



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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*"Put on the whole armor of God"*

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## The Rapture—Is It *Really* God's Promise?

Many evangelical Christian ministries, prominent Protestant ministers, and Christian television evangelists are promoting what they believe to be a promise from God—the rapture...to a place of safety. Though the standard belief is to be wafted off to heaven, receiving protection in a physical “place of safety” on Earth is another view. Can either be true? What does our Bible say about the Rapture?

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

“rapture” is *not found in the Bible*, but arguably—by extension, or indirectly—you can make the case that it is there...well, sort of. Let me explain.

As many of us know, 1 Thessalonians 4 covers subject matter illustrating Paul's encouragement to the Christians in Thessalonica that those who died would *not be forgotten* in the resurrection—that they, too, would meet the Lord in the air upon His return. As Paul proceeds to explain how this would happen, he uses the Greek word *har-pad'-zo*. It means to seize, catch away, to pluck, pull, snatch, and take by force—*like being kidnapped!* Now here's the connection to the word “rapture”—it's found in the Medieval Latin—the word is *rapturo*—this is the *indirect connection* to the English word “rapture.” This is how the notion the Lord is coming to carry away, by force, all believers—snatched violently, *raptured* into the air—as being kidnapped, and taken back to heaven for 3.5 or 7 years, depending on the particular rapture version being advanced.

There are primarily *three different versions* of this teaching—they're labeled as “pretrib,” “midtrib,” and “posttrib.” Depending on which belief one embraces—whether *before* (pretrib) or *in the middle of* (midtrib) the tribulation—determines if you will be in heaven 3.5 or 7 years. (Posttribbers may or may not believe in a brief stay in heaven.) However, most accepting the rapture teaching believe in a pretrib event based on 1 Thessalonians 5:9—“For God has *not appointed us* to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Because Paul mentions, “For God *has not appointed us to wrath*,” many take that to be interpreted as a *statement of assured protection* in heaven—avoiding the future time of tribulation. But, this is clearly an interpretation. The Bible mentions nothing about going to heaven, where God the Father and Jesus Christ reside with the heavenly host in the spirit realm.

### The Rapture Doctrine Has a Rich History

Many are aware the *rapture event* is not found in the Scriptures—it is but a theory—derived though, from what some believe to be *unequivocal* scriptural support. This is what makes the doctrine so problematic—that the vast majority of

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Millions expect to be snatched away to heaven several years before Christ visibly returns to Planet Earth.

## The Binding of Satan

Has the Devil already been bound “so that he should deceive the nations no more”?  
Or is the prophesied binding of Satan a future event?

by Vance A. Stinson

In the book of Revelation, a powerful “fiery red dragon” wages war with the people of God. The dragon is none other than “that serpent of old, called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world.” He is the “accuser of our brethren,” and his chief agents of destruction are a seven-headed beast from the sea and a two-horned beast from the earth (see Revelation 12–13). These two monstrous entities—also known as “the beast and the false prophet”—are political and religious powers the Devil uses in his war against the saints, “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

Ultimately, the Devil loses the battle. The beast and false prophet and the legions that follow them are defeated by the “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS,” who “strikes the nations” with His “sharp sword” and “treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Revelation 19:16–17).

The Devil, now defeated, is captured, bound, and imprisoned. John puts it this way:

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while” (Revelation 20:1–3).

Satan, a spirit being, cannot be bound with a literal chain or confined to a literal pit. So the symbolic nature of this description is not in question. The question is two-fold: 1) *When* does the binding of Satan occur? 2) What is the *nature* of this binding?

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the evangelical Protestant movement accepts this notion and promotes it as part of the gospel of Jesus Christ—as though it were an actual promise from God. So, how did this happen when there’s no description of it? Where did this idea come from and who is responsible for promoting it as though it’s really a promise from God, recorded in the Bible?

As early as the seventeenth century, an American Puritan minister, Cotton Mather, embraced the idea believers would be “caught up” into the air *before* the judgments of God on Earth and right prior to the commencement of the Millennium. Cotton Mather was a very prominent minister of his day in New England—writing well over 400 different publications on a variety of Bible subjects. A graduate from Harvard by the age of 15, his father, Increase Mather, was the President of Harvard for many years. Both men were involved in the Salem witch trials. But the *term* “rapture” wasn’t actually used by them. It wasn’t used until the eighteenth century, when Phillip Doddridge and John Gill, writing their commentaries on the New Testament, coined the term.

This was followed by additional writings in an essay published in Philadelphia in 1788 by a Baptist minister, Mr. Morgan Edwards. He mentioned a *pretribulation* rapture would occur *before* Christ’s return. But, then in the early nineteenth century, a gentleman named John Nelson Darby, originally from the Plymouth Exclusive Brethren congregation, began to advance dispensationalism and futurism. He even produced a translation of the Bible called “The Holy Scriptures: A New Translation from the Original Languages.” It was Mr. Darby, in the late 1820s or so—when he began to publicize his ecclesiological and eschatological teachings—who started describing the idea of a pretribulation rapture. His teachings were enhanced and promoted by a man named William Kelly, a proponent of Darby’s idea—and he continued to advance it for approximately the next 40 years, whenever and wherever he could.

But, admittedly, it was Darby’s popularization of the *pretribulation rapture* that really advanced the teaching. Using his influence among many of the Plymouth Brethren—impacting American Christianity, especially in the area of eschatology and fundamentalism—Darby’s idea increased with greater acceptance. Many of his writings and presentations at the Bible Conference Movement and the Niagara Bible Conferences were large forums to use *for promoting* his idea of a “pretrib rapture.” These conferences offered opportunity to improve the endorsement of the futurist premillennial and pretribulation rapture position for many Baptists, Presbyterians, and other Brethren congregational members. Books began to be written with the rapture in mind, late in the nineteenth century, resulting with increased exposure among many Christian denominations and leading to a much broader adoption of the concept.

But what not only really boosted the information on the rapture but also *enhanced the credibility* of this doctrine was when the Scofield Reference Bible, published in 1909 and again in 1919, included it in its reference notes. This generated a perception in the eyes of the public that the pretribulation rapture was indeed a *credible doctrine* and must be true—especially now that we find it printed in the accepted scholarly work of the Scofield Reference Bible! So, with this as the backdrop, going into the twentieth century, the rapture doctrine gained enormous momentum as a direct result of this *perceived endorsement!* But, regardless of what the Scofield Bible’s reference notes say, what really matters is what the Scriptures say—this is at the heart of the issue.

Back To the Bible

The gospel of Jesus Christ includes the message of a world-ruling kingdom—with Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. We find this fact described throughout the Bible, whether in the Old or New Testaments. The Prophets are filled with descriptions of this kingdom *on Earth*, with bears playing with cows, lions eating straw like an ox, while children play on the holes of snakes (Isaiah 11:1–9). Whether in the book of Micah, Jeremiah, Amos, Zechariah, Isaiah, or Hosea—they all mention this coming kingdom of God that will be established on Earth, where war will no longer be taught (Isaiah 2:4), and Jerusalem will become the capital city of the world (Zechariah 14). Unquestionably, this message was foremost in the mind of Christ also, as it was His message from the beginning until the end of His ministry—and He promised it would be announced, published, and spread throughout the world until the end of this present age (Mark 1:14, Luke 1:33; 4:43; Matthew 4:17, 23; 24:14; Acts 1:8).

It also included the revelation of *how* human beings would achieve immortality (2 Timothy 1:10); how the gospel was about Christ crucified—that He died for our sins so we might live with Him (1 Corinthians 1:23–31; John 3:16) eternally in His Kingdom, located here on Earth, where we will rule and reign with Him as kings and priests for a thousand years (Revelation 5:10; 20:4). This is at the heart of the gospel message and this is the *substance* of the *commencement—our introduction—into eternal life*. Yet surprisingly, as you review these scriptures, study the context of each one, which can include many more, especially those in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21—you will see there is *no indication*, mention, or notion given of any kind of preemptive “secret” return of Christ to whisk His followers off to heaven for some kind of *preliminary stay* before they return some years later to Earth as a conquering army from heaven. Portraying Christ’s return to include a rapture, *as traditionally believed and taught*, is just *not found* in the biblical narrative—it’s simply not part of the *detailed process*

by which God is bringing many sons and daughters into eternal life. So, what is the biblical alternative—the truth—the narrative we’re to understand?

Let’s begin by considering what is actually illustrated and explained, specifically, in Matthew 24—using it as a baseline reference. In this chapter we see Christ outlining some details of signs that will precede His return to Earth. He lists quite a few items for consideration, but as you go through the *sequence* it becomes very plain, there is no mention of the rapture. Admittedly, Jesus did not intend to detail every nuance of His return in this chapter, but He poignantly *specifies the significant “benchmark events,”* which define what happens upon His return; and clearly, you would think something so vital and important to the personal safety of God’s people—the preliminary protection from the tribulation—would be detailed, *but He doesn’t!*

Instead, we are introduced to many things that identify the end-time conditions that will grow worse and worse (Matthew 24:1–14). Our Lord reminds us that only those who endure to the end will be saved (verse 13). However, what is very curious about this information is, all through this narrative of so many horrific events there remains *no mention* of any thing remotely describing an unannounced, secret rapture—a whisking of Christians off to heaven!

Now, in verse 15 we are told an event called the “abomination of desolation” will occur. When that happens, those in Judea—that *part of the world*—are told to leave, get out, and do it quickly (Matthew 24:15–21). This invasion is also described in Daniel 11:40–41. It is at this time the King of the North counter attacks the King of the South, which results in the *King of the North occupying Palestine*, or Israel, as the world presently views it. We are also told, “and let not them that are in the countries (*outside of Palestine*) enter there into” (Luke 21:21). In other words, don’t go to the Middle East at that time—it won’t be safe—you will be going into harm’s way if you should “enter there into.” *So stay out!*

This will be a time of such distress, danger, and chaos that, Christ explains, it’s unlike any other time in the history of mankind. Christ warns, “And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved” (Matthew 24:22). What He’s saying is if the days weren’t shortened *humanity would self-destruct*—no flesh would be saved alive—“but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened” (Matthew 24:22). Due to His people there *on Earth*, He will shorten the days for their sake—that’s His reason for cutting the days short.

**But wait a minute**—I thought they were in heaven out of harms way! The pretrib/midtrib dispensationalist will lead you to believe His people were removed some years previous to this horribly dreadful and terrifying time in human history—so how do we corroborate this with the concept of the *secret* rapture? And furthermore, let me reiterate, there is no indication, reference, or even an innuendo of this “snatching”—*kidnap style*—of Christians wafting off to heaven. But lets continue.

In the remaining verses we are reminded false prophets will arise showing great signs and wonders, “insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:24). Clearly, we’re being told, it’s the *very elect—true Christians*—that are at risk of being deceived—at *this time—the time of the end*, when the *tribulation is occurring*, meaning they are *not in heaven!* The elect are *still on Earth* during this extremely shocking and frightful time in mankind’s history. Its hard to believe something as important, magnificent, and rewarding as an *escape from the tribulation* of literally hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people wouldn’t be described, or at least mentioned and placed into the sequence of this broad overview of significant circumstances surrounding the return of our Lord, but—to our bewilderment—nothing is mentioned! Don’t you find that both remarkably strange, and at least incredibly suspicious?

But Matthew continues and proceeds to clarify, “Immediately *after the tribulation* (notice the time sequence—“*after*”) of those days shall the sun be dark-

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ened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man *coming* in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:29–30). Now this is as plain as can be—it will happen *after the tribulation*—but notice what else is to happen. “And he shall send his angels with a *great sound* of a trumpet (so much for a secret return), and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:31).

What we are emphatically being told, at this time—when He returns with a great sound of the trumpet—His followers, the elect, will be collected from the four winds—implicit of the winds in our sky. This is describing the *time* of the resurrection of the dead, articulated in 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17. Notice: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God [this is going to be a very loud, noisy, and a frightful sound—its anything but secret, or sneaky]: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be *caught up* [Greek: *har-pad’-zo*; Latin: *rapturo*] together with them [the former dead, who are now alive again] in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air [it says *nothing* about going back to heaven]: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” And this will happen *AFTER* the tribulation!

This is a thorough description of significant turning points, circumstances, and conditions portraying a *logical sequence* that outlines “watershed events” we can expect that lead up to the return of Jesus Christ and the consequent resurrection of the just. Both Mark and Luke support this configuration of circumstances, though describing it somewhat differently in their writings. Nevertheless, their accounts unequivocally agree with the general outline of events Matthew describes. And without a doubt, *most noticeably*, is the *lack of any illustration* of what the dispensationalists describe as the rapture—it’s simply M.I.A. *in all cases!*

#### But What about the Books of Revelation and Daniel?

For some, the book of Revelation is simply a book about history—a description of Rome’s “heavy hand” on the Church during that early New Testament Church period. These Christians are generally called preterists. Others view the book of Revelation more as a *sequence of prophecies* yet to occur—future events that are yet to happen in a *particular order*. It is a detailed book about certain specifics that Jesus does not explicitly mention in the books of Matthew, Mark, or Luke. But, this shouldn’t be viewed dismissive by Christ, but rather understood as the broader picture of the *important particulars* associated with His return—leaving the details for John to record at a later date. Remember, the book of Revelation is recognized by most scholars to be written sometime during the last decade of the first century CE—some sixty years after the resurrection and ascension of our Lord.

It’s not the purpose of this short article to provide a detailed summary profile of the book of Revelation, but suffice it to say, one must be careful as to what one assigns as symbolic and what one would understand as literal. With that said, most will agree, regardless of the arguments associated with interpretations of what is symbolic, or metaphor, and what is to be taken as literal; the undeniable fact is, you will search high and low to no avail for a description explaining the rapture event as was understood and promoted by Mr. Darby and those today among the evangelical dispensationalists. Revelation 19, which is the accepted chapter by most detailing the return of Jesus Christ, clearly *does not include* any mention, explanation, or description of anything that could be remotely understood as Christians returning to heaven for a period of time—only to return to earth some years later to set up God’s Kingdom—*it’s just not there!*

Revelation 19:11 explains heaven opens up and begins to describe Christ, the Word of God, leading the armies of heaven, *made up of angels*, all riding on white horses (Revelation 19:11–14). They proceed to earth as Christ described in Matthew 24:29–31, destroying those who oppose Him upon their approach, including the beast and false prophet, which is described in Revelation 19:17–21. This was a detail Christ didn’t mention in the Gospels, but now is mentioned by John as he records this *revelation from Christ*. But, notice as you read through this chapter and on into Chapter 20—there is still *no mention* of any kind of rapture as taught by so many Protestant Christian denominations today.

And there is additional substantiation of Christians *not raptured to heaven*, by the narrative claiming there were Christians that remained on earth and came through the tribulation—described in Revelation 7:4–14. In this section of Scripture, we are told, “these are they which *came out* of great tribulation,” which means they were in it—not in heaven and removed from it!

Daniel simply states, when describing the time of the resurrection, which is when Christ returns, “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which stands for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time [the tribula-

tion]: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book [the book of life]. And many of them that sleep [in death] in the dust of the earth [*not alive in heaven*] shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:1–2).

There is absolutely *no mention*—not even an innuendo—*referencing the rapture*. What you have is an outline of events beginning back in Daniel 11:40 that puts us in the *timeline of the “end of days,”* right before Christ’s return. We know this to be true because the dead don’t rise until the last trump is sounded and Christ returns to this earth collecting his saints from the four winds of the sky (heaven) (1 Corinthians 15:51–54).

#### So What about Protection from the Tribulation?

The rapture teaching, or the doctrine of fleeing to a *physical place of safety*, is very appealing, if for no other reason than that of avoiding the fear, terror, and heartache that comes with becoming a victim of such terrifying plunder, pillaging, and ruin anticipated to accompany the tribulation. Who wouldn’t want to be removed out of the “field of play” of such death and destruction the tribulation will cause? I think all of us agree, a place of safety—be it in heaven or on earth—would be nice to have. But, is that what our God offers—*entitled protection*—because you are favored over others by Him?

Admittedly, some will say that Luke encourages us to “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you *may be accounted worthy to escape* all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36). The context obviously is the end times, making this statement very cogent to the idea that protection is indeed possible—and the *good news is; YES, protection is possible!* But, the *promise of protection* is considerably different from being *wafted off* to heaven, or *physically transported* to a *collective place of safety on earth* just to provide you security and comfort during a very difficult and devastating time for the rest of mankind.

The biblical record is clear: *if protection is provided*, there is *usually an expectation* associated with that condition—and it’s not for the weak at heart—conversely, it will be for the *strong ones*. Consider the two witnesses: they will be protected for a time. Their purpose: to provide a witness to the beast and false prophet that they are Satanic, while executing an *Elijah-type* ministry. There were times when the prophets were protected during certain circumstances, but always for a reason deeply embedded in the purpose of God. These individuals were generally the *hardened followers* of God. They had the courage, fortitude,

resolve, and faith to deal with the pressures and stresses associated with operating within such dreadful circumstances in mankind’s history—to remain in, active, undistracted, and surrounded by the conditions reserved for the last days *will not be* for the cowardly or weak Christians. No, the truth of the matter is, it will be reserved for only those who are *able to handle the circumstances* that come with this kind of *violently horrible chaos* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

In Psalms 91, we are assured those who make the Lord their refuge will have the blessing of protection with the assurance of angels having charge over them (Psalms 91:1–11). What many underestimate is how much God cares about us (Luke 12:22–40)—He has us on His GPS. Furthermore, He is our Potter, we are the clay; so *He reserves prerogative* to protect us as He sees fit for *our specific purpose within His will* “if” it becomes necessary (Romans 9:18–23).

But, we need to realize *if protection is ours* to receive, He’s entitled to expect some kind of performance for that “benefit” He provided—because after

all, it’s for His glory—and that is our reasonable service (Romans 12:1)! Therein lies the main difference between *protection* and a *place of safety*—protection is provided for the advancement of the witness and warning for the benefit of the greater whole—*not* to just save your skin. If you are in a place of safety, you might as well concede you’re on the bench—off the field of play—that is *not God’s intent*. He wants you to be that light on the hill, the salt of the earth—witnesses for as long as we draw breath; that is our calling and purpose! And contrary to the opinion of some—He *will expect* those He protects to do just that—glorify Him as a witness in the face of evil! This is the legacy of God’s Church down through history. Many thousands have paid the ultimate sacrifice for “standing in the gap”—why should it be any different for us?

So, brethren, “Take you heed, watch and pray: for you know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey ... left his house ... gave authority to his servants ... and commanded the porter to watch. Watch you [*watch out for yourself*] therefore: for you know not when the master of the house comes, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch” (Mark 13:33–37).

So, remain vigilant and available—a willing servant with courage—determined and committed to endure to the end, *regardless of whether we are chosen to be protected, or not.*



Up...up...and away! Will millions “fly away” to heaven?



## Binding, continued from page 1

### Post- and Amillennialist Views

Amillennialist Jack Cottrell says that Revelation 20:1–3 “symbolically represents Christ’s present control over Satan and his works, and the consequent limitation of his power” (*The Faith Once for All*, p. 497).

Reformed theologian Douglas F. Kelly states, “As a result of Christ’s finished work in dying on the cross, in rising from the dead, in ascending to the Father, and in being crowned on the throne of glory, Satan lost his power to deceive the untold millions of pagans, whom he formerly kept blinded to God’s saving truth” (<http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/binding-satan/>). Professor Kelly further states, “Although the evil one still has limited power in a fallen world, it is far less than what he had when he was able to bind and blind all nations outside Israel” (*ibid.*).

Postmillennialist Kenneth Gentry, also a Reformed theologian, writes, “The implications of this binding are enormous. Before Christ’s coming all nations beyond Israel are under Satan’s dominion.... Israel alone of all the peoples of the earth knows the true God and enjoys his salvation.... But with Christ’s coming and the spread of ‘the gospel of the kingdom,’ Satan’s dominion over the Gentiles collapses” (<http://postmillennialismtoday.com/2014/02/03/the-binding-of-satan/>).

Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, commenting on Revelation 20:1–3, writes, “The illumination of the nations with the light of the gospel is effected both by the [first] coming of Christ and by the binding of Satan” (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 210). Professor Hughes, after presenting the evidence, concludes “that the thousand years during which Satan is bound and confined had their beginning with the incarnation of the eternal Son, and in particular with the achievement of the purpose of the incarnation, namely, the conquest of Satan and his realm on the cross of Calvary and the redemption of man by the grace that flows from the cross...” (*ibid.*, p. 211).

According to these scholars, the binding of Satan has already occurred, and the “binding” is not the complete removal of Satan’s deceptive influence in the world, but the limitation of his power to deceive.

### Augustine on the Binding of Satan

The concept of a past binding of Satan is not new. Augustine (AD 354–430), whose writings strongly influenced Christian theology, especially in the West, taught that the binding of Satan occurred at the first coming of Christ. He believed the “abyss” (or “bottomless pit”) into which the chain-bound Devil is cast represents “the countless multitude of the wicked whose hearts are unfathomably deep in malignity against the Church of God.” This is not the first time Satan has been in this abyss, Augustine explains, but now that he is “prevented from harming believers, he takes more complete possession of the ungodly” (*The City of God*, Chapter 7).

If the abyss into which Satan is cast is the “countless multitude of the wicked,” how does this “more complete possession” prevent the Devil from deceiving the nations?

Augustine explains, “But by the chain and prison-house of this interdict the devil is prohibited and restrained from seducing those nations which belong to Christ, but which he formerly seduced or held in subjection” (*ibid.*).

Augustine further explains, “The devil, then, is bound and shut up in the abyss that he may not seduce the nations from which the Church is gathered, and which he formerly seduced before the Church existed. For it is not said ‘that he should not seduce any man,’ but ‘that he should not seduce the nations’—meaning, no doubt, those among which the Church exists—‘till the thousand years should be

fulfilled,’—i.e., either what remains of the sixth day which consists of a thousand years, or all the years which are to elapse till the end of the world” (*ibid.*).

For Augustine, then, the “bottomless pit” is not a literal place, but is a metaphorical way of describing wicked men and angels collectively. These are the Devil’s own, and in this “pit” of depravity he is confined. He is chained—restricted, greatly limited—and is therefore powerless to suppress the gospel. The gates of hell cannot prevail against Christ’s Church!

### Biblical Support?

Post- and amillennialists claim scriptural support for the view that Satan has already been chained and imprisoned in the bottomless pit. They appeal to the sound principle of interpreting ambiguous texts in the light of unambiguous ones—so Revelation 20:1–3, they claim, should be understood in the light of unambiguous scriptures on Christ’s victory over Satan. Let’s look at a few of their favorite proof texts.

**John 12:31–33:** “Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.” This He said, signifying by what death He would die.”

Jesus is speaking of the effects of His coming death. Through His death, He brings an end to the power of sin and the reign of the Devil. But this passage refers to the beginning, not the end, of the process that will ultimately rid the world of the power of sin and influence of the Devil.

Indeed, Christ has defeated the Devil in mortal combat and restricted his activities, but is this what Revelation 20:1–3 is describing? We’ll come back to this question later.

**Colossians 2:15:** “Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it [i.e., in His death].”

Christ, through His death, removed His disciples’ record of sins (see verses 11–13), thus stripping a major weapon from the arsenal of the “accuser of our brethren.” No record of sins means no grounds for accusation. Christ died to “destroy him who had the

power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14–15). The Devil can no longer, through the threat of death, intimidate those who, through Christ’s death, have “passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

But is this simply a different way of saying the same thing Revelation 20:1–3 says? It’s not difficult to see how one could connect this passage with the “binding of Satan” in Revelation 20, but proof that both passages refer to the same event is lacking.

**Matthew 12:28–29:** “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can one enter a strong man’s house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”

This is a simple analogy. The “strong man” is Satan, and Jesus “binds the strong man” before taking charge of the strong man’s house. But is this an action that’s already completed? Even if Satan has been in some sense “bound,” or restricted, does this mean that no greater restriction will be imposed upon him in the future? This text does not establish a past/present fulfillment for Revelation 20:1–3.

In addition to the above texts, post- and amillennialists highlight the New Testament passages that seem to indicate the Kingdom of God was inaugurated in the time of Jesus and the apostles. As noted above, Jesus said His expulsion of demons by the Spirit of God indicates that “the kingdom of God has come upon you.” He sent out His disciples to the cities, instructing them to proclaim, “The kingdom of God has come near to you” (Luke 10:9). Jesus Himself “came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom 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).

There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God was present then and is present now. During the ministry of Jesus, the Kingdom was present in the Person of the King of the Kingdom. The Church of God is the *embryonic* Kingdom, but not the Kingdom in its full and final form. So yes, there is a sense in which the Kingdom of God was and is present. But if there is



**Augustine, Bishop of Hippo (354–430), one of historic Christianity’s most prolific writers and influential theologians**



no *future* establishment of the Kingdom of God on this earth, then *there is no sense in which the Kingdom is now present!* The *presence* of the Kingdom depends entirely upon the Kingdom of God as a *future* reality. To put it another way, aspects of the future Kingdom may, according to God's purposes, be brought into the present. This principle, widely recognized by Bible scholars, has been described as the "presence of the future."

And this leads us to an important, but often overlooked, principle—one that's found throughout Scripture and is a vital key to understanding the above scriptures and many similar ones.

### Proleptic Statements

"Prolepsis" is defined as "the representation or assumption of a future act or development as if presently existing or accomplished" (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). Proleptic statements are not uncommon. For example, someone may say, "You're in," when in fact you're not *yet* in, or "You're a dead man," when in fact you're still alive. These statements anticipate a future reality, but they're stated as if the anticipated reality presently exists. The term "prolepsis" literally means *anticipation*.

Proleptic statements appear throughout Scripture.

God warned Adam, "[I]n the day that you eat of it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil] you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17). This may be considered proleptic, for Adam did not die in the day he ate of the forbidden fruit. In effect, God was saying, "Eat it, and you're as good as dead."

God was speaking proleptically when He said to Abraham, "I have made you a father of many nations" (Genesis 17:5). Isaac, heir of the promise, had not yet been born when this statement was made.

In Genesis 17:16, God promises to give Abraham a son by his wife Sarah. English translations usually render the verbs in the passage in the future sense. The NKJV, for instance, states, "And I will bless her and also give you a son by her." However, the Hebrew uses the past tense, stating that God *gave* a son to Abraham by Sarah, though Isaac had not yet been born at the time this statement was made. Young's Literal Translation renders the verse this way: "and I have blessed her, and have also given to thee a son from her; and I have blessed her, and she hath become nations—kings of peoples are from her." This is another example of a proleptic statement.

Paul, after speaking of Abraham's faith and quoting Genesis 17:5 ("I have made you a father of many nations"), states that God "gives life to the dead and calls those things that do not exist as though they did" (Romans 4:17). Paul, then, recognized the use of prolepsis in Scripture.

The "presence of the Kingdom" passages should be understood as proleptic statements, for apart from the certainty of the future Kingdom of God, the Kingdom cannot in any sense be present. Unless there is a future resurrection of the dead, God's people have not in any sense been "made alive" or "raised" with Christ. And unless there is a future resurrection and transformation of the saints, there is no such thing as eternal life as a present possession.

God, says Paul, "made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6–7). This statement is not true if there is no *future* Kingdom of God. Our having been "made alive" *anticipates* and *depends upon* the future reality of the resurrection of the dead. Our position "in heavenly places" *anticipates* and *depends upon* our future inheritance in the Kingdom of God.

Jesus assures us that "he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life" (John 5:24). Believers have

eternal life as a present possession only in the sense that, as long as they're faithful, eternal life is *guaranteed* to them. Jesus, then, is speaking proleptically.

The writer of the book of Hebrews understood Psalm 8:6 ("You have put all things in subjection under his [man's] feet") proleptically. He writes, "For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. *But now we do NOT YET see all things put under him*" (Hebrews 2:6, emphasis added).

The prophetic visions that make up the book of Revelation are interspersed with proleptic pictures of the triumphant church (7:4–17; 14:1–5; 15:2–4; 20:4–6). These "snapshots" of the glorified church of the future are designed to encourage the persecuted saints and motivate them to faithfully persevere in keeping the commandments of God and holding the faith of Jesus.

A good understanding of the use of prolepsis in the Bible should help us better understand the biblical statements assuring us that Christ has vanquished the enemy, having taken him and his legions captive and made a public spectacle of them. While it is true that Christ defeated the Devil in mortal combat and restricted his power, the proleptic element within these passages should not be ignored. And it may be true that the *future* binding of Satan has, in a limited sense, been brought into the present, but it is clear that the full confinement described in Revelation 20:1–3 *has not yet happened!*

### The Devil Is "Alive and Well"—and ACTIVE—on Planet Earth!

Peter cautioned, "Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world" (1 Peter 5:8–9).

How does Satan cause the "brotherhood in the world" to experience "sufferings"? He uses *human agents* in his war against God's people. Sometimes these human agents are government officials and religious leaders. In other words, according to Peter, the Devil *still* has power to *deceive the nations*. Surely Peter did not think the Devil had been chained and confined in such a way "that he should deceive the nations no more."

Paul affirms this when he writes, "Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:11–12).

Paul is saying that the *real* enemy is Satan the Devil, not the human principalities, powers, and rulers the Devil deceives and uses in his war against the people of God. Paul obviously did not believe Satan had been so restricted that he could no longer deceive the nations.

To the Ephesian believers, Paul writes, "And you ... were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience" (Ephesians 2:1–2).

The "prince of the power of the air" is Satan. Here Paul connects Satan with "the course of this world," indicating the powerful influence Satan exerts in the world, and tells the Ephesian believers they were once under the Devil's powerful influence. He affirms that Satan is still very active in the world when he describes him as "the spirit who *now* works in the sons of disobedience."

As noted earlier, the two beasts of Revelation—"the beast and the false prophet"—are political and religious powers Satan influences and uses in his war

against the people of God. In their original form, they were the Roman Empire and the propagandizing imperial cult, but embodiments of these two powers have appeared several times over the centuries and will appear again as a major force in the end of the age. This shows that Satan *still* "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

Some interpreters claim that Revelation 20:1–3 (the binding of Satan) and Revelation 12:7–9 (Satan's expulsion from heaven) are two very different ways of saying the same thing. Philip E. Hughes, for instance, writes, "The casting of the dragon into the abyss, therefore, we understand as coinciding with his being cast down from heaven as previously recorded in 12:7–9" (*The Book of Revelation*, p. 210).

In agreement with this view, the booklet, *Revelation: A Divine Message of Hope*, published by the Knights of Columbus, states, "Thus the thousand year reign is not something confined to the end of the world. It is now going on. The chaining of Satan is one way of saying what was put quite another way in 12:7–9. There Satan was pictured cast out of heaven to lead the world astray. Here he is cast out and submitted to control. Both facts are true" (p. 42).

But this view obscures the story flow that emerges from the successive visions that make up the book. In Revelation 12 and 13, the expelled dragon makes war with the saints, empowers the beast and false prophet, and leads the world astray. In chapters 19 and 20, the beast and false prophet are destroyed, and the dragon is chained and sealed in the abyss. This is not one vision recapitulating another, but visions that reveal a chronologically ordered flow of events.

### The Binding and Imprisonment of Satan

Revelation 19:11–21 describes the Second Coming of Christ. If, as some claim, this is not the Second Coming, then the book of Revelation, which describes "a new heaven and a new earth" and "the holy city, New Jerusalem" (chapters 21–22), apparently does not speak of the Second Coming of Christ. Given the central place of the Second Advent in the ending of the old age and beginning of the new one, it would seem odd indeed if the book of Revelation did not include a description of this crucial event.

In Revelation 19:11–21, Christ, depicted as a Warrior-King riding a white horse, comes with His heavenly army and meets His enemies on the battlefield. The beast and false prophet are "cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone" (verse 20), and their armies are "killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse" (verse 21). Then, an angel descends from heaven, captures the dragon, binds him, casts him into the bottomless pit, and secures the entry so the dragon cannot escape (20:1–3). As long as he's confined to the pit, the dragon can "deceive the nations no more."

The description here does not harmonize with the picture of the Devil as a "roaring lion" who "walks about ... seeking whom he may devour" or as the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience." Nor does it complement the notion of a crime boss who, though incarcerated, has limited but significant influence though contacts outside the prison walls. No, what is described here, in highly symbolic terms, is the complete (though temporary) removal of the Devil's influence. The Devil is out of sight, out of mind—until he shows up again at the end of the Millennium.

Between now and the day Satan is chained and confined, God's people will have to contend with him. Paul's advice to the saints of Ephesus is the best advice for saints today...

"Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11).



# How to Face Hurt

by Bill Glover



Bill Glover

I have been giving a lot of thought and consideration to the hurt people have brought to me. There are things that I feel need to be considered [expressed and then considered] as this subject is approached and evaluated. I am choosing to address these issues in written form privately so that you can evaluate them alone before God without my presence or your feeling you might need to give me some response personally and directly. Any response must be between you and God *alone!*

This is being said advisedly as I have definitely been where you are at this very moment. I am very much aware of your mental and emotional quandary. I truly am aware of the pain you have felt and continue to feel. I am trusting that as we go through this subject all the pieces you need will begin to fall into place and that you will emerge out the other side with a deep and more profound grasp of what is involved here and *why* God *allows* these events in our lives.

It is most important that we remember the point just made in the previous paragraph. It is God who is working here **to ultimately accomplish His will in our lives personally, individually, and spiritually.**

We all know “academically” that God is using the circumstance of our lives to develop *His character* in us. I say “academically” for a specific purpose. We can and often do grasp the “essence” of what God is doing but we all too often fail to grasp *why* He is doing it *the way He chooses to do it*. Grasping and truly understanding this is literally where the “tire rubber hits the road.” When a literal rubber tire suddenly hits the road it either allows the wheel to run its course and do its job or it can “blow out” and potentially do harm. Sadly, too many of us allow the conduct, behavior or attitude of others cause emotional [and even spiritual] “blow outs” in our trek in life.

I am fully aware of the pain and agony humans suffer. I have been there. I too was mortally wounded by those I loved and trusted. These people hurt me tremendously. And *seemingly* (from my point of view) they never recognized nor acknowledged the hurt done to me and others or the pain and agony we suffered. I wanted *them* to *know* this pain! I convinced myself that I needed [had to have] this.

My whole innermost being cried out for a *confrontation* with those who had hurt me and others so badly. I even convinced myself that I would feel better if only I could *force* this confrontation. That just facing these people and expressing all the hurt I had felt would make me whole again and allow me to get on with my life and force them to acknowledge their wrong. Wouldn’t this make us feel *so good*? *So righteous*? *So vindicated*? Confronting others who hurt us in this manner teaches us vindictiveness, self-righteousness, human pride and arrogance. *We showed them that they could not “get away with” hurting us!* Yet God does not approve such actions from us.

Our human reasoning convinces us that *God would be so proud of us for our determination to not let others “get away with” what they said or did to us!* But, is God really going to be pleased with us for this? We must each *ask and answer that question for ourselves before God!* Is this what Christ did in setting us the example? Is this what Stephen (the first Christian martyr) did? Is this what Paul did when he was mistreated? Is self justification what we want to

establish before God?

There are many flaws in the above reasoning. The first flaw is the fact that without realizing it (or at least acknowledging it) we want to place back on this person the pain we have suffered. That is a mild way of saying we want vengeance for our suffering. Yet, in our own peculiar form of self-righteousness we probably cannot truly admit to ourselves that we actually want “revenge.” We argue with ourselves that this would *help us over the hump* and we actually have convinced ourselves that it will also help the person who hurt us. And since we are trying to “help” this other person acknowledge his flaws, then obviously we are serving God in the way He requires! Such thoughts are *pure fallacies* that are sanctioned nowhere in the Bible!

In the overwhelming majority of the cases *we can never convince those who hurt us that they were actually wrong*—or at least “*THAT* wrong.” We are fighting a losing battle even before we begin to fight since such is not our job. *Only God can enable others to see the error of their ways or where and how much they have hurt another!* For us to try and do this ourselves would be totally counterproductive and trying to do God’s job for Him. When do we ever have the right to try and do God’s job for Him?

The second fallacy in this is the fact that we are the one that got hurt and is suffering. Since we are the one who got hurt in this situation, then we are the one who needs help in overcoming it. The fact that we allowed this to hurt us so badly should prove to us that we need to grow in this dimension. That in true reality *it does not [or should not] matter whether others ever learn anything from this situation. We*

**“We need to ask ourselves candidly how important our particular problem really is when compared with ... the plan He is working out on this earth.”**

*like to convince ourselves that we would not have our problem if “the other people” had not done what they did.* Please read that last statement over and over until its complete meaning settles into your mind and emotions. Your salvation depends solely on what you and you alone learn and practice personally and individually in this life. You and you alone answer to God for not only what you do in this life *but also for allowing the conduct of others to thwart God’s plan for you personally.*

If the Almighty God has called you (John 6:44), then you are right now being judged by how you act and react to all the circumstances of your life. Keep in mind that God may not even be working with “these other people” at this time other than merely to use them in teaching you the valuable spiritual lessons. Look at where this places us before God. We are in reality trying to tell God how to do His purpose for us as well as “the other persons.” We are in reality telling God: “Look, God, I hereby recognize that you are failing in your job of working with others, so I need to jump in and do your job for you!” Shall any person contend with his Maker? Should the one being molded into God’s image *question* the means used by the Master Molder? Can we truly challenge God for allowing our own human nature to trip us up?

But it is so easy for us humans to claim, “But I did not deserve this!” By making this claim we totally fail to realize or acknowledge the life of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Did He deserve or warrant what other humans did to Him? Did He cry out on the cross, “Father, look at what these ungrateful humans are

doing to me even though I came to die for them?” Or, “Father, why don’t you *force them* to acknowledge how they are hurting me?”

Or, is it not a fact that He displayed the very character of God under extreme circumstances and pled for God’s mercy for them since they really did not understand what they were doing? He suffered unjustly! Does not the Bible make it crystal clear that we are commended by God *only* when we suffer wrong unjustly and still endure it in patient faith (see 1 Peter 2:19–20)? But now notice verses 21–23, which read: “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, *leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps.* When they hurled their insults at Him, He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats. Instead, *He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.*”

Then as Paul explains further in Romans 8:16–17, we are heirs of God, sons of God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ “if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory!”

We can allow our “hurt” human nature to crowd out the very fundamentals of true Christianity—the very reason we were placed on this earth in human form. The whole creation is patiently waiting and groaning in agony for those few selected human beings to get their calling together and master their own fleshly human nature so as to become the literal sons of God so God can use us to teach His ways to all who have lived throughout the ages (Romans 8:19–23).

When we become obsessed with what others have done to cause us so much pain and anguish we are actually *complaining to God*. We are telling God we resent the fact that He is using these other circumstances to reveal to us our flaws and weaknesses.

We need to ask ourselves candidly how important our particular problem really is when compared with the Almighty God, Jesus Christ, and the plan He is working out on this earth. Is our hurt and our human suffering really that important? How do we suppose Christ will answer us when we appear before Him for judgment, and we drag up the human hurt we experienced in this life? Do we think He will hear us when we protest? “But, Christ, don’t you know how much I suffered because of this person?” We may not have done what this other person did to us. But the mistakes we make are as bad before God as the other person’s, whom we cannot bring ourselves to forgive.

I can tell you what Christ will say. He will remind us that we were given human nature (including the human tendency to get our feelings hurt) as training points. He will tell us in no uncertain words that He intended and expected us to come to Him through the Holy Spirit for the help to overcome and conquer these human traits. He will ask us point blank why we allowed self-pity to engulf us rather than using His Spirit to overcome the hurt. He will not accept our excuses then, and we had better make certain we stop giving these excuses today. We are in this flesh to overcome all these human tendencies. He has given to us His word to show us what our attitude and approach should be. He has pledged to us all the help we need to overcome—but we must be willing to acknowledge these human flaws and to ask His forgiveness when we stumble and fall. *God has not given us the responsibility of forcing another person to acknowledge his or her wrong or to learn his or her lesson!*

Each human being that has ever lived on this earth will eventually have to face these same problems and will be expected to submit to God and overcome. That is the “narrow gate” that leads to life and, sadly,



it seems, few will be willing to find it (at least in this life). There is a price we must pay individually for salvation!

My experience in life has equipped me to help others through this type problem. But God does not want me to try and force this help on any. I can only make it available. I cannot cause anyone to understand these points—*only God can do that*. I encounter situations where I suffer pain for those who come to me because I know their pain, since I have lived it. Some have been able to respond to the guidance given and have been able to face themselves and their attitude in that mirror of God's Word. Others have not reached the point of being able to really look into that mirror or be truly honest with themselves. When I encounter these I merely have to wait on God to enlighten them as I suffer along with them. Many have been the times when I agonized over those who had not yet reached this point. They still want to blame others for their problems. It is true that the mistakes of others caused these points to surface in each one of us, but the real culprit is our own human nature and character that is not yet willing or able to suffer wrongfully as Christ said we must be willing to do if we are to truly follow Him.

### How I Survived

May I share with you how I was able to survive and how I am stronger in God's faith today than ever before?

There was a point in my life that I had hit rock bottom. I was little more than a living, breathing vegetable. I had not been able to pray or study the Bible for over ten years. I wanted to die but was afraid to commit suicide since I knew such was a sin. Even the psychologists and psychiatrists recognized this in me. In desperation, I was finally able to utter a three word prayer: "I need help!" Getting through that three word prayer gave me courage to attempt a five word prayer: "I've got to have help!" Obviously God was waiting for me to reach this point of desperation. Suddenly, as clear as a bell (yet, to this very day, I cannot claim I heard an audible voice or saw anything), there was a calm and clear internal "voice" that said: "Tell me about it—unload!" So I unloaded the anguish, the frustration, the hurt, the disillusionment, and the despair I had experience for almost three decades. I have no ideas how long I spent vomiting out all this hurt and despair. Finally I stopped talking. This calm, clear "voice" then asked, "Is that all?" So I proceeded to unload some more for quite some time. Again I stopped talking, and again this calm, clear internal voice said, "Well, is that all?" This time I said, "That is all I can think of for the moment." The words of this calm, clear "voice" still ring in my very consciousness today. The words from this calm, clear "voice" that made all the difference in my life here and now and will affect me for all eternity in the Kingdom of God are: "What difference are you going to let it make in your life?" That is the question I am bluntly asking each of you at this very moment. Are you going to allow the hurt you suffered to totally disrupt your quest for salvation? Don't you think it wise to pick up that mirror in one hand and the Bible in the other and go to that private place and do some serious soul searching—*your* soul, that is! Confront your innermost being. Your salvation is at stake. **This is serious!**

It was clear that those who knowingly hurt me were clearly jeopardizing their salvation by the decisions they were making. Then God's Spirit led me to ask myself (as I looked into that mirror of my soul, internalizing the very words of Christ) whether I was going to *allow the mistakes of anyone* to prevent me from entering the Kingdom. With the help of God, I had to get rid of all the hurt, bitterness, anger, and resentment caused by what I had experienced and witnessed. I was able to ask myself candidly, "Are

you going to allow the mistakes of another to take your crown and keep you out of the Kingdom?" That is the key question that many of you reading this article must ask yourself and then answer to God's satisfaction!

### Time for a Reality Check

Did you grasp what was just said in the last paragraph? What have you suffered at the hands of others? Even at the hands of men whom you considered ministers of God? This is where I found myself at the very crossroads of my spiritual quest for salvation. And this is where many of you reading this stand *at this very moment*. I personally know of people who committed suicide because of what they encountered in the church. I personally know people who died of liver diseases due to alcoholism because they could not cope with what they suffered at the hands of men claiming to be ministers of God. Do we think all this escaped the attention of God? Do we think these things are not written down in the Lamb's Book of Life and that those who did such things will merely escape in the hereafter as they seemed to escape in this life? What we must keep in mind and never forget is that *God says that vengeance belongs to Him alone—that He will recompense*.

Finally I came to fully understand all those clear statements in the Bible. That Jesus Christ *meant* every statement He made about forgiving others so that God can and will forgive us.

*God cannot forgive us unless and until we have forgiven others*. That **is the way God has set it**, and God does not go back on His word. Burn that principle deeply into your mind and conscience. God cannot and will not forgive you personally UNLESS AND UNTIL YOU ARE ABLE TO FORGIVE OTHERS (Matthew 6:14).

**"Are you going to allow the mistakes of another to take your crown and keep you out of the Kingdom?"**

After the lessons learned from the calm, clear "voice," I was able for the first time to see that those who hurt me reacted humanly—as did David! God's Spirit enabled me to see clearly what is involved here. God nowhere in the entire Bible promised that our trials and tests would always come from outside the church. In fact, there are several New Testament warnings about men who would rise up *from our midst* and do untold damage to us *if we allow this to happen!* God specifically commands us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Too many of us began looking to human beings for the way of salvation. Jesus is our Savior. Ironically many have more faith in their memory of certain ministers than they have in God or Christ.

Time and space do not allow me to tell every detail of that experience regarding the trials shared in this article. But, in my analysis, I ask myself, "What difference will these trials make fifty, one hundred, or a thousand years from now?" The simple answer to that question is that I will either be a spirit being in the very family of God or I will have died and ceased to exist for all eternity! That is just how serious these matters are. We can allow our hurt feelings and human emotions to blow these things totally out of proportion and intensify that pain or we can go to God and ask Him to teach us what we need to learn from these events. If we truly humble ourselves before God and stop giving ourselves human excuses such as self-pity, then God will give us the willingness to face these human emotions squarely and, with His help, master them. This can be done, but it is truly *painful to confront yourself in these matters!*

What this all boils down to is *choices*. And we are the one who must make the choices. We choose to look at these things *as God does* or we choose to look at them from a human perspective. To view

these things as God views them and by responding to God's way *we leave these things behind while retaining the lessons learned*. But if we keep viewing them from a human perspective we will convince ourselves that we are justified for our misery and that *same* misery will eventually destroy us.

In conclusion then we must individually and personally learn how to confront the problems we allowed to develop within our own nature. We will accomplish nothing at all by confronting the person we feel injured us.

Remember that we will be required to answer to God for how well we face "our human nature" and not whether or not we "confronted" the person we feel hurt us.

Some may try to use Matthew 5:23–24 as a basis for confronting someone whom we feel has wronged us. This passage is actually referring to someone who may have been wronged by us or at least feels he was wronged by us. This is referring to a case where someone may feel he has a legitimate grievance against us (us being the Christian). This passage does not say that if we personally have a grievance against another that we must go and confront that person over our personal grievance no matter how legitimate that grievance may be. This passage is clearly showing that we must be willing to show that we are willing to even suffer wrong if need be (see 1 Corinthians 6:7) in order to be reconciled with another and be right with God.

Paul summarizes this entire subject in Romans 12:9–21. Love has to be genuine and we are to love good and hate evil (verse 9). We are to honor others above ourselves (verse 10). We are to be patient in affliction (verse 12). We are to bless those who persecute us—which is impossible for the natural mind to do (verse 14). We are not to repay "evil for evil" (verse 17). And, where it depends on us personally, we are to *live at peace with everyone* (verse 18). God says clearly, "It is mine to avenge—I will repay!" We are not to be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good (verse 21).

Is it not possible that our need to confront those who hurt us will net us nothing more than showing the "beam in our own eye" that we must clear out before we try and remove the "speck from another's eye" (see Matthew 7:1–5)?

We may truly believe it is the other person who has the beam in his/her eye. But, what if God does not see it that way—especially if He is not dealing with the other person at this time? By finding fault with others we are actually *faulting God*—which is a dangerous thing to do.

I continually caution people that it is extremely painful to look into that mirror of God's Word and see ourselves as God sees us—which hurts greatly (see James 1). But when God enables us to do this we begin to find true joy in the Holy Spirit as we call on God's help in removing the beams from our own eyes and the flaws in our own character.

We do *not* answer for the other person. We must not strive for a confrontation which tries to force the other to admit to his/her faults. Forcing another to "admit" his or her "wrong" (whether in hurting us or in any other situation) will *not* actually relieve our pain or give us peace. Without realizing it we are trying to create the circumstance whereby we can say to God: "See, God, I found it necessary to do your job for you since you were failing to do it. It became necessary for *me* to force this person to acknowledge his/her wrong deeds." We all too often fail to remember that we answer *only* for ourselves. We must learn to let God deal with the other person as He knows best how to do this and when. This is the only way that works!

It is my sincere hope and prayer that each of you facing these trials will be able to go to God and gain the help and insight you need to address the problems you face. May God help you.



# The Feast of Tabernacles

## *What It Means and Why You're Invited to Attend*

**The Church of God International has long taught that the annual Feast of Tabernacles pictures the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. And so it does. But it is also an annual reminder of our present “tabernacling.”**

*by Vance A. Stinson*

**G**od commanded Abraham to leave his native country and go to a land that would later be given to him and his descendants as an inheritance (Genesis 12:1–3; 13:14–17). Abraham left his home and went to the land. In time, and after many trying adventures, Isaac was born to him. The promises God had given to Abraham were passed on to Isaac, and then to Jacob, Isaac's son.

Yet, of all the years Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in the land of promise, the *land never belonged to them!* They were “resident aliens” the whole time they were there.

When Abraham's wife Sarah died, the patriarch

ple from Egyptian bondage and brought them into the wilderness, where He gave them His law (Exodus 12–24).

God did not want the children of Israel to forget the wilderness experience. He did not want them to lose sight of who delivered them from bondage and provided for them as they moved from one encampment to another. To keep this lesson-filled experience ever before them, God established the Feast of Tabernacles.

“Also on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land you shall keep the feast of the LORD for seven days; on

the first day there shall be a sabbath-rest, and on the eighth day a sabbath-rest.... You shall dwell in booths [tabernacles, or huts] for seven days. All who are native Israelites shall dwell in booths, *that your generations may know that I made the children of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God*” (Leviticus 23:39, 42–43, emphasis added).

Once in their permanent homeland, the Israelites could recall from year to year how their fathers had dwelt in temporary huts during their wilderness journey—just

as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob before them had done as they looked forward to the “city which has foundations.”

Israel entered the promised land under the leadership of Joshua. “So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers. And not a man of all their enemies stood against them; the LORD delivered all their enemies into their hand. Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass” (Joshua 21:43–45).

At long last, the tabernacling was over...

Or was it?

### The True Rest

The writer of the book of Hebrews tells us that the “rest” Joshua gave Israel was not the ultimate and final rest. Seeing a promise of a future rest in Psalm 95, the writer concludes, “For if Joshua had given them rest, then He [God] would not afterward [in Psalm 95] have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a [Sabbath] rest for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:7–9).

The “Sabbath-rest” is the eschatological “rest” God's people will fully enter when Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God upon this earth. Only then will the true rest begin. And until then *the tabernacling continues for God's people!*

Just as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob dwelt in temporary huts as they looked forward to their permanent dwelling, and just as the children of Israel tabernacled in the desert as they sought a permanent rest, God's people today abide in temporary dwellings, recognizing the transitory nature of their present mortal existence, as they look forward to the establishment of God's Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us of our present, temporary condition, and directs our attention to our permanent home, the “city which has foundations”—the Kingdom of God.

We observe the Feast of Tabernacles today in anticipation of the time when everyone will observe it. Notice how the feast is linked to the millennial reign of Jesus Christ:

“And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem [during the final tribulation prior to the return of Christ] shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to *keep the Feast of Tabernacles*” (Zechariah 14:16, emphasis added).

One day the whole world will be invited to keep the feast, but you are invited to keep it now. So why wait? Why not bring a glimpse of the future into the present?

Do it this year. Celebrate the coming new world. *Keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*



**Brethren at the 2012 Feast of Tabernacles in Australia**

had to purchase property in order to have a place to bury her body (Genesis 23). He was still “a foreigner and a visitor” even after many years of dwelling in the land (verse 4). Yet, he believed God right up to the day of his death, as did Isaac and Jacob.

“By faith he [Abraham] dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.... These [Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, among others] all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:9–10, 13).

The “dwelling in tents” indicates that the patriarchs had no permanent homes there. Their willingness to abide in temporary dwellings reflected their faith in God's promise of a permanent dwelling, the “city which has foundations.”

The patriarchs knew that God could not lie. They knew that even their deaths could not prevent Him from fulfilling His promise. And, indeed, God *will* keep His word! He *will* give the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—just as He promised—for implicit in the promise is the assurance of a resurrection.

### The Tabernacling Israelites

After a long time of dwelling in the land of Canaan, a famine forced Jacob and his sons to move to Egypt (Genesis 46), where they “were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty” (Exodus 1:7). The king of Egypt, concerned that this great people might become a threat to his nation, made slaves of them and “made their lives bitter with hard bondage” (Exodus 1:8–14).

A few hundred years later, God delivered the peo-



**Bill Watson delivering a message at the 2013 Feast in Australia**



**An attentive audience at the 2011 Feast in Jamaica**



# When Things Don't Go Your Way

What do you do when things seem to go wrong in a local Church? What do you do when some person or group of persons become a disruptive influence on the brethren? What do you do when the committee that is leading the church appears to you to be leading in the wrong direction? What do you do if, in your eyes, a local ministers goes sour and begins to act like Diotrefes, or to preach false doctrine, or to abuse his authority?

All these things really can happen to a local church. It's even possible that you can perceive them to have happened when they have not. In other words, there is always a possibility, however remote, that *you* are the one that's out of step.

What do you *do* when things don't go your way?

The answer is deceptively simple. First, you must *examine your way*. Some of us seem to get most of our exercise by jumping to conclusions. Curiously, those who are right most often are frequently the worst about jumping to conclusions. After all, when you've been right eight times out of ten, the odds are in your favor. The danger is that you will remember only the eight and forget about the two times you were wrong! Just because you have been right eight times in a row doesn't mean you are right this time. Some people, on the other hand, always follow the old dictum, "Expect the worst of people, and they'll never disappoint you." If you always expect people to disappoint you, you will probably be right more often than you're wrong. But that doesn't mean you're smart. The real test of your judgment is being able to spot good people, people who *won't* disappoint you, who won't let you and others down.

Sitting opposite people who always assume they're right, are the people who always assume they're wrong. One is just as silly as the other. After all, you have been right once or twice in your life, and it's not written in stone that you have to be wrong this time. It is just as big a mistake to jump to the conclusion that you're wrong as it is to jump to the conclusion that someone else is wrong. What seems relatively rare among human beings is the man who sits back, bides his time, and carefully evaluates the facts in the light of the Bible. David puts it this way: "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto *according to thy word*" (Psalms 119:9).

If you will do your best to objectively look at the facts in the light of the Bible, and if you will seriously *ask God* to help you see what is right, you will come to see it. There has never been a time in my life when I have done this when I have been left in the dark for more than a few weeks.

But what if you have prayed and studied your Bible and you still feel uncertain about what to do? What you must remember is that while God will always show you the difference between right and wrong, *He will not make your decision for you*. There are times when we close our eyes and *pretend* to be in the dark in order to postpone making a decision. "If I only knew what God wanted me to do, I would do it," we insist. But isn't that like asking God to make the decision for us?

When you find yourself on the horns of a dilemma, when you have agonized and prayed looking for God's will, and you're *still* in the dark, what then? The chances are that God has shown you all He is going to show you. What He needs from you now is a *decision*. You can test yourself on this one. If the moment you read this were the moment the decision had to be made, what would that decision be? Remember, there is no more equivocation, no more indecision, no more vacillation allowed. You must decide and you must decide *right now!* You may be surprised. When you realize that it really is decision time after all, there may be no question about what the decision should be.

So the first thing you do when things don't go your way is to examine your way in the light of God's Word and be prepared to make a *decision*.

Second, when things don't go your way, you keep on doing what is right. The herd instinct is powerful in all of us. It is almost impossible to avoid looking around at what other people are doing without being led along in the same direction. Not even Peter was immune. After Jesus had challenged him about his loyalty and his dedication, and had warned Peter about the hardship of his ministry

*We all have high expectations of the Church. After all, it is the Body of Christ. But the Church is composed of human beings, which do human things. Sometimes they don't measure up to our expectations. What then? What should you do when people don't measure up—when things don't go your way?*

by Ronald L. Dart

and even of the death by which he should glorify God, Peter turned around and looked at another disciple and said, "Lord, what shall *this* man do?" A strange question? Not at all. It's just the sort of question most of us would have asked. Jesus answered, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me" (John 21:20–22).

There may be no greater challenge that will ever come your way than to keep on doing what is right when everyone around you seems bent on going his

own way.

If you do these things, it may get a little lonely. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

People have written to me saying that they feel worse when they come home from church than they do when they go. If that is indeed true, then you may have a hard decision to make. Paul had to know when he told the brethren to withdraw themselves from those who walk disorderly that they might wind up alone. And yet Solomon said, "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith." He also said, "It's better to dwell along in the corner of a housetop than in a wide house with a brawling and angry woman." It may be a coincidence that the church is pictured as a woman, but in the unlikely circumstance that the church should become oppressive, argumentative, or depressing, then frankly you're better off "alone in the corner of a housetop."

Needless to say, you should count the cost before you make a decision like that. Is it really worth it to you? Are you *really* being made to feel that bad? Is the issue you're concerned about all that important? And are you really so all-fired sure that you're right after all?

Of course it is not enough for some people to be right; we must also be seen to be right. Our point of view must be vindicated. But vindication is cheap gratification at best. At worst, it can consume your life. Unless God knows you're right, it's worthless anyway. Nothing that anyone else does or thinks need divert you from the right path.

Finally, at all times be careful to avoid offenses. Jesus said, "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). We need to be careful that when we're pursuing our own way we're not causing some little one to stumble in the process.

But of course we usually think of this scripture in terms of not causing offense to someone else. But put yourself in the position of the one being offended. Will it be any comfort to you as you go sinking into the depths of the sea, to know that the one who offended you is tied to the same millstone? Wouldn't it have been better for you not to have been offended at all? David wrote, "Great peace have they which love thy law: *and nothing shall offend them*" (Psalms 119:165).

There is, after all, a difference between right and wrong, and the difference is not all that hard to see if we're honest about it. When things don't seem to be going our way, we need to take a hard look at the difference between right and wrong and be ready to make a decision—even a hard decision, if necessary. Whatever happens, we're going to keep on doing what is right and, if necessary, withdraw ourselves from those who are walking disorderly. We are going to remember that nothing anyone else does or thinks need divert us from the right path. We're going to do everything we possibly can to avoid offending or being offended.

Those moments in life when things don't seem to be going our way are a golden opportunity for us to learn whether we are committed to God's way or are determined to have our own way.

*This article originally appeared in the November-December 1985 issue (Vol. 6, No. 5) of THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS.*

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# The Ministerial Apprenticeship Program in Review

by Stephen Glover

The Church of God International is a trust," remarked Bill Watson at the 2014 Ministerial Apprenticeship Program (MAP) conference that took place in the Cincinnati area over the weekend of June 20-22. Therefore, it is only fitting to begin this article by expressing the deep-felt thankfulness for the faithful brethren who are investing their prayers and support for the preparation of the spiritual leadership of the chartered and affiliated congregations of the Church of God International, along with additional groups and fellowships working together to fulfill the gospel commission to the world. Please join earnestly, praying for the attending candidates and their families: Bob and Sonja Schofield (Australia); Gene and Valerie Lepont (Wichita, Kansas); John and Cathy Monahan (Tonganoxie, Kansas); Morgan & Brenda Pinkerman (Auburndale, Florida); Rick and Grace Dubler (Kitchener, Ontario, Canada); Ken and Marie Allen (Toronto, Ontario, Canada). Other candidates, but unable to attend included Pedro Hall, Dennis Ledford, and George Tenakis. Also, Dennis and Tonya Thomas (Atlanta, Georgia) and Steve and Patty Wyke (Middletown, Ohio) attended as visitors.



Horane Smith

Also, include in your prayers their spiritual sponsors and mentors as they labor to equip these sons of God—helping them to discover where they best will serve in the body of Jesus Christ. The MAP event kicked off on Friday evening with presentations by Bill Watson and George Ramocon on the theme of a "Bond of Brothers." Following introductions from each candidate, Bill spoke about the importance of developing real relationships that produce *genuine friendships*. This involves qualities, such as loyalty and accountability as demonstrated by Jesus and His disciples, whom He called "friends."

George Ramocon followed, presenting the way to build the "Bond of Brotherhood" begins *within* the ministers. It is very much about the temperament of the man and his willingness to experience a "radical transformation." This calling is certainly *not* for everyone, and requires a love for the church that is likened to Christ and His Father. The hotel supplied a variety of comfortable areas for conversation and fellowship as the attendees broke off into smaller groups engaged in lively banter and serious discussions punctuated by bursts of good-natured laughter as a testament to the joy felt by all the participants.

On the morning of the Sabbath, everyone resumed



Participants of the June 20–22, 2014, Ministerial Apprenticeship Program conference

from where they left off the previous night as they interactively participated in the presentation of Horane Smith posing the question, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The example of Cain illustrates in the absence of a *real relationship*, which requires effort and sacrifice, naturally leads to the spirit of murder, which is increasing throughout the world surrounding the spiritual church. It takes the sacrifice of time and effort to build a "team for God." The answer to the provocative question at the outset was repeatedly emphasized with the statement, "I would hope so!" Also, in the morning Wynn Skelton spoke about the new kind of leaders required to advance the cause of Christ, which are those "ruling in the fear of God," willingly surrendered to the "divine authority." The kind of leadership that wields spiritual influence must begin in the family where genuine humility is honed, producing Godly leaders who are "*all in*" for equipping and liberating the children of God. Wayne Hendrix followed up with a "ministerial perspective" from the life of Paul who was clearly called to be an apostle on the road to Damascus. Similarly, the MAP program is designed to identify those *called to ministry* as opposed to the "good ole boy" system, which often produced elders that were selected by human will rather than God's.

Spiritual fellowship for the Sabbath was a real pleasure as everyone gathered once more in the afternoon for a creative service involving sermonettes from the candidates, followed by evaluations offering friendly guidance on ways to improve in effectiveness. There were also two very special musical presentations from the wives of candidates that were very delightful and inspiring. Wynn followed up with some advice on sermon preparation including being aware of sensitivities, not using a sermon for correction, and don't try citing every possible scripture in one message. Daily recalibration is necessary to be immersed in the Word and the power of God. A thoughtful message from George

Ramocon on "Doctrinal Unity" completed the day's instruction. He warned against the multi-cultural world producing a tendency for *doctrinal appeasement* as the way to avoid offenses. Standing firmly opposite, this worldview is the Church, which is called the "pillar" and "foundation" of *truth*. Deemphasizing doctrine is *not the way* to unity, since in actuality it *destabilizes* the church. The key to unity is the development of strong relationships as we all engage in the work of growing in expressing the very "mind of Christ."

On Sunday everyone assembled once more to *solidify* the fraternal bonds between them. Bill Watson led an open discussion about the positive need for rules, regulations, and guidelines in any organization operating in the world. While the Church of God International recognizes God's church is not limited to any single human organization, it is vital to maintain Christ-like order and discipline in the organization. Therefore, it's important all the elders of the Church of God International are in agreement with the *Statement of Beliefs*; and if any questions or concerns should arise, they can be taken through the proper channels to be addressed and answered. This shows respect for the value of the fraternity by being courteous and considerate to the rules of order. With a common mission and vision, the church will be well-positioned to maintain the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Wynn Skelton gave a reference to EGO as an acronym for "Edging God Out." It was unanimously affirmed this approach to leadership is rightly dead or dying, and has no place in the agenda for those gathered to prepare and advance in the training and ordination of a role to Servant Eldership, as defined by the Bible.

Interestingly, the name "Cincinnati" is attributable to a Roman farmer who was called to serve in the Roman army during a time of immense danger. Following his great victory over the enemies of Rome, this humble man refused to be crowned as king, preferring instead to go back and tend the land and tenants who trusted his fidelity.

This bears a clear resemblance to the story of Gideon in the book of Judges. He too fought for the defense of a nation, only to staunchly refuse becoming king to rule over God's chosen people. May the Lord bless all of His people with the humility to surrender to His will in their own lives and in service to the churches of God and ultimately, to all of mankind in God's Kingdom!



Rick Dubler



Wayne Hendrix, citing Paul's Damascus Road experience, expounds the importance of selecting elders through identifying those called to ministry.



## Are We Free?

by Vivian Hall

On Independence Day, I watched through the rain some weary people, some excited and others both dedicated and excited, celebrate their professed freedom. Some folk banded fireworks, while others sang excited songs stating their freedom. A few gave tribute to long-ago ancestors for a battle won. Can we imagine the day when our *real* freedom comes? As we *proclaim*, still we must await God to *ordain* our freedom! Though not in an active state of war, can we say we are truly free?

Many say we are the blessed nation. Some few wonder if we are Babylon. Stoutly we criticize our leaders and think to know what will be! If we are free, free from what? We as a nation teach error. Actually, we are in bondage to our wrongs!

I heard the rendering, “Over the land of the *free* and the home of the *brave*.” Is this true? Is our land free? Are we brave? Webster states “free” is without bondage, while “brave” is exercised faith. Is this really true of us? Are we full of faith without bondage? We are willing slaves to habits, and only by the shed blood of our Savior can we be truly FREE (John 8:34; 2 Thessalonians 3:2; Colossians 1:20).

When God’s government rules this planet, we can *then* live in “the land of the FREE and the home of the BRAVE.”

### True Freedom

Are we free?  
Do we in bondage be?  
If so, “who is free?”  
Are we slaves to the way things are?  
Can we go our own way...how far?  
Is there anything we can do? To be *free, true*?  
If we would win, stop our sin!  
Walk upright, toward true light!  
Learn to *love* and *obey*, *God’s Way*!  
That only is the path for you and me,  
To be fully, *truly* free!

Vivian Hall



Statue of Liberty,  
America’s Icon of Freedom

### The Love of Jesus

The love of Jesus is our life.  
No other love do we survive.  
Many say, “What is that love  
That only comes from Him above?  
How can we tell if the love is there?”  
And can the love be everywhere?  
How can we seek this love divine  
For the Prince of life we wish to find?”

Now friends and loved ones,  
God’s Word does say—  
Can your wish be granted?  
Indeed it may.

So here are the steps to that request,  
That will lead you to happiness...  
First, you believe—and trust in Him,  
For He’s the trunk, and you’re the limb.  
To confess your sins is your next step,  
And to pray and ask His guiding help.  
After this, you’re begotten again,  
And washed away from mortal sin.

Then you will be put on trial,  
But continue and bear life with a smile,  
For it you love Him way down deep—  
His power you will know,  
His word you will keep.  
Now this, my brother, is the combination  
To life anew and true salvation.  
So if this love does interest you—  
Come home to Jesus, and start anew.

Seth Travis Smith

# The Christian and the Law of Moses

## Discerning the Will of God from an Ancient Code of Law

by Vance A. Stinson

If the Law of Moses is still in force today, why don’t we observe *all* Mosaic laws? Do we “pick and choose” which laws to keep and which not to keep? These questions come up frequently, and they deserve an answer.

First, our understanding of terms such as “the Law” and “Law of Moses” should be clarified. The expression “the Law” can mean the Torah, or Pentateuch, which consists of the first five books of the Bible. The same term (and the related phrase “Law of Moses”) can also be defined as the *regulatory system* that defines the parameters of the Covenant God made with the nation of Israel. If we have the latter definition in mind, then “the Law” is essentially synonymous with “the Covenant.” This was the law that was “added because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the [Abrahamic] promise was made” (Galatians 3:19). It served as a “tutor [custodian—RSV] to bring us [Israelites, Jews] to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). Once Jews become true believers in the Messiah, they “are no longer under a tutor [custodian]” (verse 25).

When Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets.... Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled” (Matthew 5:17–18), He meant that the Law and the Prophets—the Holy Scriptures—would continue to be a valid source of divine revelation for as long as heaven and earth continued to exist. Jesus *did not* mean that every law of the Mosaic Covenant would remain in force indefinitely. That would make no sense, since many of those laws *never did* apply to people outside the Covenant.

When Paul speaks of the Law as a “custodian” that was temporarily “added,” he was speaking of the Law as a regulatory *system*. He was not saying that the Law (Torah) was no longer a valid source of revelation and instruction for Christians.

The Mosaic Covenant contained many features that pertained exclusively to the people under the Covenant. But it also contained many *universal* features—laws and commandments (moral precepts) that are always, and in every place, in effect. The Ten Commandments, for instance, while stated in terms significant to Israel’s history and experience (see Exodus 20; Deuteronomy 5), represent ten universal moral categories. They were in *full force* long before the Mosaic Covenant was established, and they remain in full force today.

Even the case laws of the Law of Moses are instructional in that each is founded on a universal moral principle. Therefore, to understand how or whether a particular law applies today, you must discern that law’s *purpose*. Circumcision does not apply, and never has applied, to all men at all times, but (beginning in the time of Moses) only to men seeking membership in the Mosaic Covenant (or to the baby boys of people under that covenant). If there is no longer a Mosaic Covenant (cf. Hebrews 8:13), there is no need for circumcision. In that case, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision count for anything (Galatians 5:6; 6:15). But the parapet and oxen laws have a different purpose (see Deuteronomy 22:8; 25:4). Those are situational regulations. They’re not ceremonial laws; they’re practical, and they have a moral dimension.

The parapet law was for people who used their rooftops for work and leisure. Failing to install a parapet could result in a charge of criminal negligence if someone fell off the rooftop. Today, the tops of buildings are used for weddings, parties of various sorts, family or special group gatherings, and other events. Some have swimming pools, bars, and other such features. The owner of the building could be fined heavily for letting people use the top of his building if it didn’t have a wall or fence to keep people from accidentally falling off. And if the owner allowed a group to party on the unsafe top of his building, and someone stumbled over the edge and fell to his death, the owner could face criminal negligence charges. The moral dimension of that law is that you should care about your neighbor enough to make sure he’s safe when he’s on your property. Here’s another way of putting it: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

If you have an ox, you should feed him. If you work him by having him tread out the grain all day, you should feed him accordingly. This was not as much about the ox as it was about the owner of the ox. A cruel, self-serving man would hold back on feeding the ox; a kind, conscientious person would not. Such cruelty/neglect or kindness/care expressed toward a working animal would carry over to human relationships. This law tells us we should be kind and caring, not cruel and negligent.

The Law of Moses is chock full of universal moral principles and examples like those above. The moral dimension of the Law is such that Jesus could say, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is [this sums up (NIV)] the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12).



# In Loving Memory



**Noni McVey**

**Noni Patricia McVey**  
January 3, 1955 – July 14, 2014

CARMEL, CA—On July 14, 2014, Noni Patricia McVey passed away at her home, after a two-year battle with cancer. She was 59. Noni's priority in life was to be a servant of God. She constantly sought a relationship with God and put her trust in Him. Her faith in Him was evident not only in the words she spoke but in her actions and interactions with others.

Noni was born in Phoenix, Arizona on January 3, 1955. She was the second child of Loren and Patricia Chamberlain. As a child she loved taking care of her many dogs and was a regular on Arizona's Miss C Morning Program for Children.

Often described as warm and loving, Noni had the ability to make a new person in a group feel welcome. Her ability to listen and empathize created instant connections between her and new acquaintances.

Noni met her husband, Dana, in 1975 at a church dance in Squaw Valley. When it was lady's choice, she asked him to dance. In that moment, she knew he was the man she would marry. Three months later they were engaged and then married in 1977. Noni and Dana moved to Carmel in 1985 with their two daughters, Elizabeth and Jordana.

Noni was a stay-at-home mom and professional volunteer. She was always volunteering. Throughout her children's education in the Carmel Unified School District she was on the PTA, often as president. She spearheaded many valuable programs, including the art docent and music program at Carmel River School.

Noni was a leader and a hard-worker. She expanded her good work to the greater community, joining the board of National Charity League and soon becoming president. Touched by the aftermath of 9/11, she collected handmade blankets and delivered them to the traumatized children of those lost on 9/11. Soon after she founded the Monterey Bay Chapter of Project Linus, collecting handmade blankets and delivering them to seriously ill and traumatized children at CHOMP and throughout the community.

Noni spent decades teaching and writing curriculum for the church's children's ministry. She held yearly seminars for the women's ministry, inspiring women with her passion and love of God. When she noticed the needs of the young adults in the church were not being met, she started a ministry and magazine (INFUSE) for them.

In 2005, Noni became a licensed realtor. She hung her license at Keller Williams and a few years later at Sotheby's. It wasn't long before she became the president of the Women's Council of Realtors and the Monterey County Association of Realtors, raising money for scholarship funds and women's shelters.

Noni was dependable, a stickler for organization and a clean home, sure to surprise one with use of an uncommon word or phrase, and full of energy and happiness. She enjoyed cooking and hosting dinner parties, gardening, knitting, and spending time with her family.

Noni is survived by Dana McVey, her husband of 37 years; daughters, Elizabeth Barnett and Jordana McVey; grandchildren, Quinn and Cora Barnett; parents, Loren and Patricia Chamberlain; and brothers, Roger and Brit Chamberlain; also survived by many extended family and friends.

A service to celebrate Noni's life was held on Tuesday, July 29, 2014, at the Carmel High School Theatre, 3600 Ocean Avenue, Carmel, CA 93923.

**Gary Palmer**  
September 16, 1950 – July 11, 2014

Funeral services for Gary Palmer were held Monday, July 14, 2014, at Rose-Neath Chapel in Minden, LA. Dr. Don Ward officiated. Interment followed at Point Chapel Cemetery in Doyline.

Gary was born September 16, 1950, in Minden to Neil and Eva Palmer and died July 11, 2014 in Minden. He lived a life near and dear to family, full of idealism, pragmatism, spiritual beliefs, and faith. He was known for his gifts in comedic and dramatic poetry writing. Gary had an affinity for history and was an avid reader. He loved telling stories and jokes. With sharp analytical skills, Gary greatly enjoyed his work as a draftsman for the majority of his life.

His father, Neil Palmer, preceded him in death.

He is survived by his mother, Eva D. Palmer of Minden; daughters, Carmen



**Gary Palmer**

Deborah Smith and husband Keith of Gentry and their children, Cheyenne Dakota Smith and Laramie Laredo Smith of Arkansas, Maria Danielle Palmer and friend Kyle Love of Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Gary and his mother were members of the Shreveport-Bossier, LA congregation of the Church of God International.

## My Brother

*Dedicated to the Memory of Gary Palmer*

For forty-seven years I've known this man,  
He's been my friend, and he's held my hand.

Our growing years as teens we spent,

In times of comfort and discontent.

Wondering how this world could be,

Such a place, for humanity.

Yet we had both come to understand,

That this was all part of the Master's plan.

For through this world, we must go,

And learn the things, that would help us grow.

And grow we did, in truth and age,

And with each new year, we turned the page.

Time travels on and waits for none,

But sees us through the things we've done.

Life's door is here, and now you see,

Opportunity knocks for you and me,

To grow the fruits that make us men,

To wake us up, to see the end.

And so we travel this narrow road,

In this big world, we won't let go.

But then we must remember well,

What the Teacher gave us, clear as a bell.

And look straight through without regret,

And know that God is with us yet.

And though our time on earth grows dim,

We have the faith, the hope, the dreams;

We have the truth, and with that said,

It is not going to bother me when I'm dead.

So now I must say a farewell and goodbye,

To my great friend, and a brother in Christ.

Gary would put it this way:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ,

We are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:19).

So now we are ever so looking forward to the resurrection.

We are waiting and watching for the return of our Savior,

To be in His kingdom and reign with Him as His Brother,

And with Him as our King.

No, his time is not yet, but it is so close. We must learn to let go and understand that he is at peace in both his life and his death. Mr. Palmer, I have never had a closer brother than you, and I love all my brothers dearly. From me to you Gary... Thank you for being my true friend always.

*Ken Bounds*

**Dorothy Dean Wright Cave**  
February 8, 1925 – July 3, 2014

Funeral services for Dorothy Dean Cave, 89, of Sulphur Springs were Tuesday, July 8, at West Oaks Funeral Home in Sulphur Springs, TX. Charles Groce officiated. Interment was at Yantis Cemetery following the service.

Dorothy died Thursday, July 3, at her residence. She was born on February 8, 1925 in Wichita Falls, Texas to Vernon Hollie and Eva Mae Ward Wright. She married Virgil Mac Cave on January 7, 1947 at Wellington, Texas. They worked together for Southwestern Explosives for over 22 years and enjoyed their retirement together until his death on January 3, 1995. Her parents, her brothers (Hollie "Sonny" Lavern Wright and Vernon Parnell Wright),



**Dorothy Cave**



and her sisters (Naomi Rose Smith and Norma Jean Davis) preceded her in death. She was a member of the Tyler congregation of the Church of God International.

Dorothy is survived by her nieces, Linda (J. D.) Prosise of Kempner, Debra Wright of Chicago, Mary Smith of Modesto, CA, Sherry Little of Odessa, Norma (Bill) Beech and Diane (Bobby) Blackwell of Quitman; nephews, Bobby Wright of Miller Grove, James (Debbie) Davis of Jefferson, Hugh Dwayne (Carol) Smith of Gilroy, CA, Michael (Maryhelen) Smith of Modesto, CA, Gary (Donna) Davis of Kileen, Henry Davis of Longview, Bobby Cave and Larry Cave of Odessa. She is also survived by cousins Fred (Roberta) McCawley, Billy Paul Wright, Marcel Ward, Kenneth (Majorie) Ward, Jack Ward, and many great nieces and nephews.

Dorothy was a vital part of our fellowship for many, many, years. She will be remembered for her dedication, zeal, friendliness, and unassuming presence. She had a “grandmotherly” demeanor, showing love for everyone who came to church. Of all those who drive some distance to fellowship with us regularly, no one drove farther than Dorothy—about an hour and a half each way. If she wasn’t at church you knew she wasn’t feeling well or was out of town. Over the years she became “famous” for her homemade taco soup, her signature dish that all of us looked forward to her bringing to the pot-luck dinner we have after church. Dorothy was a remarkable woman whose life was centered on a profound belief in the Scripture and the promise of Jesus’ return. When she learned she had leukemia (she was 82 years old) she chose to let “nature take its natural course,” for after all (as she said), “What’s so bad about going to sleep and waking up to see Jesus?” Dorothy was very dear to us and she is already missed. We became a better church because she was such a good person.

Eunice M. Reed

January 29, 1941 – July 10, 2014



**Eunice Reed**

Eunice M. Reed, 73, of Vilonia, AR, died July 10, 2014. She was born January 29, 1941, in Cabot to the late Dan and Hazel Webb. Mrs. Reed was also preceded in death by her two brothers, Floyd Webb and Billy Floriana. Eunice was a member of the Church of God International.

She is survived by her husband of 56 years, Julius Reed; two daughters, Donna Cook (Keith) of Little Rock, Barbara Reed of Vilonia; son, David Reed (Gina) of North Little Rock; grandchildren, Sarah Sutton, Kenneth Cook, Ronnie Reed, Wesley Copeland; great-granddaughter, Brylie Sutton; brother, Lloyd Webb; and numerous cousins.

Tuesday, July 15, family, friends, and members of Eunice’s spiritual family gathered at Freedom Church in Little Rock to celebrate the life of this sweet, gentle, and kind lady.

“Although it was a time of mourning,” says Pastor Ron Elkins, “it also was a time to reflect on the many memories we all will carry with us all the days of our appointed time. We all took comfort in the scriptures pertaining to the future for Eunice after her resurrection into God’s Kingdom. May we all overcome till the end, just as Eunice has.”

Rose Irene Mesko

July 22, 1920 – February 7, 2014



**Irene Mesko**

Mrs. Rose Irene Mesko, 93, of Wampum, PA (formerly of Ellwood City, PA), passed away on Friday, February 7, 2014, following a brief illness.

Mrs. Mesko was born on July 22, 1920, to the late Eli Markus, Sr. and Agnes Vargo Markus. She graduated from Lincoln High School with the class of 1938. During World War II, she worked for the WPA. She was a member of the Church of God International in Cranberry Twp. Irene was well known for her baking and cooking skills, and for the wonderful wedding cakes she made for many couples in the area. She also enjoyed gardening and sewing. She was a Rose in a world of thorns.

Mrs. Mesko is survived by her daughter and son-in-law, Mary Agnes (Ronald) Stuck of Wampum; her three sons and daughter-in-law, Stephen A. Mesko and Jane Weatherby of Wayne Twp., James (Peggy) Mesko of New Castle, and Joseph G. Mesko of Franklin Twp. She is also survived by her 11 grandchildren, Steve, Jason, Lisa, TJ, and Joe Mesko, Kimmie Gasser, Kandy Kline, Kellie Eisenburg, Jess Dick, Kris Quear, and Traff Couch; 20 great-grandchildren, Kayla, Ava, Tyler, Sierra, Coleen, Hayden, Domenic, April, Eli, Leighann, Kaylah, Corey, Aubry, Matthew, Bri, Kalub, Lex, and

Logan; and her great-great-grandson, Sam.

She was preceded in death by her parents; her husband, Steve Mesko, whom she married on January 10, 1942, and who passed away on October 8, 2003; and her three brothers, Eli Markus, Jr., Elmer Markus, and William Markus. Steve Mesko was also a member of the Church of God International.

The funeral service was officiated by Wayne Hendrix and Bill Watson.

*Submitted by Ronald Bachner*

Kellie Gay Thomas

January 20, 1962 – June 24, 2014

The friends and family of Kellie Gay Thomas were deeply saddened upon learning of Kellie’s tragic and untimely death on June 24, 2014.

Funeral services for Kellie were Sunday, June 29, at Blanchard-St. Denis Funeral Home in Natchitoches, LA, with Vance Stinson officiating. Interment was at L.C. Weaver Cemetery in Campiti.

Kellie was born January 20, 1962 in Natchitoches. Those of us who knew her will remember her for her gregarious personality, together with her charming smile and wonderful sense of humor. She enjoyed joking and kidding and laughing, and she was a good conversationalist. She was an avid reader, loved music, enjoyed cooking, and had exhibited exceptional artistic skills through her paintings.



Kellie Thomas

She was known for her fond affection for animals, especially her two cats, which she loved dearly. She was also known for her kindness toward other people and compassion for the downtrodden.

Kellie is survived by her parents, Bobby Thomas and Shirley Friday Thomas of Campiti; her sisters, Debbie Ebert and husband Alan of Campiti, and Kim Caswell and husband Wayne of Keatchie; her niece, Brandy Kaiser and husband Adam of Saline; and one great nephew, Max Kaiser.

She was a member of the Shreveport-Bossier congregation of the Church of God International. We miss her and look forward to seeing her again ... in that great day when “this mortal has put on immortality,” when “death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54).

Thalia Clare Hufton

May 28, 1953 – June 27, 2014

Some years ago, Thalia Hufton wrote the following regarding her memorial service: “I want this service to give people a chance to say goodbye, a place to cry and hug one another, a place to sing because they knew me and know that I will be waiting for them at the Resurrection. I want flowers and children everywhere.” On Sunday, July 13, 2014, Thalia’s request was fulfilled, as hundreds of people gathered at the United Church of God East Texas building in Big Sandy to celebrate her many years of service and a life well lived.



Thalia Hufton

Thalia was born May 28, 1953, in Salem, MO to David Leslie Martin and Alice Ilene Rowan Martin. A resident of Hawkins, TX, Thalia was a loving midwife for 32 years in the East Texas area and assisted over 1,700 births. She also enjoyed gardening, scrapbooking, Bible study, traveling, and connecting with other people. Her passion was helping women become mothers.

Thalia died June 27, 2014, following a brief illness.

She is survived by her husband, Ian Hufton; three children, Philip, Amie, and Lora; and her dog Brutus.

“She was a bright light,” writes Brandy Webb, “and even though her light is temporarily dimmed, her legacy is still shining.... Until we meet again at the last trump, goodbye Thalia.”

So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”—1 Corinthians 15:54



# Looking from a Rainbow

by Dianne Prather-Tuskes



Dianne Prather-Tuskes

**D**o you ever get frustrated when you have to repeat yourself or reword what you want to say because the person you are talking to just doesn't get it. Patience is a virtue, and a lesson I would have to say every one of us repeats each and every day throughout our lives. It is an attribute that is almost thrust upon us to refine and polish tirelessly and be tested again and again throughout this journey called life. No one can escape it, and you would be foolish to say it is not a bother to you.

We all are born human, the same in so many ways. But take a closer look and we are not all the same. It's easy to look upon a herd of cattle and just see cattle, a flock of birds and just see birds, a school of fish and just see fish. But when we stand in a crowded market place and look around, we not only see people, but we know that the moment we interact with another we interact with an individual. We are not created as robots, but we are all born just a little different from the person next to us in that market place. And without actually realising it, we must use all the skills we unknowingly can muster to converse with that other individual. What do I mean? Well from our cradles we have travelled quite a way to learn how to speak our native tongue, with the correct sentence structure, vocal inflections, and proper mannerisms. We have learned how to use the various facial expressions and correct body language that will reflect what we are trying to portray. That's quite a road trip we've travelled and most of us don't even know it. For the majority, it kind of just happened, no big deal...something that just came naturally. But for a certain percentage of the population, well, these things don't come so easy and they struggle to be understood and falter to recognise social cues that, for most, are a norm.

I titled this piece, "Looking from a Rainbow"; the reason will become clear in a while. For some people, things don't come as naturally and easily as they do for most. Having previously worked in education, I became aware of the steady rise in children who have learning difficulties and impairments, many falling under what is now classified as the Autism Spectrum. For a long time the word *autism* was almost taboo. Many were not willing to know or deal with a child who was autistic because of the extreme differences in how they could react and how it appeared or didn't appear they viewed the world. But then it became apparent that there was a growing number of children who seemed very much the same as most, but were not...they still didn't fit in with the majority. They were quirky, obsessive, physically and socially awkward, anxious and hypersensitive, and, well, just different. Then it came, a name, "Aspergers," or High Functioning Autism; a reason why these kids, my kid, was...well, different. A pigeon hole was created, a slot to place the different ones. But diagnosis doesn't come easy. Many paediatricians are reluctant or not well informed on how to recognise or diagnose Aspergers from an early age, and therefore referrals for further tests are not given, with many parents struggling to get support for their child through their most formative years, until puberty sets in and further attempts are usually made for diagnosis because other symptoms may appear once hormones kick in. And why the difficulty to recognise this? Well, autism is like a rain-

bow. It can be broad and vast and have many bright colours all on the spectrum. And sometimes there can be those double-decker rainbows, and on the very rare occasions, the triple-deckers. Or, the rainbow can be faint and small, with only part of it shining through.

What does all this mean? Well, someone who falls within the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can't fit in a box...one size fits all. They are unique as all of God's children are. But, I guess you could say, their brains are just wired a little differently. A short visit to the doctor here and there is usually not enough to see what is all too apparent to those close to them, like their parents and family. Teachers, frustrated with not being able to understand why little Johnny cries each time the class claps, often struggle with social outbursts when he can't share his colours because he needs them to finish his artwork in a very systematic way; and ponder why he is always a million miles away and unable to focus on what she is teaching the class, never able to finish his work in the allotted time. But ask him to talk about his favourite topic (usually his obsession) and out rattles scientific names and words as if he had an encyclopaedia printed on the inside of his eyelids. Ask him why he did something or answered his questions the way he did and you soon realise that little Johnny is looking at the world quite differently than you and I, and not at all "within the box."

Diagnosis needs to be thorough, with an extensive case history made from the womb to the present. Many ASD children slip through the cracks and are not properly diagnosed because of haste and are therefore said by others to be lazy, misbehaved, and obstinate. But if parents are diligent and understanding they can help their child to grasp the many traits that are classed as acceptable in life's arena and grow up fitting in pretty well, even though somewhat awkwardly. But social cues are usually the hardest to work out. Things are usually black and white to these children and words spoken and actions made are usually taken quite literal. Jokes and pranks are not easily understood, and these kids are usually picked on or left out from playground groups because they seem more difficult to get through to, or fall apart if things get too hard. ASD children usually play better one on one; so find a child who is patient and will accept them for who they are and you usually have a loyal friend for life.

God has given each person his or her own unique abilities and gifts. If we could all take the time to look through someone else's eyes, we would recognise them. In some uncanny way, I think that Aspergers can be viewed as a gift. Many scientists, musicians, engineers, artists, and mathematicians have Aspergers and excel in their field because of their out-of-the-box approach, obsessive tendencies, photographic memories, and quirky ways. Just like someone who has Aspergers and looking from their rainbow, I think it's part of God's plan to make everyone like the many different colours, so we can all fit on His spectrum, His rainbow, and share the beautiful gifts He gives to each and every one of us.

Recently my son had to do his first grading in karate and seemed reluctant to want to change from white to yellow belt. I was getting a little annoyed with his attitude as the grading day approached and stopped to consider why he was acting this way. Patience was needed, not a short word or rebuke because it didn't make sense to me. So, I asked him why he was feeling anxious and sad, not about doing the grading, but changing his belt colour to yellow.

He said, "Now Mum, I know you might think I'm crazy, but I don't want to lose my white belt. Don't you think we should all start as black belt?" I slipped up again and my patience waned and I was short and said, "Of course you can't start off as black belt; you need to train many years to earn a black belt." But I should have waited and practiced that much needed attribute, because what came next sounded so beautiful that I just wanted to hug him. He said, "But Mum, we need to step out of darkness and move into the light. All of God's colours are in my white belt. I don't want to lose them." It is quite amazing that just like the glorious gifts we receive from God, all the beautiful colours of a rainbow come from white light. Instead of going up and achieving the colours, I guess my son felt like they were going to leave him one by one until all there was, was blackness. What a gift, at his age, to see things from such a special and unique perspective. Well, having realised my misunderstanding and impatience I could only hold my son and tell him how right he was. And then I told him that he could keep his colours. No one was going to take them away from him. But they needed to come out and shine from the white light to show the beautiful rainbow of lessons he will learn along the way. And when he reaches black belt he must look back at all the colours on that rainbow and know that there is always more to learn, remembering wherever there is darkness we must always strive to fill it with light. He was happy with that analogy, and all was well again.

We need to always improve ourselves, and patience is what I believe we should pray for the most, because with it comes understanding, compassion, charity, and love. Just like the beauty that can be found in each colour on a rainbow, so too can we find with patience the beauty in us all.

## About the author...

*My name is Dianne, and my husband Zoltan and I, along with our son Danjard, live in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia, and have been members of the Church of God International for over a decade. Danjard had God's blessing requested for him in front of the Australian congregation on the Last Great Day 2002, aged 11 weeks, by Herb Haupt and Frank Marang. We trust in our Lord that our son will hold fast to God's truth through his walk in life as we know that He, our Lord Almighty will forever watch over all His children through their earthly journeys.*

*I have always yearned for the truth and in my life have turned down a few wonky paths, but have always felt God's presence steering me back on track. I have had many varied jobs throughout my life but nothing I feel has been more important than the role I am in now...a mother...and a wife. The structure of the family is the most useful guide in dealing with all life's endeavors. It is the best schoolyard there is.*

*After leaving the public education system over a year and a half ago, I have concentrated my efforts into the full time homeschooling of our son. Although this can be challenging at times, the benefits far outweigh the difficulties. This can be said about our Christian walk, and the prize we will receive if we endure to the end.*

*I have always felt privileged to be part of God's family, both in the spiritual and in the physical sense. I believe it is encumbered upon every Christian to assign it their duty to make a difference in this world with whatever gifts God has bestowed upon them and to share His message and truth of His coming Kingdom.*



# Questions & Replies

by Vance A. Stinson

## Will the real “Elijah” please stand up?

**QUESTION:** I have studied the book “Who Is the Prophesied Elijah?” Comparing words in Luke Chapter 1, Malachi 3:1 & 4:5, it is a bit difficult for me to consider timings mentioned are the same, especially while reading the latter word “...before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord,” one before Christ’s ministry and a second one before He comes as Lord of Lords & King of Kings. — CM (*sent by email*)

**REPLY:** The booklet makes plain that there could be an end-time “Elijah,” but all we can say for sure is that Jesus identified John the Baptist as the “Elijah” prophesied to come. So, yes, there may be a forerunner for the Second Coming of Christ, as well.

However, it should be remembered that there have been many times of divine intervention in history, and each one was a “day of the Lord.” When the army of General Titus besieged Jerusalem and destroyed the temple in AD 70, that was a “great and dreadful day of the Lord.” It was prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 23–24. He connects the corruption of the religious leaders and rebellion of Jerusalem with the impending desolation (Matthew 23:33–39). So John, as the prophesied “Elijah,” prepared the way before Christ’s coming and *that* particular manifestation of the “day of the Lord.” John’s warnings of divine judgment were probably not restricted to the final judgment. He most likely had in view the impending desolation of Jerusalem, as well. When he saw the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” (Matthew 3:7). He went on to say, “And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (verse 10). That’s a good description of what happened to the Jews in AD 67–70. During that period, the Jewish followers of Jesus escaped. Apparently, there was not a single Christian left in Jerusalem when the Roman army moved in and destroyed the temple. In the end, thousands of Jews were crucified, and Titus would have pursued the survivors and wiped them out completely had he not been ordered to call off the campaign.

There will be a final “day of the Lord,” or time of divine intervention, which will culminate in the Second Coming of Christ. There will be powerful ministries in place at that time, including that of the “two witnesses” (Revelation 11) and the “three angels” (Revelation 14). Perhaps one or both of these will in some way fulfill an end-time “Elijah” ministry, as it appears that both are designed to prepare the way for the Lord’s return.

## Are special miracles released during Passover?

**QUESTION:** Are there special miracles that God release to us during Passover? .... Are there financial or generation curses on people today? — VP (*sent by email*)

**REPLY:** If by “special miracles” you mean the “seven Passover blessings” prosperity preachers connect with sending them a special Passover offering, the answer is NO! The seven blessings are drawn from Exodus 23:20–29, but the promises in this text are not connected particularly to Passover, and they pertain to ancient Israel, not twenty-first century Christians.

Here is the full text:

“Behold, I send an Angel before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries. For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. You shall not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do according to their works; but you shall utterly overthrow them and completely break down their sacred pillars.

“So you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water. And I will take sickness away from the midst of you. No one shall suffer miscarriage or be barren in your land; I will fulfill the number of your days.

“I will send My fear before you, I will cause confusion among all the people

to whom you come, and will make all your enemies turn their backs to you. And I will send hornets before you, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before you. I will not drive them out from before you in one year, lest the land become desolate and the beasts of the field become too numerous for you.”

This text pertains specifically to Israel’s conquest of Canaan and the conditional blessings that will follow once Israel takes possession of the land. Yet, certain prosperity preachers have drawn a list of seven blessings from the above text, connected these blessings with the Passover, and applied them to our time today. The “seven Passover blessings” are as follows:

1. God will assign an angel to His people (verses 20, 23).
2. God will be an enemy to the enemies of His people (verse 22).
3. God will give prosperity to His people (verse 25).
4. God will take sickness away from His people (verse 25).
5. God will give long life to His people (verse 26).
6. God will bring increase and inheritance (verse 30).
7. God will give a special year of blessing (verse 31).

According to televangelist (and prosperity preacher) Benny Hinn, “You can unleash these seven blessings in your life today!” How? “It all begins when you come before the Lord with a Passover offering.” Hinn goes on to say, “If you stand before the Lord with your Passover offering, He has promised the seven blessings of the Passover.” He even goes so far as to replace “His people” (in the above list) with “you” and “your,” suggesting that these promises apply to the individual believer who sends his or her “Passover offering” and begins “trusting God specifically for the seven blessings” of the Passover.

This is obviously nothing but a ploy to get people to send money—and it’s downright SHAMEFUL! There is no excuse for such gross deception through mishandling the Scriptures and creating false hopes in people in pain or poverty or suffering from terminal diseases!

God blesses His people in various ways, and certainly there are spiritual benefits associated with celebrating the redemptive work of Christ and unfolding plan of God through observance of festivals and holy days, but there are no biblical grounds for expecting God to “unleash” upon individual Christians the material blessings conditionally promised to the nation of Israel.

You also asked, “Are there financial or generation curses on people today?”

The “curses” God warned Israel about were tied to the covenant He made with them. They consisted primarily of a withdrawal of His protection and blessings. The curses would continue as long as the children continued in the sinful practices of the fathers. God says that He visits “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands [of generations] to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5-6). Notice carefully that the curse is upon *only* those generations that *hate* God. Further, it is important to remember that several generations—the fathers, their children, their children’s children, etc.—may live *at the same time*. Several false teachers today—often the same ones who talk about special Passover blessings, etc.—also talk about breaking “generational curses” and emphasize financial blessings. My advice is to ignore them. The health-and-wealth gospel and word-faith movement is full of unbiblical ideas.

## Who are the twenty-four elders?

**QUESTION:** Who are the 24 Elders in Revelation? — GF (*sent by email*)

**REPLY:** The twenty-four elders are described in Revelation 4:4:

“Around the throne [of God] were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads.”

Since these beings are called “elders,” some have assumed the twenty-four elders are either human saints or a symbolic representation of the church, which is led by human elders. But these “elders” are almost certainly angelic ministers, as are the four “living creatures” who serve with them (verses 6–11), and as are cherubim, seraphim, and other “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those [humans] who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14).

The word “elder” denotes not only age but wisdom as well. As members of the heavenly court, these heavenly beings reflect the wisdom of the One “who sits on the throne” (verses 9–10).

Some have thought the “new song” in Revelation 5:9–10 indicates the twenty-four elders are glorified humans. The elders sang, “You...have redeemed *us* to God by Your blood *out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation*, and have made *us* kings and priests to our God; and *we* shall reign on the earth.”

It should be noted that the four living creatures, which clearly are not human beings (compare their description in Revelation 4:6–8 with that of the cherubim of Ezekiel 1 and 10 and the seraphim of Isaiah 6), sing the “new song” along with the twenty-four elders.

It should also be noted that the terms “us” and “we” are translated “them” and “they” in other modern English translations. The twenty-four elders and four living creatures are singing *on behalf of* the “redeemed” (verse 9), but they are not themselves the redeemed.

**Continued, back page**



When, where, does the marriage supper of Christ take place?

**QUESTION:** Will the marriage of Christ take place in heaven or on earth? If it takes place on earth, who will officiate, and when will it take place?  
— *Chimayo, NM*

**REPLY:** We are not told where the “marriage supper of the Lamb” (Revelation 19:9) takes place, so I cannot give you a definitive answer. However, marriage feasts usually involve invited guests. If the guests at the marriage supper include *mortal* human beings—the remnant of the land of Israel (Zechariah 14:2, 5)—then the marriage supper will take place *here on earth*—at Jerusalem. At least, there is no compelling reason for believing it won’t be on the earth.

But remember, the biblical descriptions of Christ as bridegroom and the church as bride are *metaphorical*. The Bible uses various metaphors to describe the relationship of Christ and the people of God. For instance...

- Christ is the husband and the church is the wife (Ephesians 5:22–23)
- Christ is the head and the church is the body (Colossians 1:15–18; 1 Corinthians 6:15; Ephesians 1:22–23).
- The church is a building and Christ is the chief corner stone (Ephesians 2:20).

In addition, members of the church are Christ’s brothers and sisters (Hebrews 2:11; Revelation 12:5, 17; Romans 8:14–17). This, of course, is not a mere metaphor.

The “marriage supper,” therefore, may be some kind of celebration of the uniting of Christ and His glorified people; or, it is possible that it metaphorically refers to the millennial reign. There are too many uncertainties to be dogmatic about this subject. If the marriage supper metaphorically refers to a celebration of the uniting of Christ with His glorified church, then it obviously takes place shortly after Christ gathers the saints unto Himself.

Where did all the races come from?

**QUESTION:** The first human beings were Adam and Eve, right? We all came from them, right? So tell me this: How come there are so many different races of people? There are black and white and everything in between. How do you explain this? Where in the Bible does it tell us how this happened? Also there is this “mark of Cain.” What was that? Was it just for him personally, or is there a race of people today with that same “mark”? — *T.M. (sent by email)*

**REPLY:** Yes, the first human beings were Adam and Eve; and yes, we all came from them. The explanation for how there could be different races is simple. Adam and Eve’s DNA contained all the genetic information that presently exists in the human race. The families that descended from them eventually settled in different locations around the world. Over time, different genetic traits became dominant in the different groups. Each group, within just a few generations, developed its own distinct physical features. All the races we see today could have easily come about within just a few generations.

You may remember the report about the “two-tone twins” born in April 2005 in Nottingham, UK. The twins’ parents, Kylee Hodgson and Remi Horder, have white mothers and black fathers. One of the twins, Remee, is blue-eyed and “white”; the other, Kian, is brown-eyed and “black.” The birth of these beautiful twin girls is powerful proof that the emergence of the different races did not require tens of thousands of years of gradual evolutionary change and adaptation.

In all likelihood, Adam and Eve looked like a combination of all the races. Later, after the flood, when the people were scattered, the variations probably became more pronounced until, within a few generations, the races as we know them today (perhaps with others that are now extinct) came about.

The mark of Cain was for Cain only. It was apparently some sort of protective tattoo identifying Cain as a man under God’s protection (see Genesis 4:15).



TWO-TONE TWINS—Remee and twin sister Kian, with parents, Kylee Hodgson and Remi Horder. The twins were born April 2005 in Nottingham, UK. (Photos by Gary Roberts <worldwidefeatures.com>.)



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