



THE VOICE of ELIJAH

Restoring the hearts of the fathers to the children

A Greek Defines Repentance

“Lord, who hath believed our report?” Isaiah says. For “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” saith the apostle. “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe on Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of those that publish glad tidings of good things!” You see how he brings faith by hearing, and the preaching of the apostles, up to the word of the Lord, and to the Son of God. We do not yet understand the word of the Lord to be demonstration.

As, then, playing at ball not only depends on one throwing the ball skilfully, but it requires besides one to catch it dexterously, that the game may be gone through according to the rules for ball; so also is it the case that teaching is reliable when faith on the part of those who hear, being, so to speak, a sort of natural art, contributes to the process of learning. So also the earth co-operates, through its productive power, being fit for the sowing of the seed. For there is no good of the very best instruction without the exercise of the receptive faculty on the part of the learner, not even of prophecy, when there is the absence of docility on the part of those who hear. For dry twigs, being ready to receive the power of fire, are kindled with great ease; and the far-famed stone attracts steel through affinity, as the amber teardrop draws to itself twigs, and the lump sets chaff in motion. And the substances attracted obey them, influenced by a subtle spirit, not as a cause, but as a concurring cause.

There being then a twofold species of vice—that characterized by craft and stealth, and that which leads and drives with violence—the divine Word cries, calling all together; knowing perfectly well those that will not obey; notwithstanding then since to obey or not is in our own power, provided we have not the excuse of ignorance to adduce. He makes a just call, and

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demands of each according to his strength. For some are able as well as willing, having reached this point through practice and being purified; while others, if they are not yet able, already have the will.

Now to will is the act of the soul, but to do is not without the body. Nor are actions estimated by their issue alone; but they are judged also according to the element of free choice in each, —if he chose easily, if he repented of his sins, if he reflected on his failures and repented (μετέγνω), which is (μετὰ ταῦτα ἔγνω) “afterwards knew.” For repentance is a tardy knowledge, and primitive innocence is knowledge. Repentance, then, is an effect of faith. For unless a man believe that to which he was addicted to be sin, he will not abandon it; and if he do not believe punishment to be impending over the transgressor, and salvation to be the portion of him who lives according to the commandments, he will not reform.

Hope, too, is based on faith. Accordingly the followers of Basilides define faith to be, the assent of the soul to any of those things, that do not affect the senses through not being present. And hope is the expectation of the possession of good. Necessarily, then, is expectation founded on faith. Now he is faithful who keeps inviolably what is entrusted to him; and we are entrusted with the utterances respecting God and the divine words, the commands along with the execution of the injunctions. This is the faithful servant, who is praised by the Lord. And when it is said, “God is faithful,” it is intimated that He is worthy to be believed when declaring aught. Now His Word declares; and “God” Himself is “faithful.”

Clement of Alexandria, “The Stromata,” Book ii, Chap. vi, in Roberts and Donaldson (Eds.), *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (1885), Vol. 2, p. 353.

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A Note From the Editor

As many of you know, we regularly send out mailers in an attempt to solicit new subscribers to *The Voice of Elijah*®. Although we are specifically looking for born-again Believers who have a desire to understand the Truth of God's Word, we don't find many such individuals. What we do find are lots of Pretenders who feign interest in the Truth while having no desire to actually hear the Truth. How do I know this? Partly because the response rate to our mailers is usually quite low, and partly because we always hear from a small percentage of Pretenders every time a new batch of mailers go out. And where there is a small vocal minority you can be certain there is a much larger silent majority.

Although the comments and questions we receive from Pretenders are generally not hostile, there is usually a sense of smugness and belligerence behind their words. Out of courtesy we always respond to the questions we receive, if we are given an address to respond to. However, we never debate Pretenders or engage them in a war of theological concepts, even though it's obvious some of them are itching for a fight. Our ministry does not exist for the purpose of trying to convince those who can't be convinced (no matter how much biblical evidence we present) that what we teach is true. Our objective is to find born-again Believers who have an honest desire to understand God's Word and to let them know that the Truth is something other than what they have been taught.

The fact that lots of folks take umbrage with our beliefs and let us know about it is to be expected. We have no problem with that because they have every right to voice their opposition. By the same token, we have every right to ignore those who want to engage us in fruitless debate. Unfortunately for them, the Truth is not debatable. Either you know the Truth and believe it, or you don't. Those who disagree with our beliefs are free to believe whatever they want, and if what they believe proves to be true, God will undoubtedly reward them accordingly. However, if what they believe proves to be nothing more than lies, they will undoubtedly go to Hell—along with everyone else who has chosen to believe Satan's lies. And that would include us, if what we teach is a lie.

The point is, the Truth of God's Word is a serious matter and we take it very seriously here at *The Voice of Elijah*®, as should you. After all, salvation is not attained by faith (belief) in lies; it is attained by faith (belief) in the Truth. Most "Christians" overlook this obvious fact because they are enamored with the notion that "faith in Jesus Christ" is all one needs to be saved. While that statement is true, it must be understood that Jesus Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), that is, the Word of God (John 1:1-14) that indwells Believers as the Spirit of Truth (John 6:63). That's a parabolic statement that informs True Believers that "faith in Jesus Christ" requires belief in the Truth of God's Word—The Apostolic Teaching.

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Unlike the half-truth taught in the Church today, we do not teach that salvation is attained by merely believing in the redemptive work that Jesus Christ accomplished on behalf of sinful man during His earthly ministry. We teach that salvation also requires an ongoing belief (faith) in the same body of knowledge—the Word of God/The Teaching/the Truth—that Jesus Christ believed. The Church today focuses primarily on the external work of Jesus Christ—what He accomplished in the flesh—and fails to give serious consideration to the importance of His internal mind-set—what He believed. Yet during His earthly ministry Jesus always emphasized the importance of what one thinks over what one does because He knew that beliefs dictate actions. Here is a parabolic statement that reflects Christ's attitude toward those who think God is only interested in outward appearances:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”
(Matthew 23:25–28)

If you haven't figured it out yet, God is extremely interested in what you think and believe. If your thoughts are not what they should be, God knows. The only way to “cleanse” your mind (your inner person) is to rid yourself of the lies you believe and to fill your mind with the Truth of God's Word—the same Word that Jesus Christ believed and is (John 14:6). That's what true “faith in Jesus Christ” is all about. So don't buy into the nebulous theories you hear expounded in the Church today. If you don't have the Truth in you, you don't have Christ in you because Jesus Christ is the Truth.

We try to avoid phrases like “faith in Jesus Christ” when talking about salvation because we want Believers to get away from the clichéd thinking that is prevalent in the Church today and start thinking a new way—“The Way” the Early Church once thought. Of course, Pretenders are thrown for a loop when we do that because clichés are all they know. For instance, we recently heard from an individual who took exception with our stated belief that “salvation is attained solely through faith in the Truth of the Scriptures.” (See “Our Beliefs” at www.voiceofelijah.org). His argument was that salvation is attained solely through “faith in Jesus Christ.” While his statement is accurate, it is only accurate if one understands the concept of “faith in Jesus Christ” in exactly the same way the Early (Apostolic) Church did. Unfortunately, the Church today doesn't.

The fact is, if you believe the Truth of the Scriptures, which Jesus said were written about Him (Luke 24:44; John 5:46), you will have the necessary “faith in Jesus Christ” to be saved. Pretenders may not like it and they certainly won't understand it, but all we have done is state the Truth in a slightly different manner in order to promote thinking among True Believers. So if you are new to *The Voice of Elijah*®, I suggest you not react negatively to what we say merely because it is different from what you are used to hearing. Give what we say some serious thought and you just might find it makes sense.

Last Chance for the Seminar

We still have a few openings available for the *Prophecy and the Parables of Jesus Seminar* that will be held in Dallas on October 12–13. If you would like to attend this seminar, please let us know as soon as possible so that we can make necessary arrangements. For seminar details see “A Note From the Editor,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 2002. If you don't have that issue, write or call (our mailing address and phone number are on the back cover of this issue) or send us an email via our website, and we will get information out to you right away.

Allen Fries

It Is Impossible to Renew Them Again to Repentance

In his Gospel, Matthew tells us John the Baptist preached a fairly simple and straightforward message when he came heralding the First Advent of Christ:

*Now in those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
(Matthew 3:1–2)*

Matthew goes on to say that Jesus preached that same message when He took up the baton (an idiom) from John:

*From that time Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."
(Matthew 4:17)*

Matthew also records the occasion on which Jesus sent out the twelve disciples to preach that same message:

*These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them, saying, "Do not go in {the} way of {the} Gentiles, and do not enter {any} city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand."
(Matthew 10:5–7)*

Since the word *repent* is not a part of what Jesus said, it might seem that Matthew is saying the disciples did not preach exactly the same message that John the Baptist and Jesus preached, but that is not so. Mark confirms in his account of those events that repentance was indeed a part of what they preached:

*And they went out and preached that {men} should repent.
(Mark 6:12)*

It seems fairly clear that Jesus may have left off the "repent" part of the message because He knew the disciples would understand, on the basis of what He had already told them, that it was included. So that is not a problem. But Matthew's description of what these men preached is also slightly different than what one finds in Mark and Luke. Neither of those two provides a verbatim account of John the Baptist saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." However, both of them do describe his activity exactly the same way:

*John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**. And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.
(Mark 1:4–5)*

*And he came into all the district around the Jordan, **preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins**.
(Luke 3:3)*

Although Matthew does not explicitly say John was "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," he certainly implies that confession of sins to obtain forgiveness was the goal he sought:

*Then Jerusalem was going out to him, and all Judea, and all the district around the Jordan; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, **as they confessed***

their sins.

(Matthew 3:5–6)

After everything else is taken into account, there is only one major difference between Matthew's account of these events and the accounts in Mark and Luke. That difference has to do with how they portray the role of the Gospel. Mark succinctly sums it all up when he tells us the Gospel is the message that Jesus preached. In so doing, he indicates that those who responded to that message not only had to "repent," they also had to "believe in the gospel":

*And after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, **preaching the gospel of God**, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent and believe in the gospel.**"*

(Mark 1:14–15)

In the following passage, Luke explicitly confirms what Mark only implies in that passage. That is, he attests to the fact that the Gospel is at least a part of the message that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the twelve disciples *delivered* to the Jews:

*Now while the people were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John, as to whether he might be the Christ, John answered and said to them all, "As for me, I baptize you with water; but One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to untie the thong of His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. And His winnowing fork is in His hand to thoroughly clear His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." So **with many other exhortations also he preached the gospel to the people.***

(Luke 3:15–18)

To Whom Does the Gospel Pertain?

The Truth is, the Gospel was the message that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the twelve disciples *delivered* to "the people." But Matthew and Luke *make* a fairly clear *distinction* between the Gospel which Jesus "proclaimed," or "preached," to everyone and the rest of *The Teaching* which He "taught" only to the Jews. In two of the instances where Matthew mentions both activities, he says Jesus was "proclaiming" ("preaching") the Gospel

openly to everyone and "teaching" only in the synagogues:

*And {Jesus} was going about in all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.*

(Matthew 4:23)

*And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, **teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom**, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.*

(Matthew 9:35)

It is important to *make* a clear *distinction* between the Gospel and *The Teaching* for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the separation one needs to keep between the office of the Evangelist, who is charged with "preaching" the Gospel to those outside the Church, and that of the Teacher, who "teaches" *The Teaching* to those inside. (See "What's Left of the Right That Stayed Down When He Went Up?" *The Voice of Elijah® Update*, September 1995.) But perhaps the most important reason for not confusing the two has to do with understanding the *meaning* and *significance* of some of the *parabolic pantomimes* that Jesus conducted. As John records what Jesus slyly said to the high priest, He "spoke" (the Gospel) openly anywhere and everywhere to the crowds ("the world") that followed Him, but He "taught" (*The Teaching*) only in the synagogues and the Temple (to the Jews):

*The high priest therefore questioned Jesus about His disciples, and about His teaching. Jesus answered him, "I have spoken openly to the world; **I always taught in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I spoke nothing in secret.**"*

(John 18:19–20)

In that exchange, Jesus is using a fine distinction between "speaking" and "teaching" to mock the ignorance of the high priest in regard to things explained in the Gospel and *The Teaching*. One who doesn't understand the difference between those two messages might think that Jesus lied when He said, "I *always taught* in synagogues, and in the temple, where all the Jews come together; and I *spoke nothing* in secret." They

would at the very least have a hard time explaining passages like this one, where Mark says Jesus told His disciples things He never explained in public:

And with many such parables He was speaking the word to them as they were able to hear it; and He did not speak to them without a parable; but He was explaining everything privately to His own disciples.

(Mark 4:33–34)

My point in regard to preaching the Gospel is fairly straightforward: The Gospel is the introductory part of *The Teaching* which an Evangelist is called to *deliver* to “the world.” It is not the totality of “*The Mystery*” that a Teacher is charged with *delivering* to those who are “in *The House*” (of God) because they have already repented and believed the Gospel. That is because only those who believe the Gospel can understand *The Teaching*—which is “the mind of Christ”:

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

“THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND {which} HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.” For to us God revealed {them} through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the {thoughts} of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the {thoughts} of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual {thoughts} with spiritual {words.} **But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE SHOULD INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.**

(1 Corinthians 2:6–16)

According to the distinction made in the Scriptures, anyone who has been granted the basic authority of an Evangelist can “preach” the simple message of the Gospel, but only those who have the authority of a Teacher should even try to “teach” *The Teaching*. And that is nothing anyone should aspire to:

Let not many {of you} become teachers, my brethren, knowing that as such we shall incur a stricter judgment.

(James 3:1)

Now that I have ruffled more than a few feathers with that bit of information, let me explain why Satan has done his best over the centuries to confuse the issue in regard to the *meaning* and *significance* of the two words *repent* and *repentance*. Then maybe you will better understand why an Evangelist has to “preach” the Gospel before anyone can “repent and believe in the gospel.”

Words Only Carry Meaning

One major difficulty faces anyone who tries to understand what the authors of ancient writings like the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures *meant* by what they wrote: There are no dictionaries in which one can look up the *meaning* of the Hebrew and Greek words the authors used. Oh, sure, there are the voluminous Greek and Hebrew lexicons that one learns to use in school. But in most cases, those exhaustive dictionaries were compiled by German, French, or English scholars no more than 150 years ago. In many instances, the *meanings* those men recorded were based on their—or some anonymous scholar’s—“best guess” rather than on solid evidence. In many cases, one finds their dictionaries offer nothing more than the traditional “biblical” *meaning* of a Greek or Hebrew word. All too often, that is a word like *righteous* or *wicked* which has a vaguely defined *meaning* and absolutely no *significance* at all outside of the religious context in which it is still being used.

What I have in mind when I say “there are no dictionaries” are dictionaries that were written by Greeks for Greeks, or by Hebrews for Hebrews. Just as the best English dictionaries are compiled by English-speaking people for English-speaking people, so also the only valid Greek or Hebrew dictionary would be one that was compiled by a native speaker of those languages. Sadly, none like that exist. Lacking one of those, it

becomes extremely easy for one generation of English-speaking readers to be taken in by a traditional translation of a biblical term that *meant* something specific to an earlier generation of English-speaking readers but has now become little more than a cliché. (See “The Righteous and the Wicked: One Simple Distinction Lies Between Them,” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 2002.) That happens because the *meanings* of words in any language change over time.

The *meaning* of a word sometimes changes because the word takes on added *meaning*. Over time, that secondary *meaning* then becomes integrated with the original *meaning* of the term so that the term comes to *mean* something more than it did before. When words accrue added *meaning* because of the way in which they are used, linguists say they have both a *denotative* and a *connotative meaning*. The English word *fat* is a good example. The *denotative meaning* of the term is “heavyset” or “overweight.” But ask any “heavyset” or “overweight” person why they don’t like to be called “fat” and you should get a fairly good *connotative* definition of the term. You will find that the word has a pejorative *connotative meaning* that most overweight people find offensive. The term not only *denotes* that someone is heavier than some ideal weight, it also *connotes* that they are a slovenly person.

As we will discover, the addition of *connotative meaning* to the Greek word that is translated “repent” in the New Testament has resulted in confusion over what the term actually *means*. That is, the word had an original *denotative meaning* that was retained when a secondary *connotative meaning* was added. Taken together, the two *meanings* make it extremely difficult for one English word to capture the essence of the term as it was understood in the time of Christ.

That is not to say that the Greek verb and its cognate noun—which are normally translated “repent” and “repentance” respectively—are completely misunderstood today. Not at all. The Evangelists who *handed down* the Gospel from the time of Christ have always had a fairly good idea of what is involved in true repentance. Besides, all anyone has to do to get a basic sense of what the terms *mean* is look at how they are used in the New Testament. For example, as Jesus indicates the verb translated “repent” was used with the sense of “be sorry for deeds done”:

“Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times a day, and returns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”
(Luke 17:3–4)

On another occasion, Jesus indicates that true repentance involves a genuine sorrow for the things one has done:

Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in {the} day of judgment, than for you. And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in {the} day of judgment, than for you.”
(Matthew 11:20–24)

The Apostle Paul concurs with Jesus that true repentance involves more than just saying “I’m sorry.” If one truly wants to avoid the Pits of Hell, his apology to God must stem from a genuine sorrow for sins committed rather than from his feeling sorry for himself in his current miserable condition:

I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to {the point of} repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to {the will of} God, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to {the will of} God produces a repentance without regret, {leading} to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death.
(2 Corinthians 7:9–10)

As those passages indicate, true repentance involves a genuine sorrow for sins that drives one to apologize to God. But now we come to the most interesting aspect of what the New Testament authors have to say about repentance. They tell us it must be granted by God in the same way that He grants forgiveness. In

the Book of Acts, Luke records the Apostles' description of Jesus this way:

*"He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."
(Acts 5:31)*

The Apostle Paul agrees that God must grant repentance, but he goes a bit further:

*And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses {and escape} from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
(2 Timothy 2:24–26)*

The phrase "if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" confirms the fact that God must grant repentance. But unfortunately, the verb *leading* is not in the original Greek text. There is, in fact, no verb in the original text. The text actually says "if perhaps God may grant them repentance *into* a knowledge of truth." That statement, and others like it, have caused many scholars to realize that the terms translated "repent" and "repentance"—as they are used in the Greek New Testament—*connote* more than just an apology that stems from a true sorrow for sins. They also *denote* the change in one's mind-set which stands as the driving force behind such an apology. That is why you may have heard someone say the Greek verb *means* "to change one's mind." That is, anyone who truly repents will "change his mind" in regard to what is true and "believe in the gospel."

A Semantic Sleight of Hand

The Greek verb translated "repent" in the New Testament is actually a compound verb made up of a preposition prefixed to a simple verb. That simple verb is *νοέω*, which is used with the sense of "to perceive" in the New Testament and actually *means* "to think about/discern." The preposition *μετα*, which has been prefixed to the verb *νοέω*, *means* "after." Together, the two *literally* say "to think about/discern afterwards."

Therefore, the *denotative meaning* of the compound verb is "to change one's mind." That is how the verb is sometimes used in Greek texts other than the Scriptures. And the noun form of that verb is used with the sense of "afterthought."

If one studies how the compound verb *μετανοέω* is used in the Greek literature written prior to the time of Christ, it appears to have accrued a secondary *connotative meaning* sometime very early on. That *connotative meaning* is strongly attested in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures known as the Septuagint, which was produced by Jewish scholars sometime around 250 B.C. And since our concern is with how the word was understood by the Jews who wrote the New Testament Scriptures, it might help us to know what an earlier generation of Greek-speaking Jews thought the word *meant*.

The Jewish translators used the verb *μετανοέω* nearly twenty times in the Septuagint. So let's take a look at where they used it. I'll give you the New American Standard translation so that you can see what conservative evangelical scholars understand the original Hebrew text to *mean* today, and I will bold the English translation of the word(s) the Jews translated using the compound Greek verb which is normally translated "repent." That way, you can get some idea of what they thought it *meant*.

The compound verb *μετανοέω* is used twice in the Septuagint with what is apparently the same *meaning* that it has in the New Testament. The following two passages provide the context in which that is the case:

*"And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the LORD,
"Do {men} fall and not get up again?
Does one turn away and not repent?
Why then has this people, Jerusalem,
Turned away in continual apostasy?
They hold fast to deceit,
They refuse to return.
I have listened and heard,
They have spoken what is not right;
No man **repented** of his wickedness,
Saying, 'What have I done?'
Everyone turned to his course,
Like a horse charging into the battle.
Even the stork in the sky
Knows her seasons;
And the turtledove and the swift and the thrush*

Observe the time of their migration;
But My people do not know
The ordinance of the LORD.”””
(Jeremiah 8:4–7)

“I have surely heard Ephraim grieving,
‘Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised,
Like an untrained calf;
Bring me back that I may be restored,
For Thou art the LORD my God.
For after I turned back, I **repented**;
And after I was instructed,
I smote on {my} thigh;
I was ashamed, and also humiliated,
Because I bore the reproach of my youth.””
(Jeremiah 31:18–19)

On three other occasions, the Jews must have understood the verb μετανοέω had to do with someone “thinking about/discerning afterwards”:

It is a snare for a man to say rashly, “It is holy!”
And after the vows to **make inquiry**.
(Proverbs 20:25)

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

“Remember this, and be assured;
Recall it to mind, you transgressors.
Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
{I am} God, and there is no one like Me.”
(Isaiah 46:8–9)

Those are the only occurrences of the Greek verb μετανοέω in the Septuagint where men “repent” of something. That brings us to the most striking thing about how the verb μετανοέω is used in the Septuagint: God is the One who “repents” in most of the instances where it occurs:

“And also the Glory of Israel will not lie or **change His mind**; for He is not a man that He should **change His mind**.”
(1 Samuel 15:29)

For thus says the LORD,
“The whole land shall be a desolation,
Yet I will not execute a complete destruction.
For this the earth shall mourn,
And the heavens above be dark,
Because I have spoken, I have purposed,
And I will not **change My mind**, nor will I turn from it.”
(Jeremiah 4:27–28)

“At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot, to pull down, or to destroy {it;} if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will **relent** concerning the calamity I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant {it;} if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will **think better** of the good with which I had promised to bless it.”
(Jeremiah 18:7–10)

“Yet even now,” declares the LORD,
“Return to Me with all your heart,
And with fasting, weeping, and mourning;
And rend your heart and not your garments.”
Now return to the LORD your God,
For He is gracious and compassionate,
Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness,
And **relenting** of evil.
Who knows whether He will {not} turn and **relent**,
And leave a blessing behind Him,
{Even} a grain offering and a libation
For the LORD your God?
(Joel 2:12–14)

Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, He was forming a locust-swarm when the spring crop began to sprout. And behold, the spring crop {was} after the king’s mowing. And it came about, when it had finished eating the vegetation of the land, that I said,
“Lord GOD, please pardon!
How can Jacob stand,
For he is small?”
The LORD **changed His mind** about this.
“It shall not be,” said the LORD.
Thus the Lord GOD showed me, and behold, the Lord GOD was calling to contend {with them} by fire, and it consumed the great deep and began to consume the farm land. Then I said,

"Lord GOD, please stop!
How can Jacob stand, for he is small?"
The LORD **changed His mind** about this.
"This too shall not be," said the Lord GOD.
(Amos 7:1-6)

When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he arose from his throne, laid aside his robe from him, covered {himself} with sackcloth, and sat on the ashes. And he issued a proclamation and it said, "In Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let man, beast, herd, or flock taste a thing. Do not let them eat or drink water. But both man and beast must be covered with sackcloth; and let men call on God earnestly that each may turn from his wicked way and from the violence which is in his hands. Who knows, God may turn and **relent**, and withdraw His burning anger so that we shall not perish?" When God saw their deeds, that they turned from their wicked way, then God **relented** concerning the calamity which He had declared He would bring upon them. And He did not do {it}. But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry. And he prayed to the LORD and said, "Please LORD, was not this what I said while I was still in my {own} country? Therefore, in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who **relents** concerning calamity."
(Jonah 3:6-4:2)

"For thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and I have not **relented**, so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!'"
(Zechariah 8:14-15)

Now you know the cold, hard Truth about how the compound Greek verb μετανοέω was used outside the New Testament. So let's go a bit further and see what Hebrew word(s) the Jews were translating when they used it. In the three instances where men are said to "make inquiry," "reflect upon," or "recall" something, they were either translating a Hebrew word that *means* "to make inquiry" (Prov. 20:25) or a Hebrew idiom that has to do with mental reflection of some kind (Prov. 24:32; Is. 46:8). That demonstrates they understood the Greek verb μετανοέω had something to do with looking back and reflecting on past actions. In every

other instance, they used it to translate a Hebrew verb that has been translated "be sorry" in these passages:

And **the LORD was sorry** that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. And the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for **I am sorry** that I have made them."
(Genesis 6:6-7)

And **the sons of Israel were sorry** for their brother Benjamin and said, "One tribe is cut off from Israel today."
(Judges 21:6)

And **the people were sorry** for Benjamin because the LORD had made a breach in the tribes of Israel.
(Judges 21:15)

And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but as he was about to destroy {it,} **the LORD saw and was sorry** over the calamity, and said to the destroying angel, "It is enough; now relax your hand." And the angel of the LORD was standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite.
(1 Chronicles 21:15)

Do return, O LORD; how long {will it be?}
And **be sorry** for Thy servants.
(Psalm 90:13)

"I, the LORD, have spoken; it is coming and I shall act. I shall not relent, and I shall not pity, and **I shall not be sorry**; according to your ways and according to your deeds I shall judge you," declares the Lord GOD.
(Ezekiel 24:14)

In a few other instances, modern scholars have chosen to follow the lead of the Jews who produced the Septuagint. That is, they have translated that same Hebrew word as "repent." You will find that to be the case in the New American Standard translation of these three verses:

"God is not a man, that He should lie,
Nor a son of man, that He should **repent**;
Has He said, and will He not do it?
Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"
(Numbers 23:19)

"Therefore I retract,
And I **repent** in dust and ashes."
(Job 42:6)

"Perhaps they will listen and everyone will turn from his evil way, that I may **repent** of the calamity which I am planning to do to them because of the evil of their deeds."
(Jeremiah 26:3)

Now that you have all that information, many of you are probably wondering which shell the pea is under. Some of you may even be wondering which shell the nut (me) crawled out from under. If the latter is the case, that's your problem; deal with it. But I digress (again). It is obvious from what I have shown you that the Greek word μετανοέω carried the *meaning* "to change one's mind because of sorrow over one's former actions." That is the way it is used in the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures and in the New Testament. Consequently, true repentance requires one to: (1) *change one's mind* in regard to something believed previously, and (2) *be genuinely sorry* for one's sins. **Anything less is not repentance; it's just pretense.** And pretense will get you nothing from God except a one-way ticket to Hell. So let's *talk about* what goes into the change in one's thinking that God requires.

Faith Always Has a Content

You may have heard it said that the Greek word translated "repent" *means* "to turn back" or "to return," as though all God desires is that we "turn back" from our sins or "return" to Him. A lot of people believe that nonsense because they have been told that the Greek verb we have been discussing (μετανοέω) is equivalent to a Hebrew word which *means* "to return." From what I have already stated, you should be able to see that is a lie. Satan fostered that lie because he was trying to conceal the Truth concerning the Hebrew verb which *means* "to return" and make sure that Truth would not come to light. He has failed in that endeavor. I have already explained how the sons of Israel "turned aside from *The Way*." So the Prophets of Israel were not "preaching" to "the world," inviting Gentiles to become members of Israel. They were addressing the members of Israel, imploring them "to return" to "*The Way*" from which their fathers had "turned aside." (See *The Way, The*

Truth, The Life and The Mystery of Scripture, Vol. 1.) But we can *talk about* that another time.

The Jews who translated the Septuagint clearly knew that the Greek verb μετανοέω carried essentially the same *meaning* as a Hebrew word which *means* "to be sorry" or "to have regrets" about something one has done in the past. It says nothing about "turning back" or "returning" to anything.

Think about it: If a person is sorry or regrets something he has done, that sorrow implies that he has had a change of mind in regard to whatever it is that he regrets. That, in turn, can only *mean* that he no longer believes what he used to believe about the things in question. Hence, Jesus used a Greek verb which *denotes* a change of mind and *connotes* sorrow for past actions when He said, "*Repent, and believe in the gospel.*" He was summarizing what God requires of anyone who seeks to be born again. That is, the person who comes to God for salvation must have a genuine sorrow for his sins because he has heard *something* that changed his mind. That "something" is what you need to focus your attention on, because it is impossible for anyone to repent if they have not *heard, understood, changed their mind, and believed* the simple and specific message commonly called "the Gospel."

As I have stated in various ways on other occasions, the important ingredient in saving faith (belief) is not *that* one believes, it is *what* one believes. Everyone believes something about God, Jesus Christ, and the Bible. For example, Christians, Muslims, and Jews all claim to believe in the same god, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet those three religions do not believe the same things *about* that God. That is why anyone who holds to the historical tenets of evangelical Christianity would never agree that the adherents of the teachings of Islam and Judaism will be saved. After all, the original purpose of Christian missionary activity was the evangelism of people who were not "Christian." That is, Christian missions were based on the fundamental belief that, to be saved, one must believe in Jesus Christ. So let's *talk more about* that specific belief.

Christians, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses all claim to believe in Jesus Christ. But they do not all believe the same things *about* Jesus Christ. That is why evangelical Christians rightly insist that Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are cults. That is, most folks who adhere to the historical tenets of evangelical

Christianity believe Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses hold heretical beliefs about Jesus Christ. And they are correct. Those two religions are absurd distortions of historic Christianity. Therefore, on that basis alone any evangelical Christian should be able to see that the important ingredient in faith (belief) is *what* one believes *about* Jesus Christ rather than *that* one "believes *in* Jesus Christ"—whatever that *means*!

My point is, faith (belief) always has a content. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses all have "faith" (belief). That is, they all *believe* specific things about God and Jesus Christ. But the content of the faith (beliefs) of all non-Christian religions is what sets them apart from Christianity. And even within Christianity there are large segments of the Church which are antithetically opposed to the "fundamentalist" beliefs of evangelical Christianity. Such groups do not preach repentance or faith (belief) in any specific content. Their only concern is that one shows up on Sunday morning to warm a pew and put a few dollars in the collection plate. Unfortunately for them, *what* one believes about God and Jesus Christ is what distinguishes "saving faith" from ordinary faith. And "saving faith," that is, belief in the extremely specific Truth of "the Gospel," is the only way anyone can be born again. Your belief in anything less than that specific Truth won't even get you a cold cup of water in the Pit where you are headed. But then, perhaps you don't believe in Hell. Too bad for you; it's part of the Gospel message.

Satan hates the Truth of the Gospel because he knows that anyone can be born again through faith (belief) in that Truth. So he has done his best over the past couple of centuries to distort the Truth that saving faith (belief) in Jesus Christ is actually defined by *what* one believes *about* Jesus Christ rather than some nebulous numskull belief that all one has to do is have "faith in Jesus Christ," "trust in the Lord," or just "give their heart to Jesus." Clichés like those have no real *meaning* or *significance*. They *mean* whatever some lamebrained lunatic wants to *believe* they *mean*. And Satan likes that just fine. As long as *what* someone believes is not true, he controls them.

Satan has worked extremely hard to convince us we can have faith in (believe) something that has no definite content. He would also have us believe we can believe anything and everything and still be saved. Only a fool would believe such idiocy. But then the

empirical evidence tends to indicate there are more than enough of those to go around.

Now that I have shown you the basic fallacy in a lie that Satan has been avidly promoting over the past century or so, I should mention that I have already knocked down this "leap of faith" nonsense that is bandied about nowadays. (See "Satan's Fools Are Satan's Tools," *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1994.) I explained that what most people today mistakenly call "faith" is nothing more than what former generations accurately knew as "hope." And any reasonable person can tell you that hope is just so much wishful thinking if it is not based on solid evidence. As my father used to say: "Why don't you spit in one hand and wish in the other? See which one fills up first." The Truth is, most "Christians" today have taken a flying "leap of faith" into the Pits of Hell on the basis of nothing more than the asinine hope that Satan's lie is the Truth. Those of that stripe who are still with us are about to discover just how big a mistake they have made.

Believe It or Be Damned

At the beginning of this article, I showed you that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the disciples summed up the Gospel they preached in this simple message:

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."
(Mark 1:15b)

Contrary to what Satan would have everyone believe, the Gospel these men preached must have had an extremely definite content that one had to believe to be saved from the fires of Hell. That is, God certainly must have expected people to believe what Jesus preached as opposed to the lies that the scribes and Pharisees preached. At least, that is what Jesus indicated when He said this:

Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem, saying, "Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." And He answered and said to them, "And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER,' and, 'HE WHO SPEAKS EVIL OF FATHER OR MOTHER, LET HIM BE PUT

TO DEATH.' But you say, 'Whoever shall say to {his} father or mother, "Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given {to God,}" he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And {thus} you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.'" (Matthew 15:1-9)

In the "politically correct" day in which we live, it is not polite to tell somebody they are headed for Hell in a handbasket because Satan has them believing a lie. Yet, as any fool can plainly see, that runs completely contrary to the evangelistic imperative stipulated in the Great Commission which Jesus gave His disciples:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Now I've looked, but I haven't yet been able to find any mention in the Scriptures of anyone ever making it to Heaven by being "politically correct." I'm still looking, but after all this time I really don't expect to find anything. It seems fairly obvious that all this modern-day drivel as to what is and is not "politically correct" comes from intellectual pea brains who are dead-set against the tenets of evangelical Christianity. So "political correctness" is undoubtedly just another facet of Satan's lie.

It only seems logical that to get elected, politicians would have to tell their constituency what it wants to hear rather than what is true. That being the case, most politicians—due to the nature of their trade—would be liars. Ergo, the ivory-towered intelligentsia, as well as the political tergiversators who consider it a positive to be "politically correct," most likely have no concern at all for what is true. Their only concern is how to appeal to the broadest possible "political" constituency. Consequently, they live in a fantasy world where absolute Truth does not exist and *what* one believes is not all that important. So I'll just keep on doing what

God called me to do rather than doing what they deem to be "politically correct," thank you. And I will tell you without hesitation that if you do not "repent and believe in the gospel," you will spend eternity roasting in Hell. But I'm a realist. I don't really expect many to believe that.

Paul knew only one "way" for anyone to be saved. And "The Way" of salvation he understood involved an Evangelist "preaching" an extremely clearly defined message. In the following passage, Paul identifies the content of that message as both "the word of faith which we are preaching" and "the word of Christ":

*But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down), or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, **the word of faith which we are preaching**, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus {as} Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; **for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.** For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same {Lord} is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." **How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!" However, they did not all heed the glad tidings; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.** (Romans 10:6-17)*

When Paul wrote that, he had in mind the "word" of the same "gospel" that John the Baptist and Jesus preached. And no matter what the "politically correct" pinheads today would have you believe, that "word" doesn't leave any room at all for change or distortion, much less the "word" of any other religion:

I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is {really} not another; only there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ. But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

(Galatians 1:6–12)

Circumspection Is Not a Bad Idea

Most folks today mistakenly assume that nobody knows the Truth—about much of anything. When confronted with something they don't want to believe, everybody seems quick to say, "That's your opinion," as though one person's belief—what they readily call an "opinion"—is just as valid as any other belief. That perspective is founded on their belief—opinion—that it is not possible to attain a verifiable knowledge of what is true. Even many in the Church who claim to believe that the Second Coming of Jesus Christ is right around the corner have that same blasé attitude toward the Truth. It's fairly obvious that those folks haven't read what the Apostle Paul wrote about the Second Coming:

Now we request you, brethren, with regard to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together to Him, that you may not be quickly shaken from your composure or be disturbed either by a spirit or a message or a letter as if from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one in any way deceive you, for {it will not come} unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God. Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he may be revealed. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1–12)

The important thing to take away from that passage is this: The folks who come up short on Judgment Day are going to be those who lack an appropriate concern for determining whether what they believed was true. That being the case, the prudent course of action—at least for those who have their sights set on meeting St. Peter at the Heavenly Gate—would seem to be an immediate and ongoing questioning of every belief they hold. Why do you believe what you believe? Where did the belief come from? Is it a historic Christian doctrine or just another one of Satan's many Johnny-come-lately ideas which are intended to do nothing more than deceive the masses? Do you believe it just because you happen to go to a church where it is taught, or do you believe it because you have solid evidence to support the fact that it is true?

That last one is not one that anyone should ignore. Unless Jesus was just blowing smoke (an idiom) when He warned about the dangers of believing false prophets, some very religious people are going to come up quite a bit shy (another idiom) of what is required on that Great Day because they didn't realize "The Way" God expected them to "walk" (another idiom) was a very narrowly defined body of information which He required them to believe:

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it. Beware of the false prophets, who

come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn {bushes,} nor figs from thistles, are they? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit; but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. So then, you will know them by their fruits. Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'"
(Matthew 7:13–23)

Over the past nine years, I have used the pages of *The Voice of Elijah® Update* to show the Monthly Contributors to *The Voice of Elijah®* how the agents of Satan gradually contaminated *The Apostolic Teaching*, that is, "The Way" of the Lord, during the second century by fabricating lies—which they taught to Believers within the Church. Over that same time frame, I have written books and articles in which I have explained various things that the True Believer needs to know to be able to see through the lies that Satan has sown in the Church over the past 1800 years. In spite of all that, the majority of folks who claim to be Christian will not even look at the evidence I present or consider my arguments. Why? Because they are not looking for Truth.

The Pretenders who control the Church today have already decided that it does not matter what one believes. They *think* that as long as they believe there *might* be a God and then provide lip-service (an idiom) to the notion that Jesus Christ is the Son of their imaginary god, they will do just fine on Judgment Day. Unfortunately, they are *dead-wrong*. Salvation is by faith (belief) alone. That is faith (belief) in the sense of *what you believe*, not faith (belief) in the sense of *that you believe*. Everybody (even the armchair atheists you see on television) believes something about God. But only those who believe the narrowly defined Truth of *The Teaching* will be saved.

Lots of Pretenders have come into the organized Church over the past half-century. Most of them have not even gotten past the first step in the salvation

process. That is, they have not acted on the simple command of John the Baptist and Jesus: "Repent and believe in the gospel." In most cases, that is because they have never heard the Gospel. They have heard one of the many distortions of the Gospel that Satan has put into play over the past century and a half. That's too bad. But their sad circumstance is not God's fault, it is their own. If they were really seeking to know the Truth, they would have continued on, trying to find something to fill the void that still exists within them. The fact that they haven't done that merely reveals they have no real interest in knowing the Truth.

On different occasions, I have stated that I don't claim to be an Apostle, Prophet, or Evangelist. I claim only that God called me as a Teacher. My responsibility as a Teacher is to teach *The Teaching* to those who have already responded to the Gospel and been born again. My purpose in writing articles for *The Voice of Elijah®* is to disclose the lies of Satan for what they are—mere figments of someone's fertile imagination—by showing True Believers the Truth that Moses and the Prophets of Israel concealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. That Truth has been hidden behind *parabolic images* and Hebrew idioms. But it is extremely simple and easy to understand: The seven "days" of Creation are not yet complete; God is still hard at work creating "*The Man*" in His Own image and likeness. And all that anyone has to do to participate in that process is to believe in Jesus Christ, the One Who is the Truth of that *Living Word of God*. The only fly in that ointment is how one goes about identifying "the Truth." Don't worry, God has that one covered:

Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or {whether} I speak from Myself."
(John 7:16–17)

Everyone has the natural tendency to think that what he believes is "the Truth." Because of that innate psychological bent, some find it impossible to evaluate their beliefs in the cold, hard light of the Truth. If you are one of those, it should be obvious that I have not been called to teach you anything. Nonetheless, I wish you nothing but the best. Before long, you are going to need all the good fortune you can get. But there is one thing you need to know should you decide not to

“walk in *The Way*.” The author of the Book of Hebrews explains it fairly well when he says this:

Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Concerning him we have much to say, and {it is} hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes {only} of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil. Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we shall do, if God permits. For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, and {then} have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame. For ground that drinks the rain which often falls upon it and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is also tilled, receives a blessing from God; but if it yields thorns and thistles, it is worthless and close to being cursed, and it ends up being burned. (Hebrews 5:8–6:8)

The author is speaking *parabolically* concerning the responsibility that every born-again Believer has to continue on in *The Teaching* until he or she has attained the same “perfection” that Christ attained. When he says, “Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment,” he is referring to the things an Evangelist is supposed to explain when he preaches

the Gospel. That is the “milk” on which a Believer is supposed to live until he or she finds a Teacher who provides “solid food,” that is, explains the remainder of *The Teaching*.

The danger which faces anyone who has been born again is this: It is possible for a True Believer to “fall away” from the Truth that he believed when he was born again. That is why the author of the Book of Hebrews warned his reader earlier with these words:

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called “Today,” lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end; while it is said,

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

AS WHEN THEY PROVOKED ME.”

For who provoked {Him} when they had heard? Indeed, did not all those who came out of Egypt {led} by Moses? And with whom was He angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient? And {so} we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief. Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.

(Hebrews 3:12–4:2)

This is how he describes the person who has repented and believed in the Gospel but then “turned aside from *The Way*”:

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

(Hebrews 6:4–6) ■



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

One of the best known parables of Jesus is the one about the “wise man” who “built his house” on “the Rock” and the “foolish man” who “built his house” on “the sand.” Jesus concluded that parable with a *parabolic* description of the “storm” that will usher in the seventh “day” of Creation by destroying the “house” of the “foolish man.” Although scholars have no idea what Jesus *meant* by what He said, He was merely putting together various *parabolic images* the Prophets of Israel had used to speak concerning the End of the Age—that is, when God creates the man in His image and likeness at the close of the sixth “day” of Creation before the seventh “day” of rest begins. One of the passages Jesus obviously had in mind when He told that parable is the following, where Ezekiel *parabolically* explains how God plans to deal with “false prophets” who spout things off the top of their heads rather than explaining things found in *The Teaching of Moses*:

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “Because you have spoken falsehood and seen a lie, therefore behold, I am against you,” declares the Lord GOD. “So My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations. They will have no place in the council of My people, nor will they be written down in the register of the house of Israel, nor will they enter the land of Israel, that you may know that I am the Lord GOD. It is definitely because they have misled My people by saying, ‘Peace!’ when there is no peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash;

{so} tell those who plaster it over with whitewash, that it will fall. A flooding rain will come, and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out. Behold, when the wall has fallen, will you not be asked, ‘Where is the plaster with which you plastered {it?}’” Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, “I will make a violent wind break out in My wrath. There will also be in My anger a flooding rain and hailstones to consume {it} in wrath. So I shall tear down the wall which you plastered over with whitewash and bring it down to the ground, so that its foundation is laid bare; and when it falls, you will be consumed in its midst. And you will know that I am the LORD. Thus I shall spend My wrath on the wall and on those who have plastered it over with whitewash; and I shall say to you, ‘The wall is gone and its plasterers are gone, {along with} the prophets of Israel who prophesy to Jerusalem, and who see visions of peace for her when there is no peace,’ declares the Lord GOD.” (Ezekiel 13:8–16)

To understand the *meaning* and *significance* of Ezekiel’s parable, one first needs to know that “wind” and “rain” are two of the many *parabolic images* the Prophets use to cryptically describe the words of teachers—both false and true. It also helps to know that “*The Way*” is a *parabolic image* of *The Teaching of Moses*. Only then can one fully appreciate how the Prophet Nahum surreptitiously provides the *parabolic equivalency* that one needs to see how those images fit together in Ezekiel’s prophecy:

*The LORD is slow to anger and great in power,
And the LORD will by no means leave {the guilty} unpunished.
In whirlwind and storm is His way,
And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.
(Nahum 1:3)*

The liars who control the mind-set of “Christians” today have no idea how Satan intends to use the idiotic “peace and security” message they have been preaching or what God plans to do about it. Ezekiel knew. He described it rather well. Nahum knew. He helped build God’s case against them. And the Prophet Hosea—using the *parabolic image* of “Elijah”—tells it just like it is. The pulpit parrots who have helped prepare the masses for the coming of the Antichrist are about to “reap” what they have “sown”:

*For they sow the wind,
And they reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads;
It yields no grain.
Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.
(Hosea 8:7)*

Hosea is *parabolically* explaining what happens to “Israel” when the “spirit” disseminated by idiots is in control. People act in accordance with the nonsense they believe. So let me explain a few things you need to know concerning world events.

While the attention of most “Christians” is fixed on Europe, where they have been told to expect the Antichrist to appear, it appears that we are heading rather rapidly into the final stages of Satan’s delusion. A mephitic animosity which has been building for the past several decades within the Arab world is finally reaching a fever pitch. Nowhere is that hatred more virulent than in Saudi Arabia. Consequently, there is little hope that the Saudi royal family will continue in power for much longer. The overwhelming majority of the population of that country holds an antipathy for the United States that is only surpassed by their loathing for the Jews. However, events in that region of the world will probably not begin to snowball out of control politically and economically until the moderate government now in power gives way to a much more radical conservative government. I could well be wrong in that assessment, but I doubt it.

At this time, George W. Bush seems bent on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq. Yet it is doubtful the United States will unilaterally attack Iraq without some sort of provocation, given the fact that other nations are dead-set against that option. Consequently, the assassination of Hussein seems all the more likely. Although not much is made of it, U.S. and Israeli intelligence reports coming out of Iraq are undoubtedly the driving force behind the call to remove Saddam from power. Such reports probably indicate that he either already has, or is on the verge of acquiring, the technology and delivery mechanism he needs to annihilate most of the population of Israel. Considering the fact that it is obvious the madman would not hesitate to use whatever is at his disposal in case of war, it would seem self-evident that the United States government actually has no choice other than to take covert action against him.

In August 1992, I warned you concerning events that I believed would occur as a result of the “opening” of the third seal in 1988. (See “It’s Going to Get Worse!” *The Voice of Elijah® Update*, August 1992.) I indicated that dire economic dangers were facing the world because of the asset bubble burst that had just occurred in Japan. I also indicated that I believed the Nikkei stock index would eventually fall below 10,000. Fast forward to the present. More than a decade into an economic depression, the Japanese economy has yet to recover and the Nikkei stock market index has at last found a home below 10,000. Unfortunately, Japan won’t soon have an opportunity to recover, because the economic bad news facing the world economy today is not coming out of the Asian countries as it did in 1997. The source is South America—all of South America. And the world economy has no make-believe engine to pull it this time.

In 1992, when I explained what I believed would eventually happen to the world economy, I had no way of knowing that an internet and telecommunications “tulip craze” would set in here in the United States during the mid 1990s. That ridiculous nonsense drove tech and internet stock prices into the stratosphere and easily carried the world economy through the economic collapse that hit the Asian countries in 1997. But now that the sheen has burned off those flowers, the Truth may finally be inescapable: The world economy can’t keep running forever without a viable engine. The personal computer filled that role for more than a decade. It does that no longer. So you might want to start facing the facts: The rational range for the Dow is somewhere south of 6500. I have no doubt it will get there—eventually. How much farther south it will go is anybody’s guess. But you might want to sell any extra real estate before the idiotic bubble in that market bursts. I give it two years at the outside.

Where do we go from here? I have already told you: The “opening” of the first seal made increasing insight into the Truth a given for those who are seeking to know the Truth. The “opening” of the second seal did the same for warfare. The onset of weird weather and economic distress marked the “opening” of the third seal, while a quarter of the Earth’s population was doomed to extinction when the fourth seal came off. Now that the fifth seal has been “opened,” we are preparing for those who will gain insight after the sixth seal is removed. ■



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

Editor: In the last issue of The Voice of Elijah®, you restored the true meaning of two commonly used, but frequently misunderstood, terms in the Scriptures—“righteous” and “wicked.” This got me to thinking about other frequently used terms in the Scriptures that are probably misunderstood as well. One word that immediately came to mind was “repent.” Since this archaic term is seldom used these days except in a religious context, and since repentance is crucial to the new birth, it seems likely that Satan has probably also succeeded in altering or confusing the basic meaning of this word. For instance, some say “repent” means “to apologize and seek forgiveness,” others say it means “to turn back,” and still others say it means “to change one’s mind.” Although each of these definitions suggests that repentance requires a change in one’s attitude or mind-set, they are vague as to the specific change required. Would you please define “repent” for us and explain what true repentance is all about? Also, is there a parabolic image associated with repentance?

Elijah: This “Questions & Answers” column does not allow space for me to answer this question and the others you asked. Therefore, I will address it in the main article for this issue.

Editor: In Luke 14:25–35, Jesus talks about the importance of Believers “counting the cost” before making a

commitment to Him lest afterward they find they can’t honor it. I assume there is a correlation between what Jesus said in this passage and what the Apostle Peter said about Believers being worse off if they turn away from the Truth after having believed it, than they would have been had they never believed at all (2 Pet. 2:20–22). To me, it seems that Jesus and Peter are both making the same basic point. Namely, that it is better to not become a Christian if you are not ready to make a serious commitment to Christ, the Word of Truth, than it is to make an impulsive commitment you won’t likely keep once the “cost” becomes too high. If this is true, wouldn’t it be incumbent upon Evangelists to spell out the “cost” of becoming a Christian during their presentation of the Gospel so that each person is aware of what God requires of him or her before they make that commitment?

Elijah: You mentioned two entirely different passages of Scripture, so we need to take a closer look at both of them before I can answer your question. Let’s look first at what the Apostle Peter said:

For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,” and, “A sow, after washing, {returns} to wallowing in the mire.”

(2 Peter 2:20–22)

The key phrase in that passage is “the way of righteousness.” Peter is speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* associated with the Hebrew idiom “walk in The Way.” I have already explained in the seminar *The Way, The Truth, The Life* that “The Way” is a *parabolic euphemism* Moses and the other Prophets of Israel used to refer cryptically to the *oral Torah*, that is, *The Teaching of Moses* which God expected the sons of Israel to *hand down* from generation to generation—*orally*. (See *The Way, The Truth, The Life* and *The Mystery of Scripture*, Vol. 1.) As I have stated repeatedly on other occasions, belief in the Truth of *The Teaching* is the only

way to attain the “righteousness” God requires. That is why Peter calls that body of information “the way of righteousness.” Earlier in that same context, he calls it “the way of truth”:

*And {so} we have the prophetic word {made} more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that **no prophecy of Scripture is {a matter} of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God. But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; and in {their} greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.***
(2 Peter 1:19–2:3)

It is obvious from what Peter says in that passage that he is concerned about the devastation he knew would be wrought by the lies taught by the “false teachers” Satan sent into the Church to “introduce destructive heresies” and “exploit you with false words.” Taken in context, his statements reveal that he believed the false doctrines taught by such “false teachers” to be their “own interpretation” of Scripture rather than the Truth that he and the other Apostles understood. However, Peter obviously was also aware that many in the Church would be taken in by the lies of such false teachers, which is why he says “because of them the way of truth will be maligned.” In that, he is clearly contrasting “the way of truth” with what the translator has translated as “one’s own interpretation” and is asserting—as Paul does in Galatians—that in spite of what the Pretenders who control the Church today prefer to believe, there is actually only one true understanding of the Scriptures:

*I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel; which is {really} not another; only **there are some who are disturbing you, and want to distort the gospel of Christ.** But even though we, or an angel from heaven,*

*should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. For I would have you know, brethren, that **the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but {I received it} through a revelation of Jesus Christ.***
(Galatians 1:6–12)

From what the Apostle Paul says about the revelation he had *received*, he obviously regarded that part of *The Apostolic Teaching* which is commonly called “the Gospel” as something with which someone should not tamper. Peter evidently felt the same way about the entirety of *The Teaching*. He mentions “*The Way*” a third time in the course of describing what would happen when false teachers finally seduced True Believers into accepting their lies. Your understanding of 2 Peter 2:20–22 is confirmed by what he says:

*But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, **reviling where they have no knowledge**, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, **reveling in their deceptions**, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; **forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the {son} of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; {for} a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet.***
(2 Peter 2:12–16)

Keep in mind Peter is still *talking about* “false teachers,” that is, individuals who somehow managed to come to a rudimentary understanding of “*The Way*” but then “followed the way of Balaam” after “forsaking the right way,” and began “reviling where they have no knowledge” and “reveling in their deceptions.” The key to understanding what Peter has in mind is the

phrase “they have no knowledge.” His firm conviction is that such people are completely ignorant of the Truth that he and the other Apostles understood—that is, the Truth of *The oral Teaching of Moses* they were able to see hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures only because it had been revealed to them (Luke 24:45).

Peter’s use of the Greek term ἄπατή, which has been translated “deceptions” in verse 13, is extremely enlightening. The word occurs seven times in the New Testament, and each time it refers to something which poses a threat to the Believer continuing to believe the Truth which he has had opportunity to hear. Jesus used the word in His explanation of the Parable of the Sower when He *parabolically* described the fool who hears the Truth and then turns away:

“Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil {one} comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no {firm} root in himself, but is {only} temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”
(Matthew 13:18–22)

In that passage, the Greek ἄπατή has been translated “deceitfulness” rather than “deceptions,” as it was in 2 Peter 2:13. The parallel account in Mark also has the phrase “the *deceitfulness* of riches,” but Mark includes an explanatory gloss which Matthew does not have. So let’s look at that passage as well:

“The sower sows the word. And these are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them. And in a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky {places,} who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no {firm} root in themselves, but are {only} temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones on whom seed was sown

among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, and the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”
(Mark 4:14–19)

The phrase which has been translated “the desires for other things” is instructive. It tells us Jesus had in mind a person who is deceived and turns away from the Truth he has heard because he wants something else or something more. That is, the person allows his concern for things of the world to consume his attention rather than focusing continually on the simple Truth of *The Teaching* so that the Truth of that *Living Word of God* can change him into the person God desires him to be. That process of renewal is what Paul has in mind when he says this:

This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. But you did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in {the likeness of} God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.
(Ephesians 4:17–24)

On various occasions, I have explained that in that passage the Apostle Paul is speaking in terms of the *parabolic imagery* associated with the Hebrew idiom “walk in *The Way*.” That is, he is admonishing True Believers to continue believing and dwelling on *The Apostolic Teaching*—“*The Way*”—and not let “the lusts of deceit” draw them away from Jesus Christ—that is, the Truth of the Word of God they have “been taught,” “heard,” and learned. I only mention that passage here because Paul uses exactly the same word that Peter and Jesus used—ἄπατή—except in this instance the word has been translated “deceit” (v. 22). Paul uses that term

because he is concerned that the True Believer will somehow be tempted to sin and then excuse his actions by rationalizing to the point of believing a lie. That is the same concern expressed by the author of the Book of Hebrews when he uses the term ἁπατή in this passage:

Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is {still} called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end.
(Hebrews 3:12–14)

The Greek word ἁπατή has again been translated "deceitfulness." That is because the root meaning of the term has to do with something which is intentionally deceptive. In 2 Peter 2:13, Peter used it to refer to the nonsense taught by false teachers. Jesus used it in Matthew 13:22 and Mark 4:19 to describe the deceptive allure that money holds for those who get caught up in the things of this world. In Ephesians 4:22, Paul used it to depict the deceitfulness that creeps in when one desires anything other than the simple Truth of *The Apostolic Teaching*. And now the author of the Book of Hebrews is warning us, in no uncertain terms, that we should beware of the deception sin carries with it when we allow it to creep into our lives.

Those things should all raise a red flag (that's an idiom; think about the *parabolic image* on which it is based) in the mind of anyone who honestly wants to understand the Truth. If they don't, perhaps the final two occurrences of the term will. The Apostle Paul uses the term again in this verse:

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.
(Colossians 2:8)

The point Paul is making is extremely easy to understand, but it is not one that most folks take much time to think about. Paul has just informed us that God holds the True Believer solely responsible for determining what is true and what is false. That is because Paul

knows we will all be judged on the basis of our actions, but our belief in (or rejection of) the Truth of *The Teaching* will determine what we do. Therefore, the time has come when it is no longer acceptable for a True Believer to say casually, "The pastor says ...," or "I think" If a person cannot clearly and succinctly explain why he believes the Truth that God had Moses and the Prophets hid in the Hebrew Scriptures, he will not be able to avoid being led astray by the "deception" that will come into play when the Antichrist appears. How do I know that? Paul told me. And he used the Greek word ἁπατή when he did:

For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains {will do so} until he is taken out of the way. And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; {that is,} the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. And for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.
(2 Thessalonians 2:7–12)

The presence of the archaic term *wickedness* in that passage should tell you immediately that Satan is trying to hide something behind that translation. And he is. The Greek term translated "wickedness" in verses 10 and 12 means generally "what is wrong." The morphological root from which that term derives is what is called an "alpha privative" (look it up; it's in the dictionary) of its antonym which means generally "what is right." Specifically, that antonym means "innocent" and the Jews who produced the Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (ca. 250 B.C.) used it to translate a Hebrew word that means exactly that same thing. I have already talked about the meaning and significance of that Hebrew term in "The Righteous and the Wicked: One Simple Distinction Lies Between Them," (*The Voice of Elijah*®, April 2002), but that's another story.

Paul's point in 2 Thessalonians 2:7–12 is this: The Truth of *The Teaching* is "what is right"; the lies of Satan are "what is wrong." And if you plug that information

into what Paul says there, you can get a better idea of what “wickedness” he had in mind. The “deception” of Satan’s lies has long been instrumental in duping a multitude of True Believers and Pretenders alike into believing even more grandiose lies. However, Satan has known for quite a while that his time is limited. That is why, over the past 170 years, he has been carefully cultivating a lie that will allow him to pull off the ultimate deception: He is going to pretend to be Jesus Christ Himself. [See “Wanna Hear the Whopper the Liar Came Up With? (I Doubt You’ll Believe It!)” *The Voice of Elijah*®, October 1996.]

Satan stepped up the pace of his deception a bit in 1995 because he was tipped off—in April 1992—to what God had been quietly working to accomplish over the previous twenty-five years. Since that time, Satan has been working feverishly to make absolutely certain that all those ignorant folks who *choose* to believe his dispensational nonsense are ready and waiting for him when he appears. And in spite of the stupidity such people prefer to believe about their goofy god of unconditional grace, the angry God of Israel has a Day of Judgment on which He will hold each and every one of them responsible for the lies they have *voluntarily chosen* to believe.

The second passage you mentioned is this one:

Now great multitudes were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, “If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand {men} to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions. Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let

him hear.”

(Luke 14:25–35)

That is a fairly accurate translation. But it glosses over the nuances in what Jesus said. Unfortunately, if one fails to catch those subtleties, it is impossible to understand the point He makes. Therefore, I will first show you my own translation; then I will summarize what Jesus said and explain a few of the subtleties in the text. To help you better understand what Jesus *meant*, I have bolded the words which have *parabolic meaning* or *significance*:

*Now great crowds were traveling with Him; and turning, He said to them: “If someone comes to Me and he does not hate his father and mother and woman and children and brothers and sisters—and even further, his own soul—he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. For which one of you, wanting to **build a tower**, does not first sit down and count the cost—whether he has {enough} for **completion**? So that, having laid his foundation and **not being strong enough to complete** {the tower}, **all who see do not begin to mock him**, saying, ‘This man began to build and **was not strong {enough} to complete** {the tower}.’ Or what king, traveling to engage another king in battle, will not sit down first to consider whether he is able, with ten thousand, **to meet the one coming against him** with twenty thousand. But if not, while the other is still at a distance, he sends ambassadors **asking for terms of peace**. So therefore, everyone of you who does not say goodbye to all that he has cannot be My disciple. Therefore, the salt is good; but **if the salt has become foolish, with what will it be prepared**? It is useful for neither the earth nor the dunghill. **They cast it outside**. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.”*

(Luke 14:25–35) —my interim translation

The first thing you must understand about the *parabolic statements* that Jesus makes in that passage is this: He is outlining what it takes to *become* His disciple. He is not—as most people incorrectly assume—describing what is required for someone to *remain* His disciple. (There is a BIG difference between those two.) He concludes each of the three essential requirements a person must meet to *become* His disciple by saying the person who fails to meet the requirement “cannot be My disciple.” He says: (1) A person must first come to

the point where he *parabolically* “hates”—that is, rejects—all sinners, including himself; (2) he must then *parabolically* carry his own cross up to Golgotha, where he—that is, the flesh and blood person he has been—is *parabolically* crucified with/in Christ; and finally, (3) he must *parabolically* die—that is, say goodbye to everything he has and give up his own “spirit” so he can put on the “spirit” of Christ.

Sandwiched in between the second and third requirements, Jesus mentions two reasons why a “wise man” would do what is necessary to *become* one of His disciples rather than stubbornly continuing to believe the lies of Satan: First, Satan is not “strong” enough to “complete” the *parabolic* “tower” of Babel that he is currently “building”; and second, his forces are certainly not prepared to “meet” the angelic forces that Jesus Christ will bring with Him when He returns. Therefore, he should be “asking for terms of peace.” Satan isn’t, and he won’t. So Jesus is merely pointing out that in spite of Satan’s stubborn continuation of his rebellion, individual members of his “kingdom” are not required to stay the course. (That’s an idiom.) Any sinner can easily jump ship (another idiom) and become a disciple of Jesus Christ. All he needs to do is meet the requirements Jesus mentioned.

Now that I have briefly explained what Jesus is *talking about*, let me explain a few things that will help you understand His statements more fully. More than ten years ago I laid out the essentials concerning what a “disciple” is and what Jesus *meant* when He told His disciples to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matt. 28:19). (See “Where Are Jesus’ Disciples?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, April 1991.) I told you He was speaking in extremely specific terms concerning the widespread philosophical/religious practice of that era in which a Teacher *handed down* the oral teaching of a deceased Master to his disciples just as he had *received* it from the Teacher who taught him. In this instance, Jesus is laying out the requirements one must meet if he wants to *become* His “disciple”—that is, *receive* that part of *The Teaching* which is called “the Gospel” from someone who is qualified to *hand it down* to him. To speak in *parabolic* terms that are still used today, He is describing what it takes for someone to be born again.

Jesus uses three different *parabolic images* to communicate His point. The first image is founded on the Hebrew idiom “build a house.” However, He changes the *parabolic image* slightly because He wants to direct

attention to the unavoidable destruction of the *parabolic* “tower” of Babel that Satan has been “building” for centuries. His emphasis is on the fact that Satan intends to (but will be unable to) “complete” that “tower” when he appears as a man and becomes “king” over *Mystery Babylon*. (See “Is Iraq Mystery Babylon?” *The Voice of Elijah*®, January 1991.)

For the benefit of those who may not have read all that I have written previously, I should remind you that the *parabolic* “house,” or “tower,” that Satan is “building” for his “name” is his *parabolic* “kingdom.” That “house,” or “tower,” is made up of all those who believe his lies. Conversely, the “house,” or “tower,” that God is currently in the process of “building” for His “Name” is all those who believe the Truth of the *Living Word of God*. In His parable, Jesus is merely reminding His listeners that Satan is not “strong” enough to “complete” the “tower” he is “building.” Therefore, one should take that fact into account and switch sides before it is too late. That is, he should give up Satan’s lies by becoming a “disciple” of the Truth.

The second *parabolic image* that Jesus uses is one that is closely associated with the Hebrew idiom “carry *The Name*.” That idiom derives in part from the ancient belief that the king was the divine son of god who “carried *The Name*” of whatever god was supposed to have engendered him. Although specific beliefs differed from one culture to the next, the belief was generally that all who remained loyal to the king would be resurrected as part of the divine “name” he “carried.” That belief derived from a distortion of *The Teaching* in which every ancient king claimed to be *the fulfillment of the promise* that God *delivered* to Adam and Eve when He banished them from the Garden. According to *the promise*, the Man that God engenders as His Own Son will receive the divine right to reign as King over all the Earth.

In His parable concerning the two kings, Jesus is first of all pointing back to the ancient practice in which kings would march out to war each spring, seeking to gain dominion over all the Earth by bringing all other kings into subjection. The unstated purpose of that endeavor was to prove that the king was indeed *the fulfillment of the promise*. But Jesus is ultimately pointing forward to the final great battle in which He will—as the legitimate *Heir of the promise*—destroy the forces of the Antichrist and thereby prove Himself to be *the fulfillment of the promise*.

Jesus is again reminding His listeners that no matter what lies Satan may have fools believing here at the End of the Age, Satan will not be “strong” enough to prove himself to be *the fulfillment of the promise*. He is restating His suggestion that one should do what Satan will not do: He should give up such futility and become a disciple of the Truth by “asking terms of peace.” That phrase is a tongue-in-cheek allusion to *The Teaching* as the source of true peace. Keep it in mind; you will see it mentioned again in connection with our discussion of the third *parabolic image* that Jesus uses.

The final *parabolic image* that Jesus mentions is one that is associated with the Hebrew idiom “cut a covenant.” The *parabolic image* He has in mind is drawn from the ancients’ custom of preparing a covenant sacrifice by preparing it with salt before offering some of it up on the altar and eating the rest. As you are probably aware, God required the sons of Israel to include salt in every grain offering they offered to Him:

“No grain offering, which you bring to the LORD, shall be made with leaven, for you shall not offer up in smoke any leaven or any honey as an offering by fire to the LORD. As an offering of first fruits, you shall bring them to the LORD, but they shall not ascend for a soothing aroma on the altar. Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.”
(Leviticus 2:11–13)

Did you see what the Lord told Moses? He said the sons of Israel were to salt every grain offering “so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering.” Later on, He says this to Aaron, the high priest:

“All the offerings of the holy {gifts,} which the sons of Israel offer to the LORD, I have given to you and your sons and your daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD to you and your descendants with you.”
(Numbers 18:19)

That translation is much too general to allow anyone to see the *parabolic imagery* God is using. The Lord specifically says “all the wave offerings”—rather than just “all the offerings”—have been given to the priests.

To fully understand the *significance* of the *parabolic image* of “salt,” one needs to know that bit of information, because the wave offering was the sacrificial portion the priests were allowed to eat:

“This also is yours, the offering of their gift, even all the wave offerings of the sons of Israel; I have given them to you and to your sons and daughters with you, as a perpetual allotment. Everyone of your household who is clean may eat it.”
(Numbers 18:11)

If you check the context of the quote above from Leviticus 2, you will find that—as part of their *parabolic pantomime*—the priests were also allowed to eat all but a small portion of every grain offering:

“When you bring in the grain offering which is made of these things to the LORD, it shall be presented to the priest and he shall bring it to the altar. The priest then shall take up from the grain offering its memorial portion, and shall offer {it} up in smoke on the altar {as} an offering by fire of a soothing aroma to the LORD. And the remainder of the grain offering belongs to Aaron and his sons: a thing most holy, of the offerings to the LORD by fire.”
(Leviticus 2:8–10)

In light of those two passages, the *parabolic image* of “salt” can only be one in which it is used to flavor something that is to be consumed LIKE food. If you understand the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, you probably already know that the “food” He has in mind is Jesus Christ, the *parabolic* “bread of life” that came down from Heaven LIKE the manna the sons of Israel ate in the wilderness (John 6:22–63). But before I continue examining that *parabolic imagery*, I should probably also point out what Abijah, the son of Rehoboam, said about *the promise*:

“Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the rule over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?”
(2 Chronicles 13:5)

If that doesn’t convince you that “salt” is a *parabolic image*, you obviously don’t understand how Moses and the Prophets used parables to hide “*The Mystery*” in the Hebrew Scriptures. Salt IS *parabolically* LIKE some-

thing else, which is whatever God used it to represent when He explained *The Teaching* to Moses. And whatever salt represents IS LIKE salt in that it makes the parabolic “grain offering” and “wave offering” more flavorful to those who—under the terms of God’s covenant of salt—are allowed to consume those holy offerings. Since it is not my purpose here to explain the parabolic imagery of the sacrificial cult, I will limit myself to explaining what Jesus said about “salt.” He said somewhat the same thing on three different occasions. I have already explained the statements He made before He said this:

“Therefore, the salt is good; but if the salt has become foolish, with what will it be prepared? It is useful for neither the earth nor the dunghill. They cast it outside. The one who has ears to hear, let him hear.”
(Luke 14:34–35) —my interim translation

If you want to understand the meaning and significance of the parabolic image of “salt,” you need insight into at least three of the four or five subtle allusions that Jesus makes in those two verses. The first is what He says about “salt” becoming “foolish.” He intentionally used a Greek word that—depending on context—can mean either “become foolish” or “become tasteless.” That is, when one heard the word used, he had to rely on context to determine which meaning was intended. If you have difficulty understanding how one word could have two such varied meanings, just think in terms of the English word *bland*. If you look it up, you will find that it is used in almost the same way the Greek word was used. Just as there is *bland* food, there are also *bland* people. (Go ahead; look it up.)

In this case, Jesus is speaking parabolically and using one word as a double-entendre to refer to both the parabolic image and what that parabolic image represents. He could do that because, as He explains on another occasion, the parabolic “salt” He has in mind are people (who are good for nothing but to be “cast outside” if they “become foolish”):

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when {men} cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who

were before you. You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty {again?} It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do {men} light a lamp, and put it under the peck-measure, but on the lampstand; and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”
(Matthew 5:10–16)

Although it is obvious that Jesus is talking about True Believers in that passage, the translation again glosses over the nuances in what He said. Here is my own translation of the last four verses of that passage. I have bolded several of the nuanced phrases to help you see the parabolic imagery that stands behind them:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has become foolish, with what will it be salted? It is strong enough for nothing except being cast outside to be trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city lying on top of a mountain is not able to be hid. Neither do they light a lamp and place it under its container, but on the lampstand, and it shines on all those who are in the house. Therefore, let the light you have shine before men so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in the heavens.”
(Matthew 5:13–16) —my interim translation

Matthew reports that on this occasion—which is an entirely different occasion than the one that Luke records in Luke 14:25–35—Jesus used exactly the same Greek verb that He used then (“make foolish/become tasteless”). Jesus first tells His disciples that they are “the salt of the earth.” But He then warns them that it is possible for them to lose the characteristics that make them “the salt” and when they do, LIKE salt they “become foolish” and are “strong enough for nothing except being cast outside.” It is not yet clear what “outside” He has in mind; but taken in context, it is fairly obvious that “salt” is indeed a parabolic image of *The Teaching*, which is Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God. And Jesus tells His disciples they are “the salt of the earth” only because they believe the Truth of *The Teaching* that He has been explaining to them. However, His words make sense only if one understands one crucial Truth I have stated

repeatedly: *We are what we believe.* Therefore, the one who believes *The Teaching* becomes “one” with it.

Jesus confirms the fact that “the salt” is a *parabolic image* of *The Teaching* as well as the people who believe it is by immediately telling His disciples they are “*The Light* of the world.” Anyone with even a rudimentary acquaintance with the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching* knows that the Truth of the Word of God is frequently depicted as “*The Light*” that “enlightens” all those who understand the Truth. But for the benefit of those who may not yet be aware of that, I list the following *parabolic statements*:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

(John 1:1–5)

*For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give **the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.***

(2 Corinthians 4:6)

*But what I am doing, I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for **even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.** Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.*

(2 Corinthians 11:12–15)

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR {God’s} OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of **Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.***

(1 Peter 2:9)

*And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that **God is light,** and in Him there is no darkness at all.*

(1 John 1:5)

In Matthew 5:14–15, Jesus alludes to the *parabolic image* in which the Prophets depict Jesus Christ, the *Living Word of God*, as the New Jerusalem—“a city lying on top of a mountain”—which provides “*The Light*” to “all those who are in the house.” In saying that, He is merely touching the high points in regard to things that have been fully—but cryptically—explained in the Prophets. As John explained it, that *parabolic “city”* is the “temple” (understand “house”) of God where the “glory” of God resides (in the Elect):

*And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, “Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.” **And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God.** Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper. It had a great and high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels; and names {were} written on them, which are {those} of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. {There were} three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them {were} the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And the one who spoke with me had a gold measuring rod to measure the city, and its gates and its wall. And the city is laid out as a square, and its length is as great as the width; and he measured the city with the rod, fifteen hundred miles; its length and width and height are equal. And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards, {according to} human measurements, which are {also} angelic {measurements.} And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. **And I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple. And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp***

{is} the Lamb. And the nations shall walk by its light, and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it. And in the daytime (for there shall be no night there) its gates shall never be closed.
(Revelation 21:9–25)

That passage contains an incredibly fascinating parabolic description of *The Teaching*. Unfortunately, those who want to understand John’s statements literally rather than parabolically have no idea how naked and destitute they really are. But they would never believe the Truth even if He were standing right in front of them. Satan has prepared them well. But I digress.

In his Gospel, Mark tells us Jesus made a statement concerning the parabolic image of “the salt” which was somewhat similar to the ones we have already seen. But it is clear that Jesus made the statement on a completely different occasion:

John said to Him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name, and we tried to hinder him because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not hinder him, for there is no one who shall perform a miracle in My name, and be able soon afterward to speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is for us. For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as {followers} of Christ, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward. And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea. And if your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life crippled, than having your two hands, to go into hell, into the unquenchable fire, [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame, than having your two feet, to be cast into hell, [where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.] And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED. For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty {again?} Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”
(Mark 9:38–50)

It is impossible to understand what Jesus said on that occasion if one does not know what He is *talking about*. Knowing that, everything He says makes perfect sense. The key verse in the passage is this one:

“And whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble, it would be better for him if, with a heavy millstone hung around his neck, he had been cast into the sea.”
(Mark 9:42)

In using the verb that has been translated “cause to stumble,” Jesus is intentionally evoking the parabolic imagery associated with the Hebrew idiom “walk in *The Way*.” That is, He is referring to the True Believer’s believing, and mentally dwelling on, the Truth of *The Teaching*. That is confirmed by the fact that the object of the verb “cause to stumble” is “one of these little ones who believe.” So, in saying “whoever causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble,” Jesus is *talking about* a false teacher who teaches false doctrine and thereby causes a True Believer to give up some essential Truth he already believes.

To fully understand the parabolic imagery related to the disciples “cutting off” some member of their “body,” it is necessary to call to mind the things I have already explained concerning the meaning and significance of the Hebrew idiom “cut off from” in *Not All Israel Is Israel*. But it is also extremely important not to lose sight of the context in which Jesus made that statement. The disciples had come to Him telling Him they had tried to keep someone from casting out demons because that person was not one of His disciples. After telling them they should not restrain anyone who performs miracles in His name, Jesus then gives them two sure-fire ways to recognize someone they need to be concerned about: (1) If someone defiantly takes a stand against them, or (2) if he “causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble” (by teaching false doctrine), he is someone they must deal with.

Next, Jesus begins speaking in terms of the parabolic image of the Body of Jesus Christ; and He warns His disciples that it will be their responsibility to “cut off from” the Body of Christ (Israel)—that is, excommunicate from the Church—anyone who teaches false doctrine. It does not matter how important they consider that person to be. The role he plays in the Body may be that of a “hand,” a “foot,” or even an “eye.” But if he

“causes you to stumble” (by teaching false doctrine), he is to be “cut off from,” that is, “cast out” of, the Body of Christ. (Now you know which “outside” Jesus had in mind for “the salt” to be “cast” when it “becomes foolish.”) Otherwise, Jesus warns, the entire Body of Christ may be “cast into Hell” because of the lies Pretenders have enticed Believers into believing.

To further emphasize His point concerning the disciples’ solemn obligation to protect the Truth of *The Teaching* and excommunicate any false teacher who corrupts it and thereby “causes one of these little ones who believe to stumble,” He concludes by saying this:

“And if your eye causes you to stumble, cast it out. It is better to enter the kingdom of God one-eyed than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna, where THEIR WORM DOES NOT COME TO AN END AND THE FIRE IS NOT PUT OUT. For everyone will be salted with fire. The salt is good; but if the salt has become something other than salt, with what will it be prepared? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with each other.”

(Mark 9:47–50) —my interim translation

In what He says here about “the salt” and everyone being “salted with” the fire of Gehenna, as well as in what He said in Matthew 5:13–16 about “*The Light*,” Jesus appears to be combining various *parabolic images* that have no obvious relationship one to the other. Appearances are deceiving. According to the *parabolic imagery of The Teaching*, God the Father IS LIKE a raging 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)

Likewise, the *parabolic imagery of The Teaching* explains that *The Teaching* itself—that is, Jesus Christ, the *Living Word of God*—IS LIKE “*The Light*” emitted by the fire that God is:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of

men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

(John 1:1–5)

The Apostle Paul tells us that when Jesus Christ returns to destroy those who have been duped into believing Satan’s greatest lie—that the Antichrist is Jesus Christ—He will appear as the fire that God is:

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)

For the multitude who will go on denying the Truth to the bitter End, the sudden knowledge of the Truth will drop like a rock into the pit of their stomachs when Jesus Christ appears. There will be no more denying the Truth then. They will indeed “be salted with fire.” It would be better for them to be “salted” (baptized) with that “fire” now rather than to be “salted” with it then. But the choice is theirs alone.

Now that I have explained the basics concerning the two passages you mentioned, let me answer your question. Yes, it is “incumbent upon Evangelists to spell out the ‘cost’ of becoming a Christian during their presentation of the Gospel so that each person is aware of what God requires of him or her before they make that commitment.” More importantly, it is “incumbent on Evangelists to spell out the ‘cost’ of becoming a Christian during their presentation of the Gospel” so that people can actually make that commitment. That is, they should be preaching the Gospel as opposed to preaching the nonsense that most so-called “evangelists” are preaching today.

When Evangelists do what you suggest, they will explain the exactly same things that Jesus explained in Luke 14:25–35. That is, they will tell people that they cannot become a disciple of Jesus Christ until they: (1) hate the sinful person they have been, (2) voluntarily sacrifice themselves on the cross with Jesus Christ, and (3) die to the flesh. The only other “cost” that anyone needs to “count” is the one that Jesus mentioned. When they do that, they should be smart enough to

realize that Satan does not have pockets deep enough (an idiom) to finance the infinite “cost” of “building the house” he stupidly believes he can “build.”

Editor: In my editorial in the last issue of The Voice of Elijah®, I stated my belief that the spoken word has greater power to influence individuals than the written word does. Since you didn't suggest I change this statement prior to publication, I assume you agree with this concept. If so, can you explain why the spoken word—be it true or false—generally has greater power to influence the thoughts and beliefs of individuals and groups than does the written word? Is it merely the fact that the spoken word carries with it the passion and energy of the speaker whereas the written word does not, or is it something more? Did God wire humans to be more receptive to the spoken word than the written word?

Elijah: The phenomena you mention may or may not have any basis in human physiology or psychology. I can't say. I do know that God ordained that the Truth of *The Teaching* must be *handed down* from one generation to the next by someone who has been legitimately called to that task. I can also explain the *parabolic imagery* behind what Paul says in this passage:

For the Scripture says, "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same {Lord} is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call upon Him; for "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED." How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GLAD TIDINGS OF GOOD THINGS!"
(Romans 10:11–15)

According to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*, the “spirit” of the Word of God lives in the “house” (understand *family*) of God—that is, all those who have been born again. The flip side of that is, the Word of God hidden in the Hebrew Scriptures is dead and lifeless unless and until it is understood by someone who has been legitimately called to that task. Then it comes to life and lives in them and the words they speak as they *hand down* *The Teaching*. Therefore, when an

Apostle, Prophet, Teacher, or Evangelist *hands down* the Truth of the Word of God, that Word is—according to the *parabolic imagery* of *The Teaching*—living in the words they speak.

That part of *The Teaching* known as “the Gospel” has been *handed down* more or less intact from one Evangelist to the next from the time of Christ. That is why there are still legitimate Evangelists preaching the Gospel (although I will admit they are few and far between today). The same cannot be said of the rest of *The Teaching*. That Truth was totally corrupted by false teachers who successfully hijacked the Church toward the end of the second century. Consequently, God, in His wisdom, has made it possible for *The Teaching* to be *restored* here at the End of the Age by anyone who has legitimately been called to the task. When it is *restored*, that *Teaching* will be exactly the same *Teaching* that Jesus and the Apostles taught. And as Jesus said, a True Believer will have no difficulty recognizing that Truth:

The Jews therefore were marveling, saying, "How has this man become learned, having never been educated?" Jesus therefore answered them, and said, "My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or {whether} I speak from Myself."
(John 7:15–17)

Editor: The final question comes from a subscriber who wants to know if Satan can read our thoughts? This person knows that Satan plants thoughts in our minds and that he is obviously aware of those thoughts, but wonders if he can read our other thoughts—those he does not plant. So can he read our thoughts, or does he only become aware of certain thoughts when we make them known? If the latter is true, wouldn't that be a good reason for Believers to learn to keep their private thoughts private?

Elijah: As Jesus said, Satan is the Liar, and the father of all lies (John 8:44). Think about it: A liar always lies because he is afraid to face the Truth. One reason why Satan lies is to hide the Truth concerning himself—that is, who he is and what he is seeking to accomplish. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that people think Satan knows more than he does. So the short answer to your question is, No, Satan cannot read our thoughts. The long answer is a bit more complicated, so I'll just show you what the Scriptures say:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" Then Satan answered the LORD and said, "From roaming about on the earth and walking around on it." And the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job? For there is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil." Then Satan answered the LORD, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Hast Thou not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But put forth Thy hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse Thee to Thy face." (Job 1:6–11)

The remainder of the Book of Job discloses just how wrong Satan was in regard to Job, which suggests he most likely didn't know the value that Job placed on his relationship to God. He certainly didn't know what Jesus was thinking. That is evident from Matthew's account of the wilderness temptation of Christ:

Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD.'" Then the devil took Him into the holy city; and he had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, 'HE WILL GIVE HIS ANGELS CHARGE CONCERNING YOU'; and 'ON {their} HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, LEST YOU STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'" Jesus said to him, "On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory; and he said to Him, "All these things will I give You, if You fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'YOU SHALL WORSHIP THE LORD YOUR GOD, AND SERVE HIM ONLY.'" Then the devil left Him; and behold, angels came and {began} to minister to Him. (Matthew 4:1–11)

To understand what Satan was thinking at the time, it is important to understand the context in which that account occurs, especially the fact that it is part of a *parabolic pantomime* in which Jesus was playing the role of Corporate Israel. A crucial element in that pantomime is God publicly proclaiming that Jesus is His Son:

And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, {and} coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." (Matthew 3:16–17)

God's role in the *parabolic pantomime* had a tremendous impact on Satan because he didn't understand what it *meant*. Matthew tells us he came to Jesus forty days later and prefaced two of his temptations with the qualifier, "If you are the Son of God" Satan's ignorance in regard to the *meaning* and *significance* of God's *parabolic* adoption of Jesus Christ as His divine "Son" is amusing, provided one understands the *parabolic statement* that Jesus was making in His Baptism and wilderness wandering. Satan clearly did not have a clue as to what Jesus was thinking when He insisted that John baptize Him or the *parabolic imagery* He had in mind when He responded to Satan's temptation just as God expected Corporate Israel to respond. That same ignorance can be attributed to Satan's henchmen, the demons:

And the demons {began} to entreat Him, saying, "If You are {going to} cast us out, send us into the herd of swine." (Matthew 8:31)

The demons clearly did not know what Jesus was thinking or planning, just as Satan has no idea what you are thinking. He merely wants you to think that he is like God—all-knowing and all-seeing. The Truth is, he is nothing more than an ignorant created being who has chosen not to believe the Truth. Since I have already explained those things in The Next Step program, I will say no more in that regard. But it would be best to keep your private thoughts private. Otherwise, you may find you have convicted yourself. Satan finds few things more amusing than enticing people into doing the very things for which they have verbally condemned others (Matt. 7:1–2; Rom. 2:1). ■