



They Forgot It Was Just a Parabolic Image

The first and only (one God), both Creator and Lord of all, had nothing coeval *with Himself*, not infinite chaos, nor measureless water, nor solid earth, nor dense air, nor warm fire, nor refined spirit, nor the azure canopy of the stupendous firmament. But He was One, alone in Himself. By an exercise of His will He created things that are, which antecedently had no existence, except that He willed to make them. For He is fully acquainted with whatever is about to take place, for foreknowledge also is present to Him.

The different principles, however, of what will come into existence, He first fabricated, viz., fire and spirit, water and earth, from which diverse elements He proceeded to form His own creation. And some objects He formed of one essence, but others He compounded from two, and others from three, and others from four.

And those formed of one substance were immortal, for in their case dissolution does not follow, for what is one will never be dissolved. Those, on the other hand, which are formed out of two, or three, or four substances, are dissoluble; wherefore also are they named mortal. For this has been denominatèd death, namely, the dissolution of substances connected.

I now therefore think that I have sufficiently answered those endued with a sound mind, who, if they are desirous of additional instruction, and are disposed accurately to investigate the substances of these things, and the causes of the entire creation, will become acquainted with these points should they peruse a work of ours comprised (under the title), *Concerning the Substance of the Universe*. I consider, however, that at present it is enough to elucidate those causes of which the Greeks, not being aware, glorified, in pompous phraseology, the parts of creation, while they remained ignorant of the Creator. And from these the

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heresiarchs have taken occasion, and have transformed the statements previously made by those Greeks into similar doctrines, and thus have framed ridiculous heresies.

Therefore this solitary and supreme Deity, by an exercise of reflection, brought forth the Logos first; not the word in the sense of being articulated by voice, but as a ratiocination of the universe, conceived and residing in the divine mind: Him alone He produced from existing things; for the Father Himself constituted existence, and the being born from Him was the cause of all things that are produced.

The Logos was in the Father Himself, bearing the will of His progenitor, and not being unacquainted with the mind of the Father. For simultaneously with His procession from His Progenitor, inasmuch as He is this Progenitor's first-born, He has, as a voice in Himself, the ideas conceived in the Father. And so it was, that when the Father ordered the world to come into existence, the Logos one by one completed each object of creation, thus pleasing God. And some things which multiply by generation He formed male and female; but whatsoever beings were designed for service and ministration He made either male, or not requiring females, or neither male nor female.

For even the primary substances of these, which were formed out of nonentities, viz., fire and spirit, water and earth, are neither male nor female; nor could male or female proceed from any one of these, were it not that God, who is the source of all authority, wished that the Logos might render assistance in accomplishing a production of this kind.

Hippolytus, "The Refutation of All Heresies," Book x, Chaps. xxviii-xxix, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1886), Vol. 5, pp. 150-151.

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A Note From the Editor

While reading the comments of the Early Church Father Irenæus in the last issue of the newsletter, I was struck by the fact that the idiocy he was refuting is little different than what is still going on today. Although Gnosticism is no longer around, the egotistical mentality of those who think there isn't anything in the Scriptures they don't understand or can't figure out by their own intellectual prowess is still with us. In fact, the situation is probably worse than ever today because the arrogant mentality of Church leaders has spilled over to the common layman. Consequently, any fool who has an opinion on what the Scriptures teach (and everyone does) is not only encouraged to share his ignorance, he is also given various forums within the Church to do so. The most popular of these forums being Sunday School and group Bible studies.

I have not always held this opinion. For years I actually thought group studies were beneficial to my spiritual growth. I'm not sure when I first sensed that something wasn't right and my feelings toward these groups began to change. Maybe it was when I noticed that difficult questions were always answered with worn-out clichés that everybody could spout but nobody could adequately explain. Or maybe it was when I began to suspect that Pretenders (unbelievers) who were in the class were more interested in social connections than in the Truth. Or maybe it was when I, a mere layperson, was encouraged and allowed to become a "teacher" despite my lack of qualifications. Or maybe it was all of the above and then some, I don't know.

Prior to ending my involvement in Sunday School and group Bible study some years ago, I had been actively involved in them for the better part of fifteen years. So my disparaging remarks come from the perspective of a Believer who has been there and done that. Although I have no intention of telling others what to do, I will say this: Any Believer who is searching for the Truth or for other True Believers will have little success finding either in these two settings, or, for that matter, in the Church at large. It may sound crass and mean-spirited to say such a thing, but it's true.

Should you disagree with my position and think your group is somehow the exception, maybe you should conduct a little experiment. Try sharing some of the Truth you have learned from *The Voice of Elijah*[®] and see what happens. What you will find is, people who love darkness hate the Light, which is just another way of saying that unregenerate individuals don't appreciate hearing the Truth. Sadly, most "Christians" in the Church today are unregenerate and wouldn't recognize the Truth if it slapped them in the face. In fact, they become offended and indignant when it does.

That's why I wouldn't recommend conducting this experiment with too much vim and vigor. Don't tout the Truth too strongly or proclaim it

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too loudly, unless you like confrontations. I made the mistake years ago (before I knew better) of thinking I could convince others to believe the Truth I was learning from *The Voice of Elijah*® by merely bringing the Truth to their attention. So when a discussion ensued one morning on whether salvation was a process or a one-time event associated with the new birth, I jumped right in. What a mistake! The spirit of contention created by the ensuing discussion convicted me right then and there to never again get into an argument with others regarding my beliefs. That is not to say, however, that I won't defend my beliefs. The Apostle Peter said Believers should be ready when others ask them to give an account for what they believe (1 Pet. 3:13–16).

It's one thing to stand firm in faith (beliefs) and defend your behavior because someone questions your conduct, but it's another matter altogether to get into a heated exchange because you want to convince someone that your beliefs are right. It is far better to walk away and be content in the knowledge that you know the Truth than to argue with a fool. In fact, quarreling with a fool only makes you a fool yourself (Prov. 20:3; 26:4). Besides, any Believer who has not been called as a Teacher would be wise to spend more time listening and learning than talking anyway. I only wish I had learned this before becoming a "teacher" myself.

Looking back on my trials and tribulations as a "teacher," the two things I learned were attention to detail and humility. I learned to be more attentive to the details of the biblical text and I learned greater humility because I was often forced to admit that I didn't understand what I was reading. Nothing humbled me more than trying to explain things I didn't understand. And even on those rare occasions when I thought I understood what the Scriptures were talking about, I seldom did—I only thought I did. This sad reality is commonplace in the Church today. Ignorant "teachers" stand up and flap their jaws, all the while thinking they are proclaiming God's Word, when more often than not they are proclaiming Satan's. What an abomination! I'm sorry I was ever part of this sad, sordid affair.

I have no excuse for my involvement because I knew I was not qualified to teach, yet I taught anyway. I did so partly because I felt obliged to do "my part." Although I now feel ashamed that I tried to teach others, the experience did open my eyes to the fact that inept teaching is prevalent throughout the Church. You see, learning to examine the Scriptures with an inquisitive mind and a critical eye not only made me aware of how ignorant I was, it also made me aware of how ignorant all "teachers" in the Church are. And I include in this group every scholar of the past century and a half who has ever shared his ignorance with the world.

After all, credit should be given where credit is due. Most of the false knowledge that "teachers" today hand down as an oral tradition originated long before our time. That's how it is with traditions; they usually have some age on them. It's just too bad the Church's current traditions only go back 100–150 years and not back 1800–2000 years to the time of the Early Church.

Here are a few questions for you who are currently "teachers" in the Church to seriously ponder: From whom did you receive the authority to teach? Did you receive it from God, from an institution of higher learning, or from someone within your church? If it was from someone other than God, where did this person or group receive the authority they gave you to teach God's Word? And if you claim your authority is from God, are you really sure it came from Him, or did you just get the feeling one day that you should be teaching others and assume that feeling came from God?

If you are not absolutely certain that God called you as a Teacher and that you have the legitimate authority to teach His Word—The Apostolic Teaching—I suggest you do yourself a big favor and give it up. The chances are extremely high that you are currently teaching lies, which means you will ultimately face the harshest of judgments (James 3:1). Turn back now from the error of your way so that your soul might be saved from death (James 5:19–20). A word to the wise is sufficient.

Allen Fries

Why Leave Any Wiggle Room for Proud Protestants or Pious Pontification?

In the April 2000 issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I told you that the Early Church Fathers specifically assert that the Prophets and Apostles spoke cryptically in parables and enigmas so that nobody could understand what they had said unless someone explained it to them. I also asseverated that nobody has ever taken what they said seriously—until now. Then I explained that, unfortunately, anyone who sincerely desires to understand the biblical message must begin with the knowledge that the *meaning* and *significance* of every prophetic passage in the Hebrew Scriptures have been sealed up in the *parabolic imagery* and Hebrew idioms that the Prophets intentionally used to conceal the message they had been given. Finally, I showed you some excerpts from *The Epistle of Barnabas* and Justin Martyr’s “Dialogue With the Jew Trypho” where that fact is mentioned.

I told you that one could, perhaps, dismiss the claim that the Prophets concealed the message of the Scriptures by speaking in parables if those were the only two sources where inferences to it can be found. But the Truth is, various Church Fathers—True Believer and Pretender alike—make that claim. Those men also insist that it is absolutely impossible for the unregenerate person to understand the *parabolic* message of the Scriptures until someone who understands it explains it to him. I contended that in the face of such incontrovertible evidence, only an extremely close-minded individual could honestly dispute one self-evident fact: Early Church leaders not only believed Jesus Christ had, of necessity, revealed the *meaning* of the Hebrew Scriptures to the Apostles because those Scriptures had been sealed; they also believed they were *handing down* that understanding of the Scriptures as an *oral tradition*.

Then I set out to show you where the Church Fathers *talk about* such things. I began by commenting on statements the second-century Church Father Irenæus made in Book I and Book II of his monumental work, “Against Heresies.” In this issue of *The Voice of Elijah*®, I will comment on what Irenæus says in Book III and Book IV of that work.

“Against Heresies,” Book III

TEXT: Chapter I—

The Apostles Did Not Commence to Preach the Gospel, or to Place Anything on Record, Until They Were Endowed With the Gifts and Power of the Holy Spirit. They Preached One God Alone, Maker of Heaven and Earth.

1. **We have learned from none others the plan of our salvation, than from those through whom the Gospel has come down to us, which they did at one time proclaim in public, and, at a later period, by the will of God, handed down to us in the Scriptures, to be the ground and pillar of our faith.** For it is unlawful to assert that they preached before they possessed “perfect knowledge,” as some do even venture to say, boasting themselves as improvers of the apostles. For, after our Lord rose from the dead, [the apostles] were invested with power from on high when the Holy Spirit came down [upon them], were filled from all [His gifts], and had perfect knowledge: they departed to the ends of the earth, preaching the glad tidings of the good things [sent] from God to us, and proclaiming the peace of heaven to men, who indeed do all equally and individually possess the Gospel of God. **Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own**

dialect, while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome, and laying the foundations of the Church. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, did also hand down to us in writing what had been preached by Peter. Luke also, the companion of Paul, recorded in a book the Gospel preached by him. Afterwards, John, the disciple of the Lord, who also had leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia.

2. These have all declared to us that there is one God, Creator of heaven and earth, announced by the law and the prophets; and one Christ, the Son of God. If any one do not agree to these truths, he despises the companions of the Lord; nay more, he despises Christ Himself the Lord; yea, he despises the Father also, and stands self-condemned, resisting and opposing his own salvation, as is the case with all heretics.

COMMENTARY: Irenæus makes several points here, but one of the most interesting is his assertion that Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew language, addressing it to the Jews who lived in Rome. If that were true, it would certainly account for the fact that the ostensible purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to show that Jesus Christ is the Israel of God. (See *Not All Israel Is Israel*.) But if the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew and then translated into Greek, that might present a bit of a problem to some folks today since no known copy of that Hebrew original exists. How does that affect the theory that verbal inspiration applies only to the original autographs?

Irenæus makes another interesting comment when he claims that the Gospel the Apostles preached was "handed down to us in the Scriptures." He does not appear to have in mind the Hebrew Scriptures alone since he goes on to argue that the Apostles attained "perfect knowledge" on the Day of Pentecost and went out preaching the Gospel on the basis of that "perfect knowledge." Finally, he tells us the Gospel these men preached was later recorded in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. From that, we know he is pointing to the Apostles' "perfect knowledge" of the Old Testament Gospel of Jesus Christ which the Prophets hid in the Hebrew Scriptures because that same message is hidden in the parables of the Gospels.

This passage would be extremely interesting to read in the original since it is obvious that the translator had no clue as to the mind-set of Irenæus. He

shows that when he needlessly supplies "the apostles," "upon them," and "His gifts," to try to make the text make sense. The Truth is, his translation makes perfect sense without those superfluous additions—provided you understand what Irenæus was thinking regarding the events that transpired on the Day of Pentecost.

It was not just the Apostles who gained "perfect knowledge" of the Hebrew Scriptures on the Day of Pentecost. Luke tells us there were nearly 120 people in the Upper Room. The Holy Spirit bestowed "perfect knowledge" of the Hebrew Scriptures on every one of them. The only difference between the Apostles and the rest of the people in the room was that the Apostles had the authority to preach the message they understood. The others didn't.

As for Irenæus' summary of the Gospel message the Apostles preached, don't be so hasty as to assume that his summary falls short of the Gospel you believed. The Truth is, the Hebrew Scriptures begin with an account of how God created things because that is what the Hebrew Scriptures, that is, the Law and the Prophets, are all about—God creating things. The focal point of the Scriptures is how Jesus Christ, "The only Man" Who has been created in the image and likeness of God, made that possible for others.

TEXT: Chapter II—

The Heretics Follow Neither Scripture nor Tradition.

1. **When, however, they are confuted from the Scriptures, they turn round and accuse these same Scriptures, as if they were not correct, nor of authority, and [assert] that they are ambiguous, and that the truth cannot be extracted from them by those who are ignorant of tradition.** For [they allege] that the truth was not delivered by means of written documents, but *viva voce*: wherefore also Paul declared, "But we speak wisdom among those that are perfect, but not the wisdom of this world." [1 Cor. 2:6] And this wisdom each one of them alleges to be the fiction of his own inventing, forsooth; so that, according to their idea, the truth properly resides at one time in Valentinus, at another in Marcion, at another in Cerinthus, then afterwards in Basilides, or has even been indifferently in any other opponent, who could speak nothing pertaining to salvation. For every one of these men, being altogether of a perverse disposition, depraving the system of truth, is not ashamed to preach himself.

COMMENTARY: Irenæus is arguing against the nonsense that is going on in the Church today. Pretenders use the Scriptures to build elaborate theories concerning the scriptural message. Then, to prevent someone from pulling the rug out from under them by showing them the Scriptures do not support their goofy theories, they reject the Scriptures. For example, dispensationalists desperately want to go on believing that the Prophets of Israel knew nothing about the “Church age.” So they cling tightly to their belief that the Prophets are referring to the Jews every time they mention Israel. It completely escapes their notice that they have thereby discarded any evidence the Old Testament might provide. Won’t they be surprised to discover that Jesus Christ is “*The Remnant*” of Israel, and True Believers who make up the Body of Jesus Christ are the *Ekklesia*, that is, the “congregation,” of Israel?

Just for the record: One of the Hebrew terms that refer to the “congregation” of the sons of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures is sometimes translated *Ekklesia* in the Septuagint. Theologians are puzzled by the use of that same Greek term in the New Testament, so they normally translate it “Church.” They have no idea that when the authors of the New Testament use the term *Ekklesia*, they are not referring to a free-standing, independent “Church.” They are instead pointing to the *parabolic imagery* in which Believers make up the Body of Jesus Christ, the Israel of God.

Incidentally, the Jews referred to themselves as the *Ekklesia* of God until shortly after Christ died. Then, when Christians started using that appellation, the Jews resorted to calling themselves the “synagogue” of God. In the Septuagint, *sunagogos* is the other Greek term that the Jews used to translate the two Hebrew terms that are translated “congregation” in English. Do you need more evidence that first-century Christians considered themselves to be the continuation of Israel? If you do, there is certainly plenty of it. Not the least of which is the fact that Christian Jews insisted Gentile Christians had to be circumcised. Why would they do that if they did not understand Christians were claiming to be the descendants of Abraham—that is, Israel?

TEXT: 2. **But, again, when we refer them to that tradition which originates from the apostles, [and] which is preserved by means of the successions of presbyters in the Churches, they object to tradition, saying that they themselves are wiser not merely than**

the presbyters, but even than the apostles, because they have discovered the unadulterated truth. For [they maintain] that the apostles intermingled the things of the law with the words of the Saviour; and that not the apostles alone, but even the Lord Himself, spoke as at one time from the Demiurge, at another from the intermediate place, and yet again from the Pleroma, but **that they themselves, indubitably, unswervingly, and purely, have knowledge of the hidden mystery: this is, indeed, to blaspheme their Creator after a most impudent manner! It comes to this, therefore, that these men do now consent neither to Scripture nor to tradition.**

COMMENTARY: Folks in the Church today see no need to pay any special attention to *oral tradition*. Their foggy brains must think our generation has figured out the *meaning* of the Scriptures all by ourselves. That is, they must have somehow come to believe that “they have discovered the unadulterated truth” concerning the Scriptures without any help from previous generations. So if you try to tell them the Apostles *handed down* an *oral tradition* that the Church has long since lost, they will either vehemently deny it or casually say, “So what?” They are absolutely blind to the fact that they are themselves busy *handing down* an *oral tradition* that some fool thought he “discovered.”

Did you notice what Irenæus said about “the unadulterated truth” and “the hidden mystery”? He is *talking about* the claims the Gnostics made concerning the *oral tradition* that they claimed to have *handed down* from the Apostles. If those claims were completely absurd, Irenæus would have dismissed them outright. He doesn’t do that. Instead, he rejects the Gnostics’ basis for those claims by arguing that they do not pay attention either to the Scriptures or *oral tradition*. And now he is going to argue that Christians are doing exactly what he insists the Gnostics are not doing.

TEXT: 3. Such are the adversaries with whom we have to deal, my very dear friend, endeavouring like slippery serpents to escape at all points. Wherefore they must be opposed at all points, if perchance, by cutting off their retreat, we may succeed in turning them back to the truth. **For, though it is not an easy thing for a soul under the influence of error to repent, yet, on the other hand, it is not altogether impossible to escape from error when the truth is brought alongside it.**

COMMENTARY: Pay close attention to what Irenæus says here! It may not be easy for you to admit that you have been duped into believing a lie. But if you have even the slightest inkling that I have said something that rings true, you had best keep listening until your pride allows you to humbly acknowledge that Satan has deceived you along with everybody else.

TEXT: Chapter III—

A Refutation of the Heretics, From the Fact That, in the Various Churches, a Perpetual Succession of Bishops Was Kept Up.

1. **It is within the power of all, therefore, in every Church, who may wish to see the truth, to contemplate clearly the tradition of the apostles manifested throughout the whole world;** and we are in a position to reckon up those who were by the apostles instituted bishops in the Churches, and [to demonstrate] the succession of these men to our own times; those who neither taught nor knew of anything like what these [heretics] rave about. **For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries, which they were in the habit of imparting to “the perfect” apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves.** For they were desirous that these men should be very perfect and blameless in all things, whom also they were leaving behind as their successors, delivering up their own place of government to these men; which men, if they discharged their functions honestly, would be a great boon [to the Church], but if they should fall away, the direst calamity.

COMMENTARY: Only a fool would be so inane as to claim that Irenæus does not plainly claim there was only one *oral tradition* in the Church of his day. He even calls that *oral tradition* “the tradition of the apostles.” (I call it *The Apostolic Teaching*.) Then he argues against the Gnostics’ goofy claim that Jesus Christ revealed a secret teaching to some of the Apostles and not to others. Some folks will undoubtedly be dense enough to argue that Irenæus is saying the Apostles knew of no “hidden mysteries.” Those who thus reveal their vapidly obviously do not understand either the Scriptures or the power of the lowly comma. Regardless of the translator’s preconceptions, this is what Irenæus *meant*:

For if the apostles had known hidden mysteries which they were in the habit of imparting to “the perfect” apart and privily from the rest, they would have delivered them especially to those to whom they were also committing the Churches themselves.

The point Irenæus is making here is fairly easy to understand. The Apostles *delivered* an *oral tradition* to the men they put in charge of the various churches. That *oral tradition* included everything Christ *delivered* to the Apostles. Consequently, there are no *additional* “hidden mysteries” that are known only to “the perfect” as the Gnostics claim. In making that statement, Irenæus in no way denies that Christ did, indeed, reveal a “hidden mystery” to the Apostles. Luke plainly says Jesus explained the things that Moses and the other Prophets of Israel had written about Him:

And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures.
(Luke 24:27)

If you would rather not admit that the things Jesus explained that day were somehow hidden, maybe you will go for “made difficult to understand.” They sure weren’t put in any form that was *meant* to be readily understood by everyone. If they were, why was Jesus Christ the only One Who understood them?

TEXT: 2. Since, however, it would be very tedious, in such a volume as this, to reckon up the successions of all the Churches, we do put to confusion all those who, in whatever manner, whether by an evil self-pleasing, by vainglory, or by blindness and perverse opinion, assemble in unauthorized meetings; [we do this, I say,] **by indicating that tradition derived from the apostles, of the very great, the very ancient, and universally known Church founded and organized at Rome by the two most glorious apostles, Peter and Paul; as also [by pointing out] the faith preached to men, which comes down to our time by means of the successions of the bishops.** For it is a matter of necessity that every Church should agree with this Church, on account of its preeminent authority, that is, the faithful everywhere, inasmuch as **the apostolical tradition has been preserved continuously by those [faithful men] who exist everywhere.**

COMMENTARY: Have the words of Irenæus finally managed to get through the mental fog that Satan has wrapped around our generation? Face the facts: The leaders of the second-century Church believed they were teaching things which had been *handed down* to them as an *oral tradition* from the time of the Apostles. You may very well quibble over whether they were actually doing that. But only a fool would dispute the fact that Irenæus, a solid pillar in the second-century Church, was totally convinced they were.

If, a century and a half after Christ was crucified, leaders of the Church claimed they were still *handing down* an *oral tradition* that originated with the Apostles, what happened to that *oral tradition*? Better yet, even if they weren't actually *handing down* the same things the Apostles taught and merely thought they were, what happened to that claim? Why does no major branch of the Church today claim to be teaching exactly the same things the Apostles taught?

TEXT: 3. The blessed apostles, then, having founded and built up the Church, committed into the hands of Linus the office of the episcopate. Of this Linus, Paul makes mention in the Epistles to Timothy. To him succeeded Anacletus; and after him, in the third place from the apostles, Clement was allotted the bishopric. **This man, as he had seen the blessed apostles, and had been conversant with them, might be said to have the preaching of the apostles still echoing [in his ears], and their traditions before his eyes. Nor was he alone [in this], for there were many still remaining who had received instructions from the apostles.** In the time of this Clement, no small dissension having occurred among the brethren at Corinth, the Church in Rome despatched a most powerful letter to the Corinthians, exhorting them to peace, renewing their faith, and **declaring the tradition which it had lately received from the apostles**, proclaiming the one God, omnipotent, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Creator of man, who brought on the deluge, and called Abraham, who led the people from the land of Egypt, spake with Moses, set forth the law, sent the prophets, and who has prepared fire for the devil and his angels. From this document, **whosoever chooses to do so, may learn that He, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, was preached by the Churches, and may also understand the apostolical tradition of the Church**, since this Epistle is of older date than these men who are now

propagating falsehood, and who conjure into existence another god beyond the Creator and the Maker of all existing things. To this Clement there succeeded Evaristus. Alexander followed Evaristus; then, sixth from the apostles, Sixtus was appointed; after him, Telephorus, who was gloriously martyred; then Hyginus; after him, Pius; then after him, Anicetus. Soter having succeeded Anicetus, Eleutherius does now, in the twelfth place from the apostles, hold the inheritance of the episcopate. **In this order, and by this succession, the ecclesiastical tradition from the apostles, and the preaching of the truth, have come down to us. And this is most abundant proof that there is one and the same vivifying faith, which has been preserved in the Church from the apostles until now, and handed down in truth.**

COMMENTARY: How can there be any doubt in a reasonable person's mind? Irenæus firmly believed that the Church in his day was still teaching exactly the same things the Apostles taught. He even gives a sequential list of the men who were instrumental in transferring what he calls the "apostolical tradition" from the Apostles down to Eleutherius, a man who was still alive in his own day. That sequential list is: Linus, Anacletus, Clement, Evaristus, Alexander, Sixtus, Telephorus, Hyginus, Pius, Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherius. Some dimwits might foolishly claim that Irenæus is here arguing in favor of the papacy. And there might even be some credit to that view were it not for the fact that he goes on to make the same argument for the churches at Smyrna and Ephesus.

TEXT: 4. But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, **having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true.** To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time, —a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in

the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, **proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles, —that, namely, which is handed down by the Church.** There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, “Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.” And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, “Dost thou know me?” “I do know thee, the first-born of Satan.”

Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, “A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.” [Titus 3:10–11] There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. **Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.**

COMMENTARY: Most folks in the Church today would be hesitant to approve of the way that the Apostle John and his disciple Polycarp treated heretics. Small wonder. They can’t identify with anyone who has heard and honestly believed the Truth of the Gospel. Since their own beliefs are nothing more than a crude amalgamation of contradictions and distortions of the Gospel, they have no sure way of identifying the Truth anyway. Under those circumstances, anyone who turns a cold shoulder to another “Christian” is—by their definition—being far too dogmatic.

The only way that folks in the Church today know how to deal with dogmatic people is to wait until their dogmatism gets so great that their behavior can—rightly or wrongly—be labeled “cultic.” Then they reject them, not for what they believe but for being dogmatic about their beliefs. And they claim that such people are no longer “Christian.” If you don’t believe that, then you tell me: When was the last time any church grilled you about your beliefs before they let

you sit down in the pew? You know perfectly well that if you keep your mouth shut, you can believe Jesus Christ is Satan himself and they will—even if you sing like a crow—let you sit right up front in the choir.

The Church today fails to see how, in welcoming anyone and everyone (as long as they don’t get too dogmatic), they are doing exactly the opposite of what is required to protect the integrity of the Truth of the Gospel. But the leaders of the Church are not trying to protect the Truth of anything. They are only protecting their precious “Christian” norms—norms which have nothing to do with truth or falsehood. They have only to do with a relative definition of acceptable behavior. One of those norms is to welcome everyone—no matter how way out and weird their doctrine gets—as long as they don’t get dogmatic about what they believe. Just look at how far down we have come:

Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth.

According to the goofy definition of “cult” that one finds in the Church today, *The Voice of Elijah*[®] must be a “cultic” organization because we firmly (dogmatically) believe and proclaim that the message of the Hebrew Scriptures was sealed up and that the Prophets speak cryptically in terms of *parabolic imagery*. Never mind that we hold no meetings, have no members, and certainly don’t try to coerce folks to believe what we teach, lazy lamebrains will always be willing to attach the “cultic” label rather than check the evidence. Don’t bother trying to change their minds with logic, reason, or Truth; they aren’t interested in those things. Satan has them living in Fantasy Land.

TEXT: Chapter IV—

The Truth Is to Be Found Nowhere Else but in the Catholic Church, the Sole Depository of Apostolical Doctrine. Heresies Are of Recent Formation, and Cannot Trace Their Origin up to the Apostles.

1. Since therefore we have such proofs, it is not necessary to seek the truth among others which it is easy to obtain from the Church; since the apostles, like a rich man [depositing his money] in a bank, lodged in her hands most copiously all things pertaining to the truth: so that every man, whosoever will, can draw

from her the water of life. [Rev. 22:17] For she is the entrance to life; all others are thieves and robbers. On this account are we bound to avoid *them*, but to make choice of the things pertaining to the Church with the utmost diligence, and to **lay hold of the tradition of the truth**. For how stands the case? Suppose there arise a dispute relative to some important question among us, should we not have recourse to the most ancient Churches with which the apostles held constant intercourse, and learn from them what is certain and clear in regard to the present question? **For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?**

COMMENTARY: Did you grasp the implications of the question Irenæus asked? Read it carefully again:

For how should it be if the apostles themselves had not left us writings? Would it not be necessary, [in that case,] to follow the course of the tradition which they handed down to those to whom they did commit the Churches?

The issue Irenæus raises is one that demands to be addressed honestly. However, the Protestant Church has swept it completely under the rug and goes about its business as though the issue does not exist. The Roman Catholic Church responds to the question with their silly claim of papal authority, totally unaware that when the Church lost *The Apostolic Teaching* its leaders lost the authority that inhered in it.

We Protestants don't fare any better. We rejected the *subjective* proclamation of the Pope in favor of the *objective* proclamation of the Scriptures alone. We have no Pope and adamantly assert that we don't need or want one. In the wisdom of God, our Protestant claims concerning the Scriptures have finally come true. All that anyone needs today is a knowledge of the message the Prophets hid in the Hebrew Scriptures. In that at least, we Protestants come out ahead of the Roman Catholics. However, in rejecting the Pope, we have made it all the more difficult for us to see that the Church once was what the Catholics claim it still is. And unfortunately, our fellow Protestants will continue in their blindness in that regard as long as they are unwilling to face the fact that Church leaders once *handed down* an *oral tradition* which was eventually lost.

TEXT: 2. To which course many nations of those barbarians who believe in Christ do assent, having salvation written in their hearts by the Spirit, without paper or ink, and, carefully preserving the ancient tradition, believing in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, by means of Christ Jesus, the Son of God; who, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, condescended to be born of the virgin, He Himself uniting man through Himself to God, and having suffered under Pontius Pilate, and rising again, and having been received up in splendour, shall come in glory, the Saviour of those who are saved, and the Judge of those who are judged, and sending into eternal fire those who transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent. Those who, in the absence of written documents, have believed this faith, are barbarians, so far as regards our language; but as regards doctrine, manner, and tenor of life, they are, because of faith, very wise indeed; and they do please God, ordering their conversation in all righteousness, chastity, and wisdom. If any one were to preach to these men the inventions of the heretics, speaking to them in their own language, they would at once stop their ears, and flee as far off as possible, not enduring even to listen to the blasphemous address. Thus, by means of that ancient tradition of the apostles, they do not suffer their mind to conceive anything of the [doctrines suggested by the] portentous language of these teachers, among whom neither Church nor doctrine has ever been established.

COMMENTARY: There is a virulent strain of idiocy coursing through the veins of Christians today. The mental haze caused by that pathogen allows them to believe that whatever they choose to believe is God's honest Truth. Yet they feel no compunction at all when they change, exchange, or rearrange the "truth" that they believe so that it better fits in with their own wants and desires. However, it seems to me that Truth is Truth, and anything else is a lie. So if someone changes the Truth, they have thereby manufactured a lie. And anyone who manufactures a lie is a liar. At least it seems that way to me. What do you think?

I only mention this liar/lies stuff because I can't help but wonder: What does that make the theologians in the Church today? They are busy redefining a Christian theology which they claim to be true. But if a liar is one who changes the Truth, are they all liars? I

don't think so. One has to change *the Truth* before he can rightfully be called a liar. Since they no longer have the Truth of the Gospel, the most that can be said for them is they are aspiring liars, wannabe liars, or groupies of the Liar. Nonetheless, their activities seem to fit the description of those whom Christ will send into eternal fire because they "transform the truth, and despise His Father and His advent." But that's just my opinion. What do you think? Incidentally, the Apostle John says this about folks who change the Truth:

"But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part {will be} in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."
(Revelation 21:8)

I wonder if Irenæus had that Scripture in mind when he mentioned "those who transform the Truth." But how could my concerns about changing the Truth possibly have any relevance today? Christians in the second century still had the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*. Once that was lost, the best the rest of us could ever hope for must be something less—unless, of course, God should somehow intervene. But under any circumstances it would seem the far wiser course that we not add to, subtract from, or otherwise change anything that we have come to believe as true. However, if you somehow come to the conclusion that something you have believed is not true, you should certainly reject it in favor of what you deem true. Having done that, perhaps you should then emulate the Christians whose reaction to liars Irenæus describes:

They would at once stop their ears, and flee as far off as possible, not enduring even to listen to the blasphemous address.

TEXT: 3. For, prior to Valentinus, those who follow Valentinus had no existence; nor did those from Marcion exist before Marcion; nor, in short, had any of those malignant-minded people, whom I have above enumerated, any being previous to the initiators and inventors of their perversity. For Valentinus came to Rome in the time of Hyginus, flourished under Pius, and remained until Anicetus. Cerdon, too, Marcion's predecessor, himself arrived in the time of Hyginus, who was the ninth bishop. Coming frequently into the

Church, and making public confession, he thus remained, one time teaching in secret, and then again making public confession; but at last, having been denounced for corrupt teaching, he was excommunicated from the assembly of the brethren. Marcion, then, succeeding him, flourished under Anicetus, who held the tenth place of the episcopate. But the rest, who are called Gnostics, take rise from Menander, Simon's disciple, as I have shown; and each one of them appeared to be both the father and the high priest of that doctrine into which he has been initiated. But all these (the Marcosians) broke out into their apostasy much later, even during the intermediate period of the Church.

COMMENTARY: The information Irenæus provides here is invaluable to anyone who desires to understand how Satan managed to sucker punch the legitimate leaders of the second-century Church. The evidence indicates he created a diversion by using Pretenders who came into the Church, radically distorted *The Apostolic Teaching*, and continued to teach a mangled version of *The Teaching* after they were excommunicated. Then, while Church leaders were preoccupied with refuting Pretenders who were teaching a gross exaggeration of *The Teaching* outside the Church, Satan used other Pretenders inside the Church to change *The Apostolic Teaching* little by little.

Valentinus, Cerdon, and Marcion were the most threatening of those outside the orthodox Church who claimed to be leaders of the true Church. Refuting the claims of these and other imposters became an obsession to legitimate Church leaders like Irenæus, Hippolytus, Tertullian, and others. However, these men were so focused on external threats to the Church that they seemingly never noticed when a new breed of "Christian philosopher" like Justin Martyr began using the speculative methodology of Greek philosophers to change the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*.

By the end of the second century, it was obvious to all that serious damage had somehow been done to *The Teaching*. That's when Clement (the Dumb) of Alexandria and Origen (the Idiot) suggested that Church leaders could use the (stoic) methodology of Philo of Alexandria to recover the Truth which had been lost. When Church leaders agreed, speculative theology rapidly replaced *The Apostolic Teaching* which was still being taught in the Church when Irenæus wrote his monumental work "Against Heresies."

TEXT: Chapter V—

Christ and His Apostles, Without Any Fraud, Deception, or Hypocrisy, Preached That One God, the Father, Was the Founder of All Things. They Did Not Accommodate Their Doctrine to the Prepossessions of Their Hearers.

1. Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, [John 14:6] and that no lie is in Him. As also David says, prophesying His birth from a virgin, and the resurrection from the dead, "Truth has sprung out of the earth." [Ps. 85:11] **The apostles, likewise, being disciples of the truth, are above all falsehood; for a lie has no fellowship with the truth, just as darkness has none with light, but the presence of the one shuts out that of the other.**

Our Lord, therefore, being the truth, did not speak lies; and whom He knew to have taken origin from a defect, He never would have acknowledged as God, even the God of all, the Supreme King, too, and His own Father, an imperfect being as a perfect one, an animal one as a spiritual, Him who was without the Pleroma as Him who was within it. Neither did His disciples make mention of any other God, or term any other Lord, except Him, who was truly the God and Lord of all, as these most vain sophists affirm that the apostles did with hypocrisy frame their doctrine according to the capacity of their hearers, and gave answers after the opinions of their questioners, — fabling blind things for the blind, according to their blindness; for the dull according to their dulness; for those in error according to their error. And to those who imagined that the Demiurge alone was God, they preached him; **but to those who are capable of comprehending the unnameable Father, they did declare the unspeakable mystery through parables and enigmas: so that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the cause of truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as each individual was able to receive it!**

COMMENTARY: I got the distinct impression while reading this section that the translator lost the train of

Irenæus' thought somewhere in the middle of it. He doesn't seem to understand that Irenæus knows that Jesus Christ and the Apostles did, in fact, "declare the unspeakable mystery through parables and enigmas." Yet Irenæus makes that clear in the next book of "Against Heresies" when he says this about the Word of God that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures:

For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, [Matt. 13:44] that is, in this world (for "the field is the world" [Matt. 13:38]); but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables.

Irenæus, "Against Heresies," Book iv, Chap. xxvi, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1867), Vol. 1.

Not knowing that the Word of God has been hidden in "types and parables," the translator can't quite grasp what Irenæus means when he says this:

But to those who are capable of comprehending the unnameable Father, they did declare the unspeakable mystery through parables and enigmas: so that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the cause of truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as each individual was able to receive it!

The translator assumes the entirety of the claim is false when the Truth is, only this part of it is false:

So that the Lord and the apostles exercised the office of teacher not to further the cause of truth, but even in hypocrisy, and as each individual was able to receive it!

What Irenæus says about the preaching of the Apostles is true. "They did declare the unspeakable mystery through parables and enigmas." Since you may have missed his point, let me refer you back to what he said earlier. He said the Apostles left a record of the doctrine they taught. Although most folks today think that record can be found in the New Testament Epistles, Irenæus says it can be found in the Gospels:

Since, therefore, the tradition from the apostles does thus exist in the Church, and is permanent among us, let us revert to the Scriptural proof furnished by those apostles who did also write the Gospel, in which they recorded

the doctrine regarding God, pointing out that our Lord Jesus Christ is the truth, [John 14:6] and that no lie is in Him.

The sad fact is—for those who don't understand the parables in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—the Apostles left the Church a succinct written explanation of “*The Mystery*” that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures. All anyone needs to do to understand that *mystery* is read the parables of Jesus that are recorded in the four Gospels—with understanding. Unfortunately, it is impossible to do that unless one already has a fairly good understanding of “*The Mystery*” that Moses and the other Prophets of Israel hid in the Hebrew Scriptures. Nevertheless, lots of folks—and maybe even you—will insist they can.

All anyone has to do to understand what Moses wrote is think like an ancient Egyptian. Then to understand most of the other Prophets, one needs to think like a Canaanite. It also helps a bit if one thinks like an Assyrian and a Babylonian toward the end of the Prophets' history of Israel. Lacking the ability to do that, I guess you'll just have to make something up—like Valentinus, Cerdon, and Marcion. God probably won't mind if you come fairly close to the Truth. Like the old adage the Liar is fond of misquoting: “Close always counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, and religion.” And his children obviously have a whole lot less concern for the Truth than what Irenæus evinces here.

TEXT: 2. Such [a line of conduct] belongs not to those who heal, or who give life: it is rather that of those bringing on diseases, and increasing ignorance; and much more true than these men shall the law be found, which pronounces every one accursed who sends the blind man astray in the way. **For the apostles, who were commissioned to find out the wanderers, and to be for sight to those who saw not, and medicine to the weak, certainly did not address them in accordance with their opinion at the time, but according to revealed truth.**

For no persons of any kind would act properly, if they should advise blind men, just about to fall over a precipice, to continue their most dangerous path, as if it were the right one, and as if they might go on in safety. Or what medical man, anxious to heal a sick person, would prescribe in accordance with the patient's whims, and not according to the requisite

medicine? But that the Lord came as the physician of the sick, He does Himself declare, saying, “They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” [Luke 5:31–32] How then shall the sick be strengthened, or how shall sinners come to repentance? Is it by persevering in the very same courses? or, on the contrary, is it by undergoing a great change and reversal of their former mode of living, by which they have brought upon themselves no slight amount of sickness, and many sins?

But ignorance, the mother of all these, is driven out by knowledge. Wherefore the Lord used to impart knowledge to His disciples, by which also it was His practice to heal those who were suffering, and to keep back sinners from sin. **He therefore did not address them in accordance with their pristine notions, nor did He reply to them in harmony with the opinion of His questioners, but according to the doctrine leading to salvation, without hypocrisy or respect of person.**

COMMENTARY: I like the way Irenæus describes the Apostles:

For the apostles, who were commissioned to find out the wanderers, and to be for sight to those who saw not, and medicine to the weak, certainly did not address them in accordance with their opinion at the time, but according to revealed truth.

That is definitely a far cry from what is going on in the Church today. Listen carefully to your television or radio on any given day of the week and you will find preachers energetically telling people exactly what they want to hear—with complete disregard for the Truth. They are, in fact, more blatant in that regard than politicians. If you doubt that, count the number of times they say “I think” or “I believe.” Then watch to see how definite they become when they tell you God would have you send them your money. You won't hear much “I think” or “I believe” then.

If you are a True Believer who has given up on finding the Truth in the Church, I challenge you to give it one more try with *The Voice of Elijah*®. You won't find things here that will give you the “warm fuzzies.” And our approach won't win us many friends. In fact, it will make us more than a few enemies. But we just try to tell it like it is in the same way that Christ did:

He therefore did not address them in accordance with their pristine notions, nor did He reply to them in harmony with the opinion of His questioners, but according to the doctrine leading to salvation, without hypocrisy or respect of person.

TEXT: 3. This is also made clear from the words of the Lord, who did truly reveal the Son of God to those of the circumcision—Him who had been foretold as Christ by the prophets; that is, He set Himself forth, who had restored liberty to men, and bestowed on them the inheritance of incorruption. And again, the apostles taught the Gentiles that they should leave vain stocks and stones, which they imagined to be gods, and worship the true God, who had created and made all the human family, and, by means of His creation, did nourish, increase, strengthen, and preserve them in being; and that they might look for His Son Jesus Christ, who redeemed us from apostasy with His own blood, so that we should also be a sanctified people, — who shall also descend from heaven in His Father’s power, and pass judgment upon all, and who shall freely give the good things of God to those who shall have kept His commandments. He, appearing in these last times, the chief cornerstone, has gathered into one, and united those that were far off and those that were near; [Eph. 2:17] that is, the circumcision and the uncircumcision, enlarging Japhet, and placing him in the dwelling of Shem. [Gen. 9:27]

Irenæus, “Against Heresies,” Book iii, Chaps. i–v, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1867), Vol. 1.

COMMENTARY: I have mentioned somewhere on some other occasion that I began my Christian walk as a disciple of the Apostle Paul. That was so because at first, his were the only words in all of the Scriptures that made sense to me. Gradually, over the first few years of my walk with the Lord, I became a disciple of Peter, James, and John as well. Then, some eight years after God called me, I found that Jeremiah and Ezekiel also had things to say that I could understand. More recently, I have found myself sitting at the feet of Moses, the master of all the Prophets. After I heard him explain God’s plan and purpose in the Man Jesus Christ, I found that Isaiah, Micah, Joel, and the other Prophets had a tremendous amount they were suddenly willing to teach me. Now, as I read what Irenæus wrote, I hear an echo of the things that Moses and the

Prophets say about “*The Man*.” I also see a devout man of God fighting valiantly for the Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching* in spite of overwhelming odds.

“Against Heresies,” Book IV

TEXT: Chapter XXVI—

The Treasure Hid in the Scriptures Is Christ; the True Exposition of the Scriptures Is to Be Found in the Church Alone.

1. **If any one, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling (*vocationis*). For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, [Matt. 13:44] that is, in this world (for “the field is the world” [Matt. 13:38]); but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables.** Hence His human nature could not be understood, prior to the consummation of those things which had been predicted, that is, the advent of Christ. And therefore it was said to Daniel the prophet: “Shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of consummation, until many learn, and knowledge be completed. For at that time, when the dispersion shall be accomplished, they shall know all these things.” [Dan. 12:4, 7] But Jeremiah also says, “In the last days they shall understand these things.” [Jer. 23:20; 30:24] For every prophecy, before its fulfillment, is to men [full of] enigmas and ambiguities. But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition.

And for this reason, indeed, when at this present time the law is read to the Jews, it is like a fable; for they do not possess the explanation of all things pertaining to the advent of the Son of God, which took place in human nature; but when it is read by the Christians, it is a treasure, hid indeed in a field, but brought to light by the cross of Christ, and explained, both enriching the understanding of men, and showing forth the wisdom of God, and declaring His dispensations with regard to man, and forming the kingdom of Christ beforehand, and preaching by anticipation the inheritance of the holy Jerusalem, and proclaiming beforehand that the man who loves God shall arrive at such excellency as even to see God, and hear His word, and from the hearing of His discourse be glorified to

such an extent, that others cannot behold the glory of his countenance, as was said by Daniel: "Those who do understand, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and many of the righteous as the stars for ever and ever." [Dan. 12:3] Thus, then, I have shown it to be, if any one read the Scriptures. For thus it was that the Lord discoursed with the disciples after His resurrection from the dead, proving to them from the Scriptures themselves "that Christ must suffer, and enter into His glory, and that remission of sins should be preached in His name throughout all the world." [Luke 24:26, 47] And the disciple will be perfected, and [rendered] like the householder, "who bringeth forth from his treasure things new and old." [Matt. 13:52]

COMMENTARY: It may have been difficult for you to understand what Irenæus says here since the Church today teaches a whole bunch of things that are diametrically opposed to what Irenæus understood and believed. Therefore, I should probably summarize his statements and leave no room for doubt. Irenæus merely said that the Word of God—Jesus Christ—was hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures and could not be understood until He came and revealed Himself to His disciples. That is why Daniel was told to seal up the words of his prophecy. However, as both Daniel and Jeremiah confirm, the *meaning* of the things the Prophets wrote will finally be understood in the final days of this Age. In case you didn't understand that is what Irenæus *meant* when you read it the first time, here it is again:

The treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables. Hence His human nature could not be understood, prior to the consummation of those things which had been predicted, that is, the advent of Christ. And therefore it was said to Daniel the prophet: "Shut up the words, and seal the book even to the time of consummation, until many learn, and knowledge be completed. For at that time, when the dispersion shall be accomplished, they shall know all these things." [Dan. 12:4, 7] But Jeremiah also says, "In the last days they shall understand these things." [Jer. 23:20; 30:24] For every prophecy, before its fulfilment, is to men [full of] enigmas and ambiguities. But when the time has arrived, and the prediction has come to pass, then the prophecies have a clear and certain exposition.

Irenæus says a few other things concerning *The Apostolic Teaching*, including the fact that the person who believes the Truth will be "glorified" as Daniel says in Daniel 12:3. It isn't obvious that Irenæus has in mind the Resurrection of the Righteous when he *talks about* glorification because he sees the Resurrection as nothing more than the logical result of a lifetime spent listening to the Word of God. However, it becomes clear from reading the larger context in Daniel 12 that resurrection precedes, or is at least simultaneous with, the glorification of True Believers:

"Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands {guard} over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace {and} everlasting contempt. And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever. But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."
(Daniel 12:1–4)

The translator assumed that Irenæus was quoting Daniel when he wrote: "For at that time, when the dispersion shall be accomplished, they shall know all these things." That is not a quote; it's a comment. And the translator's assumption that it is a quote makes it impossible for the reader to understand that Irenæus has in mind the "dispersion" of Christians at the End. Irenæus obviously understood that Daniel is referring to the appearance of the Antichrist because he quotes Daniel 12 twice in connection with his discussion of those things. (See "Against Heresies," Book v, Chaps. xxix and xxxiv, or *The Advent of Christ and AntiChrist*, pp. 75, and 99.) Unfortunately, if you do not know Irenæus has in mind the Return of Christ on "clouds of glory" when he quotes Jeremiah, you have no basis for understanding what he says. The Truth is, Jeremiah twice describes the (*parabolic*) storm clouds of God's wrath:

*Thus says the LORD of hosts,
"Do not listen to the words of the prophets*

who are prophesying to you.
 They are leading you into futility;
 They speak a vision of their own imagination,
 Not from the mouth of the LORD.
They keep saying to those who despise Me,
'The LORD has said, "You will have peace";
And as for everyone who walks
in the stubbornness of his own heart,
They say, 'Calamity will not come upon you.'
 But who has stood in the council of the LORD,
 That he should see and hear His word?
 Who has given heed to His word and listened?
 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.
 I did not send {these} prophets,
 But they ran.
 I did not speak to them,
 But they prophesied.
 But if they had stood in My council,
 Then they would have announced My words to My people,
 And would have turned them back from their evil way
 And from the evil of their deeds."
 (Jeremiah 23:16–22)

Behold, the tempest of the LORD!
 Wrath has gone forth,
 A sweeping tempest;
 It will burst on the head of the wicked.
 The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back,
 Until He has performed, and until He has accomplished
 The intent of His heart;
In the latter days you will understand this.
 (Jeremiah 30:23–24)

If, after reading that, you do not yet see that fools in the Church are provoking God to anger by teaching profoundly stupid things, you might want to seriously consider exchanging your tattered garments for an asbestos suit. You are certainly going to need it.

TEXT: 2. Wherefore it is incumbent to obey the presbyters who are in the Church, —**those who, as I have shown, possess the succession from the apostles;**

those who, together with the succession of the episcopate, have received the certain gift of truth, according to the good pleasure of the Father. But [it is also incumbent] to hold in suspicion others who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever, [looking upon them] either as heretics of perverse minds, or as schismatics puffed up and self-pleasing, or again as hypocrites, acting thus for the sake of lucre and vainglory. **For all these have fallen from the truth.** And the heretics, indeed, who bring strange fire to the altar of God—namely, strange doctrines—shall be burned up by the fire from heaven, as were Nadab and Abihu. [Lev. 10:1–2] But such as rise up in opposition to the truth, and exhort others against the Church of God, [shall] remain among those in hell (*apud inferos*), being swallowed up by an earthquake, even as those who were with Chore, Dathan, and Abiron. [Num. 16:33] But those who cleave asunder, and separate the unity of the Church, [shall] receive from God the same punishment as Jeroboam did. [1 Kin. 14:10] *Irenæus, "Against Heresies," Book iv, Chap. xxvi, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), The Ante-Nicene Fathers (1867), Vol. 1.*

COMMENTARY: Did you hear what he said? He said the legitimate leaders of the Church "have received the certain gift of truth" from the Apostles. Then he asserts that those "who depart from the primitive succession, and assemble themselves together in any place whatsoever ... have fallen from the truth." The implications of that assertion are absolutely staggering.

Roman Catholics have been saying that about Protestants for centuries. And no matter what Protestants prefer to believe, the argument is valid. However, those smug and self-assured Catholics have never stopped to consider that the Protestant counterclaim might be just as true: The Roman Catholic Church fell from the Truth when Church leaders ignorantly let it slip out of their grasp.

Both Protestants and Catholics are absolutely correct, not in what they claim for themselves but in what they charge against the other. So what should a Believer who is honestly seeking to know the Truth do? That's a difficult question. And it is one that you—and only you—can answer. However, I would offer this frank observation: Logic alone should tell you not to expect to hear the Truth from anyone who spins some long-winded yarn about how the Church somehow held on to the Truth. ■



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 main article of the January 2000 newsletter you explained some things about the “riddle in the mirror” that the Apostle Paul alludes to in 1 Corinthians 13:12, as well as in other places. Although it was difficult to grasp everything you had to say on the subject, I trust things will become clearer in time as we learn more of The Teaching. To that end, I would like to ask you about a couple of ambiguous phrases found in the Scriptures that I suspect can only be explained and understood via a riddle, possibly even the riddle in the mirror. The two phrases are “from everlasting to everlasting,” which is mentioned five times in the Old Testament (1 Chr. 16:36; Ps. 41:13; 90:2; 103:17; 106:48), and “from glory to glory,” which is mentioned once by Paul in the same context as the “mirror” image (2 Cor. 3:18). Since “everlasting” means “without end” and the “glory” of the Lord is His eternal Word, I assume these phrases are alluding to the fact that God and His Word are without beginning or end. But since this is only a guess on my part, would you explain the meaning of these two phrases and/or tell us what they allude to? Are they tied to the riddle in the mirror?

Elijah: You are on the right track, but unfortunately, the folks who translated the Scriptures have put you on the wrong train. You can only understand the two phrases you mentioned if you are thinking *parabolically*.

That is, you have to mentally visualize something *literal* in order to comprehend what the reality depicted by the abstract concepts “everlasting” and “glory” IS LIKE. Both of those words point to the same basic *parabolic image*; however, that *parabolic image* must be broken down into its constituent parts before “everlasting” and “glory” start to make any sense at all.

As you correctly surmized, the “riddle in a mirror” does come into play. However, the riddle does not explain the phrases “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” and “from glory to glory.” Instead, the *parabolic imagery* that stands behind those two phrases is *meant* to help you grasp the reality that is described by the riddle. I won’t be able to explain everything you need to know about that here, but maybe I can get a good start. You can always ask another question in regard to anything I don’t explain here.

The first phrase you mentioned (“from everlasting to everlasting”) actually occurs in two basic forms. In one form, the Hebrew term *’olam*—which has been translated “everlasting”—has the definite article (“the everlasting”); in the other, it occurs without the definite article (“everlasting”). Those two forms of the phrase sometimes occur with the conjunction (“from everlasting *even* to everlasting”) and sometimes without (“from everlasting to everlasting”). The noun *’olam* occurs with the definite article (“the”) in 1 Chronicles 16:36 as well as in Psalms 41:13 and 106:48. It occurs without the article in Psalms 90:2 and 103:17. Those two forms of the phrase appear with the conjunction (normally translated “even”) in 1 Chronicles 16:36 as well as in Psalms 41:13, 103:17, and 106:48. The conjunction has been omitted only in Psalm 90:2. Here are the verses you mentioned:

*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
Then all the people said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD.
(1 Chronicles 16:36)*

*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting to everlasting.
Amen, and Amen.
(Psalm 41:13)*

*Before the mountains were born,
Or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God.
(Psalm 90:2)*

*But the lovingkindness of the LORD is
from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him,
And His righteousness to children's children ...
(Psalm 103:17)*

*Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
From everlasting even to everlasting.
And let all the people say, "Amen."
Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 106:48)*

From your question, I can tell that you most likely used the New American Standard Bible to do your study of the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting.” That was apparent because the same five verses you mentioned are the only ones that came up when I used the English phrase “from everlasting to everlasting” to search that translation. Just as you stated, the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” does occur in those five verses. And it occurs nowhere else in the New American Standard Bible. However, there is one more thing you need to take into account.

When I ran a search of the Hebrew text using the two basic forms of the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” that occur in those five verses, four other verses came up. That told me the same Hebrew phrase that you found translated “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” can be found in Nehemiah 9:5 and 1 Chronicles 29:10 as well as in Jeremiah 7:7 and 25:5. So we should probably look at those verses also:

*Then the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah,
Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah, {and} Pethahiah, said,
"Arise, bless the LORD your God forever and ever!
O may Thy glorious name be blessed
And exalted above all blessing and praise!"
(Nehemiah 9:5)*

*So David blessed the LORD in the sight of all the assembly;
and David said, "Blessed art Thou, O LORD God of
Israel our father, forever and ever."
(1 Chronicles 29:10)*

*"For if you truly amend your ways and your deeds, if you
truly practice justice between a man and his neighbor,
{if} you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, or the
widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, nor
walk after other gods to your own ruin, then I will let you*

*dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers
forever and ever."
(Jeremiah 7:5-7)*

*"And the LORD has sent to you all His servants the
prophets again and again, but you have not listened nor
inclined your ear to hear, saying, 'Turn now everyone
from his evil way and from the evil of your deeds, and
dwell on the land which the LORD has given to you and
your forefathers forever and ever.'"
(Jeremiah 25:4-5)*

In those four instances, the same two phrases that were translated “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” in the five verses that you listed have now been translated “forever and ever.” However, if you do a search of that English phrase in the New American Standard Bible, you will find that it occurs twenty-two times. That *means* some other Hebrew phrase (or phrases) has also been translated “forever and ever.” So your statement concerning the number of times the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” occurs in the Old Testament merely serves to illustrate the basic difficulty one faces in trying to do biblical word studies based on a translation.

All existing translations of the Scriptures conceal more of the Truth than they reveal. One of the ways they do that is by inconsistently translating identical—or nearly identical—words and phrases. Therefore, it is completely futile to track the usage of an English word or phrase in any currently existing translation of the Scriptures. Unfortunately, that holds true no matter how literal the translation claims to be.

You can see that the translation “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” didn’t quite fit the context in the last four verses above, so the translator picked an English translation that imbued the phrase with a slightly different sense. The only problem with that is, his translation (“forever and ever”) doesn’t do any better job of capturing the essence of the Hebrew than “from everlasting {even} to everlasting.” You should be able to understand why I say that once you know how the Hebrew word that has been translated “forever” and “everlasting” is used in the Hebrew Scriptures. As I mentioned above, that Hebrew term is *‘olam*. We will take a look at how it is used and what it *means* a bit later. Right now, we have a more urgent matter to attend to.

If you want to understand what the Prophets say about *'olam*, you first have to discard a goofy set of beliefs that Satan has you believing about “forever” and the “everlasting.” But before I explain the why’s and wherefore’s of the lie that you currently believe, let me remind you that Satan is constantly trying to deceive mankind by means of distortion and contradiction, by mixing outright lies with unadulterated Truth. If you need evidence of the technique the Snake uses to manipulate the Truth, just look at how he deceived Eve:

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

(Genesis 3:1–7)

The text tells us Satan began his deception by putting an intentional distortion of the Truth in the form of a question: “Indeed, has God said, ‘You shall not eat from any tree of the garden’?” After Eve jumps to God’s defense with what appears to be an equally distorted understanding of God’s prohibition, Satan continues with an outright contradiction of the Truth: “You surely shall not die!” To make that lie more palatable, he mixes in a bit of the Truth for good measure: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” We know that last statement is true because it is given as the reason that Adam and Eve were booted out of the Garden:

Then the LORD God said, “Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he

stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”—therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.

(Genesis 3:22–23)

In the article “Satan’s Fools Are Satan’s Tools” (see *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994), I gave you a little more up-to-date example of how Satan works to deceive us. From what I said in that article, you should be able to see that the Snake arbitrarily picks some idiot who is willing to be his mouth. He then uses that fool to spout off all sorts of distortion and contradiction of the Truth—in which outright lies are mixed with unadulterated Truth. In the case of the idiotic notion I discussed in that article—that saving faith involves some imbecilic “leap of faith”—Satan chose the philosopher wannabe Søren Kierkegaard to be his mouth. He then used that demented little man to distort the *meaning* of “faith,” to contradict the fundamental Christian belief that saving faith must always rest on evidence, and to assert the bald-faced lie that one must take a “leap of faith” to be saved. Yet through it all he made sure that Kierkegaard valiantly defended the Truth that one is saved by “faith” alone. Consequently, today one can find all sorts of numskulls propagating one of Satan’s greatest lies: That saving faith has no definitive content and has no need of any.

I have already insinuated that Satan has you believing a lie about time and eternity. Now I tell you that lie is as equally outrageous as the “leap of faith” lunacy that I refuted six years ago, but you would undoubtedly be hard-pressed to discern what the lie is—even knowing that it has to do with how you conceive of “everlasting,” “forever,” and “eternity.” Nonetheless, I will tell you frankly that you will never be able to understand the Truth that stands behind the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” until you stop thinking in terms of Satan’s lie and take on the ancient mind-set represented by the Hebrew term *'olam*. That mind-set has little, if anything, in common with your present view of “everlasting” and “forever,” not to mention “eternity.”

Before we look at the ancient mind-set, let’s take a good, honest look at our own modern mind-set and the essential contradiction inherent in what we believe about time and eternity. Then maybe you can dispel the mental fog in which Satan would prefer we remain.

You saw how, in four instances, the New American Standard Bible substituted the phrase “forever and ever” for the Hebrew phrase that had been translated “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” on five other occasions. Although the translation “forever and ever” clearly conceals important information about the biblical text from the reader, an insidious logic stands behind the translator’s decision to make the substitution: Something that lasts forever and ever is everlasting. However, (and this is where Satan’s lie begins to grab hold) we modern folks are not absolutely certain that *the* everlasting—in the sense that “everlasting” is used in the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting”—is forever and ever. You undoubtedly cannot see what I *mean* by that statement because Satan has lied to us in regard to the nature of time and eternity. Consequently, you believe that two completely contradictory notions are both true. You will never be able to understand the Truth that lies hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures until you can see through Satan’s deception, so let me explain it for you.

The term *forever* is used both as a noun (“*the* everlasting is *forever and ever*”) and as an adverb (“something that lasts *forever and ever*”). The term *everlasting* is used both as a noun (“from *everlasting* {even} to *everlasting*”) and as an adjective (“something that lasts forever and ever is *everlasting*”). This is my point: When both terms are used as nouns, there is a Satan-inspired ambivalence in our thinking that tells us *forever* may not *mean* the same thing as *everlasting*. If you think that is not the case, keep right on thinking. The Truth may dawn on you when you least expect it. That is because Satan’s lie has to do with how you conceive of the afterlife and your supposed transition—at death—from an existence in time (“forever and ever”) to one in eternity (*the* “everlasting”).

When *forever* is used as a noun, it refers to a very long time—that is, it *means* “everlasting *time* or *time* without end.” However, when *everlasting* is used as a noun—as it is in the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting”—it is a synonym for eternity. Keep those two dictionary definitions in mind when we *talk about* the “end of time” a bit later. They are the reason why I told you we are ambivalent as to whether *the* everlasting is forever and ever.

In our mind-set, time and eternity are not *always* measured the same way. Now I realize that some of your readers are already saying to themselves, “But

time without end and eternity are the same thing!” That certainly is what we believe—*sometimes*. But that merely serves to demonstrate the incredible hold that Satan has over our thinking. He has us blindly believing two flatly contradictory notions about eternity! And he finds it hilarious when we disclose how dense we are by insisting that two mutually contradictory notions are both true. So go ahead. Give him a good laugh if it makes you feel better. We’ll see who has the last laugh when time finally rolls around to *’olam*.

I have already told the participants in The Next Step program that if you want to track where Satan has lied to us, just look at all the apparent contradictions in the Scriptures. In each and every case, the apparent contradiction is the result of Satan successfully inculcating a lie in the minds of dimwitted folks like you and me. Since a dictionary is the most comprehensive repository of all the lies that Satan has us believing, all you have to do to track down his lies is look for contradictions in the *meanings* assigned to theological terms. Here’s a definition. See if you can identify Satan’s lie:

ETERNITY: 1. *Time* without beginning or end; infinite time. 2. The state or quality of being eternal. 3.a. The *timeless* state following death. b. The afterlife; immortality. 4. A very long or seemingly endless *time*.
(American Heritage Electronic Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992)

Which is it? Is eternity “*time* without beginning or end”? Or is it “the *timeless* state following death”? The question is, Is eternity something that exists *in time*, or is it something that exists *outside of time*? It can’t be both. Yet both of those completely incompatible notions make up your conception of “eternity,” provided you grew up speaking the English language. And that is exactly the way that Satan likes it. However, I can tell you that when you think about eternity, the concept in which eternity is “the *timeless* state following death” takes precedence over any view of eternity as “time without beginning or end.” The dominance of that view becomes fairly obvious if we plug the definition of *eternal* into the dictionary definition of eternity as “the state or quality of being eternal”:

ETERNAL: 1. *Being* without beginning or end; *existing outside of time*. 2. *Continuing without interruption; perpetual*. 3. *Forever true or changeless: eternal truths*.

4. Seemingly *endless*; interminable. 5. Of or relating to spiritual communion with God, especially in *the afterlife*. (American Heritage Electronic Dictionary, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992)

If you still can't see how Satan has lied about the relationship of time to eternity, perhaps the following verse will help. I saw through Satan's lie concerning time and eternity several years ago, but only after the translator's bumble had caused me to stumble:

"But as for you, Daniel, conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time; many will go back and forth, and knowledge will increase."
(Daniel 12:4)

The Hebrew text does not say "end of time." It says "the time of the end" or (perhaps) "an end time." The phrase "end of time" reflects the translator's own mistaken belief that one day time will end and everyone will enter eternity (that is, *the "everlasting"*—the timeless afterlife) where they will continue to exist "forever and ever." To my knowledge, this is the only time the phrase "end of time" occurs in any major version of the Bible. Every other reputable translation has translated the phrase in Daniel 12:4 (and 12:9) as "the time of the end." But Satan likes for folks to think that time will one day end and a timeless eternity will begin, so that's how the error managed to creep in.

Unless I miss my guess, your own conception of eternity has fallen victim to the same lie that the translator of the text above believed. I say that because the modern Christian mind-set generally holds that at the time of the Resurrection our existence in time will end and we will begin an existence in a timeless eternity—an eternity that has no beginning and will have no end. That misconception derives from the goofy notion that the dead go to be with God, the Creator God Who manifestly must exist outside the time (and space) He created.

I needn't point out the obvious to those who understand the *parabolic imagery* the Scriptures use to describe the nature of God. After all, for a word to be thought outside of time and space, it would only require a Person outside of time and space to think it. Beyond that, it seems self-evident to me that the thoughts that you and I think (or better yet, the *beliefs* that we hold) do not necessarily exist in time and space

anyway. If they don't, then the Person that the Word of God is could easily be anywhere and everywhere around us and never once be *in* time or *in* space. But enough of that. We can talk philosophically and scientifically about the fifth dimension some other time.

For the benefit of those who still haven't gotten the point of this discussion, I would like to ask a simple question, If you want to continue to hold the lunatic belief that time ends where eternity begins, would you please tell me how you plan to measure the durative span of "forever and ever" in a timeless eternity? Just thought I'd ask. Maybe it will help one or two to see the ridiculous nature of something that Satan has had us all believing. Not that it has anything to do with *the "everlasting."* The only thing that relates to that is what the ancients thought when they said "*olam*."

The first thing you need to know about how the Israelites, Canaanites, Arameans, and other ancient peoples used the term '*olam* (Canaanite, Aramean, Arabic: '*alam*) is, there does not seem to be any difference in *meaning* between the different forms of the phrase "from everlasting {even} to everlasting" (the one with and the one without the definite article). However, the use of the definite article with the Hebrew word '*olam* does provide an additional bit of insight into the mind-set of the Prophets in regard to how they viewed the *meaning* of the term.

The ancients' use of the definite article with '*olam* tells us they must not have understood '*olam* as an abstract concept in the same way that we think of "eternity." That is, they must not have thought it *meant* "forever" in the sense of a durative span of time or a "timeless state" in the way that we view "everlasting" (that is, eternity). Instead, the Prophets appear to have conceived of '*olam* as a specific point in time that stands in relation to the entire span of time. That impression is bolstered by the way they use the term on other occasions. For example, another Hebrew phrase ("*from now {and} until forever*") has exactly the same grammatical construction as the phrase that is translated "*from everlasting {even} to everlasting*," except it replaces the first '*olam* with a word that most definitely *means* "now" in the sense of "at this point in time." That phrase occurs in the following verses:

*Blessed be the name of the LORD
From this time forth and forever.*
(Psalm 113:2)

*But as for us, we will bless the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
Praise the LORD!
(Psalm 115:18)*

*The LORD will guard your going out and your coming in
From this time forth and forever.
(Psalm 121:8)*

*As the mountains surround Jerusalem,
So the LORD surrounds His people
From this time forth and forever.
(Psalm 125:2)*

*O Israel, hope in the LORD
From this time forth and forever.
(Psalm 131:3)*

*"And as for Me, this is My covenant with them," says the LORD: "My Spirit which is upon you, and My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring," says the LORD, "from now and forever."
(Isaiah 59:21)*

*"I will make the lame a remnant,
And the outcasts a strong nation,
And the LORD will reign over them in Mount Zion
From now on and forever."
(Micah 4:7)*

If those seven verses had been translated literally, every one of the bolded phrases would have been translated "from now {and} until everlasting" after the pattern of "from everlasting {even} to everlasting." However, the translator could not bring himself to translate the phrase "from now {and} until 'olam" literally because to do so he would have had to give up his modern mind-set concerning "forever" and take on an ancient mind-set that is completely foreign to his own. In that ancient mind-set, the Hebrew term 'olam designates a point in time that stands in relation to the entire span of time in exactly the same way that "now" is a point in time that stands in relation to the entire span of time. If that were not so, the simple juxtaposition of the two prepositional phrases ("from now" and "until 'olam") would make no sense at all.

If it isn't obvious to you after looking at the seven verses in which the phrase "from now {and} until 'olam" occurs that the ancients thought of 'olam as somehow directly connected to the durative span of time in which we live, it should be apparent from a survey of the following verses. In each one, the prepositional phrase "from 'olam" has been translated "from ancient times" and "long ago":

*And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, {namely,} Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.'"
(Joshua 24:2)*

*Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt.
(1 Samuel 27:8)*

*"For long ago I broke your yoke
{And} tore off your bonds;
But you said, 'I will not serve!
For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down as a harlot."
(Jeremiah 2:20)*

*"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)*

Only a fool would deny that every one of the activities mentioned in those verses had to begin at some specific point in time. That point in time is clearly referred to as 'olam, thereby indicating that in the ancient mind-set 'olam is directly connected to the durative span of time in which we live. Although it is not clear from a brief survey of those texts what point in time 'olam refers to, it should be obvious that the Flood is the earliest possible time. After all, the Scriptures tell us only eight people got off the ark. All the other people mentioned came along later.

I am undoubtedly getting too meticulous for those folks who want to go on believing that "from 'olam"

means something general like “from ancient times” or “long ago.” Won’t they be surprised when *‘olam* comes around again? But I am getting ahead of myself again.

The Prophets ridicule the Canaanite world view by measuring time not only “from *‘olam*” but also “until *‘olam*” just as the Canaanites did. (You do remember that we began this discussion by looking at the phrase “from everlasting {even} to everlasting” don’t you?) However, the Prophets had a completely different (*parabolic*) perspective concerning when *‘olam* had occurred and what it was. Given those circumstances, all those folks today who have no idea what *‘olam* is (*parabolically* speaking) or why they need to be on the lookout for it will certainly be surprised—to say the least—when it gets here. For whatever it’s worth to you, God called me to make sure that you aren’t.

The Prophets indicate the future *‘olam* is, like every *‘olam* in the past, a specific point in time. You can see that in the following passages, where the phrase “until *‘olam*” has been translated “forever”:

And the LORD said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, “Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever.”

(Genesis 13:14–15)

“And you shall observe this event as an ordinance for you and your children forever.”

(Exodus 12:24)

“Be careful to listen to all these words which I command you, in order that it may be well with you and your sons after you forever, for you will be doing what is good and right in the sight of the LORD your God.”

(Deuteronomy 12:28)

“So Moses swore on that day, saying, ‘Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance to you and to your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God fully.’”

(Joshua 14:9)

But they said, “We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, ‘You shall not drink wine, you or your sons, forever.’”

(Jeremiah 35:6)

There are lots of other verses in the Scriptures where the phrase “until *‘olam*” occurs. I just picked a few where it is rather obvious that the phrase refers to a future point *in time* rather than referring to some vague—and ridiculously goofy—notion in which time ends and the idiotic “forever” of a timeless eternity *outside of time* begins.

The question you may already be asking is, “If the Hebrew term *‘olam* (which is normally translated ‘forever,’ ‘everlasting,’ ‘eternal,’ or ‘eternity’) does not actually *mean* ‘forever’ or even ‘everlasting’—that is, if it does not carry the sense of an unending duration of time—but refers instead to a specific point in time, to what point in time does it refer?” In response, I would remind you that to be viable, any answer to that question must take into account the fact that *‘olam* points both to a point in past time (“from *‘olam*”) as well as to a point in future time (“until *‘olam*”).

Anyone who wants to claim that *‘olam* doesn’t refer to the past as well as the future will have to do some rather fancy semantic footwork to explain not only the *meaning* of the phrases “from *‘olam*” and “until *‘olam*” but also the *meaning* of the phrase “from *‘olam* {even} to *‘olam*” without positing a generally vague and completely arbitrary understanding of those phrases. They will also have to explain why the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes plainly tells us there has already been more than one *‘olam*:

*Is there anything of which one might say,
“See this, it is new”?*

Already it has existed for ages

Which were before us.

(Ecclesiastes 1:10)

In that verse, the translator translated the plural form of *‘olam* as “ages” because he had no idea what the Prophet had in mind when he used the term. The text clearly says there had already been at least two of those little buggers before the Prophet penned those words. Of course, one could always argue that the fellow who wrote that verse was merely being poetic, or maybe he didn’t know what *‘olam* meant, or maybe But you get the idea. If someone has a mind to, he can flippantly ignore the fact that the plural form of the noun *‘olam* occurs twelve times in the Hebrew Scriptures. And he can probably even explain away the fact that the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes—speaking *parabolically* of

course—plainly says there has already been more than one of them. But then some folks will do anything to avoid the Truth.

Interestingly enough, the answer to the question which I took the liberty of posing for you is simple and straightforward. It comes from the world view espoused by the Greek Stoic philosophers. As I told you in *The Way, The Truth, The Life* seminar, Stoic philosophy originated with Phoenician philosophers who inherited the mind-set of the biblical Canaanites. Therefore, we can learn a lot about the Canaanite beliefs that the Prophets of Israel ridicule in their writings just by studying Stoic philosophy.

A fundamental Stoic—Canaanite—belief held that the present universe was created by the divine *logos*—that is, by the all-powerful *word* of a creator god. Moreover, the Stoics believed that divine word (*logos*) is manifested in every aspect of this Creation but can be found in its purest form only in rational intelligence. According to their view, the divine *logos* is the sum total of all the qualities of all the elements of the universe. However, it is specifically a “seed” that resides in all those elements. That “seed” holds the power to give birth to the four fundamental elements of fire, air, earth, and water. Therefore, when this current Creation is destroyed by fire, the indestructable “seed” of the word of the creator god will reproduce a new Creation identical to this one. If you have done any reading at all in the New Testament, you are most likely already aware of how much some of those things sound like what the Apostle Peter wrote in this passage:

This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior {spoken} by your apostles. Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with {their} mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For {ever} since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.” For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God {the} heavens existed long ago and {the} earth was formed out of water and by water, through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and

destruction of ungodly men. But do not let this one {fact} escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

(2 Peter 3:1–13)

I could cite other passages where the Christian doctrine of creation by the Word of God is mentioned (cf. Heb. 11:3), but that is beside the point. The only reason I pointed out what Peter wrote is because he plainly tells us—speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*—that this Creation owes its existence to the Word of God and that it is destined to endure a fiery conflagration of some sort before a new Heaven and a new Earth emerge.

Peter got his information from what the Prophets wrote in ridicule of Canaanite beliefs concerning how the “seed” of the word of their creator god would reproduce this same Creation after it caught fire and burned. But I’m getting way ahead of myself. I’ll have more to say about what Peter and the Prophets wrote a bit later. Right now, we need to take a look at some of the things that Jesus and the other Apostles said about “the burning.” On at least one occasion, Jesus indicates that He is the agent of God’s burning wrath:

“I have come to cast fire upon the earth; and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!”
(Luke 12:49–50)

The Apostle Paul agrees that Jesus Christ will, at His Second Coming, bring down fire to consume Satan’s unfortunate dupes—those whom Peter calls “ungodly men”:

For after all it is {only} just for God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and {to give} relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

(2 Thessalonians 1:6–8)

The author of the Book of Hebrews alludes to the same fire that Peter and Paul mention. However, he describes it as a sudden flash that results from God's burning anger:

For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.

(Hebrews 10:26–27)

A bit later, the same author goes on to identify God Himself as the source of that consuming fire:

Therefore, since we receive a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us show gratitude, by which we may offer to God an acceptable service with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire.

(Hebrews 12:28–29)

On the basis of those few passages, we can be certain the authors of the New Testament would have us understand that a day is rapidly approaching when stubbornly ignorant creatures who refuse to bend, or bow, will suddenly burn in the fire of God's burning anger. Peter calls that day "the day of the Lord" and Paul indicates that it is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Knowing that, we can now take a look at how the Prophets (or at least a couple of them) ridicule the Canaanite/Phoenician/Stoic belief that this Creation periodically undergoes a renewal by fire.

While ignorant Canaanites fervently believed in a cyclical renewal of Creation that was both literal and physical, the best the Prophets were willing to grant was that *The Teaching of Moses* does, indeed, describe a reality that is just LIKE what the Canaanites believed. That is, the Prophets use the mental imagery inherent in the Canaanites' goofy beliefs concerning the renewal

of Creation to speak in parables that describe what actually does happen when the fire that God is engulfing this Creation. The Prophet Zephaniah gives us a fairly complete description of the fire that will erupt on the Day of the Lord:

"I will completely remove all {things} From the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

"I will remove man and beast;

I will remove the birds of the sky

And the fish of the sea,

And the ruins along with the wicked;

And I will cut off man from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

"So I will stretch out My hand against Judah

And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place,

{And} the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.

And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven,

And those who bow down {and} swear to the LORD and {yet} swear by Milcom,

And those who have turned back from following the LORD,

And those who have not sought the LORD or inquired of Him."

Be silent before the Lord GOD!

For the day of the LORD is near,

For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,

He has consecrated His guests.

"Then it will come about on the day of the LORD's sacrifice,

That I will punish the princes, the king's sons,

And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.

And I will punish on that day all

who leap on the {temple} threshold,

Who fill the house of their lord with violence and deceit.

And on that day," declares the LORD,

"There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,

A wail from the Second Quarter,

And a loud crash from the hills.

Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar,

For all the people of Canaan will be silenced;

All who weigh out silver will be cut off.

And it will come about at that time

That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,

And I will punish the men

Who are stagnant in spirit,
 Who say in their hearts,
 ‘The LORD will not do good or evil!’
 Moreover, their wealth will become plunder,
 And their houses desolate;
 Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit {them},
 And plant vineyards but not drink their wine.”
**Near is the great day of the LORD,
 Near and coming very quickly;
 Listen, the day of the LORD!**
 In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
 A day of wrath is that day,
 A day of trouble and distress,
 A day of destruction and desolation,
 A day of darkness and gloom,
 A day of clouds and thick darkness,
 A day of trumpet and battle cry,
 Against the fortified cities
 And the high corner towers.
 And I will bring distress on men,
 So that they will walk like the blind,
 Because they have sinned against the LORD;
 And their blood will be poured out like dust,
 And their flesh like dung.
 Neither their silver nor their gold
 Will be able to deliver them
**On the day of the LORD’s wrath;
 And all the earth will be devoured
 In the fire of His jealousy,
 For He will make a complete end,
 Indeed a terrifying one,
 Of all the inhabitants of the earth.**
 (Zephaniah 1:2–18)

That’s pretty scary stuff—provided you have a good, healthy fear of the Lord. If you don’t, that’s your problem. Maybe you should consider having a brain transplant. Enough sarcasm. At least now we know that Peter and Zephaniah are *talking about* the same point in time. Of course, there will always be that stray moron who assumes it is his God-given task to point out all the apparent contradictions in the Scriptures. He fails to comprehend that those things are nothing more than a mirage his father the Devil uses to play with his minuscule mind. I am referring to the fact that, according to what Peter said on the Day of Pentecost, the “day of the Lord” has either already come or else that “day” covers a rather long period of time:

But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: “Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give heed to my words. **For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is {only} the third hour of the day; but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:** ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says, ‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT UPON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; EVEN UPON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE, AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BENEATH, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. THE SUN SHALL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS, AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. AND IT SHALL BE, THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED.’”
 (Acts 2:14–21)

The “day of the Lord” that Peter has in mind is “the day” on which the Body of Jesus Christ will be glorified. And when he hears that, the proverbial fool will object that John implies Jesus Christ was glorified when He was resurrected:

These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him.
 (John 12:16)

I agree with John. Jesus Christ was glorified—in a *parabolic pantomime*—on Resurrection Morning. But the objection I posed does not even address the real issue. The “Glory” of God is a *parabolic image*. Therefore, my use of the term *glorified* indicates I was speaking *parabolically* concerning a *literal* reality. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ was indeed a *literal* event. However, I said, “the day on which the *Body of Jesus Christ will be glorified.*” I did not say, “the day on which *Jesus Christ will be glorified.*” While that may seem like a rather minor

semantic distinction, there is a big difference in *meaning* between those two statements.

So tell me, When will the Body of Jesus Christ be glorified? The “Body of Jesus Christ” is a *parabolic image*, so that should have told you I am speaking *parabolically* concerning a *literal* reality. Since a *parabolic* question can only be understood—and accurately answered—*parabolically*, I offer you the last part of the *parabolic* explanation the Apostle Paul gave of those things:

*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with {Him} in order that we may also be glorified with {Him.} For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for {our} adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.
(Romans 8:16–23)*

That wasn’t fair, was it? Paul is obviously *talking about* the Day of the Lord, that is, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. But you have no way of knowing why he mixed in all that “glory this” and “glory that” stuff with the *parabolic image* in which this Creation is a woman in labor if you don’t know what the “Glory” of the Lord is and what it *means* to be created in the image and likeness of God. The birth of the Children of God in the image and likeness of God is, after all, what Paul is describing—*parabolically*.

The “Glory” of God is “*The Light*” of the fire that God is. So to be “glorified” is—*parabolically* speaking—to be changed into the image and likeness of the same *parabolic* fire that God is. And to think that most folks today stupidly believe that every last man, woman, and child on the face of the Earth has already been created in the image and likeness of God. Too bad. Satan’s lie has locked them out again.

My only point in showing you what Peter, Paul, and John said about the Day of the Lord is to provide an opportunity for you to tie all of the *parabolic imagery* together in your mind. The cyclical renewal of Creation by the “seed” of the Word of God is what the Prophets had in mind when they used the Hebrew term ‘*olam*. According to the ignorant view espoused by the Canaanites, there has already been a long series of renewals by that “seed.” The Prophets do not deny that. Instead, they use the term ‘*olam* to ridicule those beliefs by pointing to all the times when God has *parabolically* renewed Creation with the fiery “seed” of His Word. One of the most obvious *parabolic pantomimes* in which God depicted that renewal is the Flood. That is why Jeremiah surreptitiously points back to that point in time when he uses ‘*olam* in these passages:

*And Joshua said to all the people, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, {namely,} Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods.’”
(Joshua 24:2)*

*Now David and his men went up and raided the Geshurites and the Girzites and the Amalekites; for they were the inhabitants of the land from ancient times, as you come to Shur even as far as the land of Egypt.
(1 Samuel 27:8)*

Another *parabolic pantomime* in which God *parabolically* renewed Creation with His “seed” is the Exodus of the sons of Israel from Egypt. Consequently, the Prophet also uses ‘*olam* to point to the *parabolic pantomime* of the Passover Parable in the following passages. [Editor: See *The Passover Parable* on the Order Form]:

*“For long ago I broke your yoke
{And} tore off your bonds;
But you said, ‘I will not serve!’
For on every high hill
And under every green tree
You have lain down as a harlot.”
(Jeremiah 2:20)*

*“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)*

The Prophets frequently use the term *'olam* while sarcastically explaining how both the Resurrection and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ are just LIKE what the ignorant people of their generation believed about the cyclical renewal of Creation by the "seed" of the word of a creator god. For example, the Prophet Isaiah uses the *parabolic imagery* of the Passover Parable in Isaiah 63:7–14 to explain the link that exists between the Resurrection of the Body of Christ and the Hebrew idiom "make a name." However, in verses 9 and 11 he rather pointedly refers to the time of Israel's wandering in the wilderness as "all the days of *'olam*":

*I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the LORD,
the praises of the LORD,
According to all that the LORD has granted us,
And the great goodness toward the house of Israel,
Which He has granted them according to His compassion,
And according to the multitude of His lovingkindnesses.
For He said, "Surely, they are My people,
Sons who will not deal falsely."
So He became their Savior.
In all their affliction He was afflicted,
And the angel of His presence saved them;
In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them;
And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.
But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit;
Therefore, He turned Himself to become their enemy,
He fought against them.
Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses.
Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the
shepherds of His flock?
Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them,
Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses,
Who divided the waters before them
to make for Himself an everlasting name,
Who led them through the depths?
Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble;
As the cattle which go down into the valley,
The Spirit of the LORD gave them rest.
So didst Thou lead Thy people,
To make for Thyself a glorious name.
(Isaiah 63:7–14)*

In case you happened to be wondering (or *parabolically wandering* in the wilderness like the sons of Israel), the Hebrew term *'olam* specifically refers to the "burning" of all things material so that only the "seed"

of the Word of God remains. It is what Peter had in mind when he wrote this:

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your
souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one
another from the heart, for you have been born again not
of seed which is perishable but imperishable, {that is,}
through the living and abiding word of God. For,
"ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS,
AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS.
THE GRASS WITHERS,
AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF,
BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD ABIDES FOREVER."
And this is the word which was preached to you.
(1 Peter 1:22–25)*

When he wrote that, Peter was visualizing the same *parabolic imagery* that Moses envisioned when he *parabolically* pointed to the *'olam* that is yet to come. Unfortunately—for those who are destined to be burned—Moses *parabolically* depicts the burning of this Creation in a *parabolic pantomime* that the unrighteous will not be able to understand. So perhaps I should explain—for the benefit of those who have ears to hear—where Moses has hidden the Truth.

The Hebrew word *'olam* is a verbal noun form (*'olah*) of the verb *'alah*. An old accusative ending (*am*) has been suffixed to that verbal noun to give it the sense of a repetitive or cyclical activity. (The noun *'olah* drops the final *ah* when it combines with the *am* suffix, thus producing *'olam*. That is normal Hebrew morphology.) To give you an example of how the accusative suffix *am* was used, it is sometimes attached to the Hebrew noun for "day" (*yom*) to give it the sense of "daily" (*yomam*). However, that is beside the point.

The verb *'alah* means "to go up" or "ascend." So the verbal noun *'olah* means something like "that which goes up." In the Pentateuch, the verbal noun *'olah* is normally translated as "burnt offering" or "whole offering." Moses repeatedly uses *'olah* (without the *am* suffix) in describing a *parabolic pantomime* in which the acrid smoke of a burning sacrifice ascends to Heaven as a sweet aroma in the nostrils of God. That *parabolic pantomime* depicts the burning of "the man" in the fire of God's wrath.

If you were unaware that the whole of mankind ("the man") will be consumed as a burnt offering on the Day of the Lord, you obviously were not paying

attention to how Zephaniah *parabolically* describes that Great Day:

*Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is near,
For the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
He has consecrated His guests.
"Then it will come about on the day of the LORD's sacrifice,
That I will punish the princes, the king's sons,
And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments."
(Zephaniah 1:7–8)*

The sacrifice Zephaniah mentions in that passage is a *zebach*. That sacrifice was a "peace offering," which was eaten as a communal meal by the family who offered it (hint: LIKE the Passover sacrifice). A *zebach* sacrifice ("peace offering") was entirely different than an '*olah* sacrifice ("burnt offering") in that no part of an '*olah* could be eaten—even by the priest who offered it on the altar. However, anybody who is familiar with what Moses wrote knows that every *zebach* presupposes the offering of an '*olah*. That is, the altar of the Lord had to be consecrated every day by an '*olah* ("burnt offering") before any other sacrifice—including a *zebach*—could be offered:

*"Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two one year old lambs each day, continuously. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight; and there {shall be} one-tenth {of an ephah} of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of beaten oil, and one-fourth of a hin of wine for a libation with one lamb. And the other lamb you shall offer at twilight, and shall offer with it the same grain offering as the morning and the same libation, for a soothing aroma, an offering by fire to the LORD. It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, where I will meet with you, to speak to you there. And I will meet there with the sons of Israel, and it shall be consecrated by My glory. And I will consecrate the tent of meeting and the altar; I will also consecrate Aaron and his sons to minister as priests to Me. And I will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them; I am the LORD their God."
(Exodus 29:38–46)*

Now, if the Lord required a burnt offering ('*olah*) every morning to consecrate the altar in *parabolic pantomime*, what makes you think the Day of the Lord is any different? That "day" is, after all, the reality depicted by the *parabolic pantomimes* of the sacrificial cult.

Editor: In the last newsletter you said there are numerous Hebrew idioms that are similar in meaning to the English idiom, "your goose is cooked," which you used to mock those who are ignorant of the Truth but don't know it. Since you said you would explain some of these Hebrew idioms if you were reminded of them, I'm reminding you now. What are some of the Hebrew idioms you had in mind and what do they mean? Did the Prophets use these idioms to mock the ignorant people of their own day?

Elijah: To be honest, I was just being sarcastic when I said, "Remind me to explain them to you sometime." I have maybe a dozen Hebrew idioms that I have done preliminary research on but have never mentioned in any of the things I have written. I have so little free time that I have not been able to do the detailed investigation I need to do to be sure that I understand what those idioms *mean*.

I did not *mean* to imply by what I said in the last issue of *The Voice of Elijah*® that there are Hebrew idioms which are similar in *meaning* to the English idiom "your goose is cooked." My point was, there are lots of Hebrew idioms that, just like the idiom "your goose is cooked," have a *meaning* which is not readily apparent to someone not well-versed in the Hebrew language. Here is what I said:

If you don't know where, when, how, and why Isaiah, Jeremiah, and all those fellows laid out the plan of God for all the Ages, you might want to reconsider the precarious perch on which you have chosen to roost. Otherwise, you could wake up to find your goose has already been cooked. (That's an English idiom. The Hebrew language has lots of idioms like that one. Remind me to explain them to you sometime.)

It would be impossible in one issue of *The Voice of Elijah*® for me to explain the *meaning* of even a small fraction of the Hebrew idioms that the Prophets used to mock the people of their own generation. If I were to explain the *significance* of all those idioms, my

explanation would fill several books. I intend to include some of that information in the three remaining volumes of The Resurrection Theology Series, provided I ever find the time to write them.

I have, until recently, been having difficulty just keeping up with my obligation to write articles for *The Voice of Elijah*® and *The Voice of Elijah*® Update, not to mention producing videotapes for The Next Step program. However, as my health has improved over the past six months, I have been able to devote more time to working on other things. I am currently trying to catch up in all the areas where I have fallen behind. Only the Lord knows whether I will be able to accomplish that, much less do all the research and writing necessary to complete the books I have promised.

In *Not All Israel Is Israel*, I explained the meaning and significance of the Hebrew idiom “cut off from.” In *The Mystery of Scripture, Volume 1*, I touched on the meaning of the two idioms “walk in *The Way*” and “carry *The Name*.” In past issues of *The Voice of Elijah*® and *The Voice of Elijah*® Update, as well as in *The Isaiah Seminar*, I have explained the meaning of the three idioms “make a name,” “build a house,” and “raise up a seed.” I have probably also mentioned various other Hebrew idioms in addition to those, but I have no idea where or when.

Although the meaning of each of those idioms may be interesting in and of itself, that information has no relevance whatsoever if one does not understand the significance of the idiom. That is, it does not help to know what Moses and the other Prophets of Israel said if one does not know why they said it. Unfortunately, it is much easier to pin down the meaning of an idiom than it is to figure out its significance. Yet without an understanding of the significance of an idiom, it is sometimes not possible to fully understand its meaning. Several of the idioms I currently have under study are proving to be especially difficult to understand because I don’t fully grasp the parabolic imagery that stands behind them. For example, the following passage contains an idiom that I have looked at time and time again, yet I have never been able to understand what it means:

For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, “We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!”
(Isaiah 4:1)

The Hebrew idiom that has been translated “let us be called by your name” does not literally say that. It says, “let your name be called over us.” But what does it mean for a name to be called over someone or something? I am not absolutely certain. I know what the women are saying. They are telling the man that they will do whatever he demands of them so that they can become members of his “house” and live on in his “name.”

According to the mind-set of that day the women are expressing a willingness to do whatever is necessary for them to attain resurrection. However, I know that only because I understand the ancient mind-set that stands behind the idioms “build a house” and “make a name.” Yet even knowing that, I can’t fully grasp the meaning of the idiom “call a name over.” Part of the difficulty I am having stems from not understanding what the women are referring to in the phrase that has been translated “take away our reproach.” What is their “reproach”? I don’t know yet because I haven’t had time to do the necessary research. I can see that the significance of the idiom has to do with the parabolic image in which Israel is a childless widow and God is her Redeemer. But until I understand the different contexts in which the idiom occurs, I can only guess at the meaning of these verses:

*We have become {like} those over whom
Thou hast never ruled,
{Like} those who were not called by Thy name.*
(Isaiah 63:19)

*Thy words were found and I ate them,
And Thy words became for me a joy
and the delight of my heart;
For I have been called by Thy name,
O LORD God of hosts.*
(Jeremiah 15:16)

A second idiom which is most likely related to that idiom is the one found in this verse:

“You shall make an altar of earth for Me, and you shall sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen; in every place where I cause My name to be remembered, I will come to you and bless you.”
(Exodus 20:24)

That verse doesn't say "in *every* place where I cause My name to be remembered." It says, "in the *whole* place in which I cause My name to be remembered." But that is beside the point. What does God mean when He says "I cause My name to be remembered"? What "name" does He have in mind? And how will He cause that "name" to be remembered? Before you answer, you should first take into account the fact that a "name" is sometimes the surviving son of a deceased person and that one of the functions of a surviving son is to "cause the name" of his deceased father "to be remembered":

Now Absalom in his lifetime had taken and set up for himself a pillar which is in the King's Valley, for he said, "I have no son to preserve my name." So he named the pillar after his own name, and it is called Absalom's monument to this day.
(2 Samuel 18:18)

You wouldn't know it from that translation, but when Absalom said, "to preserve my name," he used exactly the same idiom—"to cause my name to be remembered"—that God used in Exodus 20:24. So now the mystery deepens. What did these ancient people consider to be the "name" of a god? If we knew that, perhaps then we could understand what the following passage has to say about the "name" of pagan gods:

"You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall tear down their altars and smash their {sacred} pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut down the engraved images of their gods, and you shall obliterate their name from that place."
(Deuteronomy 12:2-3)

When most folks read "you shall obliterate their name," they assume it means nothing more than "get rid of every trace of them" or some such vague notion. But I can't help wondering why such people would have so little concern for the Truth that they don't notice Moses said exactly the same thing in this verse:

"And the LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to put an end to them quickly, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for

you. But the LORD your God shall deliver them before you, and will throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed. And He will deliver their kings into your hand so that you shall make their name perish from under heaven; no man will be able to stand before you until you have destroyed them."

(Deuteronomy 7:22-24)

Why do you suppose the translator translated the Hebrew idiom "you shall make their name perish" in verse 24 when he has translated it "you shall obliterate their name" in Deuteronomy 12:3? Could it be that he did not know what the "name" of the gods referred to in Deuteronomy 12:3 but had fairly good reason to believe that Moses is talking about killing the offspring of kings in this case? I would assume so. He should have been aware that Isaiah equates "The Name" of a person with his offspring and posterity in this verse:

"And I will rise up against them," declares the LORD of hosts, "and will cut off from Babylon name and survivors, offspring and posterity," declares the LORD.
(Isaiah 14:22)

Now that certainly does create quite a quandary, doesn't it? We don't know for sure, but Moses may be talking about killing people when he says this:

"You shall cut down the engraved images of their gods, and you shall obliterate their name from that place."
(Deuteronomy 12:3b)

Does Moses have in mind the extermination of people when he uses the idiom "obliterate their name" in that verse? If he does, is he referring to people who were somehow considered to be the "name" of pagan gods just as the offspring of kings were regarded as their "name"? And if that is the case, how did one become part of the "name" of a god? Then I begin to wonder what the Apostles might have meant if they were speaking *parabolically* when they talk about being "baptized into The Name" of Jesus Christ. Those are just some of the things that I mull over when I stop to consider what God might have meant if He were speaking *parabolically* when He said "in the whole place in which I cause My name to be remembered." I'm not saying that He was speaking *parabolically*, you understand. But what did He mean if He wasn't? ■