



THE VOICE of ELIJAH

Recipe for Stupidity: Take the Truth; Distort It

Now, that Achamoth, when the Saviour came to her, drew a veil over herself through modesty, Moses rendered manifest when he put a veil upon his face. Then, also, they say that the passions which she endured were indicated by the Lord upon the cross. Thus, when He said, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He simply showed that Sophia was deserted by the light, and was restrained by Horos from making any advance forward. Her anguish, again, was indicated when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" her fear by the words, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me;" and her perplexity, too, when He said, "And what I shall say, I know not."

And they teach that He pointed out the three kinds of men as follows: the *material*, when He said to him that asked Him, "Shall I follow Thee?" "The Son of man hath not where to lay His head;" —the *animal*, when He said to him that declared, "I will follow Thee, but suffer me first to bid them farewell that are in my house," "No man, putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of heaven" (for this man they declare to be of the intermediate class, even as they do that other who, though he professed to have wrought a large amount of righteousness, yet refused to follow Him, and was so overcome by [the love of] riches, as never to reach perfection) —this one it pleases them to place in the animal class; —the *spiritual*, again, when He said, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God," and when He said to Zaccheus the publican, "Make haste, and come down, for to-day I must abide in thine house" —for these they declared to have belonged to the spiritual class.

Also the parable of the leaven which the woman is described as having hid in three measures of meal, they declare to make manifest the three classes. For, according to their teaching, the woman represented Sophia;

Continued on back cover

Continued from front cover

the three measures of meal, the three kinds of men—spiritual, animal, and material; while the leaven denoted the Saviour Himself.

Paul, too, very plainly set forth the material, animal, and spiritual, saying in one place, “As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy;” —and in another place, “But the animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit;” and again: “He that is spiritual judgeth all things.” And this, “The animal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit,” they affirm to have been spoken concerning the Demiurge, who, as being animal, knew neither his mother who was spiritual, nor her seed, nor the Sons in the Meroma.

And that the Saviour received first-fruits of those whom He was to save, Paul declared when he said, “And if the first-fruits be holy, the lump is also holy,” teaching that the expression “first-fruits” denoted that which is spiritual, but that “the lump” meant us, that is, the animal Church, the lump of which they say He assumed, and blended it with Himself, inasmuch as He is “the leaven.”

Moreover, that Achamoth wandered beyond the Meroma, and received form from Christ, and was sought after by the Saviour, they declare that He indicated when He said, that He had come after that sheep which was gone astray. For they explain the wandering sheep to mean their mother, by whom they represent the Church as having been sown. The wandering itself denotes her stay outside of the Meroma in a state of varied passion, from which they maintain that matter derived its origin.

Irenæus, “Against Heresies,” Book i, Chap. viii, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1867), Vol. 1, p. 327.

Is It Time To Renew?

The Voice of Elijah
P.O. Box 2257
Rockwall, TX 75087-2257
(972) 635-2021

Check the mailing label below. If it says, “TIME TO RENEW,” your subscription expires with this issue. Don’t miss a single issue! Use the order form in this issue to renew your subscription now.

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MESQUITE, TX
PERMIT NO. 0038

www.voiceofelijah.org



Published quarterly by
Voice of Elijah, Inc.

Allen Friess, Executive Editor
Marcia Woody, Managing Editor

Volume 11
Number 4
October 2000

All correspondence
should be addressed to:

Voice of Elijah, Inc.
P.O. Box 2257
Rockwall, TX 75087-2257

Subscription rates:
(1 year, U.S. Funds)

U.S. \$24.00
Canada \$30.00
Abroad \$50.00

Articles published by permission of
Larry Dee Harper
(dba The Elijah Project).

Except when otherwise noted,
Scripture taken from the
New American Standard Bible,
© 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971,
1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1987, 1988.
The Lockman Foundation.
Used by permission.

Bolded Scripture reflects
the emphasis of the author.

Copyright © 2000, 2018
by Voice of Elijah, Inc.
voiceofelijah.org
facebook.com/voiceofelijahinc

A Note From the Editor

In the July 2000 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I shared my firm conviction that anyone who has not been called as a Teacher should not be teaching others from the Scriptures. Since I know that old beliefs and habits die hard and that those who are currently teaching others probably didn't take my first warning seriously, I'm issuing a second warning. The reason is simple: God takes the Truth of His Word very seriously. If you get it wrong and teach your misconceptions to others, you are going to pay a severe price on Judgment Day (James 3:1). Think of it this way: If you are proclaiming a message that is not compatible with the Truth (despite your best intentions) you are not doing God's work; you are doing Satan's. That's why you will have Hell to pay (literally) if you don't stop your foolishness.

To help you better understand why you should stop teaching others, I want to ask you a simple question that any legitimate Teacher will be able to answer easily. I have taken this question from the Old Testament because the Gospel message that Jesus Christ and the Apostles preached came out of the Old Testament (as only it could have since the New Testament didn't exist at the time). My purpose is to illustrate the difficulty that is involved in trying to extract the Truth from the Scriptures, even when it relates to the simplest of questions.

I hope to accomplish two things through my question: (1) to point out how blissfully ignorant mainstream Christians are of the Truth and (2) to get you to stop teaching others if you are currently doing so. Although I am going to provide you the answer to my question (indirectly), I am also going to leave an unresolved issue that I don't intend to explain because I'm not a Teacher, and because leaving you in the dark helps advance my purpose.

Here's the question: Which did God create first—man or the animals? That appears to be a pretty simple question, doesn't it? But appearances are deceiving in this case because the answer is not as easy to ascertain as you might think. The difficulty lies in the fact that the Scriptures appear to offer contradictory answers. Here are the pertinent Scripture passages that must be considered:

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth after their kind"; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth after their kind, and the cattle after their kind, and everything that creeps on the ground after its kind; and God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the

Continued on page 29

Continued from inside front cover

image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

(Genesis 1:24–27)

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. And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him.

(Genesis 2:18–20)

These two passages appear to contradict each other. The first plainly says God created the animals before He created man in His image and likeness, while the second just as plainly says He created the animals after He created man. This tells us that at least one of these passages does not say what Satan has convinced everyone it says. This raises two logical questions: Which of these two passages means something other than what people think it says? And what is the true meaning and significance of that passage?

While I have no intention of answering the second question, I will answer the first one (along with my original question) by reminding you of a fact that was mentioned twice in the July 2000 newsletter: Mankind was never created in the image and likeness of God. Now that you know which passage is shrouded in mystery, maybe you can tell me what Moses was actually talking about in Genesis 1:26–27? If you can't, you obviously don't understand the Scriptures. How do I know that? Because I know that everything in the Scriptures is, in one way or another, tied to Moses' cryptic statement in Genesis 1:26–27. That's why he made the statement early on in his writings. He expected the informed reader to appraise the rest of the Scriptures in the light of this one all-important passage. But you already knew that—if you are a legitimate Teacher. If you didn't, then maybe it's time you

stopped teaching lies and started listening to the Truth. A word to the wise is sufficient.

Website Construction

On an entirely different matter, I would like to solicit your help with our website. If you have been to our website recently, you know there is still work to be done before our site is complete. Although we hope to complete this work in the near future (we are doing all the work ourselves so as to maintain complete control), it will probably be a long time before we can say that the work is completely done. With technology growing by leaps and bounds, and with the internet being so crucial to the work we must accomplish—that is, spreading the Truth around the world—it's likely that we will need to upgrade our site on a fairly regular basis.

Here is how you can help: If you have internet access, go to our website (www.voiceofelijah.org) and take a critical look at it. Then send us an email at webmaster@voiceofelijah.org telling us what you like and don't like. Your likes and dislikes are equally important to us because we intend to make changes based on majority opinion. Also, we need input on how our website functions on your computer system. Since a website can be adversely affected by the screen resolution and browser of a particular user, our website may not be fully compatible with your system. If that's the case, contact us and let us know what your screen resolution is (640x480, 600x800, etc.) and what browser you are using. If you don't know that information, contact us anyway. We can work on these details later.

On another issue, I encourage you to continue submitting questions that you would like to see answered in the "Questions & Answers" section of our newsletter. You can do so by snail mail (P. O. Box 2257, Rockwall, TX 75087-2257) or by email (webmaster@voiceofelijah.org) with any questions or comments you might have. Please don't look for a personal response. Pertinent questions and comments will be addressed in future newsletters for the benefit of all.

Allen Fries

Don't Confuse a Fool; Let the Idiot Think He Knows

In the articles I have written for *The Voice of Elijah*® and *The Voice of Elijah*® *Update* over the past few years, I have made a point of using incendiary terms like *fool*, *idiot*, *imbecile*, and *moron* to describe those who stubbornly reject the Truth of *The Teaching*. My purpose has been to provoke people who strive to be politically correct and give them no good reason to give credence to anything I say. That technique works rather well because we all respond more or less unfavorably to anyone who would dare speak so derogatorily of others. It is just another of those quirks of human nature: Rather than first considering whether or not something is true, we all ignorantly tend to accept or reject things on the basis of how they are said. That is especially true of anything that we deem too dogmatic. It is just more evidence of the stubbornness that Satan, the Master of all Fools, has successfully inculcated into the human psyche.

I only mention the mastery that Satan, the Fool, has over all other fools as a segue into what the Prophets say concerning those who stupidly continue to epitomize the absolutely awesome ignorance of their father, the Idiot. That Lamebrain, Satan, had direct knowledge of the Truth, having heard it from God Himself. Yet because he valued his own thoughts and ideas more than an honest evaluation of what Someone Else had to say—no matter how He said it—he turned away from the Truth he had heard and stubbornly walked off into the darkness he now rules. To put it bluntly, Satan became a fool because he placed no value on a knowledge of the Truth. If you think folks like him are not a dime a dozen today, you are obviously content to live in a reality of his own making. Stay tuned, coming attractions may change your mind.

Contrary to public opinion, the disparaging terms *fool*, *idiot*, *imbecile*, and *moron* are the only viable terms for describing some people. Here's why. The generally accepted definition of a fool is someone who lacks common sense. That is, he does things without regard to consequences. However, according to the Prophets, the category "fool" includes idiots, imbeciles, and morons as well. Let me explain. Under a classification system that was abandoned by psychiatrists after the IQ test gained widespread acceptance, an idiot was a mentally handicapped adult who had a mental age of less than three. An imbecile had a mental age between three and seven, while the mind of a moron was stalled somewhere between seven and twelve. Nowadays, those three words have no such definite *meaning* and are generally considered offensive—which is one of the reasons I use them. Folks who fit the description (in God's sight) tend to get a bit more riled than most when they read what I write.

I could be politically correct and rank the ignorant offspring of Satan as "educable" (IQ of 50–75), "trainable" (IQ of 25–50) and "custodial" (IQ of 0–25). But given the psychiatric use (and abuse) of the English language, I'll continue to mock people who ignorantly reject the Truth by assigning them to categories that more accurately reflect how God views them: as morons, imbeciles, and idiots. (And in the process do my best to turn back brainless numskulls for whom such frankness comes a bit too close to describing the stark reality they assiduously strive to avoid.)

If my mockery of ignorant people strikes you as rude and inappropriate, consider the facts: An IQ test reflects the mental capabilities of a person by assessing the knowledge the person has been able to accumulate over his lifetime. Can you imagine what questions God

might put on such a test? Even if you were able to score above 75 on God's test—which is doubtful—where do you think you would rank in comparison to the One Who has been around forever? He *is* the knowledge you should be striving to attain! But even in light of your own lack of insight into the Truth, you could rightly ask, "Who gave you the right to slap derogatory labels on people?" Good question. Since my response to that question would only pit the opinion of a moron—me—against that of an idiot—you—I'll not challenge your opinion. We'll just wait and see whether God actually called me to do what I'm doing. Then, when you see the abomination of desolation standing in the holy place ...

Enough sarcasm. Let me show you what the Scriptures have to say about dimwits.

The Fool

I have already explained that the predominate characteristic of a fool is his lack of common sense. That is, he does things without regard to the consequences. With that in mind, listen to how the Prophet describes the Fool and his lamebrained offspring:

*For the choir director. {A Psalm} of David.
The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God."
They are corrupt, they have committed abominable deeds;
There is no one who does good.
(Psalm 14:1)*

Do you know the difference between an ordinary fool and an imbecile? Like the Prophet said, a fool says to himself, "There is no God," so that he can do what he wants to do. But an imbecile says it right out loud in public to show everybody his great wisdom. Do you know why that marks him as an imbecile? Because he is stupid enough to firmly believe something for which he cannot and will not ever have any evidence. That is, he is not intelligent enough to grasp the fact that it is impossible to prove the nonexistence of God. As I have said before (see "The Demons Also Believe (Poor Devils!)" *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1991), lack of presence—as in the statement "There is no God {here, where I can see Him}"—does not and cannot demonstrate the nonexistence of anyone or anything. The best that anyone can do in that regard is establish some degree of probability (an opinion).

In contrast to the nonexistence of God, which cannot be determined, one can easily demonstrate the existence of God. All one needs to do is show evidence of intelligent communication which could have come from no other source. Say, for example, a coherent message—*The Apostolic Teaching*—which was written down in bits and pieces over 1500 years by men who claimed that God had spoken to them in "dark sayings" and parables. But even then, "proof" of the existence of God would exist only in the mind of the Believer. Of such things are hung juries made.

Trying to establish the nonexistence of God is sort of like looking for the proverbial needle in the haystack from which they took the straw that broke the camel's back. Just because they have not yet been able to find the Needle does not *mean* He is not still hidden somewhere in the stack. Who knows? The next straw they remove could well be the one that breaks your back. Don't make too much of that parable. I don't *mean* to imply that you look or smell like a camel, I just found the imagery amusing. (But, of course, if that particular shoe should happen to fit, an imbecile might even choose to wear it. But then again I wonder, do camels wear shoes?)

The Prophet who wrote Psalm 53 evidently thought some folks were so ignorant that they needed to be reminded how foolish it is to ignore the fact that God *might* still be hidden where nobody has yet thought to look. That is, he said exactly the same thing:

*For the choir director; according to Mahalath.
A Maskil of David.
The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God,"
They are corrupt, and have committed abominable injustice;
There is no one who does good.
(Psalm 53:1)*

The Hebrew word translated "fool" in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 is *nabal*. If you know your Bible very well, you are most likely already familiar with the Prophet Jeremiah's story about David's dealings with a man who was rightly called "Fool" (Nabal):

Now {there was} a man in Maon whose business was in Carmel; and the man was very rich, and he had three thousand sheep and a thousand goats. And it came about while he was shearing his sheep in Carmel (now the man's name was Nabal, and his wife's name was

Abigail. And the woman was intelligent and beautiful in appearance, but the man was harsh and evil in {his} dealings, and he was a Calebite), that David heard in the wilderness that Nabal was shearing his sheep. So David sent ten young men, and David said to the young men, "Go up to Carmel, visit Nabal and greet him in my name; and thus you shall say, 'Have a long life, peace be to you, and peace be to your house, and peace be to all that you have. And now I have heard that you have shearers; now your shepherds have been with us and we have not insulted them, nor have they missed anything all the days they were in Carmel. Ask your young men and they will tell you. Therefore let {my} young men find favor in your eyes, for we have come on a festive day. Please give whatever you find at hand to your servants and to your son David.'" When David's young men came, they spoke to Nabal according to all these words in David's name; then they waited. But Nabal answered David's servants, and said, "Who is David? And who is the son of Jesse? There are many servants today who are each breaking away from his master. Shall I then take my bread and my water and my meat that I have slaughtered for my shearers, and give it to men whose origin I do not know?" So David's young men retraced their way and went back; and they came and told him according to all these words. And David said to his men, "Each {of you} gird on his sword." So each man girded on his sword. And David also girded on his sword, and about four hundred men went up behind David while two hundred stayed with the baggage. But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, "Behold, David sent messengers from the wilderness to greet our master, and he scorned them. Yet the men were very good to us, and we were not insulted, nor did we miss anything as long as we went about with them, while we were in the fields. They were a wall to us both by night and by day, all the time we were with them tending the sheep. Now therefore, know and consider what you should do, for evil is plotted against our master and against all his household; and he is such a worthless man that no one can speak to him." Then Abigail hurried and took two hundred {loaves} of bread and two jugs of wine and five sheep already prepared and five measures of roasted grain and a hundred clusters of raisins and two hundred cakes of figs, and loaded {them} on donkeys. And she said to her young men, "Go on before me; behold, I am coming after you." But she did not tell her husband Nabal. And it came about as she was riding on her donkey and coming down by the hidden part of the mountain, that behold, David and his

*men were coming down toward her; so she met them. Now David had said, "Surely in vain I have guarded all that this {man} has in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that belonged to him; and he has returned me evil for good. May God do so to the enemies of David, and more also, if by morning I leave {as much as} one male of any who belong to him." When Abigail saw David, she hurried and dismounted from her donkey, and fell on her face before David, and bowed herself to the ground. And she fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the blame. And please let your maidservant speak to you, and listen to the words of your maidservant. **Please do not let my lord pay attention to this worthless man, Nabal, for as his name is, so is he. Nabal is his name and folly is with him;** but I your maidservant did not see the young men of my lord whom you sent. Now therefore, my lord, as the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, since the LORD has restrained you from shedding blood, and from avenging yourself by your own hand, now then let your enemies, and those who seek evil against my lord, be as Nabal. And now let this gift which your maidservant has brought to my lord be given to the young men who accompany my lord. Please forgive the transgression of your maidservant; for the LORD will certainly make for my lord an enduring house, because my lord is fighting the battles of the LORD, and evil shall not be found in you all your days. And should anyone rise up to pursue you and to seek your life, then the life of my lord shall be bound in the bundle of the living with the LORD your God; but the lives of your enemies He will sling out as from the hollow of a sling. And it shall come about when the LORD shall do for my lord according to all the good that He has spoken concerning you, and shall appoint you ruler over Israel, that this will not cause grief or a troubled heart to my lord, both by having shed blood without cause and by my lord having avenged himself. When the LORD shall deal well with my lord, then remember your maidservant." Then David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me, and blessed be your discernment, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodshed, and from avenging myself by my own hand. Nevertheless, as the LORD God of Israel lives, who has restrained me from harming you, unless you had come quickly to meet me, surely there would not have been left to Nabal until the morning light {as much as} one male." So David received from her hand what she had brought him, and he said to her, "Go up to your house in peace. See, I have listened to you and granted your request."*

Then Abigail came to Nabal, and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. And Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunk; so she did not tell him anything at all until the morning light. But it came about in the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal, that his wife told him these things, and his heart died within him so that he became {as} a stone. And about ten days later, it happened that the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.
(1 Samuel 25:2–38)

One of the morals of that story—it has several—should be fairly obvious: Those who are honestly trying to serve God should never waste time responding to the provocation of a fool since God already has plans for him. He is just waiting for the right time to let the fool know—up close and personal—how lacking in common sense he actually is. (Keep that in mind the next time some idiot starts showing you his great insight into the *meaning* and *significance* of the Scriptures.) However, the moral of the story about David and Nabal is beside the point. My only interest in what Jeremiah wrote is the fact that the man so clearly personified his name: Fool.

If one were to go by current translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, one would labor unnecessarily under the delusion that the writer of the Book of Proverbs mentions the fool (*nabal*) quite often. The Truth is, the Prophet uses the Hebrew term *nabal* (“fool”) only three times in the entire book. In every other instance where the English word *fool* or *foolish* appears, he uses a Hebrew word that could better be translated as “idiot,” “imbecile,” or “moron.” However, those words are too derogatory for politically correct translators, so they continue to use the less offensive term *fool* to translate several Hebrew terms.

Since Jeremiah has already provided a fairly good profile of the fool (*nabal*) in his account of how Nabal treated David, you can understand why the Prophet would say the following about such people:

*Excellent speech is not fitting for a fool;
Much less are lying lips to a prince.
(Proverbs 17:7)*

*He who begets a fool {does so} to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool has no joy.
(Proverbs 17:21)*

*Under three things the earth quakes,
And under four, it cannot bear up:
Under a slave when he becomes king,
And a fool when he is satisfied with food,
Under an unloved woman when she gets a husband,
And a maidservant when she supplants her mistress.
(Proverbs 30:21–23)*

It is obvious from what the Prophet says in those verses that God has a rather low opinion of fools. However, the Prophet has made even more derogatory statements about some of the fool's mentally handicapped kinfolk. So let's take a look at what he said about idiots, imbeciles, and morons.

The Moron

Did you notice that I bolded only one of the occurrences of *fool* in Proverbs 17:21 above? That is because only one of the two words translated “fool” in that verse is actually the Hebrew word *nabal*. The other is *kesil*. That word should be translated “imbecile.” I say that because the author of the Book of Proverbs, in describing the characteristics of an imbecile (*kesil*), tells us he is just one step from being as far removed as he can be from what God expects of anyone who has even the slightest trace of insight into the Truth.

To understand what the Prophet says about idiots, imbeciles, and morons, as well as the larger categories of scoffers and fools, one first needs to know that he is *talking about* people who ignorantly reject a very specific body of information—*The Teaching* that God revealed to Moses and the other Prophets of Israel. That is, he has in mind things explained in the *parabolic imagery* and Hebrew idioms of *The Teaching* when he mentions *knowledge*, *understanding*, and *wisdom*. Also, it helps to know that he intentionally defines some important *parabolic imagery* early on in his work (*crown*, *spring*, *treasure*, etc.), so one needs to pay particularly close attention when he uses the words *like* and *as*. He may well be defining a term that he intends to use later on in his parables. (I assume you are already aware that the Hebrew word translated “proverb” actually *means* “parable,” that is, “comparison.”)

If the reader does not understand what the Prophet is doing in the Book of Proverbs, he would be better off reading tea leaves. At least then he might have some hope of coming to his senses and realizing

that what he *thinks* he sees in the parables of the Prophet is actually just a figment of his own imagination.

The Prophet's purpose in writing the Book of Proverbs is to remind the True Believer that God expects him to be constantly "walking in *The Way*." That is, the one who understands the Truth is supposed to continually keep his mind on the things explained in the *parabolic imagery* and Hebrew idioms of *The Teaching of Moses*. (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar tapes.) Speaking cryptically in terms of the Hebrew idiom "walk in *The Way*," the Prophet repeatedly contrasts those who have insight into *The Teaching of Moses* ("*The Way*" of the Lord) with those who lack insight into that Truth. Along the way, he describes how various types of people will react when they hear that Truth explained.

I have already shown you that the Prophet mentions the fool, that is, the person who acts without regard to consequences, only three times. He refers to the scoffer much more frequently. Those two classes of people exhibit character traits which the Prophet attributes to a decided lack of intelligence, that is, to an inability to comprehend the Truth. However, he describes three other dullards as well. The most intelligent of those three dimwits is the moron (*pethi*). Although the New American Standard Bible would have us believe that the moron (*pethi*) is merely "naïve," the Prophet is a bit more direct. In Proverbs 1:32, he compares the moron (*pethi*) with the imbecile (*kesil*), which tells us the moron (*pethi*) certainly doesn't have a whole lot going on upstairs:

*"For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them,
And the complacency of fools shall destroy them."
(Proverbs 1:32)*

On two different occasions, the Prophet says exactly the same thing about the moron (*pethi*): Since he, the moron (*pethi*), doesn't know how to identify the Antichrist, he will suffer. Unfortunately, statements which are identical in the Hebrew do not always appear as identical statements in some translations, as you can see from the following:

*The prudent sees the evil and hides himself,
But the naive go on, and are punished for it.
(Proverbs 22:3)*

*A prudent man sees evil {and} hides himself,
The naive proceed {and} pay the penalty.
(Proverbs 27:12)*

Just to make sure that his reader understands who he is *talking about*, the Prophet explains that the moron (*pethi*) doesn't have much common sense. Since the mooncalf has never thought about the importance of the "way" he "walks"—that is, what he thinks—he does not stop to consider whether or not something is true. He believes whatever sounds good to him at the time. The Prophet knows that as long as the moron (*pethi*) continues to do that, he will never come to an accurate knowledge of the Truth. That is why he insists that the moron's (*pethi*) casual attitude toward truth contrasts markedly with that of the person who has heard and understood the Truth of *The Teaching*. That person not only knows where he is supposed to be "walking," he "considers his steps" and makes sure he "walks" in "*The Way*" of the Lord:

*And I saw among the naive,
I discerned among the youths,
A young man lacking sense.
(Proverbs 7:7)*

*The naive believes everything,
But the prudent man considers his steps.
(Proverbs 14:15)*

The upshot of it all is, the moron (*pethi*) treasures abject stupidity while those who believe *The Teaching* will go on to attain authority over all Creation through their knowledge of the Truth:

*The naive inherit folly,
But the prudent are crowned with knowledge.
(Proverbs 14:18)*

There is one extremely interesting thing about the Prophet's statements concerning the moron (*pethi*). He allows that it is possible for a moron (*pethi*) to gain insight into the Truth of *The Teaching*. In fact, one of his stated reasons for writing the book is to provide that:

*To give prudence to the naive,
To the youth knowledge and discretion.
(Proverbs 1:4)*

On four different occasions, the Prophet makes *parabolic statements* in which he challenges the moron (*pethi*) to take a closer look at *The Teaching* (“*The Way*” of the Lord) so that he might attain to the Resurrection of the Righteous through his knowledge of and belief in the Truth:

“How long, O *naive* ones, will you love simplicity?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing,
And fools hate knowledge?”
(Proverbs 1:22)

“O *naive* ones, discern prudence;
And, O fools, discern wisdom.”
(Proverbs 8:5)

“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 9:4–6)

“Whoever is *naive*, let him turn in here,”
And to him who lacks understanding she says,
“Stolen water is sweet;
And bread {eaten} in secret is pleasant.”
(Proverbs 9:16–17)

Not only does the Prophet allow that it is possible for a moron (*pethi*) to gain insight into the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses*, he also describes the circumstances which will prompt the moron (*pethi*) to evaluate the Truth of *The Teaching* and see it for what it actually is. Unfortunately, only the unmitigated wrath of God is able to bring him to his senses:

Strike a scoffer and the *naive* may become shrewd,
But reprove one who has understanding
and he will gain knowledge.
(Proverbs 19:25)

When the scoffer is punished, the *naive* becomes wise;
But when the wise is instructed, he receives knowledge.
(Proverbs 21:11)

The Imbecile

The Prophet tells us an imbecile (*kesil*) is a person who has no time for anyone who tries to tell him God expects him not only to believe, but also to think in terms of, the *parabolic imagery* He revealed to Moses and the other Prophets of Israel. Instead, the imbecile (*kesil*) thinks he can believe whatever he wants to believe about the Scriptures, and that his beliefs, no matter how asinine, will be completely acceptable to God. The Prophet says this:

He who trusts in his own heart is a *fool*,
But he who walks wisely will be delivered.
(Proverbs 28:26)

I assume you understand that when the Prophet says “heart” he is *talking about* the mind, and that when he says “walks” he is obliquely pointing to the Hebrew idiom “walk in *The Way*.” If you don’t, you certainly don’t have the slightest inkling of what the Prophet is *talking about*. But if you think you know, keep right on reading. Who knows? You may eventually come to realize the Prophet’s description of a moron (*pethi*) fits you perfectly.

The Prophet tells us the imbecile (*kesil*) not only thinks he can believe whatever he wants to believe about God, he also bluntly says the imbecile (*kesil*) has no interest at all in understanding anything other than what he already believes. His major focus is in telling you what he thinks:

A *fool* does not delight in understanding,
But only in revealing his own mind.
(Proverbs 18:2)

I apologize for not having the time to provide a more *literal* translation of these passages from the Book of Proverbs. If I had, you would be able to see clearly that the Hebrew term translated “mind” in that verse is the same term that has been translated “heart” in Proverbs 28:26 above.

When the Book of Proverbs was written, people thought that the physical heart was where all thought processes occurred. So in both of the verses quoted above, the Prophet is referring to the lamebrained ideas safely harbored in the completely darkened mind of an imbecile (*kesil*). Those ignorant notions prevent

the imbecile (*kesil*) from understanding the Truth. But they also create within him a hatred for what Moses and the other Prophets of Israel hid in the Scriptures because he cannot understand it. For that reason the Prophet tells us the best course of action for those who have insight into *The Teaching of Moses* is to avoid the imbecile (*kesil*). The last thing the True Believer should do is *talk about* the Truth while one is within earshot:

*Do not speak in the hearing of a fool,
For he will despise the wisdom of your words.
(Proverbs 23:9)*

In spite of the Prophet's warning against explaining the Truth to an imbecile (*kesil*), there will always be that stray moron (*pethi*) among us who has been able to attain some insight into *The Teaching* but still values his own "way" of thinking more than "The Way" God thinks. That moron (*pethi*) will try to convince an imbecile (*kesil*) as to the Truth of what he has been able to see in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, it will be too late for him to remedy his mistake when he realizes that his conversations with the imbecile (*kesil*) have cost him his own ability to understand the Truth:

*He who walks with wise men will be wise,
But the companion of fools will suffer harm.
(Proverbs 13:20)*

*Leave the presence of a fool,
Or you will not discern words of knowledge.
(Proverbs 14:7)*

The Prophet lists various numskull traits which are characteristic of an imbecile (*kesil*). Pay close attention to what he says. God expects the True Believer to be able to identify an imbecile (*kesil*) and avoid getting into fruitless theological discussions with him. In contrast to those who believe the Truth of *The Teaching* and act in accordance with their firm belief, an imbecile (*kesil*) hates the Truth because it would place limits on his behavior. Instead, he takes great pride in his deliberately chosen lack of restraint:

*"How long, O naive ones, will you love simplicity?
And scoffers delight themselves in scoffing,
And fools hate knowledge?"
(Proverbs 1:22)*

*"For the waywardness of the naive shall kill them,
And the complacency of fools shall destroy them."
(Proverbs 1:32)*

*Doing wickedness is like sport to a fool;
And {so is} wisdom to a man of understanding.
(Proverbs 10:23)*

*Every prudent man acts with knowledge,
But a fool displays folly.
(Proverbs 13:16)*

*Desire realized is sweet to the soul,
But it is an abomination to fools to depart from evil.
(Proverbs 13:19)*

*A wise man is cautious and turns away from evil,
But a fool is arrogant and careless.
(Proverbs 14:16)*

The imbecile's (*kesil*) lack of self-restraint derives from the solitary fact that, somewhere along the way, he concluded he was under no obligation to submit to the God-given authority of his parents. Consequently, it is impossible for anyone to convince him that something other than his inane notions about God might be true. So I ask you: If the discipline of his own father and mother could not get through to the imbecile (*kesil*), what makes you think he would listen to the voice of reason? He not only lacks self-discipline, he rejects authority of any kind. Furthermore, he despises anyone, including those closest to him, who suggests that he would do better to live in submission to the Truth of *The Teaching*:

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

*A wise son makes a father glad,
But a foolish man despises his mother.
(Proverbs 15:20)*

*A rebuke goes deeper into one who has understanding
Than a hundred blows into a fool.
(Proverbs 17:10)*

*He who begets a fool {does so} to his sorrow,
And the father of a fool has no joy.
(Proverbs 17:21)*

*Wisdom is in the presence of the one who has understanding,
But the eyes of a fool are on the ends of the earth.
A foolish son is a grief to his father,
And bitterness to her who bore him.
(Proverbs 17:24–25)*

The major difficulty one faces in trying to deal with an imbecile (*kesil*) is the anger and the hatred of authority that he (or she) keeps concealed beneath a thin veneer of civility. It is sometimes obvious, but not always. However, a True Believer will be able to see it if he is extremely perceptive. It is quite often expressed in malicious gossip, which the imbecile (*kesil*) spreads with abandon. That is why the Prophet warns True Believers not to cross an imbecile (*kesil*) by challenging the nonsense he has chosen to believe:

*He who conceals hatred {has} lying lips,
And he who spreads slander is a fool.
(Proverbs 10:18)*

*The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way,
But the folly of fools is deceit.
(Proverbs 14:8)*

*Let a man meet a bear robbed of her cubs,
Rather than a fool in his folly.
(Proverbs 17:12)*

*A fool always loses his temper,
But a wise man holds it back.
(Proverbs 29:11)*

It does not take all that much insight into the Prophet's cryptic warnings about imbeciles (*kesil*) to be able to see why a True Believer should never get into theological discussions with them. Imbeciles (*kesil*) have never dealt forthrightly with anyone, not even with their own parents. So it is not always obvious what they are thinking. That being the case, one might think it would be difficult to tell who does, and who does not, fall into the imbecile category. That is not so. There is one sure way to identify every imbecile (*kesil*). Contention is the key.

The imbecile (*kesil*) cannot help himself. He is, and always will be, openly contentious when he hears the Truth of *The Teaching*. That is, he will invariably find something in it with which he can—and will—disagree. He will also intentionally say things that are meant to antagonize Believers:

*A fool's lips bring strife,
And his mouth calls for blows.
A fool's mouth is his ruin,
And his lips are the snare of his soul.
(Proverbs 18:6–7)*

*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
Than he who is perverse in speech and is a fool.
(Proverbs 19:1)*

*A foolish son is destruction to his father,
And the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.
(Proverbs 19:13)*

The Prophet's attitude toward the imbecile (*kesil*) is one of complete rejection. He sees the True Believer as standing in stark contrast to the imbecile (*kesil*) because he knows that everyone who accurately understands and believes the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses* will act in accordance with it. He also knows that although the imbecile (*kesil*) is completely unable to understand the *parabolic imagery* in which the Truth has been hidden, he will stubbornly reject the slightest suggestion that something other than what he believes might be true.

The Prophet does not see the imbecile (*kesil*) as ever having any part in God's plan of salvation, which Moses and the Prophets of Israel concealed behind the Hebrew idioms and *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*. He views him instead as being so enamored with Satan's lies that he places no value at all in a knowledge of the Truth. Consequently, the Prophet tells us the imbecile (*kesil*) will never respond appropriately when he hears the Truth of *The Teaching* explained.

The Prophet knows that the imbecile (*kesil*) has no hope at all of ever *inheriting the promise* of God and ruling over God's Creation. So he tells us that when the True Believer encounters an imbecile (*kesil*), his best course of action is to keep his mouth shut and remain content knowing that he understands the Truth of *The Teaching*:

The wise will inherit honor,
But **fools** display dishonor.
(Proverbs 3:35)

A prudent man conceals knowledge,
But the heart of **fools** proclaims folly.
(Proverbs 12:23)

The crown of the wise is their riches,
{But} the folly of **fools** is foolishness.
(Proverbs 14:24)

Wisdom rests in the heart of one who has understanding,
But in the bosom of **fools** it is made known.
(Proverbs 14:33)

The tongue of the wise makes knowledge acceptable,
But the mouth of **fools** spouts folly.
(Proverbs 15:2)

The lips of the wise spread knowledge,
But the hearts of **fools** are not so.
(Proverbs 15:7)

The mind of the intelligent seeks knowledge,
But the mouth of **fools** feeds on folly.
(Proverbs 15:14)

Why is there a price in the hand of a **fool** to buy wisdom,
When he has no sense?
(Proverbs 17:16)

Luxury is not fitting for a **fool**;
Much less for a slave to rule over princes.
(Proverbs 19:10)

There is precious treasure and oil in the dwelling of the wise,
But a **foolish** man swallows it up.
(Proverbs 21:20)

Like snow in summer and like rain in harvest,
So honor is not fitting for a **fool**.
(Proverbs 26:1)

In those verses, the Prophet who wrote the Book of Proverbs has provided a fairly good description of the imbecile (*kesil*). But he has succinctly summarized his contemptuous view of him in this next passage:

A whip is for the horse, a bridle for the donkey,
And a rod for the back of **fools**.
Do not answer a **fool** according to his folly,
Lest you also be like him.
Answer a **fool** as his folly {deserves},
Lest he be wise in his own eyes.
He cuts off {his own} feet, {and} drinks violence
Who sends a message by the hand of a **fool**.
{Like} the legs {which} hang down from the lame,
So is a proverb in the mouth of **fools**.
Like one who binds a stone in a sling,
So is he who gives honor to a **fool**.
{Like} a thorn {which} falls into the hand of a drunkard,
So is a proverb in the mouth of **fools**.
{Like} an archer who wounds everyone,
So is he who hires a **fool** or who hires those who pass by.
Like a dog that returns to its vomit
Is a **fool** who repeats his folly.
(Proverbs 26:3–11)

Did you understand what the Prophet said? He said the imbecile (*kesil*) is little better than a dumb beast. He wouldn't understand the Truth even if you tried to beat it into him. So when he tries to draw you out concerning what you believe, you should say as little as possible. The Prophet goes on to say that if a Believer explains anything at all about the parables (proverbs) of the Prophets to an imbecile (*kesil*), he will create a messenger from Hell. The imbecile (*kesil*) will twist and distort what he has said, telling everyone he said this or he said that. And the Believer won't be able to correct what the imbecile (*kesil*) said because he won't know who the imbecile (*kesil*) talked to or what he said to them. That is, the Believer will be LIKE a man with no legs, completely unable to control the message he sent out when he explained the Truth to an imbecile (*kesil*). In light of what the Prophet says, let me rub it in beforehand: Should you ever find yourself living that nightmare, you will have no one to blame but yourself. The imbecile (*kesil*) may have used the gun against you. But you loaded it for him.

The interesting thing about Proverbs 26:3–11 is the fact that the Apostle Peter quotes verse 11 in the second chapter of 2 Peter, where he explains how false teachers came into the Church, heard the Truth of *The Teaching*, and then took their knowledge of the Truth outside the Church and promptly distorted it. That is exactly why the Prophet warns the True Believer not to

explain the Truth to imbeciles (*kesil*). He knows what they will do. Peter says this, speaking *parabolically* (as the Prophet does) in terms of *The Teaching* as “*The Way*”:

For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, {returns} to wallowing in the mire.”
(2 Peter 2:21–22)

The Prophet who wrote the Book of Proverbs is, like Peter, *talking about* imbeciles (*kesil*) who twist and distort the Truth because they do not want to live within the limits it places on them. However, there is a major difference between the circumstance Peter mentions and the one the Prophet has in mind. The imbeciles (*kesil*) Peter describes came into the Church under the guise of True Believers and got their knowledge of the Truth from legitimate Teachers. So they alone will bear guilt for distorting the Truth and thereby destroying the souls of those they taught. The Prophet is warning Believers not to become involved with imbeciles (*kesil*) in such goofiness. He is saying that if God did not call you to teach, you had best not be the moron (*pethi*) who loads the gun for an imbecile (*kesil*). He may kill others (by misrepresenting the Truth of *The Teaching*) with the gun you loaded, but God will find you guilty of his sin because you were the one who “hired” him.

The Idiot

Now that I’ve shown you the Prophet’s incredibly low opinion of imbeciles (*kesil*), I must tell you there is a class of people, the ones I call “idiots,” who are even lower in his estimation. It doesn’t take the IQ of a genius to see why he tells us on two different occasions that these dense dummkopfs have even less hope of participating in *the promise* than the imbecile (*kesil*):

*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*
(Proverbs 26:12)

*Do you see a man who is hasty in his words?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.*
(Proverbs 29:20)

From what the Prophet says elsewhere, it becomes clear that the type of person he has in mind in those two verses is the one he calls a ‘*ewil*’ (what I call an “idiot”). As I stated previously, I am merely using the moron–imbecile–idiot classification system that psychiatrists abandoned. Yet I am making precisely the same distinctions the Prophet made. He makes his distinctions based on the likelihood of a person coming to a knowledge and understanding of the Truth of *The Teaching*. So do I. He was mocking the ignorance of those who refuse to believe the Truth by concealing the things he said behind *parabolic imagery* and Hebrew idioms. So am I. But I am going one step further.

I am mocking the abject stupidity of such people by explaining what the Prophet said in terms that any intelligent person should be able to understand. So let me be painfully blunt about it: Those who can’t accept the things I am explaining here are prevented from doing so only by the fact that they want to go on believing Satan’s lie. In light of the impending wrath of God, their ignorant intentions in that regard label them—just as the Prophet defined them—as either a moron (*pethi*), imbecile (*kesil*), or idiot (‘*ewil*). They all belong to the category he calls “fools” (*nabal*).

The difference between the imbecile (*kesil*) and the idiot (‘*ewil*) is one of focus. The imbecile (*kesil*) wants to go on doing whatever he wants to do without being restrained in any way. He loves to sin. So he will always react to the Truth emotionally rather than intellectually. Although he becomes angry and vindictive when his actions or beliefs are challenged, he doesn’t see the content of what one believes as being all that important. That is why he will not hesitate to twist and distort *The Teaching* if he ever has opportunity to hear it explained.

The idiot (‘*ewil*) is one step further away from God than the imbecile (*kesil*). His personal beliefs are extremely important to him, and he firmly believes all sorts of ridiculous things about God. Yet he has not given all that much thought to anything he believes. Nevertheless, he is, as the Prophet stated above, “wise in his own eyes” and “hasty in his words.” Since he is firmly convinced that he has this God-thing well in hand, he thinks he can say whatever he wants to say about God or the Bible and it will be true. That’s why the idiot (‘*ewil*) is even dumber than the imbecile (*kesil*). The imbecile (*kesil*) believes lies about God, but he doesn’t care whether or not his beliefs are true. He

is willing to believe any lie that will allow him to go on sinning. The idiot (*'ewil*) does the imbecile (*kesil*) one better. He makes up lies as he goes along and is absolutely convinced that each and every one of them is true. That's a whole lot more than dumb, it's downright stupid. Hence, the Prophet ranks the idiot (*'ewil*) a little lower than the imbecile (*kesil*) on the scale of intelligence. He defines the idiot's (*'ewil*) problem rather specifically in this verse:

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

Folks today who are the absolute epitome of the Prophet's description of the idiot (*'ewil*) are those in the Church who firmly believe all kinds of goofiness about God yet adamantly insist that Christians no longer need anyone to teach them. Those poor dimwits claim that since every Christian now has the Holy Spirit living within him, we should all be able to figure out the *meaning* of the Scriptures for ourselves. It somehow escapes the notice of those low-watt light bulbs that the Apostle Paul clearly says God established the office of Teacher within the Church at the same time that He poured out the Holy Spirit:

*Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this {expression,} "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave some {as} apostles, and some {as} prophets, and some {as} evangelists, and some {as} pastors and teachers.
(Ephesians 4:8-11)*

The Prophet also implies in Proverbs 1:7 above that Satan has taught idiots (*'ewil*) yet another of his stupid pet tricks: to deny that the Hebrew word translated "fear" in the phrase "fear of the Lord" actually *means* fear. Those who want to believe Satan's lies are slow-witted enough to think that it *means* reverence. They must have never read this verse:

And Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of

*Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin."
(Exodus 20:20)*

Think about it: Moses told the people they had no reason to fear God, yet he insists God fully intends for them to fear Him. There is no contradiction in that. Moses' point is, if you are a part of God's People, you have no reason to fear what God will do to you in the here and now, but you had best have a good, healthy fear of what He *might* do to you in the hereafter if you don't get your act together and stop sinning. That is what the Apostle Paul is *talking about* in this verse:

*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.
(Philippians 2:12)*

God not only rejects the idiot (*'ewil*) because the lamebrain is convinced that he already knows the Truth about God, but also because he is actively promoting his goofy notions concerning the *meaning* of the Scriptures. Consequently, the idiot (*'ewil*) will not only bring the wrath of God down on himself, he will bring it down on everyone who believes what he teaches:

*The wise of heart will receive commands,
But a babbling fool will be thrown down.
He who walks in integrity walks securely,
But he who perverts his ways will be found out.
He who winks the eye causes trouble,
And a babbling fool will be thrown down.
(Proverbs 10:8-10)*

*Wise men store up knowledge,
But with the mouth of the foolish, ruin is at hand.
(Proverbs 10:14)*

*The lips of the righteous feed many,
But fools die for lack of understanding.
(Proverbs 10:21)*

*The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,
But a wise man is he who listens to counsel.
A fool's vexation is known at once,
But a prudent man conceals dishonor.
(Proverbs 12:15-16)*

*In the mouth of the foolish is a rod for {his} back,
But the lips of the wise will preserve them.
(Proverbs 14:3)*

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

It should be obvious that the Prophet's description of the idiot ('*ewil*') includes those in the Church today who are teaching lies about God while claiming God called them to teach. Unfortunately, that includes many Evangelists who have fallen into Satan's snare by drifting away from evangelizing sinners *outside* the Church and starting to teach those *inside* the Church instead. (See "What's Left of the Right that Stayed Down When He Went Up?" *The Voice of Elijah® Update*, September 1995.) Being idiots ('*ewil*'), they see no harm at all in teaching others things that may or may not be true. That is because they have never stopped to consider that what they teach might not be true.

The Prophet knows that it is impossible to reason with an idiot ('*ewil*'). That is because the idiot ('*ewil*') cannot grasp the fact that something other than what he believes about God might, in fact, be true. If someone with insight into the Truth of *The Teaching* were to approach him on the basis of reason, he would automatically consider the Truth to be ridiculous. Yet under such circumstances, he could easily respond in one of two ways. He could refrain from saying anything and thereby leave the impression that he is honestly considering whether what he has heard is true:

*Even a fool, when he keeps silent, is considered wise;
When he closes his lips, he is {counted} prudent.
(Proverbs 17:28)*

*Wisdom is too high for a fool,
He does not open his mouth in the gate.
(Proverbs 24:7)*

If the idiot ('*ewil*') feels that one of his pet doctrines has been challenged, however, he might fall back on anger or ridicule to defend it:

*Keeping away from strife is an honor for a man,
But any fool will quarrel.
(Proverbs 20:3)*

*A stone is heavy and the sand weighty,
But the provocation of a fool is heavier than both of them.
(Proverbs 27:3)*

*When a wise man has a controversy with a foolish man,
The foolish man either rages or laughs, and there is no rest.
(Proverbs 29:9)*

No matter how an idiot ('*ewil*') responds when he hears the Truth explained, trying to reason with him is sheer futility. One will never be able to convince the numskull that what he believes is Satan's lie:

*Though you pound a fool in a mortar
with a pestle along with crushed grain,
{Yet} his folly will not depart from him.
(Proverbs 27:22)*

There is one easy-to-understand reason why an idiot ('*ewil*') is incapable of responding to the Truth. The Prophet tells us he has been ignoring the conviction of the Holy Spirit all along:

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

The idiot's ('*ewil*') lack of respect for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom will sooner or later cost him dearly. (Death has a way of catching up with us all.) The Prophet puts it this way:

*He who troubles his own house will inherit wind,
And the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted.
(Proverbs 11:29)*

If you think you have been born again but you don't understand the *parabolic imagery* the Prophet is using in the Book of Proverbs, you had best pray to God that you are only a moron (*pethi*) and not an idiot ('*ewil*'). If that statement bothers you, cheer up. The chances are fairly good that you are just a moron (*pethi*), and a little knowledge of the Truth can easily remedy that. If you were an idiot ('*ewil*'), you would probably not have even bothered to read this article. Those lamebrains *think* they have God all figured out. That's the root of their problem. They *think* when they should be listening. That's just "*The Way*" it is. ■



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

The Apostle John, in the Book of Revelation, *parabolically* describes events that will occur on the Earth after Satan is cast out of Heaven. He uses a powerful but cryptic *parabolic image* to warn the Elect concerning the nature of the danger they will face when the Serpent takes on the form of a man. He says this:

And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male {child.} And the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, in order that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent. And the serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, so that he might cause her to be swept away with the flood. And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and drank up the river which the dragon poured out of his mouth. And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and went off to make war with the rest of her offspring, who keep the commandments of God and hold to the testimony of Jesus.
(Revelation 12:13–17)

The most interesting thing about John's *parabolic* description of the End as a time of inundating flood is how closely that corresponds to the way that Jesus *parabolically* portrays that time:

"For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the

flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be."
(Matthew 24:37–39)

The key to understanding what John *meant* by His *parabolic statement* about the Serpent taking action against "The Woman" and her offspring can be found in Jesus' *parabolic* comparison of End-Time events to those which occurred prior to the Flood: "and *they did not understand* until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." His point of comparison has to do with the lack of understanding on the part of those who are destined to be destroyed. Like Noah—who survived the Flood because he had been granted insight into how to avoid the impending destruction—there will be those at the End who have understanding (Dan. 12) and thereby avoid getting swept away by the *parabolic* "flood" that comes out of the Serpent's mouth. Unfortunately, those scoffers who reject understanding will fall victim to that *parabolic* deluge just as the Prophet Isaiah predicted they would some 2700 years ago:

*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."
 The bed is too short on which to stretch out,
 And the blanket is too small to wrap oneself in.
 For the LORD will rise up as {at} Mount Perazim,
 He will be stirred up as in the valley of Gibeon;
 To do His task, His unusual task,
 And to work His work, His extraordinary work.
 And now do not carry on as scoffers,
 Lest your fetters be made stronger;
 For I have heard from the Lord GOD of hosts,
 Of decisive destruction on all the earth.
 (Isaiah 28:14–22)

Isaiah is speaking in terms of some extremely specific *parabolic imagery* in that passage. If the reader does not understand that, the meaning and significance of what the Prophet says will pass silently through the empty void in and around (not to mention way over) his head. And anyone who scoffs at the notion that Isaiah might have meant something specific by what he said about the Sea of El rightly falls into the category of those whom Isaiah calls “scoffers.” To the scoffer’s way of thinking, nobody in his right mind would ever believe that the men who wrote the Bible were all talking about the same thing. Those fools don’t know it, but they are already in flood waters that are way over their heads; and more rain is on the way. That’s because Judge River and Prince Sea fully intend to rule over them forever (if you know what I mean.)

The most interesting use of the *parabolic image* of the “flood” that is to come at the End is what Jesus said about the wise man who “built his house” on the Rock. Both Matthew and Luke mention the “flood,” but Luke’s account includes a bit more detail:

“And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? Everyone who comes to Me, and hears My words, and acts upon them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation upon the rock; and when a flood rose, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. But the one who has heard, and has not acted {accordingly,} is like a man who built a house upon the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great.”
 (Luke 6:46–49)

In that parable, Jesus is using the Hebrew idiom “build a house” to speak in terms of the same *parabolic imagery* the Prophets had in mind when they used that idiom. However, Matthew places a greater emphasis than Luke does on the *parabolic image* of the wise man’s “house” being “built on the Rock” because the members of his intended audience were Jews living in Rome. He even comes back to that image later on in his Gospel. His purpose is to make the point that Christians—not Jews—are the *parabolic* “house” that God is “building”:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He {began} asking His disciples, saying, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” And they said, “Some {say} John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.” He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Simon Peter answered and said, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal {this} to you, but My Father who is in heaven. **And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.**” Then He warned the disciples that they should tell no one that He was the Christ.
 (Matthew 16:13–20)

Luke’s version of Jesus’ parable focuses more on the “flood” that will seek to sweep away the “house” of the “wise man” at the End. If you do not yet understand what that “flood” is and why God is allowing it, you need to go back and carefully study the things I have written and recorded to this point. If you have a “love of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10), you will do that. Then you will understand what Jeremiah meant by this:

“Behold, the storm of the LORD has gone forth in wrath,
 Even a whirling tempest;
 It will swirl down on the head of the wicked.
 The anger of the LORD will not turn back
 Until He has performed
 and carried out the purposes of His heart;
In the last days you will clearly understand it.”
 (Jeremiah 23:19–20) ■



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

Editor: In the last issue I asked you to explain the meaning of the ambiguous phrase “from everlasting to everlasting” which is mentioned numerous times in the Old Testament. You said the Hebrew term that is translated “everlasting” is ‘olam and that this term doesn’t actually mean “everlasting” or “forever.” Instead it is used by the Prophets to refer to specific points in time (past and future) when God, by the power of His Word, renewed or will renew Creation in some way. You said, for instance, that the Flood and the coming Day of the Lord both qualify as ‘olam (parabolically speaking). You also demonstrated through the Scriptures that the Prophets allude to numerous periods of time in ancient history as ‘olam. Can you tell us how many points in history qualify as ‘olam and identify the events or circumstances that mark them as ‘olam? Also, is the future Day of the Lord the final ‘olam? Is it “the ‘olam” the Prophets have in mind when they use the definite article with ‘olam? How many references to “the ‘olam” are there in the Scriptures?

Elijah: Those questions get right to the heart of the parabolic imagery that stands behind the Prophets’ “riddle in a mirror.” There are well over four hundred occurrences of the term ‘olam in the Hebrew Scriptures. But the term has the definite article only fifteen times, and just over half of those appear in the

phrase “from the everlasting until the everlasting.” Of the rest, only Jeremiah 28:8 points back to “the ‘olam” of the Passover and Israel’s Exodus from Egypt. The rest point forward to “the ‘olam” that is yet to come. Here is what Jeremiah says about “the ‘olam” of the Exodus:

*“The prophets who were before me and before you from ancient times prophesied against many lands and against great kingdoms, of war and of calamity and of pestilence.”
(Jeremiah 28:8)*

A majority of the occurrences of “the ‘olam” occur with a Hebrew preposition that has the meaning “until.” And the prepositional phrase “until the ‘olam” occurs most often with another prepositional phrase in the expression “from the ‘olam until the ‘olam.” However, the prepositional phrase “until the ‘olam” also stands alone on four occasions. It has been translated various ways in these passages:

*“But I will settle him in My house and in My kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”
(1 Chronicles 17:14)*

*Save Thy people, and bless Thine inheritance;
Be their shepherd also, and carry them forever.
(Psalm 28:9)*

*It is like the dew of Hermon,
Coming down upon the mountains of Zion;
For there the LORD commanded the blessing—life forever.
(Psalm 133:3)*

*Blow a trumpet in Zion,
And sound an alarm on My holy mountain!
Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble,
For the day of the LORD is coming;
Surely it is near,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness.
As the dawn is spread over the mountains,
{So} there is a great and mighty people;
There has never been {anything} like it,
Nor will there be again after it
To the years of many generations.
(Joel 2:1–2)*

You can see from Joel 2:2 that the Day of the Lord is definitely an *'olam*. Whether or not it is the final *'olam* is something that the Scriptures have intriguingly left unanswered. One could argue that it isn't the final *'olam* from what John says in Revelation 20. But I wouldn't stand too firmly on that text since John is speaking *parabolically*:

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I {saw} the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years. And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

(Revelation 20:4–10)

Besides the four occurrences of the prepositional phrase “until the *'olam*” that I showed you above, “the *'olam*” occurs in these next two verses as well:

He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.

(Ecclesiastes 3:11)

And I heard the man dressed in linen, who was above the waters of the river, as he raised his right hand and his left toward heaven, and swore by Him who lives forever that

it would be for a time, times, and half {a time;} and as soon as they finish shattering the power of the holy people, all these {events} will be completed.

(Daniel 12:7)

In both of those verses, the Prophets are referring to the Day of the Lord, that is, Judgment Day. There is no reason to explain what they have said, however, because it would take an inordinate amount of time to do that here and what they have said in that regard is not all that relevant to what we are discussing at this time anyway. However, your question concerning how many points in time qualify as an *'olam* is relevant. It deals directly with the “riddle in a mirror,” that is, with the nesting of *parabolic images* in *The Teaching of Moses*, *The Teaching of the Prophets*, *The Teaching of Jesus*, *The Apostolic Teaching*, and now, here at the End, in *The (restored) Apostolic Teaching*.

The Flood

To be regarded as a *parabolic 'olam*, a point in time must be in some way LIKE the *'olam* that is yet to come. That is, it must be LIKE the Day of the Lord—the Second Coming of Christ—when, after God's judgment has fallen on the Earth, the Righteous will be resurrected as the *parabolic* Body of Jesus Christ. Various points in time have been specifically singled out by the Prophets as being LIKE that one point in time, so I will mention those first. The Prophet Isaiah points to the Flood as one such time:

*“For this is like the days of Noah to Me;
When I swore that the waters of Noah
Should not flood the earth again,
So I have sworn that I will not be angry with you,
Nor will I rebuke you.”*

(Isaiah 54:9)

The *meaning and significance* of that verse is a bit difficult to understand if one is not aware that the Prophet has been *parabolically* describing the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in the first eight verses of that chapter. Then, beginning in verse 11, he goes on to use the *parabolic image* of the New Jerusalem to describe the resurrected Body of Jesus Christ.

The Tower of Babel

The second point in history which the Prophets point to as an *'olam* is the fiasco that occurred when fools put their heads together at the Tower of Babel and decided *the promise* had already been *fulfilled*. Whereas Isaiah, in Isaiah 54, mentions the days of Noah as a time of God's *blessing*, the Prophets always use the Tower of Babel as a *parabolic image* to describe how God's curse will fall on humanity at the time of "the *'olam*." I can't fully explain why that is without getting into the *significance* of the *parabolic image* of *The Virgin*. I can only tell you that Isaiah has the Tower of Babel in mind when he says this concerning the coming kingdom of the Antichrist:

*"Come down and sit in the dust,
O virgin daughter of Babylon;
Sit on the ground without a throne,
O daughter of the Chaldeans.
For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate.
Take the millstones and grind meal.
Remove your veil, strip off the skirt,
Uncover the leg, cross the rivers.
Your nakedness will be uncovered,
Your shame also will be exposed;
I will take vengeance and will not spare a man."
Our Redeemer, the LORD of hosts is His name,
The Holy One of Israel.
"Sit silently, and go into darkness,
O daughter of the Chaldeans;
For you will no more be called
The queen of kingdoms.
I was angry with My people,
I profaned My heritage,
And gave them into your hand.
You did not show mercy to them,
On the aged you made your yoke very heavy.
Yet you said, 'I shall be a queen forever.'
These things you did not consider,
Nor remember the outcome of them.
Now, then, hear this, you sensual one,
Who dwells securely,
Who says in your heart,
'I am, and there is no one besides me.
I shall not sit as a widow,
Nor shall I know loss of children.'
But these two things shall come on you suddenly in one day:*

*Loss of children and widowhood.
They shall come on you in full measure
In spite of your many sorceries,
In spite of the great power of your spells.
And you felt secure in your wickedness and said,
'No one sees me,'
Your wisdom and your knowledge, they have deluded you;
For you have said in your heart,
'I am, and there is no one besides me.'
But evil will come on you
Which you will not know how to charm away;
And disaster will fall on you
For which you cannot atone,
And destruction about which you do not know
Will come on you suddenly.
Stand {fast} now in your spells
And in your many sorceries
With which you have labored from your youth;
Perhaps you will be able to profit,
Perhaps you may cause trembling.
You are wearied with your many counsels;
Let now the astrologers,
Those who prophesy by the stars,
Those who predict by the new moons,
Stand up and save you from what will come upon you.
Behold, they have become like stubble,
Fire burns them;
They cannot deliver themselves from the power of the flame;
There will be no coal to warm by,
{Nor} a fire to sit before!
So have those become to you with whom you have labored,
Who have trafficked with you from your youth;
Each has wandered in his own way.
There is none to save you."
(Isaiah 47:1-15)*

Again, if one does not understand the *meaning* and *significance* of what the Prophets have stated in terms of the *parabolic imagery* related to the *sacred marriage* and the ancient Hebrew practice of redemption, which has been called levirate marriage, one has no basis at all on which to understand what Isaiah has said about the *virgin daughter of Babylon*. The Prophet is mocking the ignorance of mankind by describing what will happen after people realize they have believed a lie by having agreed—LIKE the fools at the Tower of Babel who participated in the *sacred marriage ceremony*—that an impostor is "The Name" of God.

Isaiah is condemning the Earth itself—the physical Earth—to the curse of God because everyone on the Earth except the Redeemed have been deluded into believing that the Antichrist is Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the Jews, “The only legitimate Name” of God. That is, that he is “The Name” of God born of a virgin in accordance with *the fulfillment of the promise*.

Sodom and Gomorrah

The next point in time which the Prophets mention as being LIKE “the ‘*olam*” to come is the time when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Isaiah combines that *parabolic image* with the *parabolic image* in which the final generation IS LIKE those who lived at the time of the Tower of Babel when he says this:

*And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms,
the glory of the Chaldeans' pride,
Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.
It will never be inhabited or lived in
from generation to generation;
Nor will the Arab pitch {his} tent there,
Nor will shepherds make {their flocks} lie down there.
But desert creatures will lie down there,
And their houses will be full of owls,
Ostriches also will live there,
and shaggy goats will frolic there.
And hyenas will howl in their fortified towers
And jackals in their luxurious palaces.
Her {fateful} time also will soon come
And her days will not be prolonged.
(Isaiah 13:19–22)*

The Prophet immediately goes on to describe what will happen when people realize they have been deceived into believing the Antichrist is Jesus Christ. He describes it from the point of view of those who have refused to believe Satan’s lie:

When the LORD will have compassion on Jacob, and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob. And the peoples will take them along and bring them to their place, and the house of Israel will possess them as an inheritance in the land of the LORD as male servants and female servants; and they will take their captors captive, and will rule over their oppressors.

*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.”
 (Isaiah 14:1–20)

The Passover and Exodus

The next point in time which the Prophets point to as an *'olam* is the Exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt. I have explained in *The Passover Parable* how the Passover and Israel's Exodus speaks *parabolically* concerning the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to see how that *parabolic pantomime* also speaks concerning the Second Coming of Christ if one does not know that the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ was itself a *parabolic pantomime*. In it, Jesus Christ died on the cross to depict the destruction of the man Adam at the End of the present Age. His Resurrection on the third day was a *parabolic* portrayal of the Resurrection of “The Man” Adam in the image and likeness of God prior to the beginning of the Age to come.

In the following passage, Isaiah describes how—for the benefit of those who know the Truth—the Second Coming of Christ will be LIKE that first Passover, when the sons of Israel sang songs during the night. To understand what Isaiah says here, however, one not only needs to know what the other Prophets have said about Jesus Christ as “The Name” of God, one must also have insight into the *parabolic imagery* in which the Resurrection of the Righteous is *parabolically* depicted as their ascending the Mountain of God:

*Behold, the name of the LORD comes from a remote place;
 Burning is His anger, and dense is {His} smoke;
 His lips are filled with indignation,
 And His tongue is like a consuming fire;
 And His breath is like an overflowing torrent,
 Which reaches to the neck,
 To shake the nations back and forth in a sieve,*

*And to {put} in the jaws of the peoples
 the bridle which leads to ruin.
 You will have songs as in the night
 when you keep the festival;
 And gladness of heart as when one marches
 to {the sound of} the flute,
 To go to the mountain of the LORD,
 to the Rock of Israel.
 And the LORD will cause His voice of authority to be heard.
 And the descending of His arm to be seen in fierce anger,
 And {in} the flame of a consuming fire,
 In cloudburst, downpour, and hailstones.
 For at the voice of the LORD Assyria will be terrified,
 {When} He strikes with the rod.
 And every blow of the rod of punishment,
 Which the LORD will lay on him,
 Will be with {the music of} tambourines and lyres;
 And in battles, brandishing weapons,
 He will fight them.
 For Topheth has long been ready,
 Indeed, it has been prepared for the king.
 He has made it deep and large,
 A pyre of fire with plenty of wood;
 The breath of the LORD, like a torrent of brimstone, sets it afire.
 (Isaiah 30:27–33)*

Kingdom of David

The reign of David as king over the sons of Israel is the next point in time which the Prophets viewed as being *parabolically* LIKE “the *'olam*” that is yet to come. There is much more to the *parabolic imagery* than just the fact that Jesus Christ is, like David, a *fulfillment of the promise* that God gave to Abraham. However, that is the part of the *parabolic image* on which the Prophets most often key. That is the case with Ezekiel in this passage:

“And My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances, and keep My statutes, and observe them. And they shall live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons, and their sons' sons, forever; and David My servant shall be their prince forever. And I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their

midst forever. My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.”
(Ezekiel 37:24–28)

The Fall of the Northern Kingdom

The capture of Samaria and deportation of the ten tribes of Israel by the Assyrians is the next point in time which the Prophets compared to “the ‘*olam*” that is yet to come. Ezekiel combines that *parabolic image* with an even more powerful *parabolic image* in this passage:

“Therefore, O Oholibah, thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold I will arouse your lovers against you, from whom you were alienated, and I will bring them against you from every side: the Babylonians and all the Chaldeans, Pekod and Shoa and Koa, {and} all the Assyrians with them; desirable young men, governors and officials all of them, officers and men of renown, all of them riding on horses. And they will come against you with weapons, chariots, and wagons, and with a company of peoples. They will set themselves against you on every side with buckler and shield and helmet; and I shall commit the judgment to them, and they will judge you according to their customs. And I will set My jealousy against you, that they may deal with you in wrath. They will remove your nose and your ears; and your survivors will fall by the sword. They will take your sons and your daughters; and your survivors will be consumed by the fire. They will also strip you of your clothes and take away your beautiful jewels. Thus I shall make your lewdness and your harlotry {brought} from the land of Egypt to cease from you, so that you will not lift up your eyes to them or remember Egypt anymore.’ For thus says the Lord GOD, ‘Behold, I will give you into the hand of those whom you hate, into the hand of those from whom you were alienated. And they will deal with you in hatred, take all your property, and leave you naked and bare. And the nakedness of your harlotries shall be uncovered, both your lewdness and your harlotries. These things will be done to you because you have played the harlot with the nations, because you have defiled yourself with their idols. You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore I will give her cup into your hand.’

Thus says the Lord GOD,

*‘You will drink your sister’s cup,
Which is deep and wide.
You will be laughed at and held in derision;
It contains much.
You will be filled with drunkenness and sorrow,
The cup of horror and desolation,
The cup of your sister Samaria.
And you will drink it and drain it.
Then you will gnaw its fragments
And tear your breasts;
for I have spoken,’ declares the Lord GOD.”*
(Ezekiel 23:22–34)

If one does not understand how the Prophets of Israel used the mandragora wine that was consumed during the sacred marriage ceremony as a *parabolic image* to depict the false teaching that will lead to the rise of the Antichrist, one has no way to understand what the Prophet Ezekiel is *talking about*, much less what he meant by what he said. The Apostle John is using the same *parabolic image* to say exactly the same thing that Ezekiel said when he writes these things:

And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.” And another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or upon his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”
(Revelation 14:8–10)

After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority, and the earth was illumined with his glory. And he cried out with a mighty voice, saying, “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed {acts of} immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”
(Revelation 18:1–3)

Jesus was using the same *parabolic image* that Ezekiel and John used when He spoke in terms of His death *parabolically* depicting “the ‘*olam*” that is yet to come in these passages:

*Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Him with her sons, bowing down, and making a request of Him. And He said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left.” But Jesus answered and said, “You do not know what you are asking for. **Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?**” They said to Him, “We are able.” He said to them, “**My cup you shall drink;** but to sit on My right and on {My} left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father.”*
(Matthew 20:20–23)

*And He withdrew from them about a stone’s throw, and He knelt down and {began} to pray, saying, “**Father, if Thou art willing, remove this cup from Me;** yet not My will, but Thine be done.”*
(Luke 22:41–42)

*Simon Peter therefore having a sword, drew it, and struck the high priest’s slave, and cut off his right ear; and the slave’s name was Malchus. Jesus therefore said to Peter, “Put the sword into the sheath; **the cup which the Father has given Me, shall I not drink it?**”*
(John 18:10–11)

The Babylonian Captivity

The destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. is the next point in time which the Prophets viewed as being like “the ‘*olam*” that is yet to come. The Babylonian Captivity is *significant* to that *parabolic image* only because it directly connects the destruction of the Temple in 586 B.C. with its rebuilding seventy years later (in 516 B.C.) by “The Remnant” of Israel. To understand the *parabolic image* related to the “building of God’s house” by “The Remnant” of Israel, one must first understand that, in their message concerning “the ‘*olam*” that is yet to come, the Prophets’ are speaking *parabolically* in terms of death and resurrection. Knowing that, it is not too difficult to see how every *parabolic pantomime* of “the ‘*olam*” in the past—especially the *parabolic pantomimes* of the Passover Parable and the Babylonian Captivity—

parabolically depicts the death of the man Adam at the End of this Age and the Resurrection of “The Man” Adam at the beginning of the next.

An understanding of the Hebrew idiom “build a house,” along with insight into the *parabolic imagery* of the *sacred marriage* ceremony which stands behind it, are absolutely essential if one ever hopes to grasp the *meaning* of the things the Prophets have said concerning how God is going to “build a house” for Himself at the time of “the ‘*olam*” that is yet to come. The Prophet Amos is using that *parabolic imagery* to speak concerning the Second Coming when he says this:

*“For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As {grain} is shaken in a sieve,
But not a kernel will fall to the ground.
All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,
Those who say,
‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’
**In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David,
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins,
And rebuild it as in the days of old;
That they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name,”**
Declares the LORD who does this.*
(Amos 9:9–12)

The Prophet Zechariah is talking in terms of the same *parabolic image* that Amos had in mind when he says this concerning Jesus Christ:

The word of the LORD also came to me saying, “Take {an offering} from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah; and you go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon. And take silver and gold, make an {ornate} crown, and set {it} on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”’ Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the LORD to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and

Hen the son of Zephaniah. And those who are far off will come and build the temple of the LORD." Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. And it will take place, if you completely obey the LORD your God. (Zechariah 6:9–15)

Likewise, Jesus was speaking *parabolically* in terms of the same *parabolic image* that Zechariah and Amos used when He described His Resurrection as a rebuilding of the Temple:

The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**" The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.** When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. (John 2:18–22)

If one does not understand that God was conducting a *parabolic pantomime* when He sent Jesus Christ down to Earth to die on the cross, one has no insight at all into the things that Paul and the other Apostles say concerning "The House" of God they are in the process of "building." Peter's statements in 1 Peter 2:4–10 are an absolute delight to anyone who can see how the Body of Jesus Christ is the Israel that Hosea had in mind (Hos. 1:10 ff.) when he spoke concerning "the 'olam" that is yet to come. However, I am somewhat partial to what Paul says in the following passage because he reveals a much more detailed understanding of what the Prophets have said concerning "the burning" that is yet to come:

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. **Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is {to be} revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work.** If any

man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire. Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and {that} the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (1 Corinthians 3:10–17)

The Life of Christ

If one does not understand that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, came down from Heaven to die on the cross and *parabolically pantomime* how the man Adam—the Body of Jesus Christ—would one day become "The Man" Adam, the things the Gospels tell us Christ did and said make little, if any, sense. The Gospel of Matthew is the most revealing in that it draws attention to how the Man Jesus Christ was LIKE the man Israel. But Matthew makes no attempt to explain that the Prophets' history of the man Israel is nothing more than an account of a *parabolic pantomime* that God directed over several centuries. In it, the life of the man Israel (Jacob) *parabolically* depicts the life of the man Adam. If the Early Church Father Justin Martyr is correct in his assertions concerning the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew's silence in that regard is probably due to the fact that he wrote his Gospel in Hebrew and addressed it to the Jews living in Rome. Under those circumstances, his overriding concern would have been to show the Jews that Jesus Christ was Israel, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

All of the Gospels include details concerning the life of Christ that are intended to show how the life of the Man Jesus Christ was *parabolically* LIKE that of the man Adam as well as that of the man Israel. However, it is easy to get lost in the nested *parabolic images* if one does not understand the ancient mind-set concerning the man Adam and keep in mind the fact that Jesus was conducting a series of *parabolic pantomimes* within one extended *parabolic pantomime*. For example, the *parabolic pantomime* that I found impossible to understand for more than twenty years is His Baptism by John. I could see that the Baptism of Christ was not only LIKE Noah's escape from the Flood but also LIKE Israel's passage through the Reed Sea since the correspondence of those two *parabolic images* is confirmed by 1 Corinthians 10:1–2 and 1 Peter 3:20. I could also see that Christ was in some

sense *parabolically* depicting His Own Resurrection. But I simply could not understand the *significance* of the underlying *parabolic imagery* because I did not understand what ultimate reality Jesus was *parabolically pantomiming*.

I could not understand the *meaning* and *significance* of the Baptism of Christ until I was finally able to read and understand what Moses and the other Prophets of Israel said about the man Israel and how he IS LIKE the man Adam. On the basis of that information, I could see how, in His Baptism, Christ was *parabolically* depicting not only His Own Resurrection but also the Resurrection of “*The Remnant*” of the man Adam and “*The Remnant*” of the man Israel at the End of the Age. Then everything else I understood to that point made perfect sense. But it took a while for those things to come into focus.

Let me say one last thing while we are on the subject of “the *’olam*” that is yet to come: In coming to a knowledge of the Truth, I have had to fight the lies of Satan every step of the way. Those lies penetrated to the very core of what I believed about the nature of God, the nature of the Bible, and the nature of man himself. So it would not surprise me to find that some of your readers have had a vehement reaction against the things I have explained to you here. That’s the way it is with the delusion that will one day bring the Antichrist to power. Those who reject the Truth because they want to go on believing a lie will have no idea they have been beguiled by Satan until it is too late for them to do anything about it. Furthermore, there is nothing anyone who knows the Truth can do for them. All we can do is make sure as many as possible have opportunity to hear the Truth before the End.

Editor: Speaking of ambiguous phrases, I want to ask you about the commonly held perception that human beings are “fearfully and wonderfully made.” As I’m sure you know, this belief is based on Psalm 139:14 and was made popular by a book entitled Fearfully and Wonderfully Made that was written years ago by a doctor who apparently thought the title aptly describes God’s creation of the human anatomy. The problem with this belief is that the context surrounding Psalm 139:14 does not suggest that the psalmist is talking about creation of the human body. Would you please put Psalm 139:14 into its context and explain what the psalmist is actually talking about?

Elijah: Your argument against the translation “fearfully and wonderfully made” is a popular one; but unfortunately, it doesn’t hold a lot of water. The verse right before verse 14, and the two verses right after it, do talk about the development of the human body in the womb. However, you are correct in your observation that the rest of the psalm, as well as verse 14 itself, is not concerned with that topic—except indirectly. But to see how that is, one has to know what the psalmist is *talking about* in the psalm. I’ll try to explain that without going into a lot of detail.

Anyone who has ever tried to *interpret* the *meaning* of the phrase you mentioned faces one basic difficulty: Nobody has ever been able to decipher its grammatical structure. Not knowing that, it is impossible to determine how it should be translated. So most translators fall back on a translation that has been with us ever since King Jimmy directed that his version of the Bible be read in the Anglican Church. That was in 1611. One would think that someone would have been able to figure out what the psalmist *meant* in the nearly four hundred years since, but some things in the Bible seem to defy easy explanation.

To understand the *meaning* and *significance* of Psalm 139:14 one must first get a good handle on the *meaning* and *significance* of the things the psalmist says in the verses immediately before and after that verse. That is, one needs to understand the *immediate context* in which the verse occurs. However, that is only possible if one has a general understanding of the overall message of the Scriptures—the *extended context* in which the verse occurs. With that in mind, take a look at my translation of the first sixteen verses of Psalm 139:

For the choir director. A psalm of David.
 Your Majesty, You have examined me,
 And You know:
 You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
 You understand my thinking from afar.
 You have winnowed my path and where I lie down;
 And You are familiar with all my ways.
 Before there is speech on my tongue,
 Look! Your Majesty, You know it all!
 You have set siege to me—in back and in front;
 And You have put Your hand on me.
 Knowledge is too incomprehensible for me;
 It is so high, I am not able to {comprehend} it.
 Where can I go from Your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from Your presence?
 If I ascend to the Sea of Waters,
 You are there.
 Or if I spread out a bed in the Sea of El,
 Look! You're there!
 If I could take the wings of the dawn,
 If I could dwell in the farthest reaches of the sea,
 Even there Your hand would guide me,
 And Your right hand would take hold of me.
 Should I say, "Surely darkness will cover me!"
 And the light behind me be night,
 Even darkness is not too dark for You;
 Night is as light as the day.
 Darkness and light are the same.
 When You created my kidneys,
 You wove me together in my mother's womb.
 (I thank you because they are afraid.
 I have been set apart.
 Your works are incomprehensible,
 And my soul knows it very well.)
 My skeleton was not hidden from You.
 When I was made in secret,
 {When} I was embroidered in the lowest parts of the Earth,
 Your eyes saw my embryonic form;
 And on Your scroll all of them were written—
 The days that were planned
 When there was not one of them!
 (Psalm 139:1–16) —my interim translation

With the exception of verse 14, my translation is not much different and not necessarily any better than other translations. All I have tried to do is emphasize those things that provide a bit more insight into the mind-set of the author. In verse 14, however, I depart radically from the King James Version—"fearfully and wonderfully made" because that translation does not adhere at all to the grammatical rules of the Hebrew language. All I have done in my translation is use the *context* to make sense of the morphological forms found in that verse and the verse right before it.

The Prophet who wrote Psalm 139 begins by lamenting the fact that God knows what he thinks even before a thought comes into his mind. Speaking *parabolically* in terms of the Hebrew idiom "walk in *The Way*," he says, "You have examined me and know exactly what I am going to think and say before I have time to think or say anything because You know how I think":

For the choir director.
 A psalm of David.
 Your Majesty, You have examined me,
 And You know:
 You know when I sit down and when I stand up;
You understand my thinking from afar.
 You have winnowed my path and where I lie down;
And You are familiar with all my ways.
 Before there is speech on my tongue,
 Look! Your Majesty, You know it all!
 (Psalm 139:1–4) —my interim translation

After he says that, the Prophet then laments the fact that he did not choose to be a Prophet. Rather, God laid His hand on him and, by revealing the Truth of *The Teaching of Moses* to him, compelled him to serve as His "mouth." And, because of his calling and the knowledge that God has given him, he realizes it is futile for him to try to avoid doing what God has called him to do. As Jonah learned the hard way, there is no place where anyone called by God can run and hide:

**You have set siege to me—in back and in front;
 And You have put Your hand on me.**
 Knowledge is too incomprehensible for me;
 It is so high, I am not able to {comprehend} it.
**Where can I go from Your Spirit?
 Or where can I flee from Your presence?**
 If I ascend to the Sea of Waters,
 You are there.
 Or if I spread out a bed in the Sea of El,
 Look! You're there!
 If I could take the wings of the dawn,
 If I could dwell in the farthest reaches of the sea,
**Even there Your hand would guide me,
 And Your right hand would take hold of me.**
 Should I say, "Surely darkness will cover me!"
 And the light behind me be night,
 Even darkness is not too dark for You;
 Night is as light as the day.
 Darkness and light are the same.
 (Psalm 139:5–12) —my interim translation

After venting his frustration over having to deal with a situation in which he has extremely little control over how he lives his own life, the Prophet next moves on to briefly mention his "kidneys" and the role they played in his submission to the will of God. Of course, if

one does not understand what part the ancients thought the “kidneys” played in the human thought process, one has no basis at all on which to understand what the Prophet says. Since I explained the relationship of the “heart,” “kidneys,” and “soul” to the participants of The Next Step program nearly six years ago (Tape 18—November 1994), I will only briefly summarize those things here.

The first thing one needs to know is that the ancient Israelites, along with all their contemporaries, did not realize that the brain was the bodily organ where thoughts occur. They believed a person thought with his heart and stored knowledge in his kidneys. That ancient mind-set has made it difficult for translators to translate the Hebrew term *kilyah* (plural: *kelayoth*—“kidneys”) when it appears to refer to something other than a physical organ of the body. As a matter of fact, it drives them to distraction because they don’t have much insight at all into that aspect of the ancient mind-set. For example, the translator of the following verse decided to translate the Hebrew term for kidneys as “feelings” in spite of the fact that it occurs in parallel with the term for the physical heart:

*But, O LORD of hosts, who judges righteously,
Who tries the feelings and the heart,
Let me see Thy vengeance on them,
For to Thee have I committed my cause.
(Jeremiah 11:20)*

The translation “feelings” would not be all that objectionable if it had been maintained consistently throughout. But it wasn’t. Six chapters later, the translator decided the Hebrew term *kilayoth* could better be translated as “mind,” again in spite of the fact that it occurs in parallel with the Hebrew term for the heart:

*“I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds.”
(Jeremiah 17:10)*

Three chapters later, Jeremiah again uses the Hebrew term for kidneys in tandem with the term for heart. This time the translator decides to stay with the translation “mind”:

*Yet, O LORD of hosts,
Thou who dost test the righteous,
Who seest the mind and the heart;
Let me see Thy vengeance on them;
For to Thee I have set forth my cause.
(Jeremiah 20:12)*

Anyone with even a modicum of common sense should be able to read those verses and immediately discern that the people who wrote the Hebrew Scriptures did not think like we think. They had a completely different mind-set. In that mind-set, the physical heart did the thinking and the kidneys stored the experiential, conceptual, and identical knowledge an individual had previously gained. The ancients believed that with the heart and the kidneys working together, a person could come to a logical conclusion on the basis of all the information available to him. That is when the soul came into play. In their view, the person’s soul was the deciding factor in what knowledge was stored in his kidneys. That is, it was the part of the person where decisions were made. If the heart thought something but the soul was dead set against believing it, that information would not be stored in the kidneys as something the person knew to be true.

The ancient mind-set differed greatly from the nebulous notions that we have today concerning the “heart” and “soul,” not to mention the “kidneys.” Those little buggers have dropped out of the equation entirely. That being the case, it is not surprising that folks can’t seem to figure out what the Prophet *meant* by what he wrote in Psalm 139:14. The Truth is, he was merely expressing gratitude to God for the fact that his “kidneys” housed a knowledge of God which caused such an overwhelming fear in him that his soul realized he had best pursue the calling God had placed on his life:

*When You created my kidneys,
You wove me together in my mother’s womb.
(I thank you because they are afraid.
I have been set apart.
Your works are incomprehensible,
And my soul knows it very well.)
(Psalm 139:13–14) —my interim translation*

After he makes that parenthetical statement, the Prophet goes on to state that God had already planned

the entire span of his life from the moment he was conceived in the womb:

*My skeleton was not hidden from You.
When I was made in secret,
{When} I was embroidered in the lowest parts of the earth,
Your eyes saw my embryonic form;
And on Your scroll all of them were written—
The days that were planned
When there was not one of them!
(Psalm 139:15–16) —my interim translation*

I'm not sure that your readers want or need any explanation of why I translated verse 14 the way I did. But for the benefit of those who are still trying to grasp the finer points of biblical interpretation, I will briefly point out the difficulty faced by those who have tried to make sense of the verse. The crux of the problem actually boils down to just one word. If you compare my translation of the verse to others, you can see that it is generally acknowledged that the verse begins "I thank you for/because." It ends with "Your works are wonderful/incomprehensible. And my soul knows it very well." Believe it or not, the difficult-to-understand part of the verse that lies in between those two statements consists of only two verbal forms. The first form is a feminine plural participle of a verb that *means* "to fear." The second is a first person singular ("I") passive form of a verb that *means* "to separate, set apart, or distinguish."

From what I just told you, the difficulty with the translation "fearfully and wonderfully made" should be obvious to anyone who understands the fundamentals of Hebrew grammar: The participle *fear* does not agree in person, number, or gender with the finite verb *set apart*. (Unless one wants to arbitrarily assume the psalmist was a woman. Then it would agree in gender alone.) So even a first-year Hebrew student should know immediately that the participle cannot be construed as working in concert with the finite verbal form. That being the case, one should go looking for the antecedent of the pronoun which is implied in the participle (*they*) instead of blindly accepting the usual translation. That's all I did.

Since the Hebrew term for kidneys is a feminine plural form, and the translation "they {my kidneys} are afraid" makes perfect sense in context and in light of the ancient mind-set, I see no reason to doubt that is what

the Prophet *meant*. Of course, if someone is overly contentious or somehow completely enamored with the translation "fearfully and wonderfully made," I doubt my deductive reasoning makes a whole lot of difference to them. Those folks will go on believing whatever tickles their fancy.

Editor: This next question is from a subscriber who wanted to ask you a few things about Luke 23:39–43. This individual had recently read the comments of an evangelical leader/teacher who cited this passage to back up his claim that all one need do to be acquitted on Judgment Day is "believe in Jesus," as one of the thieves alongside Jesus seemingly did. The subscriber rightly understands that salvation is by faith alone, and he also understands that saving faith is based on what one believes and not merely that one believes. However, since the thief appears to have done little more than profess that he believed and the aforementioned "teacher" used the thief's words and Jesus' response to essentially say that's all one need do to be saved, the reader would like you to explain a few things. First, can you explain what Jesus meant when He said to the thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise"? And secondly, what can you tell us about the place called "Paradise"? Where does the parabolic imagery that is used in The Teaching to describe it come from?

Elijah: When dealing with people who traffic in generalities, clichés, and other unmitigated goofiness, it is best to leave them to their own devices. Anyone who wants to claim that the man who died with Christ did not have some extremely specific beliefs concerning Christ—that is, that he had a definite *content* to his faith—has obviously never read the account very carefully. Take a look at what Luke says:

*And one of the criminals who were hanged {there} was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."
(Luke 23:39–43)*

We know that the two men hanging around Jesus (pun intended) that day were Jews because the scoffer derisively demands that Christ deliver them from death. He would never have done that had he not been a Jew who believed the Messiah of the Jews would one day come. And he would not have included the other man in his plea had that man not also been a Jew. So we know that Luke would have us understand that three Jews died on crosses that day. That is important to an understanding of what Jesus and the man said to each other right before they died. We also know that two of the three men were guilty; One was not. That is also important to our understanding of Luke's account because he makes it clear that the man who believed in Christ that day knew it.

Let's briefly consider what qualified the man for salvation. First, he had a healthy fear of God. That is evident in his rebuke of the scoffer. He says, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?" Second, he had thoroughly examined himself and could see that he deserved to die because of the things he had done: "And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." Third, he believed that Jesus Christ is the Messianic King of the Jews and he asked Christ for His protection. He says, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!"

In light of what the man said, it would be absolutely absurd for anyone to claim that he did not have a definite *content* to his faith. He firmly believed that Jesus Christ was *the fulfillment of the promise* God had made to David. Furthermore, I can guarantee he had a far greater understanding of the *content* of that *promise* than any "Christian" today who warms the pew every Sunday. I know that because I know the message of the Jews in his generation was indisputable: The content of one's *oral tradition* mattered. If that were not so, there would never have been any dispute between the Pharisees and Sadducees over the doctrine of resurrection.

Now let's consider Jesus' statement concerning Paradise. You asked me to explain what Jesus *meant* when He said, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise." You also wanted to know about the place called "Paradise" and the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind it. I'll lump all of those together in my answer because it is impossible to understand what

Jesus *meant* without an understanding of the other two things you asked.

First, one needs to know that the Greek word translated "paradise" is a Persian loanword that *means* "garden" or "park." The Greeks took it over into their language (Greek: *paradeisos*) in the same way that we English-speaking folks picked up *very* (*verai*) and *hors d'oeuvre* from the French. The same Persian word was also picked up by those who spoke Hebrew (Hebrew: *pardes*). It even occurs three times in the Hebrew Scriptures (Neh. 2:8; Eccl. 2:5; Song 4:13). To make the plot a bit more complex, however, after the Jews started speaking Aramaic during the Babylonian Captivity, they carried the same word over and made it a part of that language (Aramaic: *pardeysa*).

All of the things I just told you would be nothing more than an interesting bit of trivia were it not for the fact that the Jews used the Greek form of the Persian loanword to translate the Hebrew term for "garden" when they made the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures ca. 250 B.C. That is when the history of the term becomes extremely interesting. While the Rabbis never use the Hebrew or Aramaic versions of the Persian loanword to denote the Garden of Eden, the folks who gave us the Septuagint do just that.

To Greek-speaking Jews from that time on, the Garden of Eden becomes "the Paradise." That is not surprising considering the fact that the word occurs forty-five times in the Septuagint. The translators leave little doubt that they deliberately used the term to refer to the Garden of Eden. One finds it not only in the Genesis account of the Garden but also in passages like the following, where the Prophets definitely have in mind the Garden of Eden:

*"Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness,
Who seek the LORD:
Look to the rock from which you were hewn,
And to the quarry from which you were dug.
Look to Abraham your father,
And to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain;
When {he was} one I called him,
Then I blessed him and multiplied him."
Indeed, the LORD will comfort Zion;
He will comfort all her waste places.
And her wilderness He will make like Eden,
And her desert like the garden of the LORD;
Joy and gladness will be found in her,*

Thanksgiving and sound of a melody.
(Isaiah 51:1–3)

“Son of man, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre,
and say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD,
“You had the seal of perfection,
Full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God;
Every precious stone was your covering:
The ruby, the topaz, and the diamond;
The beryl, the onyx, and the jasper;
The lapis lazuli, the turquoise, and the emerald;
And the gold,
the workmanship of your settings and sockets,
Was in you.
On the day that you were created
They were prepared.
You were the anointed cherub who covers,
And I placed you {there}.
You were on the holy mountain of God;
You walked in the midst of the stones of fire.
You were blameless in your ways
From the day you were created,
Until unrighteousness was found in you.
By the abundance of your trade
You were internally filled with violence,
And you sinned;
Therefore I have cast you as profane
From the mountain of God.
And I have destroyed you, O covering cherub,
From the midst of the stones of fire.
Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty;
You corrupted your wisdom by reason of your splendor.
I cast you to the ground;
I put you before kings,
That they may see you.
By the multitude of your iniquities,
In the unrighteousness of your trade,
You profaned your sanctuaries.
Therefore I have brought fire from the midst of you;
It has consumed you,
And I have turned you to ashes on the earth
In the eyes of all who see you.
All who know you among the peoples
Are appalled at you;
You have become terrified,
And you will be no more.””
(Ezekiel 28:12–19)

Such is the history of the Greek term *Paradise* (*paradeisos*), the term that Jesus used when He spoke to the man on the cross that day about being with Him in “the Paradise.” But that is all we need to know to understand what Jesus *meant* when He *promised* the man that they would—that very day—be together in the Garden of Eden. Of course, it doesn’t help much to know what Jesus had in mind when He said that if one does not understand what Moses *meant* when he *parabolically* described how the flaming sword of the Lord keeps folks from finding “The Way” back to “the Paradise”:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.
(Genesis 3:22–24)

I am constantly amazed by some of the goofy lies that Satan has folks believing today. Fools will insist that Moses would have us understand that the Garden of Eden was located somewhere here on the Earth. But they never bother to stop and consider how four rivers which have their headwaters thousands of miles from each other could all flow out of one river—the river which flows through the Garden of Eden. I’m sure Moses had a good chuckle when he wrote that one. It is just another example of how stupid it is for modern folks to try to understand the Hebrew Scriptures without taking into account the ancient mind-set.

The ancients thought in terms of the “Sea of Waters” above and the “Sea of El” below. So it is only natural that they would also believe those two bodies of water were joined by a river, or rivers, which flowed down from the “Sea of Waters” to the “Sea of El” below. Without going into the specifics concerning what astronomers know or don’t know about such things today, I can only tell you that the Garden of Eden is still out there somewhere, and the River of Life is undoubtedly still flowing through it. But it would appear that the water from that river has long since been diverted elsewhere. ■