks!"*

—my translation

(Cf. Coogan, p. 101)

The antics of the goddesses Anat and Asherah in gaining the decree of the supreme god El certainly makes for humorous reading. But one must understand that the overriding *significance* of the Baal myth resides in the not-so-obvious fact that the god who had his "house built" became (or remained) one of the sons of the supreme god El. For example, the texts indicate Baal was a son of Dagon who *became* the son of El. Although the texts do not tell us this explicitly, it is obvious from *The Teaching of Moses* that his adoption by El occurred after he had his "house built."

For the benefit (or detriment) of those of you who are familiar with Canaanite mythology, I should tell you I am filling in gaps in the Canaanite mythology on the basis of the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching of Moses*, *The Teaching of the Prophets*, and *The Apostolic Teaching*. In some ways, Moses and the Prophets are much more explicit about what Baal went through to attain resurrection from the dead than any of the Canaanite mythological texts are. But before one can understand the *meaning* and *significance* of either the Canaanite mythological texts or what Moses and the Prophets wrote, one must understand what they are *talking about*. Without insight into the *meaning* and *significance* of the Hebrew idioms "build a house," "raise up a seed," and "make a name," that is impossible. But that is not what I am explaining here.

According to the *mythological imagery* of the Canaanites, the dead soul who survived "Judge River" and ascended the Mountain of El would there find the supreme god El sitting in a funky old tent called "the tent of meeting." In Canaanite drawings, he is depicted as an aged king sitting on a throne with his feet resting on the royal footstool. From this dais, El would issue the decree that the god of wisdom could "build a house" for the exonerated soul so that he could live like all the other gods and goddesses.

Now, if you know anything at all about the things that Moses wrote, you probably already know that the Tabernacle in which the God (*El*) of the sons of Israel dwelled is also called "the tent of meeting." You may even know that when Moses ascended the Mountain of God, God gave him the pattern for that tent so that He could dwell among the sons of Israel:

*"And let them construct a sanctuary for Me, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I am going to show you, {as} the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furniture, just so you shall construct {it.}"*  
(Exodus 25:8–9)

Scholars have long debated whether the Tabernacle (Hebrew: *mishkan*) and the "tent of meeting" (Hebrew: *'ohel mo'ed*) were one and the same. They were. But before the Tabernacle was completed, Moses met with God in another tent that he called "the tent of meeting." As contrasted with the Tabernacle, which was set up by the Levites inside the camp, Moses set this one up himself—outside the camp:

*Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And it came about, that everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp. And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. And it came about, whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.*  
(Exodus 33:7–11)

The point of that *parabolic pantomime* was to remind the sons of Israel that, just as in the Canaanite mythology, the decree of God (*El*) always comes from His throne in "the tent of meeting." That is because when God spoke the Ten Commandments from Mt. Sinai, He was playing the role of the Canaanite god El in a *parabolic pantomime*. He did that to demonstrate to the sons of Israel that the Ten Commandments contain the Law by which the dead will be judged. The outcome of their judgment will, in turn, determine whether or not they can ascend the Mountain of God and enter into the Resurrection. But God was also reminding them that, in spite of the fact that Baal—the Canaanite god of the resurrection—failed the judgment



and found himself carried off downstream, he still got his “house built” the old-fashioned way: El intervened and gave the decree. And since God Himself took on the attributes of Baal under the name of the God “He will become,” you can see that the Resurrection of the Body of Jesus Christ is not some new Christian doctrine. It is just part of the *mythological imagery* the Prophets used to describe the *re-forming* of Israel into a vessel more to God’s Own liking.

There is much more to God’s *parabolic pantomime* of the judgment His Firstborn Son Israel faces at the foot of the Mountain of God. His pronouncement of the “ten words” from the top of Mt. Sinai is just the central focus of that particular pantomime. But the key to understanding the *meaning* and *significance* of the *parabolic pantomime* of Judgment Day resides in an accurate understanding of the Creation Account. It is essential that one knows what it *means* for mankind to be created in the image and likeness of God—which is the point of what Isaiah and Jeremiah tell us about the activity of God, the Potter. They remind us that His Creation is not yet complete. He is still busily *re-forming* Israel into an entirely different vessel—One that is more suited for the purpose He has in mind.

## The Assembly of El

Now we come to a little more intricate part of the *parabolic imagery* related to God’s *re-forming* of Israel. The texts tell us the Canaanite god El made His decree concerning the fate of Baal from a tent called “the tent of meeting.” That tent was called “the tent of meeting” for one very good reason: The assembly, or council, of the sons of El met there in order to hear his decree. That would not be overly *significant* in itself except for one very peculiar fact: The same word that is used to designate the assembly of the sons of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures (Hebrew: *’edah*) is also, on at least one occasion, used to refer to the assembly of the sons of El in the Canaanite mythological texts. Most often, however, the Canaanite texts use an Eastern Semitic term (Akkadian: *puhru*) for that assembly. That, in turn, is *significant* because it points us to what the Akkadian myths tell us concerning the assembly of the gods and their decree concerning the kingship of the god Marduk. But that’s another story.

For now, it is enough to know that in God’s pantomime of Judgment Day, the gods who assemble in the

council of the gods to hear the decree that God speaks from the tent of meeting are none other than the members of Israel, the *parabolic* Firstborn Son of God. Now you know *why* Jesus ridiculed the Jews for taking offense at His claim that He was the Son of God (John 10:22–39). You should also be able to understand *why* the Apostle John said this regarding the *parabolic* assembly of the Children of God on Judgment Day:

*There was the true light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*  
(John 1:9–13)

It’s a bit difficult to understand what John *meant* by what he said there if you don’t know what it *means* to be created in the image and likeness of God. John is *talking about* the riddle in which the past is still future. He makes that a little clearer in what he says here:

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and {such} we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.*  
(1 John 3:1–2)

I’ve mentioned the *parabolic image* in which the future is *parabolically* viewed as the past on several other occasions. My favorite view of that *parabolic imagery* can be found in what Paul wrote to the Colossians:

*If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory. Therefore consider the*

members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come, and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.

(Colossians 3:1–7)

My point here is actually quite simple: According to the *parabolic pantomime* God conducted at Mt. Sinai, the sons of God who assemble in council at the “tent of meeting” to hear the decree of El on Judgment Day are all those who have ever been members of Israel and have not been “cut off from” that Body. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) The point of the *parabolic pantomime* of the “assembly” of Israel at “the tent of meeting” (in which the future is the past) is equally as simple: The members of that Body have already “assembled” in that “tent” and heard the decree of God which will result in their resurrection. That decree is contained in *The Teaching*. All that is required of them for their resurrection is that they believe what they have heard. If they fail to continue believing the Truth, they will be “cut off from” Israel. That is what the author of the Book of Hebrews is *talking about* in the following passage:

*Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do, if God permits. 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. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. But, beloved, we are convinced of better things concerning you, and things that accompany salvation, though we are speaking in this way. For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward*

*His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*

(Hebrews 6:1–12)

Obviously, when one reads that passage, it helps to know that rain is a *parabolic image* of *The Teaching*. (See “How Do You Tell the Difference Between an Alcoholic and a Drunkard?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1999.) It also doesn’t hurt to know that *The Teaching* is *parabolically* depicted as food. (See “If You Plan to Reap What You Sow, You Had Better Watch What You Plant,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1998.)

Later on, the author of the Book of Hebrews goes a bit more in depth into the *parabolic image* of the assembly of the sons of God. As you read the following passage, keep in mind he has just concluded a lengthy exhortation regarding the importance of continuing to believe *The Apostolic Teaching* if one intends to *inherit what was promised*:

*Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled; that {there be} no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a {single} meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears. For you have not come to {a mountain} that may be touched and to a blazing fire, and to darkness and gloom and whirlwind, and to the blast of a trumpet and the sound of words which {sound was such that} those who heard begged that no further word should be spoken to them. For they could not bear the command, “IF EVEN A BEAST TOUCHES THE MOUNTAIN, IT WILL BE STONED.” And so terrible was the sight, {that} Moses said, “I AM FULL OF FEAR and trembling.” But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the*

*sprinkled blood, which speaks better than {the blood} of Abel. See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned {them} on earth, much less {shall} we {escape} who turn away from Him who {warns} from heaven. And His voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "YET ONCE MORE I WILL SHAKE NOT ONLY THE EARTH, BUT ALSO THE HEAVEN." And this {expression}, "Yet once more," denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.*  
(Hebrews 12:14–29)

That part about the Believer coming to a mountain that cannot be touched should tell you the *parabolic image* of the Mountain of God represents something other than a *physical* mountain. Fools won't be able to make the cut on this one, so listen carefully: The Mountain/city/angels of God are not a *physical* thing; He is a Person—not a *physical* Person, but a *spiritual* One. He is the Word of God—*The Teaching*. Keep that in mind as you reread the list of things to which the Believer has come:

*But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than {the blood} of Abel.*  
(Hebrews 12:22–24)

Those are not separate items. They are all *parabolic images* of one and the same *literal, yet spiritual, Person*. Of course, to understand how that is, it helps to know what the Prophets have said about Jesus Christ as the Heavenly Jerusalem and how blood and the soul are linked in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*. Maybe then you could understand how sprinkled blood can talk. My only point here is, in the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching*, the assembly of the sons of God occurs at the *parabolic* Mountain of God. It is there that God issues His decree.

The following psalm was written by a Prophet whose insight into the *meaning* and *significance* of Nathan's prophecy to David (2 Sam. 7) can hardly be questioned. Speaking *parabolically*, he *talks about* the decree of El—the Word of God—which is proclaimed in the assembly/council of the sons of God and how it results in the *fulfillment of the promise* to David in the God "He will become"—that is, in the Resurrection of the One sometimes called "Jehovah" or "Yahweh":

*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.*  
(Psalm 89:1–8)

That's a rather cryptic allusion to the decree of God (El) that resulted in "The House" of David being "built" in the God "He will become." The *meaning* and *significance* of the passage is made even more obscure by the fact that the translator did not understand what the psalmist was *talking about*. Consequently, he came up short in a few spots. But it is not my intention to explain this psalm at this time. My only point is, the psalm makes it clear that the members of the "assembly/council of the holy ones" are the same as "the sons of the mighty."

In the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, the "assembly of the holy ones"—that is, the members of Israel, the Firstborn Son of God—meets at the Mountain of God where God resides in the "tent of meeting." Notice that the members of that august assembly are called "the sons of the mighty" in the

psalm quoted above. That is important. However, one also needs to know that, according to Moses and the Prophets, the God Who presides over the assembly of “the sons of the mighty” is the God Who revealed Himself to them by the name “He will become.” When that One speaks, His powerful voice brings about what He has decreed in the assembly/council of “the sons of the mighty.” That is what the psalmist is *talking about* in Psalm 29:

*A Psalm of David.*

*Ascribe to the LORD, O sons of the mighty,  
Ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.  
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due to His name;  
Worship the LORD in holy array.  
The voice of the LORD is upon the waters;  
The God of glory thunders,  
The LORD is over many waters.  
The voice of the LORD is powerful,  
The voice of the LORD is majestic.  
The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars;  
Yes, the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.  
And He makes Lebanon skip like a calf,  
And Sirion like a young wild ox.  
The voice of the LORD hews out flames of fire.  
The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;  
The LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.  
The voice of the LORD makes the deer to calve,  
And strips the forests bare,  
And in His temple everything says, “Glory!”  
The LORD sat {as King} at the flood;  
Yes, the LORD sits as King forever.  
The LORD will give strength to His people;  
The LORD will bless His people with peace.  
(Psalm 29:1–11)*

That’s just another way of saying *The Teaching* is going to bring about the very events that it describes. The part about “He will become” sitting as king at the time of the Flood is *meant* to ridicule the Canaanite beliefs concerning “Prince Sea” and “Judge River” taking Baal captive. In contrast to their god Baal, the God “He will become” has never been a slave to anyone. He is King of all Creation, commanding the elements of the universe, which obey His every command. Having said that, now let me explain a bit about that foolish shepherd who is yet to come.

## *Can You Spell D-U-M-B?*

According to Canaanite mythology, any decree that El made in the assembly of the gods was the epitome of wisdom. That’s one of the keys to understanding the *meaning* and *significance* of the “wisdom” literature of the Old Testament—that is, books like Job, the Psalms, and Proverbs. Some of the more startling parts of *The Teaching* have been concealed there. In the wisdom of God, those things will remain concealed there until just that moment in time when it is necessary to bring about the events for which they were spoken. In the meantime, the assembly of the sons of God needs to prepare itself for the invasion of the king of Babylon. That is what Isaiah is *talking about* in this passage:

*And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest  
from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which  
you have been enslaved, that you will take up this taunt  
against the king of Babylon, and say,  
“How the oppressor has ceased,  
{And how} fury has ceased!  
The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked,  
The scepter of rulers  
Which used to strike the peoples in fury  
with unceasing strokes,  
Which subdued the nations in anger  
with unrestrained persecution.  
The whole earth is at rest {and} is quiet;  
They break forth into shouts of joy.  
Even the cypress trees rejoice over you,  
{and} the cedars of Lebanon, {saying,}  
‘Since you were laid low,  
no {tree} cutter comes up against us.’  
Sheol from beneath is excited over you  
to meet you when you come;  
It arouses for you the spirits of the dead,  
all the leaders of the earth;  
It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.  
They will all respond and say to you,  
‘Even you have been made weak as we,  
You have become like us.  
Your pomp {and} the music of your harps  
Have been brought down to Sheol;  
Maggots are spread out {as your bed} beneath you,  
And worms are your covering.’  
How you have fallen from heaven,  
O star of the morning, son of the dawn!*

*You have been cut down to the earth,  
 You who have weakened the nations!  
 But you said in your heart,  
 'I will ascend to heaven;  
 I will raise my throne above the stars of God,  
 And I will sit on the mount of assembly  
 In the recesses of the north.  
 I will ascend above the heights of the clouds;  
 I will make myself like the Most High.'*  
*Nevertheless you will be thrust down to Sheol,  
 To the recesses of the pit.  
 Those who see you will gaze at you,  
 They will ponder over you, {saying,}  
 'Is this the man who made the earth tremble,  
 Who shook kingdoms,  
 Who made the world like a wilderness  
 And overthrew its cities,  
 Who did not allow his prisoners to {go} home?'  
 All the kings of the nations lie in glory,  
 Each in his own tomb.  
 But you have been cast out of your tomb  
 Like a rejected branch,  
 Clothed with the slain who are pierced with a sword,  
 Who go down to the stones of the pit,  
 Like a trampled corpse.  
 You will not be united with them in burial,  
 Because you have ruined your country,  
 You have slain your people.  
 May the offspring of evildoers not be mentioned forever.  
 Prepare for his sons a place of slaughter  
 Because of the iniquity of their fathers.  
 They must not arise and take possession of the earth  
 And fill the face of the world with cities."  
 (Isaiah 14:3–21)*

That passage is *talking about* the time when Satan comes in the person of the Antichrist as the king of Mystery Babylon, the *harlot* that sits astride the scarlet beast. Did you see what the fool intends to accomplish at that time? He thinks he can somehow—after being cast down to Earth—enter the Resurrection along with (or instead of) all “the holy ones,” that is, all the members of Israel—the ones who have the legitimate right to ascend to “the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north.” What do you think would cause him to believe that lie? Well, sometimes liars fall victim to their own lies. In this case, the Liar has evidently swallowed a big one. But the *significance* of Satan’s assault on the

gates of Heaven will be lost on you if you are not thinking *parabolically*.

You see, the phrase “in the recesses of the north” should actually be translated “on the side of *Zaphon*.” It is a reference to the mythological mountain on which the Canaanites believed Baal resided after his “house” had been “built.” Scholars know that, but translators stay away from it because they are afraid to admit that anything in the Bible smacks of myth. Unfortunately, their desire to sanitize the Scriptures is futile. The *mythological imagery* is already there. All they are doing is hiding it. And when they do that, they play right into the Liar’s hands. If you can’t see where the Prophets ridicule the ancient myths, you can’t see the *parabolic imagery* in which they have couched *The Teaching*.

Now that you know “the north” should sometimes be translated “*Zaphon*,” let me show you where that information makes a big difference in your understanding of the biblical text. In Psalm 48, the psalmist says this:

*A Song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.*

*Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised,  
 In the city of our God, His holy mountain.  
 Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth,  
 Is Mount Zion {in} the far north,  
 The city of the great King.  
 God, in her palaces,  
 Has made Himself known as a stronghold.  
 (Psalm 48:1–3)*

The phrase translated “the far north” in verse 2 is exactly the same phrase that we saw translated “the recesses of the north” in Isaiah 14:13. It should be translated the same way as that instance—that is, as “the side of *Zaphon*.” What’s my point? Merely that, according to *The Teaching*, the *parabolic* city of God sits on a *parabolic* Mountain named *Zaphon*. Mt. Zion is just a *parabolic image* of a mountain peak on a ridge that comes down off *Zaphon*, just as the Temple Mount in Jerusalem sits on a ridge that extends to the southeast of Jerusalem. The Prophets tell us God is “building” a *parabolic* “house” on that *parabolic* mountain peak and He intends to dwell in that *parabolic* “house” forever. That is what Isaiah is *talking about* in the following passage:

Therefore, hear the word of the LORD, O scoffers,  
 Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem,  
 Because you have said,  
 "We have made a covenant with death,  
 And with Sheol we have made a pact.  
 The overwhelming scourge will not reach us  
 when it passes by,  
 For we have made falsehood our refuge  
 and we have concealed ourselves with deception."  
 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD,  
 "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,  
 A costly cornerstone {for} the foundation,  
 firmly placed.  
 He who believes {in it} will not be disturbed.  
 And I will make justice the measuring line,  
 And righteousness the level;  
 Then hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies,  
 And the waters shall overflow the secret place.  
 And your covenant with death shall be canceled,  
 And your pact with Sheol shall not stand;  
 When the overwhelming scourge passes through,  
 Then you become its trampling {place.}  
 As often as it passes through, it will seize you.  
 For morning after morning it will pass through,  
 {anytime} during the day or night.  
 And it will be sheer terror to understand what it means."  
 (Isaiah 28:14–19)

That entire passage is speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of Judgment Day. On that Great Day, the members of Israel—the Body of Jesus Christ—will find they have a "house" that has already been "built" for them, just as the god Baal supposedly had his "house" "built" after he triumphed over Judge River and Prince Sea. Those who are outside the assembly of the sons of Israel will be swept away by a *parabolic* flood that carries them into the *parabolic* Sea of El—that is, into *Sheol*.

If you have difficulty seeing that the Prophet Isaiah is speaking *parabolically* in the passage above, consider the fact that the Apostle Paul quotes or alludes to verse 16 on four separate occasions (Rom. 9:33; 10:11; 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20). In each and every case, he indicates that the "cornerstone" of the "foundation" for "The House" that is being "built" on Mt. Zion is none other than Jesus Christ. For those looking forward to the rebuilding of the Temple: I'd be interested in hearing someone explain how Jesus Christ can be a *figurative*

stone laid in the foundation of a *physical* house of God. It's just *parabolic imagery*, folks. It points to a completely different spiritual reality. In that reality, every Believer is a "living stone" that God is preparing for His eternal "house." If you didn't know that, or if you don't know that God's "house" is "The House" of Israel, you really should read your Bible more carefully. The Apostle Peter has explained it all rather clearly in this passage:

Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander, like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord. And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For {this} is contained in Scripture:

"BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE,  
 A PRECIOUS CORNER {stone},  
 AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM  
 SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."

This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve,

"THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED,  
 THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER {stone,}"  
 and,

"A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE";  
 for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word,  
 and to this {doom} they were also appointed. But you are  
 A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A  
 PEOPLE FOR {God's} OWN POSSESSION, that you may pro-  
 claim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of  
 darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT  
 A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had  
 NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.  
 (1 Peter 2:1–10)

The Apostle is explaining how Christian Believers are now members of Israel—the Body of Jesus Christ. If you can't see how that *parabolic imagery* stands behind everything he says in that passage, you should study *Not All Israel Is Israel* and some of the other things I have written. If, after reading those things, you still can't see the *parabolic imagery* in which Jesus Christ is "The House" of Israel, I pity you. You have obviously been blinded by the Prince of Darkness. ■



**The Voice of Elijah**<sup>®</sup> 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.

**A Little Cloud on the Horizon:** Canaanite myth tells us Baal got his “house built” through the efforts of two goddesses—Anat and Asherah—and the craftsmanship of the god of wisdom, Kothar-wa-Hasis. For sixty years, scholars have been studying the cuneiform tablets on which that myth was written. Amazingly, they haven’t yet been able to figure out what the texts are *talking about*. Lacking that crucial information, they don’t have a clue as to what they *mean*.

Scholars still believe the “house” that Baal had “built” for him must be either a temple or a palace. The Truth is, Baal’s “house” was a male child, a boy who was considered to be the son of god—both human and divine, a child who was “built”—through the agency of wisdom—in a virgin, a child whose sole purpose in life was to be sacrificed so that others might live in the resurrection. If you cannot see from that rough outline how God has mocked the religiosity of mankind in the life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, don’t worry about it. Just let contention continue to reign supreme in your “heart.” See where it gets you.

The Prophets of Israel wove seven messages into the prophetic and historical books they left for us. Those seven messages explain all that one needs to know about the *meaning* and *significance* of *what* the Prophets wrote. But the Canaanite mythological texts tell us a whole lot more about *why* they wrote it. To understand the Canaanite mind-set, one must realize that, in some way or other, the gods and goddesses were considered to be a personification of the life force

that the Canaanites perceived in various animate and inanimate objects. For example, the goddess Asherah represented the life force that resided in some trees. Therefore, we find this prohibition in the Scriptures:

*“You shall not plant for yourself an Asherah of any kind of tree beside the altar of the LORD your God, which you shall make for yourself.”*  
(Deuteronomy 16:21)

The god Baal, by contrast, was the king of the gods because he was the life force that existed in the rain. The Canaanites believed that when Baal arose in the resurrection, he broke free from the Sea of El—the Mediterranean Sea—and came riding on the clouds toward the coast of Canaan where he would fall to Earth in the snow and the rain. Hence his title: Rider on the Clouds. When the rain fell, some of the life force of Baal was transferred to the ground, where it caused seeds to sprout and vegetation to grow. The rest ran off into the rivers that carried it back to “Prince Sea.” Eventually, all of the life force of Baal fell victim to “Judge River,” who carried him back out to the Sea of El. When Baal succumbed once again to “Prince Sea,” the god “Death” reigned over the land in the drought that ensued.

The *parabolic imagery* of the Elijah who is to come is based on that *mythological imagery*. After he appears to end the *parabolic* drought, the majority of Israel—the Body of Jesus Christ—will be “cut off from Israel.” A mere seven thousand will remain. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) And then there must be a showdown between Elijah and the prophets of Baal to see who can bring the rain:

*But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, “Go up now, look toward the sea.” So he went up and looked and said, “There is nothing.” And he said, “Go back” seven times. And it came about at the seventh {time,} that he said, “Behold, a cloud as small as a man’s hand is coming up from the sea.” And he said, “Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare {your chariot} and go down, so that the {heavy} shower does not stop you.’” So it came about in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower.*  
(1 Kings 18:42b–45a)

Let me know when you see that little cloud. ■



**The Voice of Elijah**<sup>®</sup> 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:** With Easter having recently come and gone, I want to ask you a question that has always baffled scholars. The question relates to Judas Iscariot and the thirty pieces of silver he returned to the chief priests and elders after feeling remorse at betraying Christ (Matt. 27:3). We are told that the chief priests took the silver and purchased the Potter's Field (Matt. 27:7) according to the words of the Prophet Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9–10). The dilemma that scholars have been unable to resolve is that the passage quoted in Matthew 27:9–10 does not appear to come from the Book of Jeremiah. Although many scholars think this passage comes from Zechariah 11:12–13, there is only a vague resemblance between the Matthew and Zechariah passages. So here is my question: Where is Matthew 27:9–10 found in the Old Testament? Is it found in Jeremiah, Zechariah, or in one of the books of the Deuteronomistic History—Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings—that you say Jeremiah wrote (The Voice of Elijah<sup>®</sup>, July 1997)?

**Elijah:** Unfortunately, I can only answer your question superficially. You are asking me to explain the meaning and significance of one of the most complex and intricately detailed *parabolic pantomimes* in all the Scriptures. Over the past eight years, I have explained a few of the ways in which the Prophets used the component parts of *parables*—Hebrew idioms and *parabolic*

*images*—to hide *The Mystery* of Scripture in their writings. But there is an incredibly rich *parabolic imagery* that stands behind the things that Matthew says concerning Judas in the passage you mentioned. So if I fall short of your expectations in regard to explaining what Matthew had in mind when he wrote those things, I can at least take solace in the fact that nobody else has been able to provide an adequate explanation either. If you don't mind, however, I would prefer to answer the question in a separate article. Even a superficial explanation is beyond the scope of this column.

**Editor:** In the introduction to *The Way, The Truth, The Life seminar audiotapes (and other places as well)* you state that you intend to make the case that you are restoring *The Apostolic Teaching* by presenting evidence from the Scriptures and from "extrabiblical sources" to show that what you teach is true. Since we have recently picked up some new subscribers who aren't familiar with what you have been doing over the past twenty-five years, can you cite some of the extrabiblical sources you use to help you validate and/or gain a greater understanding of the Truth? And can you explain how these sources help you in what you do?

**Elijah:** Various extrabiblical materials confirm my understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. That material ranges all the way from the Sumerian clay tablets of the third millennium B.C. down to paperback books you can find on the shelves of Christian bookstores today. The Sumerian and Akkadian (Babylonian and Assyrian) material is most valuable for confirming the meaning and significance of the various idioms that one encounters in the Hebrew Scriptures. The Egyptian and Canaanite mythological texts provide the greatest insight into the *parabolic imagery* the Prophets were using when they mocked the people of Israel for believing such goofiness.

The following example from the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* sheds light on the thinking of the ancients in regard to eternal life. In the following passage, Gilgamesh and Enkidu have come to the Cedar Forest, where they intend to "make a name" for themselves by slaying the dragon Huwawa:

*Gilgamesh opened his mouth,  
Saying to [Enkidu]:  
"Who, my friend can scale he[aven]?"*



Only the gods [live] forever under the sun.  
 As for mankind, numbered are their days;  
 Whatever they achieve is but the wind!  
 Even here thou art afraid of death.  
 What of thy heroic might?  
 Let me go then before thee,  
 Let thy mouth call to me, 'Advance, fear not!'  
**Should I fall, I shall have made me a name:**  
 'Gilgamesh'—they will say—against fierce Huwawa  
 Has fallen!' (Long) after  
 My offspring has been born in my house,"  
 (obscure; 18-21 mutilated)  
 "[Thus calling] to me, thou hast grieved my heart.  
 [My hand] I will poise  
 And [will fell] the cedars.  
**A [name] that endures I will make for me!"**  
 (James B. Pritchard, *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*  
 [Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press,  
 1969], p. 79)

There are various theories concerning the *meaning* and *significance* of the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. At present, I am not persuaded by any of them. That is not because I find them unconvincing, but because they do not take into account the *meaning* and *significance* of the two semitic idioms "make a name" and "build a house." The clearly stated theme of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is the quest for eternal life. And the semitic idiom "make a name"—which is itself used in connection with that topic in the Canaanite mythology and in the Hebrew Scriptures—occurs several times in *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. But each time, it seems to have overtones that mock the notion that "to become famous" in any way compares with the attainment of eternal life.

The *mythological imagery* one finds in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* also relates to the idiom "build a house" in that it tells how an Akkadian king, Gilgamesh, traveled to the Cedar Forest to fell the giant cedars that Huwawa guarded. That is not overly *significant* unless one knows that the annals of the Babylonian and Assyrian kings are filled with details concerning how they, likewise, made that trek—for the same purpose—to bring back cedar wood to "build a house" for this god or that. One has to wonder whether the scribes who composed the Akkadian myths are not doing the same thing as their Canaanite counterparts. That is, they may well be speaking euphemistically concerning something beyond the physical.

One of the most interesting aspects of the *mythological imagery* of *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is how the Prophet Isaiah mocked it while at the same time using it to speak cryptically concerning how God "made a name" for Himself by felling the giant cedars of Lebanon:

So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, {He will say,} "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." For he has said,  
 "By the power of my hand and by my wisdom I did {this,} For I have understanding;  
 And I removed the boundaries of the peoples,  
 And plundered their treasures,  
 And like a mighty man I brought down {their} inhabitants,  
 And my hand reached to the riches of the peoples like a nest,  
 And as one gathers abandoned eggs,  
 I gathered all the earth;  
 And there was not one that flapped its wing  
 or opened {its} beak or chirped."  
 Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops with it?  
 Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who wields it?  
 {That would be} like a club wielding those who lift it,  
 {Or} like a rod lifting {him who} is not wood.  
 Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send  
 a wasting disease among his stout warriors;  
 And under his glory a fire will be kindled  
 like a burning flame.  
 And the light of Israel will become a fire  
 and his Holy One a flame,  
 And it will burn and devour his thorns  
 and his briars in a single day.  
 And He will destroy the glory of his forest  
 and of his fruitful garden, both soul and body;  
 And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.  
 And the rest of the trees of his forest  
 will be so small in number  
 That a child could write them down.  
 (Isaiah 10:12–19)

We can put aside for now the fact that Isaiah is *talking about* the Antichrist in terms of the *parabolic image* of the king of Assyria. The point of the passage has to do with what God is going to do when He has finally "built His house," or, as he puts it: "when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and

on Jerusalem." Isaiah has in mind the *parabolic* Mount Zion and Jerusalem on Mt. *Zaphon*, where God is currently "building a house" for His "Name." When that "house" has finally been "built," God is going to turn His attention to the king of Assyria, the one who has been coming up to the *parabolic* "Cedar Forest" on a regular basis and felling "trees" to "build a house" for himself. At that time, God is going to do some clear-cutting of His Own. That becomes clear from what the Prophet says at the end of that chapter:

*Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs  
with a terrible crash;*

*Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down,  
And those who are lofty will be abased.*

*And He will cut down the thickets of the forest  
with an iron {axe,}*

*And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.*

*Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,  
And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

*And the Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,*

*The spirit of wisdom and understanding,*

*The spirit of counsel and strength,*

*The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.*

*And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,*

*And He will not judge by what His eyes see,*

*Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;*

*But with righteousness He will judge the poor,*

*And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;*

*And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,*

*And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.*

*Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,*

*And faithfulness the belt about His waist.*

*(Isaiah 10:33–11:5)*

The information one gains from the exploits of Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Akkadian *Epic of Gilgamesh* provides some insight into what the Prophet Isaiah is *talking about*. But one has no way of understanding the *meaning* of "a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse," much less the *significance* of *why* he says it, without insight into the Canaanite ritual of planting a tree—called an *Asherah*—when someone died. That knowledge comes from reading the Egyptian and Canaanite mythology with the understanding that the Egyptian myth of Osiris is, for the most part, nothing more than an Egyptian version of the Canaanite myth of Baal.

The extrabiblical material I am most anxious to find time to study further is the Jewish literature of the Intertestamental Period. When I read that literature ten years ago, the one thing that perplexed me most was what they have to say concerning how *The Teaching* was *handed down* by righteous men before the time of Moses. I had no idea at that time what they were *talking about*. Now that I understand those things a bit better, I could no doubt understand more about *what* they have said and perhaps gain some insight into *why* they felt compelled to say it.

If one understands the Truth concerning *The Teaching of Moses* as "*The Way*" and "*The Light*," it is not difficult to see that at least some of the Jews were still holding on to that Truth as late as 167 B.C. Consider the following excerpt from the Dead Sea Scrolls:

*From the God of Knowledge comes all that is and shall be. Before ever they existed He established their whole design, and when, as ordained for them, they come into being, it is in accord with His glorious design that they accomplish their task without change. The laws of all things are in His hand and He provides them with all their needs.*

*He has created man to govern the world, and has appointed for him two spirits in which to walk until the time of His visitation: the spirits of truth and falsehood. Those born of truth spring from a fountain of light, but those born of falsehood spring from a source of darkness. All the children of righteousness are ruled by the Prince of Light and walk in the ways of light, but all the children of falsehood are ruled by the Angel of Darkness and walk in the ways of darkness.*

*The Angel of Darkness leads all the children of righteousness astray, and until his end, all their sin, iniquities, wickedness, and all their unlawful deeds are caused by his dominion in accordance with the mysteries of God. Every one of their chastisements, and every one of the seasons of their distress, shall be brought about by the rule of his persecution; for all his allotted spirits seek the overthrow of the sons of light.*

*(Geza Vermes, The Dead Sea Scrolls in English [Sheffield, England: JSOT Press, 1987], pp. 64–65)*

The amazing thing about passages like that is not how unlike pharisaic Judaism they sound, or how much they echo the New Testament, but how true they are to *The Teaching of Moses*.

Perhaps the most intriguing of all the currently available extrabiblical material is the Gnostic literature of the second century A.D. When the Gnostics broke away from the Early Church, they took the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* and remythologized it. That is, instead of understanding that the parables of the Prophets are only *meant* to tell us what spiritual reality IS LIKE, the Gnostics said the Prophets were actually describing that reality *literally*. So, for instance, they understood Proverbs 8:1–9:6 to be a *literal* description of the activities of a goddess named Sophia—Wisdom—rather than just a *parabolic* description of the role that wisdom has played and is playing in Creation.

The Gnostic literature highlights many of the most important *parabolic images* in *The Apostolic Teaching*. With that information in hand, one can often go to the Early Church Fathers and find hints as to the true *meaning* and *significance* of those *parabolic images*. But even the information the gnostic texts provide does not help all that much unless one knows where those *parabolic images* originated in the Egyptian and Canaanite mythology and how they are linked to the Hebrew idioms the Prophets used to *talk about* them.

To use the example I mentioned above, without an understanding of the *significance* that the Sumerians, Akkadians, Egyptians, and Canaanites placed on wisdom, one has little hope of ever understanding what the Prophets *meant* by their use of the *parabolic imagery* related to the gnostic goddess named Sophia. Furthermore, one has absolutely no idea *why* Solomon would *parabolically* depict wisdom this way:

*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)*

It is not by accident that Solomon mentions "*The House*" and "*The Way*" in that passage. Those are *parabolic*

*images* the Prophets used to *parabolically* describe the things that one must do to enter into the Resurrection of the Righteous. Since I have *talked about* those things in The Next Step program, I'll say no more about them here. My point has only to do with how the Gnostics remythologized the *parabolic imagery* of *The Apostolic Teaching* and turned it into something that was a total abomination. You can see generally what they did just by reading the following short excerpt from a gnostic work titled *The Sophia of Jesus Christ*:

*Matthew said to him, "Lord, Savior, how was Man revealed?" The perfect Savior said, "I desire that you understand that he who was revealed before the universe in the boundlessness is the self-grown, self-constructed Father who is full of shining light, and is ineffable. In the beginning he decided to have his form come to be as a great power. Immediately the beginning of that light was revealed as an immortal, androgynous man, so that through that immortal man they might attain their salvation and awake from forgetfulness through the interpreter who was sent, who is with you until the end of the poverty of the robbers. And his consort is the great Sophia, who was from the first destined in him for a yoke, through the self-begotten Father, from Immortal Man, who first was revealed in divinity and kingdom; for the Father, who is called 'Man, the Self-Father,' revealed him. He created for himself a great aeon, whose name is Ogdoad, corresponding to his greatness. He was given great authority and ruled over the creation of poverty. He created for himself gods and angels <and> archangels, myriads without number for retinue. (This is) from that light and the tri-male spirit, which is that of Sophia his consort. For from this God originated divinity and kingdom. Therefore he was called 'God of gods,' 'King of kings.'"*

(James M. Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1977], pp. 213–215)

If you understand what *The Teaching* has to say about light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, and wisdom and foolishness, you can see that the Gnostics have taken *parabolic images* to be a *literal* description of spiritual reality rather than an explanation of what that reality IS LIKE. Obviously, some fool added a whole lot of his own speculation to the mix, but the basic outline of *The Apostolic Teaching* still remains. He has even retained the *parabolic image* in

which death is a deep sleep which overcomes the one who has forgotten the Truth. Isaiah seems to have been particularly dedicated to that one. Paul even alludes to it. Yet it comes directly out of Egyptian mythology:

*But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you like a thief; for you are all sons of light and sons of day. We are not of night nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober. For those who sleep do their sleeping at night, and those who get drunk get drunk at night. But since we are of {the} day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.*  
(1 Thessalonians 5:4–9)

**Editor:** *Speaking of Isaiah, you recently completed the lengthy process of digitally editing and remastering The Way, The Truth, The Life seminar tapes and producing a transcript of them. Let me be one of the first to say that the overall clarity and quality of the tapes has definitely been improved and that the transcript is a wonderful addition that makes the finished product even better than before. Now that this is behind you, and you are in the process of preparing for another seminar later this year on the Book of Isaiah, can you give those who might be interested in attending the seminar a general overview of what you will be discussing? Also, what did you learn from the first seminar that will help you this time around? Will the production of audiotapes and a transcript be as time-consuming as what you recently went through?*

**Elijah:** In *The Isaiah Seminar*, I plan to go through the Book of Isaiah and present an overview of what Isaiah is talking about in the various sections of his work. I have no intention of explaining in minute detail what he meant by what he said or the significance of his statements. That will eventually come into clear focus after I have explained the first four of the seven messages hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures: “The House,” “The Way,” “The Light,” and “The Name.”

My intention in *The Isaiah Seminar* is to do with the Book of Isaiah much the same thing as I have been doing for the past three or four years with the material I have presented on The Next Step videotapes. I plan to record a carefully scripted lecture—in front of a live

audience. That is, I hope to prepare a transcript and adhere to it rather closely so that when the seminar is over, the editing of the audiotapes and accompanying transcript shouldn’t take much time at all in comparison to what went into the editing of *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes.

If everything works as I hope it will, I should be able to break away from my transcript to answer questions from those who attend and then go right back to it afterward. We should be able to easily edit out all of the questions and answers later. That will allow me to be more flexible in that regard than I was the last time. If the attendees want an unedited tape of the entire seminar, we may even provide that. This process should work better than the last seminar. It may not. If it doesn’t, I’ll probably record all future audiotapes in a sound booth just to make the material available more quickly.

**Editor:** *I want to close with a question recently submitted to us by one of our subscribers. Here is what he wrote:*

*I was just reading 1 Kings 17 in the light of your parabolic interpretation of water and rain, etc. (January 1999 issue). Here, Elijah the Tishbite revives a young boy from death. Do you think this could be a premonition of Elijah preparing the way for the Second Coming?*

**Would you respond to this question?**

**Elijah:** I don’t know what to say in that regard. I have no idea how detailed the parabolic imagery of the Elijah Parable actually is because I don’t yet fully understand all of the parabolic imagery associated with the second message, “The Way,” and the fourth message, “The Name.” The second message appears to be the message that speaks concerning the role the herald plays in announcing the Resurrection of the Son of God. And the fourth message talks about Jesus Christ as *the Heir of the promise* Whom God “raised up” as a *Seed* for David.

I certainly don’t want to read things into the biblical text just because they seem to fit. The Early Church literature is full of that sort of nonsense. So the best I can say at this time is perhaps the death and revival of the widow’s son is parabolic imagery, perhaps it isn’t. Time alone will tell. ■