



# THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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"Put on the whole armor of God"

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## Always Remember God!

by George Roper



The process of being able to recall past events and future intentions is known as the ability to remember. As a plethora of memories and upcoming plans vie for our recollection in the moment, it can be difficult to remember items of importance and

to follow courses of action that we may well-meaningly have intended to take in the future. Recent public health concerns in particular have rivaled other prominent matters in occupying the stage of our attention of late. Any number of items of significance may prove to capture our focus, so much so as to cause us to neglect to remember something else of precedence.

The ability to remember oftentimes appears to be a fleeting pursuit. Psychologist Herman Ebbinghaus, a prominent figure in the 1880s in the study of memory and retention, found that people organically forget material after it is presented to them. Ebbinghaus's research established "the forgetting curve," which reflected how much an individual forgets over time. Ebbinghaus found that of the newly introduced information that a person may take in, 56 percent is forgotten within one hour, while 66 percent is forgotten after a day has elapsed, and 75 percent of information cannot be remembered after six days—thus showing that our proclivity to forget can very well contribute to failing to recall aspects that may prove to be crucial to our well-being.

Failing to remember can have dire, catastrophic repercussions. In 1988, a disaster fell upon Piper Alpha, an oil platform located in the North Sea, some 120 miles off of Aberdeen, Scotland. Piper Alpha held 226 workers on board. In the course of performing maintenance work on the pumps aboard the oil platform, one of the workers failed to remember to return the safety valve back onto the pump. At the time, the pump had temporarily been taken offline and was not expected to be used until the maintenance had been completed. Despite the upkeep to the pipe having not been completed, the line was placed back into service. Due to the safety valve not being in place, an oil leak occurred, triggering a massive explosion and oil fire. The oil platform sank, killing 165 workers, with 61 survivors. Thirty remained unaccounted for. Failing to remember to reattach the safety valve cost many lives. The accident has been regarded as one of the worst oil disasters to occur.

Undoubtedly, the need to retain knowledge and the ability to remember is a necessity. In many industries, measures are frequently being investigated regarding how the memory of employees can be bolstered to improve output and safety. The logistics of remembering information learned is a procedure of great interest to those in the field of academia as well. Being able to harness greater retention in students would improve student proficiency.

The need to remember is crucial in the workplace and in the classroom. However, in everyday life the ability to remember is also of great importance. The act of being able to remember compliments those in all walks of life. Neglecting to remember events or procedures can create inconvenience. From remembering an appointment to remembering where we placed our keys, the course of remembering contributes to performing our daily routines at their most optimum.

In a 2015 article published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal titled *Neuron*, by a group of MIT neuroscientists headed by Richard Cho, the workings of memory were discussed. The article explained how repetition, the repeated mental reference of a particular concept and prior established impressions of a subject can reinforce memory. These engagements prove to aid in being able to remember input learned and continue to be utilized by educators today.

The tendencies of human nature are certainly not lost on God. In fact, God implements the very same engagements to aid mankind in remembering pertinent information. One manner of repetitive reinforcement that God implemented is the observance of the Sabbath. God has reminded mankind through the years in His Word to remember this institution.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8, NKJV).

God implores all individuals to "remember" the Sabbath, recognizing our tendency to forget. He designated the day to be put aside for a commanded assembly and to receive instruction (Leviticus 23:3). This repetitive process serves to reinforce our ability to remember God and to remember to implement his ways in our thought process.

We also find other commanded days of recognition in the annual holy days. God itemizes the days that he wishes for people to observe in Leviticus 23. God prefaces the description of these days by urging people to participate in the repetitive process of gathering together on days of commemoration, where they will receive instruction regarding the festivals of God and how to celebrate them.

"These *are* the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times" (Leviticus 23:4, NKJV).

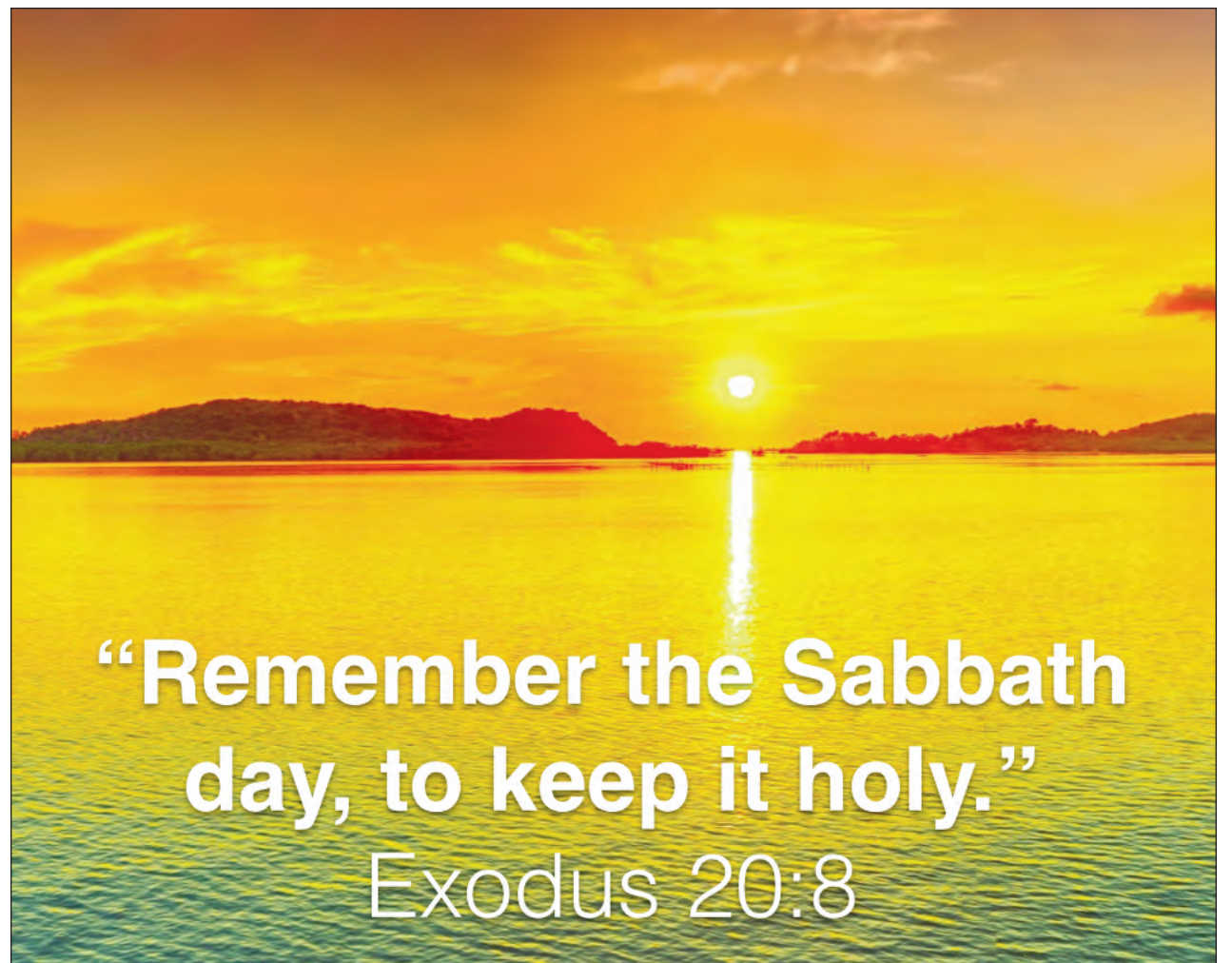
These behaviors all lay the precedent for increasing our being able to remember the things of God. Beyond the physical observations of the Sabbath and God's holy days, the admonitions that are conveyed on those days are to continue to be reflected upon, whereby cementing our ability to remember God's ways.

"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8, NIV).

The continued observance of the Sabbath and the holy days establishes a repetition where we receive instruction that impacts our memory enabling us to remember God. This exposure allows an individual to develop a bank of knowledge about God to reflect on. The ongoing fluency with the knowledge of God in turn predisposes one's memory to retain a greater understanding of God going forward. These processes create the function of remembering God. We can see the function of remembering God at work in the account of King Josiah of Judah.

Josiah assumed the throne after the previous kings

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"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy."

Exodus 20:8



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had led Judah into idolatry. After years of this influence, the temple had fallen into disrepair. King Josiah commissioned the temple to be refurbished. While performing these renovations, the priest discovered the book of the law, which contained instructions given to Moses from God. Because of the idolatrous practices prior to Josiah that influenced the management of the temple, this book had been lost. Scholars believe that the material that had been discovered is what we understand to be the book of Deuteronomy.

When this text was read to the king, he was highly disturbed. The book forecasted blessings that would be imparted to the nation for observing God's laws, as well as curses for deviating from God's law. King Josiah was well aware that the nation's recent history was reflective of not obeying God and that these curses were now impending. King Josiah recognized that Judah had failed to remember God. He understood that the techniques that reinforce the ability to remember God within an individual and within a people had been neglected. The practice of observing the Sabbath, recognizing the holy days, and the exposure to the teaching of God's law had all been abandoned, resulting in a widespread illiteracy of God's law.

In attempts to rectify the debilitating spiritual condition of the nation, King Josiah immediately employed the process of repetitive reinforcement, where the people were exposed to information about God on a continuous basis via the observance of the Sabbath and the holy days.

"Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD. The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book. Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge themselves to it; the people of Jerusalem did this in accordance with the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors" (2 Chronicles 34:29–32, NIV).

King Josiah called for an assembly of the people, where God's instructions were read and explained to them—a process that increased their knowledge quotient regarding God's ways. The people in turn pledged to adhere to the protocols of God which they now had a familiarity with. These steps created a

mechanism that enabled them to remember God. This process continued as the people returned to God and observed the Passover season, which consisted of the Passover evening and the Days of Unleavened Bread.

"The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days. The Passover had not been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 35:17–18, NIV).

Just as the people of King Josiah's day had failed to remember God, we too can find ourselves in a position where we have grown distant from God. As that distance is exacerbated by our preoccupation with the minute and consequential cares of life, we can experience a spiritual atrophy, leaving us in a condition where we won't remember God. It is imperative that we are mindful to engage in those repetitive methods that reinforce our commitment to God. As we are so exposed, in keeping the Sabbath and recognizing the holy days, we become familiar with God and his ways. In so doing, we can be assured that we will always remember God.

## Questions & Answers

by Vance A. Stinson

**The gift of "tongues" on the Day of Pentecost: Was the miracle in the speaking, the hearing, or both the speaking and the hearing?**

**QUESTION:** I'd like to ask a question regarding the correct interpretation of Acts 2:6. This verse says that on the day of Pentecost "everyone [in the crowd of diaspora Jews] heard them [disciples] speaking in his own language." I have always held the view that it was only a speaking miracle that took place on the day of Pentecost. But I recently reread Acts 2:6 and the grammatical structure of this verse seems to me to imply that each of the different linguistic groups was hearing all the disciples speaking his own native language at the same time. For example, the Jews from Arabia heard the disciples speaking Arabian language while the Jews from Rome heard the same disciples speaking Latin and, at the same time, those from Mesopotamia heard the same disciples speaking Sumerian language, and so on. If this is the case, as the statement in Acts 2:6 suggests, it means a miracle of hearing (in addition to the miracle of speaking) took place on the day of Pentecost. What do you think is the best way to analyze and make sense of the grammar in Acts 2:6, and why?

V.E. (sent by e-mail)

**ANSWER:** The text specifically states, "And they [the disciples] were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (2:4). Here, the miracle is clearly in the speaking. The disciples were able to speak languages they had not previously learned.

But was there also a miracle in the hearing that took place that day?

As you have discovered, Acts 2:6 could easily be

interpreted to mean that "each of the different linguistic groups was hearing all the disciples speaking his own native language at the same time." If that's what was happening, then it would seem that the miracle was in the hearing, at least in part.

But Luke (the writer) is not attempting to provide a highly detailed description of the events of that day. He tells us that "everyone heard them speaking in his own language," but he does not tell us whether or not all the disciples were together in one place the whole time; nor does he describe the exact format (or whether there was one) the disciples followed in addressing the crowd. Did they speak one-by-one from a platform? Were they moving about freely in the crowd, speaking separately to individuals and small groups? Luke doesn't provide all the details of this event.

So let's consider a couple of possibilities as we try to envision what that day must have been like and how the events Luke describes unfolded.

In Acts 2:14, Peter is "standing with the eleven," indicating that the twelve were all together in one place. But does this mean they had been standing together in that one place for the entire time? If so, were they all speaking at the same time? It seems more likely that, if they were all together during the entire time, they would have been speaking *one after the other*. So if each of the disciples were speaking in turn—one followed by another—from the one location, then we might logically conclude that the miracle was in the hearing. This would mean that if a Galilean disciple who knew only Aramaic and maybe a little Greek miraculously began addressing the crowd in Latin, but the Jews from Arabia heard that speech in their own Arabian language, then the miracle would be in both the speaking and the hearing.

However, it is possible that, before the scene described in 2:14, the disciples (individually or by twos, not as a group) were moving about freely speaking to individuals and small groups. In a large multi-lingual setting, we would naturally expect to find people grouped together according to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. So when a disciple spoke to a group (perhaps a family) of Latin-speaking Jews, the Spirit enabled him to speak in Latin; when the same disciple later spoke to a group from Mesopotamia, he was miraculously able to communicate with them in their Sumerian language.

Remember also that when Peter addressed the

crowd, it was "the third hour of the day" (2:15), or about 9:00 AM. Perhaps the Spirit had come two or three hours earlier. This would allow enough time for the disciples to individually address different groups and for word of the strange "tongues" phenomenon to spread through the crowd. Within a short time, reports quickly circulated about these Galileans (known for their peculiar accents) speaking fluently in the languages of the different groups that were present that day. Responses to this phenomenon were mixed. Many "were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, 'What does this mean?' But others mocking said, 'They are filled with new wine'" (2:12).

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The mockers' statement—"They are filled with new wine"—is not a statement one would make after witnessing the miracle; it is rather a statement one would make after hearing *about* such a miracle. This would suggest that, prior to Peter's message (2:14ff), the disciples were individually addressing groups within the assembly, and not speaking one-by-one from a shared platform.

So, in the final analysis, it is *possible* that the miracles of Pentecost *included* a miracle in the hearing, but we *know for sure* that there was a miracle in the speaking, for when the disciples were "filled with the Holy Spirit" they "began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."

**If no one has seen God or heard His voice, whose "voice from heaven" was heard at Jesus' baptism?**

**QUESTION:** I have a couple of questions for you. I've been studying chapter 5 in John and came across verse 37 where Jesus is speaking to the Jews and says, "And the Father himself, which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." I read in Matthew 3:17, "and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So my questions are, first, is the Father actually speaking in Matthew 3:17, or is it a representative? Second, is it safe to say in John 5:37 that Jesus is speaking of their inability to hear the message conveyed by the Father because they don't believe Him to be the Son?

L.C. (sent by e-mail)

**ANSWER:** The message conveyed through the "voice from heaven" in Matthew 3:17 originated with the Father, so we should think of the voice from heaven as the Father's voice. Whether He used an angel or some other means of creating an audible message is inconsequential. God is Spirit. He does not have the physical organs needed for voice production; nor does He have a light-reflecting physical body, so He cannot be seen or heard by the physical mechanisms that enables us to see and hear each other. When the ancients saw God and heard Him speak, they were seeing and hearing God, not in His essence but through means of a manifestation of some sort. The "voice" that was heard on the day of Jesus' baptism originated with God the Father; it was therefore the "voice of God" irrespective of how the sound was produced.

In John 5:37, Jesus apparently means that the crowd *in general* had not received a visible or audible communication from God, but He affirms that the Father has testified of Him nevertheless. He goes on to say that the God-inspired Scriptures they search in their quest for eternal life testify of Him (Jesus); yet they are still unwilling to come to Him and receive the eternal life they seek. Why? Because "whom He [the Father] sent, Him [Jesus] you do not believe" (verse 38). So, to your question, "Is it safe to say in John 5:37 that Jesus is speaking of their inability to hear the message conveyed by the Father because they don't believe Him to be the Son?" my answer is a most definite *yes*.

**Does the Bible say Saturday is the seventh day?**

**QUESTION:** Can you prove to me by Scripture alone that our Saturday is the seventh day? I cannot find one verse that proves Saturday is the seventh day, only by other sources from men, like history books, modern rabbis claiming Saturday has never changed or been broken, but by Scripture alone I cannot link Saturday to the seventh day. From the time of creation to today, for me to link Saturday to the seventh day I will have to put my complete faith in man, as the Scriptures do not link Saturday to the seventh day. The Scriptures just say for six days you shall do your work and on the seventh day you should rest. The Babylonians used the moon to start the month

and the day one started from each new moon. I'm not suggesting we observe lunar sabbaths as some extremist Christians do, but we also don't want to be hypocritical like the Pharisees, as the Scriptures says Jesus verily rebuked them, calling them sons of their father the devil, synagogue of Satan, fake Jews. Scripture alone!!

M.O. (sent by e-mail)

**ANSWER:** The biblical proof you're asking for doesn't exist. One cannot determine by the Bible alone that the day we call "Saturday" is the seventh day of the biblical week. But then, the Bible nowhere teaches that the Bible is the sole source of truth—so by what authority do you establish your "Scripture alone" rule? On what *biblical* grounds do you throw out examination of historical data as a legitimate means of arriving at important truths? The truth is, the extreme form of *sola scriptura* you have adopted is *nowhere taught in the Scriptures*.

Make no mistake, the Bible is God's unique revelation to mankind and therefore must be given first place in our quest for truth, but Scripture nowhere teaches that it is the sole source of all true knowledge.

That being said, we can know that our "seventh day," the day we call "Saturday," is the seventh day of the God-instituted biblical week, because it has been continuously observed in some manner not only by the Jews but also by historic Christianity for literally centuries. The early Christians recognized the Sabbath, and so have Christians across the centuries. Eastern Orthodox Christians have always referred to our Saturday as "the Sabbath," and they still do today. The Orthodox still follow the ancient tradition of refraining from fasting on Saturday because that day is the "Creation Sabbath" and ought to be honored as such.

In addition, the writings of the early church fathers clearly distinguish between the Sabbath and Sunday, stating in the plainest language that the day we call Sunday is the first day of the week. That understanding was preserved through the centuries-old traditions and customs of historic Christianity. These ancient faith traditions have been preserved by Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic communities alike, as well as by the Ethiopian and Coptic Christian communities. It is utterly impossible that all these centuries-old faith traditions could have lost sight of which days were the first and seventh days of the biblical week.

And then there are the Jews that have been scattered all over the world for many centuries. One could easily believe that a single Jew could wake up one Friday morning and mistakenly think it was Saturday, but it's not conceivable that this could happen to millions of them scattered over many countries.

Because of the witness of the faith traditions of both Jews and Christians, the whole world today knows that the day we call Saturday is the seventh day of the week, and that it's traceable all the way back to the time of Jesus.

**Does the Bible teach that the Sabbath begins and ends with sunset?**

**QUESTION:** Can you tell me how it came to be that the Sabbath is kept from sunset to sunset by the churches of God? Mainly, where in the Bible can scriptures be found to substantiate this practice? The reason I am asking is because we're told in Scripture to make sure the things we are taught are so. I am trying to find this information, but so far have not found it in my studies. I don't know what I may have overlooked.

B.B., Somerset, PA

**ANSWER:** The Bible does not directly state that the Sabbath begins and ends at sunset. We derive this

understanding from observing how the ancient Israelites reckoned the point at which one day ends and the next day begins.

One problem we run into is the fact that the Hebrew words translated "day" frequently refer to some period other than the twenty-four-hour day. Examples include "day of the LORD," "day of vengeance," and "in that day." In addition, a "day" is often the period between sunrise and sunset, which was the ordinary work day—the hours of daylight as opposed to the hours of darkness.

The ordinary *work* day ended at around sunset. But that leaves us with a question regarding the *week* day: Does the week day also end with sunset? If so, then sunset ends one week day and begins a new week day. On the other hand, if the *week* day (like the *work* day) begins at sunrise, then sunrise is the point at which one week day ends and a new week day begins.

So which is it? Is there any scriptural evidence for one or the other?

Indeed, there is!

Notice that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is "on the fifteenth day of the [first] month" (Leviticus 23:6). The first and last days of this seven-day feast were high days (verses 7–8).

The first day of this feast is the fifteenth, but notice when the fifteenth begins:

"In the first month, on the *fourteenth day of the month at evening*, you shall eat unleavened bread, until the twenty-first day of the month at evening" (Exodus 12:18).

Notice that the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is the **FIFTEENTH** day of the first month, begins "on the **FOURTEENTH** day of the month at evening." This clearly means that the fifteenth day begins when the fourteenth day ends! Here we see evidence of a "sunset to sunset" reckoning of days.

But that's not all. Notice that the last day of this seven-day feast ends, not at sunrise, but with the sunset that ends the twenty-first day (or seventh day of this annual festival):

"[Y]ou shall eat unleavened bread, until the *twenty-first day of the month at evening*. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land (verse 18b–19).

The seventh day of the feast does not end with sunrise, but with sunset ("at evening") on the "twenty-first day of the month." As soon as the twenty-first day (or seventh day of the feast) ends, the twenty-second day of the month begins. Here, again, is evidence that the Hebrews used a "sunset to sunset" reckoning for days of the week and month.

Finally, the Day of Atonement seals it.

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 'Also the *tenth day* of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement.... And you shall do no work on that same day, for it is the Day of Atonement.... It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall afflict your souls; on the *ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening*, you shall celebrate your sabbath'" (Leviticus 23:26–28, 32).

The Day of Atonement, which is here said to be on the "TENTH day of this seventh month," begins "on the NINTH day of the month AT EVENING" and is observed "from evening to evening." This means that the tenth day of the month begins at the same "evening" the ninth day of the month ends. The Day of Atonement—the tenth day of the month—is observed "from evening to evening."

Since Scripture shows plainly that three annual Sabbaths—the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Day of Atonement—are observed according to the sunset-to-sunset reckoning, we have a strong biblical precedent for a sunset-to-sunset reckoning for *all* Sabbaths, both annual and weekly.



# Did Jesus Keep the Kosher Laws?

by Mike James



**T**o try to answer our question we need to define the word *kosher*. For the purposes of this article, we will define kosher as the laws that the Jews use to determine what kinds of food they can eat. These laws deal not only with the food, but how the food is

prepared. Some of these laws come from the written Word of God (Old Testament), but others are part of an oral tradition.

For example, the Bible tells us in **Leviticus 11:7** we are not to eat swine. This is considered part of the kosher laws of the Jews. The Jews also teach we should not prepare meat foods on the same plates in which we prepare dairy foods. This law is also a kosher law, but it is not found in the written Word of God. So it is important to understand what people mean when they use certain words. Some people think kosher only pertains to animals the Bible tells us not to eat. Others understand that the kosher laws include written laws from the Bible and other laws that Jewish religious authorities have added to the meaning of kosher.

Another example pertains to not eating the blood of clean animals. **Deuteronomy 12:15–16** teaches us not to eat the blood of an animal. It also mentions the blood being poured out of an animal, but no further details are provided. There is also mention of not eating anything that has died on its own (**Deuteronomy 14:21**). Today Orthodox Jews have specific regulations on how to slaughter an animal to make it kosher. But these regulations are not part of God's written law in the Bible.

Jesus might have eaten animals that were slaughtered in a certain way due to the cultural norms that were present at the time He was living. But that does not mean Christians need to observe those traditions. The written law did not give details on how to kill an animal. Jesus also likely observed Hanukkah (**John 10:22–23**) because He was a Jew, but keeping this festival is not required of Christians because it is not part of God's written law. **Leviticus 23** addresses the holy days and festivals God wants us to observe.

This distinction is very important because it gets at the root of arguments on the law of God and whether we still need to observe it. We believe you do need to keep the law of God until heaven and earth pass away (**Matthew 5:17–19**). The law does not save us, but it helps us understand God's character and what sin is. By observing it we are following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ.

Let's look at an example of Jesus' emphasis on the written law and the Pharisees' focus on their oral tradition of law. Many Christians teach that in **Mark 7** Jesus made all meats clean to eat. Swine, shellfish, and catfish were now available to us to eat when previously they were not.

That is not what this chapter is about at all. Notice in verse 3 what the context is. The disciples of Jesus were caught eating with unwashed hands. Nowhere in the Old Testament will you find a law speaking about eating with unwashed hands. Notice that verse 3 speaks of the traditions of the elders. This law was part of the oral tradition of the Pharisees just like some of the kosher laws. They had created other laws to protect the written laws of God. Jesus is taking issue with these additional laws that were man-made and not God-ordained. See further in verse 7 these are called the rules of men.

In some ancient manuscripts the phrase "making all foods clean" (**Mark 7:19**) is not there. Some

scholars believe this phrase was added due to the beliefs of some of the translators. Other ancient manuscripts don't add that phrase. They simply end verse 19 with the phrase "purging all meats." This chapter does not address the biblical food laws at all. The point of the chapter is addressed in the next few verses (verses 20–23). Jesus was trying to make the point that what really defiles us is not getting a little dirt on our food, but the bad thoughts that come from us internally.

For our discussion, it is important to understand Jesus did not agree with all the laws the Pharisees taught to the people. Some of these laws would include kosher laws like not preparing meat on a plate that is used for cheese or not eating meat and milk together during a meal. These kosher laws are not in the written Word of God.

Another example of the fact Jesus did not keep the Pharisaical oral law (traditions) is found in **Luke 6**. Notice in **Luke 6:6–11**, the Pharisees become upset with Jesus when he heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath. The reason they were upset was because Jesus healed a man on the Sabbath when He could have waited till the following day to perform the healing. According to the *Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Volume 8, 1984, p. 887), rabbinical law would have permitted healing on the Sabbath if the illness was of a critical nature. A withered hand was something not critical. It could wait till the next day.

These details about what could and could not be done on the Sabbath were not addressed in the written law of God. The Pharisees came up with other rules and regulations they wanted the people to follow. Jesus makes it clear again the traditions and rules of the teachers were not required to keep the law of God.

Let us now look at what was happening in the New Testament Church in relation to God's written law and the additional laws of the Pharisees.

I want to begin by addressing some definitions again. To many the word Torah means the first five books of the Bible. Torah can also mean the law of God or instruction. To Orthodox Jews, Torah can also mean not only the written law (in the Bible), but the oral traditions that were said to have been passed down from God to Moses.

The Jews believe that God gave Moses the written law on Mount Sinai and Moses wrote it down and we have it in the first five books of the Bible. But they also believe that oral laws were passed from God to Moses that provided commentary on the written laws that were given. There is no scriptural evidence that this happened. The record from the New Testament makes it clear Christ did not approve of the oral traditions of the Jews.

After the resurrection of Jesus, we continue to see debate in the early Church about just what laws Christians are supposed to observe. This debate centers around those who believed only the written law was valid versus those who considered the written law and the commentary (oral traditions) about it valid.

Let's not forget that most of the early converts to Christianity were Jewish. The record of history we read in the New Testament is a record of change and confusion. The Jewish Christians were only beginning to understand that God was saving the Gentiles too (**Acts 11:18**). The early Church was trying to figure things out. Remember, the first-century Christians did not have a New Testament to help them figure out what they should be doing like we do. The New Testament books are a record of the Church figuring things out about God's law, among

other things.

The Old Testament law taught that the alien/stranger (think Gentile) could be part of Israel as long as they obeyed God's law (**Exodus 12:48–49**, **Leviticus 24:22**). God wanted Israel to love the stranger/alien (Gentile) too (**Leviticus 19:33–34**, **Deuteronomy 10:19**). Paul had to correct Peter at Antioch because he was separating himself from eating with the Gentiles because of his fear of "them which were of the circumcision" (**Galatians 2:11–12**). This refers to the "circumcision party" of the early Church.

Look at **Titus 1:9–11** as an example. Here we read about "they of the circumcision." This is referring to the "circumcision party." They were a faction within the early Church who were Jewish and believed that the oral traditions and the written law were necessary for Christians to observe. Remember, all Jews (male) were circumcised, so this is not just speaking about Jewish believers. This was a faction in the early Church that saw things a certain way. We have the same thing in the Church today. There are some who believe we need to say God's name in Hebrew. There are others who think we need to keep the holy days based on observation of the moon from Jerusalem. Others believe in observation from their local area, while we in CGI and many other Church of God groups follow the Hebrew calendar to determine the holy days.

Notice carefully something very interesting in **Titus 1:14**. It mentions that this party of the circumcision is into "Jewish myths." One of the myths popular at this time in history was the idea God provided additional laws to Moses orally that Moses did not write down. They also believed God was only working with Israelites. Some of these other myths were written down in books at this time that never made it into the Bible. Today we have some people in the greater Church (including some in the Hebrew Roots movement) who teach that the oral traditions must also be observed. Some others teach that pseudepigraphal books should be considered Scripture. This is not what Jesus and the apostles taught.

Jesus made it clear in **Luke 11:51** that He believed in our Old Testament as Scripture. Many don't realize that the Jews ordered their Scriptures differently than we order the Old Testament. Genesis was their first book, but in their canon of Scripture 2 Chronicles is the last book. In **Luke 11:51** Jesus confirms this by mentioning the first and last books of the Jewish Scriptures. All the other books in the Old Testament fell between Genesis and 2 Chronicles. Jesus further confirms His acceptance of only our present Old Testament by mentioning the three divisions of the Old Testament in **Luke 24:44** (Law, Prophets, and Psalms). Those three divisions contain all our Old Testament books. Scholars confirm this threefold division of the Old Testament did not include the apocryphal books of the Catholic Bible or the pseudepigraphal books.

For further evidence of the need to observe the written law rather than the oral law we will investigate how the early Church dealt with some of these factional issues. Let us turn to **Acts 15:5** and see one big example. Notice that within the early Church there was a group from the sect of the Pharisees who believed that new Gentile converts should be circumcised (physically) and keep the law of Moses. Now what does "law of Moses" mean here? Some argue that "law of Moses" here means the written law of God in our Bible. That is partially true. It does mean that, but since this was the Pharisees, they also believed that the oral traditions were equal to the

*Continued next page*



written law of God. So, if they said “law of Moses” it would include those additional laws that Christ had already said were not needed.

As we continue to read in **Acts 15** we will find further evidence to this point. Notice what we read in **Acts 15:19–21**:

“It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is **READ** in the synagogues on every Sabbath.”

Some erroneously argue that the Church was deciding that the law of God did not matter any longer. That is completely wrong. If you think the Church is saying that Gentiles should only worry about these four things, then what about the laws against murder, stealing, having no other gods, etc. These four items (food sacrificed to idols, no blood, no strangled animals, fornication) were addressed in the written law of God and would be more common practices to Gentiles than Jews. Food sacrificed to idols is addressed in **Exodus 34:15**. The admonition against eating blood is mentioned in **Genesis 9:4**, **Leviticus 3:17**, and **Leviticus 7:26**. Strangulation of animals is not mentioned in the law, but some Gentiles slaughtered animals in this way. This would leave much of the blood in the animal instead of letting the blood bleed out. Therefore, this would go against the law of not eating blood. Therefore strangulation is mentioned here. Finally, the Gentiles were very familiar with temple prostitution which is why fornication is mentioned (**Exodus 20:14; 22:16; Jeremiah 2:20–36; Ezekiel 16:15–43**).

The Church is concerned here about issues that the gentile/pagan converts were likely to be involved in. The Church knew that the new converts would be learning the written law of God by visiting the synagogues (**Acts 15:21**). That is where they would pick up the rest of the information they needed to be obedient to God. Notice that James says Moses is **READ** in the synagogues. This is evidence he expected the new converts to follow the written law of God. The oral traditions could not be read in the synagogues because they were not written down yet. The oral traditions were not finally written down until AD 200. The oral law was recited from memory.

According to Ron Dart’s book, *Digging Up Hebrew Roots* (Wasteland Press, 2008), many of the Gentiles coming to Christianity at this time were “God fearers” and acquainted with the synagogue and the law. “Raw” Gentile converts did not come into the Church in large numbers until about 80 years later. The Church was just getting started and many issues had not been resolved yet.

We must remember that the sacrifices were still being observed at this time. Not until after AD 70 did the sacrificial system cease due to the destruction of the temple. The early Christians did not have the New Testament to help them resolve issues like we do. They were in the midst of figuring these questions out for us. We can now go to the New Testament to help us determine how we are to observe God’s law.

The Jerusalem Conference addressed in **Acts 15** helps us to understand something like circumcision today. Let’s not forget even the Old Testament teaches that circumcision is of the heart (**Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6**). This is not just a New Testament principle (**Romans 2:29**).



### “Rise, Peter, kill and eat!”

**PETER’S VISION of clean and unclean animals (Acts 10) is commonly interpreted to mean that the dietary laws of Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 have been abolished for believers under the New Covenant. But Peter himself supplies the proper interpretation of the vision: “God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean” (verse 28).**

We know through the New Testament that the Old Testament sacrificial law is no longer required because Christ’s sacrifice took all of that on (**Hebrews 10:1–10**). But is sacrifice over? No, because Christ’s sacrifice is there for any future Christians who repent and get baptized and for present Christians who sin and repent.

The New Testament and New Covenant do not do away with God’s law. We learn more about the detail of God’s law in the New Testament (**Matthew 5:21–42; 1 Timothy 5:17–18; Hebrews 10:1–10**). The New Testament books of Matthew, 1 Timothy, and Hebrews provide more information on how to understand Old Testament laws, as do other parts of the New Testament. By studying God’s entire written Word with God’s Holy Spirit in us we can better understand how to observe and follow His law. But I emphasize God’s written law provided to us in the Bible—not additional laws, like some of the kosher laws that are not required. Jesus probably kept Jewish kosher laws because He was a Jew living among Jews. But it is obvious from the New Testament record that Christians must only observe God’s written law which is more fully understood by the New Testament Scriptures. If you have not read Ron Dart’s book, *Law and Covenant*, please do so. It provides great information on understanding how to observe God’s law today.

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# From a Messianic Jew in the Church of God

**EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article is from a Jewish member of the Church of God. Having been brought up in a Jewish family, he is familiar with Jewish methods of approaching the Hebrew Scriptures. He therefore brings to the Church of God community a unique perspective on possible "hidden" meanings embedded within the Hebrew texts. His perspective is in addition to, not instead of, the time-honored and proven principles of sound biblical exegesis.**

Now that we are approaching the spring holiday season, it may be interesting to see another perspective—that of a Messianic Jew in the Church—especially as it directly affects the meanings of Scripture and the holy days in a way the basic King James Version cannot. When you're brought up in it, you just see things differently.

Probably the best place to start looking at the Messianic approach is in the Hebrew language itself.

## Hebrew—A Living, Multi-Faceted Language

Have you ever tried to explain something and, upon noticing that the person you were talking to wasn't "getting it," you said, "Let me put it another way," or maybe asked, "Do I need to draw you a picture?"

God does exactly that, creating a language that utilizes not just words but is alive with pictures and numbers to make sure the point is not overlooked. There are often "sub-text" stories buried in the language, the pictures, or the numbers themselves. It is well known that ancient hieroglyphics was a picture language, but less well-known is the fact that the same characteristic is found in the Hebrew texts.

The societies of the ancient Hebrews and their neighbors were primitive and largely superstitious, and they never had anything remotely resembling the many wonderful learning tools we have at our fingertips. How, then, could the Hebrews of Old Testament times have even begun to understand the deeper meanings we see in Scripture today?

The answer lies in the Hebrew words themselves.

God used the Hebrew words to create "imagination movies" to assure that the messages were seen and understood. The language elicits images and word pictures—much like a children's book filled with illustrations to tell the story. God, through the Hebrew, makes words dance and come to life for all times, all generations, all peoples—much like the dancing brooms in Disney's *Fantasia*.

Let me further illustrate the point: How many words would it take to describe the *Mona Lisa* compared to just seeing it? The picture transcends time, language, and culture. The Hebrew language does the same, injecting life into the text.

While "Messianic" is just a term describing a Jewish follower of Christ, well beyond the "Messianic" perspective are formal deeper-meaning studies (kabbalah) and studies of numerical values of words, phrases, and names (gematria), where the language itself, alive with pictures and meanings, helps bring the Old Testament into even greater focus. Those images can then be applied to the New Testament to better explain, enhance, or validate it.

The following is just a brief introduction to this subject.

## Someone Else's Eyes

It has been said that there were almost fifty different translators and over a hundred modern versions of the Bible. Imagine asking fifty people to translate the same verse! What are the odds all fifty would translate the verse the same way?

So without study, we always run the risk of seeing the Bible through "someone else's eyes." We're confronted with questions on which translators and which versions are the best. The King James Version

is a great starting point, but in this time of increased knowledge there is still much more we can access.

## Hebrew—a Language for All Time

In the Hebrew, *each* letter can be not only a part of a word but a word in itself, a picture, a number, a complete message, an image, a story, an implication—even the way it is constructed carries meaning. Letters that are numbers, and numbers that are words, sentences, concepts—it boggles the imagination!

There is clearly a certain beauty in the language as well, as it reflects the magnificence of all order and creation and, of course, our great God.

To begin our brief study, there's no better place to start than at the very beginning of the Hebrew alphabet. The *aleph* (א), the first letter of the alphabet, has multiple meanings embedded in it. As a picture, the *aleph* is the "paleo," much like hieroglyphics, as it pictures the ox (𐤀), a symbol of power. The *aleph* is often used as the first letter in the various names of God, though in its current form it looks like this: א

Let's start with *construction*...

The tenth letter of the alphabet, and therefore also the number "10," is the *yud* (י)—as in "not one *jot*." If you separate the parts, you can see the *aleph* is constructed with two *yuds* (top and bottom) and a single line (*vav*) separating them: א. In addition to being the number "10," the meaning ascribed to the *yud* is "hand," so God's *hand* and *power*. Also, as "10" it signifies the commandments, so by extension, God's *Law*.

So hidden in the *aleph*—in its very construction—there is a "hidden" Bible verse (or two). In the diagram where the *yud* appears at the top and bottom, we see the associated Bible verse, Matthew 6:10—"Your will be done [the Law] on earth [the lower *yud*, God's Law on earth] as it is in heaven [the upper *yud*, God's Law in heaven]." Even if rotated 180 degrees, it's exactly the same—truly, "in earth as it is in heaven." Above and below, heaven and earth were created to reflect God's Law. (I'll mention in passing that the *vav* represents a "nail," something to think about as Passover approaches.)

## What About the Holy Days?

A Messianic perspective can even bring an expanded "look" to each holy day. For this article, I choose Pentecost/Shavout. (You'll see why in a moment.)

As we know, this holy day represents the giving of the Law/Ten Commandments at Sinai (Shavout), and Holy Spirit/grace manifestation at Zion (Pentecost), with both accompanied by two occurrences: thunder and lightning.

But something is often overlooked.

"And it came to pass...that there were thunders and lightnings..." (Exodus 19:16).

One aspect of *kabbalah* is that it often moves into the "mystical." With this in mind, do you notice something curious about in the above verse? God immediately separated the natural from the supernatural. In the natural, lightning always precedes thunder. In Exodus, with thunder coming first, God declares this even as a supernatural occurrence, and it is explained as the verse continues: "...and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud." So God's

voice and presence preceded the light. We will only look at a few parallel instances, but they give Shavout/Pentecost even more meaning.

One important concept connected to establishing understanding, meaning, and relevance is scriptural "first use." So where would the thunder/lightning "first use" be? Not surprisingly, it was "In the beginning."

"And God said [voice: thunder], Let there be light [lightning]" (Genesis 1:3). First the voice—God speaks (thunder)—then the light! So it was established "from the beginning" and appears multiple times, as in Psalm 119:105: "Thy word [voice] is a lamp [light] unto my feet."

So there are two images that we see at both Sinai and Jerusalem. We see them clearly at Sinai, and then at Pentecost—the "sound as of a mighty wind" (thunder) and "tongues of fire" (lightning).

So while we see that, with the thunder and lightning, both days have elements of the other. We'll also see that they complement each other. This will help us see the fullness of their meaning.

## God's Very Name

A connection that I've never seen elsewhere, and one of the most amazing aspects of Shavout and Pentecost, is that God actually placed His very name on them.

Without getting too much into it, let's take a look at some of the qualities of the fifth letter of the alphabet, the letter *hey*. The *hey* is expressed by exhaling. Think of what God did to impart life. He "breathed" (exhaled—*hey*) into Adam. In John 20:22, Jesus "breathed on them [disciples], and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit...'" (An interesting side note: Abram became *Abraham* through the addition of the letter *hey*.)

It is not coincidence that the letter *hey* is His "breath" but also the number five, which is why it's also known to be the letter/number constituting breath, power, revelation, inspiration, grace, and God's Spirit.

So how does God place His name in Shavout/Pentecost?

"Sing unto God, sing praises to His name: extol him that rides upon the heavens by His name JAH, and rejoice before Him" (Psalm 68:4).

In reality, it's not "Jah," but "Yah" (יָהּ). Reading left to right, it is *yud*, *hey*.

As we have seen, *yud* is the number ten (the Law—Sinai—Shavout), and *hey* is the number five (the Spirit—grace—Zion—Pentecost). So the *yud-hey* (Sinai/Zion) spells "Yah." So God actually placed His name on these two feast days forever, and by His very name He validates the convergence and coordination of the two. Remember that without Christ, Judaism will never see this.

The above is but a brief overview of what I find to be a very interesting topic. I hope it is a blessing to you—or, at the very least, interesting, entertaining, and thought-provoking. If nothing else, it confirms the greatness of our Lord, who was crucified and died for our sins, was buried, raised the third day, and ascended to sit at the right hand of the Father, where He serves as our High Priest as we await His return in the days to come.

*Hallelu Yah!*

# Some Challenges in Keeping the Sabbath



by Michelle Algarra

Being a Filipina, I do not really perceive the differences in challenging situations for Sabbath-keeping groups or individuals in the Philippines and the United States. But based on my personal experiences, I have found looking for valid employment rather difficult for Sabbath-keepers in our country.

In the Philippines, too much value is given on academic credentials for long-term and lifetime employment opportunities. Undergraduates are usually belittled and have to resign themselves to mostly blue collar jobs and rudimentary office jobs that have maximum age requirements. The age limit for most jobs for undergraduates is a youthful 35–40 years old. In addition, most jobs require work on the Sabbath as mandatory.

The Business Processing Outsourcing industry bloomed in the Philippines in the late '90s for competent undergraduates or college level individuals who possessed proficiency in the English language. Internationally-based call centers from English-speaking countries like the US, Britain, Australia, etc. mushroomed in the country and gave impetus for the growth of the economy.

Unfortunately, the BPO industry requires work on the Sabbath and holy days due to the shifting schedules and business temperament or profit motive. As a result, it is only in exceptional cases that Sabbatharians, most especially those from the

Churches of God, would be given an opportunity to work at call centers with entry level salary of two hundred dollars a month, the highest being at the managerial level. Sabbath-keepers who do not possess a bachelor's degree (or higher) who have good English communication skills are usually not given an opportunity to work at call centers because they are required to go to work Friday nights and Saturdays even during the training phase.

I had a series of jobs for undergraduates that were only short-term or did not last due to a variety of factors, mostly simple jobs in the office and blue collar jobs. Others were merely sidelines or else long-term jobs that were only voluntary in nature, with no regular salary. In the exhausting ritual and rigmarole of job-hunting, I found that valid work opportunities most often required work on the Sabbath, inclusive of call centers that did not have any maximum age requirement.

The problem with voluntary or semi-voluntary jobs as a service towards guardians and relatives, for example, employers who are affiliates of Catholic or Protestant groups who do not believe in the Sabbath make it difficult for employees not to compromise in doing labor on the weekly Sabbath and annual holy days as part of their obligatory requirements. For example, some errands and chores would be expected by relatives and guardians from Sabbath-keeping protégées.

The emergence of internet technology has granted jobseekers an opportunity to find innumerable job opportunities with various skill-oriented qualifications. However, finding work is still a grievous challenge as even a good resume or curriculum vitae and

the passing of interviews and examinations do not guarantee acceptance for work in various fields. Because there are so many applicants, finding valid work and still be able to keep the Sabbath rest regulations is still arduous and difficult.

For Church of God brethren, finding good work opportunities require deep faith and trust in God as the Great Provider. He loves Christians so much that He opens doors for brethren who need work to meet their financial needs. Employment is a necessary requirement to make life productive and for the provision of material needs, and seeking employment is both a trial and a learning experience, most specially when believing in the sanctity of the Sabbath.

## Scriptural References (NIV):

**Exodus 20:8–11:** Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

**Genesis 2:2–3:** By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. Then God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

**Matthew 7:7–8:** Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened.

# Some Aspects of Overcoming

by Michelle Algarra

In our Christian walk, the initial stage of conversion entails exegesis of biblical texts, or discovering what those texts originally meant. But the main determinant of true Christianity is hermeneutics, or the application of those texts to our lives today.

It is not enough to be conversant with church doctrine in its intellectual format. We are called into the church not to become theologians but to learn to exercise Christian principles along with the foundational knowledge of Scripture.

Christian conduct is enveloped in two broad categories—love for God and love for one's neighbor. Though difficult, Christians in God's church must overcome spiritual vanity and intellectual superiority in the knowledge of the Scriptures compared to professing Christians.

The Bible teaches us to grow both in grace and in knowledge. As we gain deeper understanding of Scripture through continual Bible study, we should be growing in depth of spiritual perception or insight.

The greatest crisis Christians face is the matter of conscience. Thoughts, words, and actions

must be dictated by spiritual parameters rather than feelings and emotions. Development of self-control is important in dominating the evil facet of human nature, and the utilization of the power of the Holy Spirit to bear spiritual fruits and for one's good qualities and traits to dominate one's behaviour.

The development of self-control is imperative in learning to become more like Jesus Christ in our conduct and behaviour, and less and less like the adversary. It requires effort at overcoming, and the tools of prayer, Bible study, and meditation to achieve the goal.

# Conditional Election

by Vance A. Stinson

According to Calvinist John MacArthur, the Lamb's Book of Life "is the registry in which God inscribed the names of those chosen for salvation before the foundation of the world" (The *MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Revelation 1–11*, p. 50). All whose names are in the registry are said to be secure, their salvation certain. For them, apostasy cannot happen.

But does the Bible support this claim?

The apostle Paul says the names of his fellow workers "are in the Book of Life" (Philippians 4:3). The Book of Life will be opened in the final judgment, and anyone whose name is not found in it will be "cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:12, 15). Indeed, only those whose names have been "written

in the Lamb's Book of Life" will be permitted to enter the Holy City (21:27).

The unregenerate who marvel at the "beast" are described as those "whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world" (17:8). Presumably, this is the text MacArthur had in mind when he wrote the above, since this is the only text that connects the "Book of Life" with "the foundation of the world." He and other Calvinists apparently think this verse indicates that the names of all the elect were recorded in the heavenly registry *before* the world was created. But the text doesn't actually say that. It speaks of those whose names have *never*—from the foundation of the world *onward*—been recorded in the Book of Life.

But what of the person whose name is in the Book of Life? Is he unconditionally secure in his salva-

tion? Is apostasy impossible for such a person?

To the spiritually dying Christians of the church in Sardis, Christ says, "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels" (Revelation 3:5; cf., Exodus 32:31–33; Psalm 69:27–28).

But what about the spiritually dying believer who does not "strengthen the things...that are ready to die" (Revelation 3:2), does not "hold fast and repent" (verse 3), and does not overcome (verse 5) his sinful behavior but persists in it? Christ's promise to not blot the name of the faithful overcomer from the Book of Life suggests that the believer who does not overcome, but persists

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## In Loving Memory

**Lonnie “Wayne” Hendrix**

December 5, 1942 – December 7, 2021



Lonnie “Wayne” Hendrix, age 79, fell asleep in Christ on Tuesday, December 7, 2021, from complications of IPF. A funeral service was conducted at Misencik Funeral Home, Avon, OH, with Bill Watson, pastor of the Medina Church of God International, officiating. Interment followed at Resthaven Memory Gardens, Avon.

Wayne is survived by his wife of 39 years, Sandra Hendrix (nee Hart); sons, Steven (Wendy) Hendrix and Lonnie (Darlene) Hendrix; stepchildren, Denise (Dean) Radcliffe, Michael (Heidi Miller) Sislow, Sherry Boden, and Cathie (Craig) Bohl; grandchildren, Brittany, Emily,

Breanna, Nathaniel, and Seth; step-grandchildren, Craig, Bobby, Leigha, Aneesa, and Michael; 15 great-grandchildren; one brother, Matt (Paula) Hendrix; one sister, Wanda (Gurney) Revels; and stepbrother, Jerry (Renata) Jones.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Lonnie and Edna (nee Miller) Hendrix, and granddaughter Lauren.

Wayne was born on December 5, 1942, in Huntsville, Alabama. He was an electrician with General Motors and Lorain Shipyards for many years. He also worked at Invacare for several years before retiring in 2007. He was a US Army veteran and member of the American Legion in Elyria, OH. He was an elder in the Church of God International for over 30 years.

Wayne served God and His people faithfully for decades. Over the years, Wayne and his lovely wife, Sandi, faithfully traveled for God’s Church, both within and outside of the United States, as well as pastored congregations in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Toledo, Columbus, and Medina, Ohio. Wayne was a major participant on many of the CGI’s video products, contributing to advancing the gospel of Jesus Christ around the world, influencing thousands who heard his passionate presentations about the plan of salvation that Jesus Christ introduced to all of humanity. He was well liked and loved by many, and his excitement and knowledge of the Bible and God’s truth was infectious to anyone that came in contact with him. He will be missed greatly. But, as it says in Psalms 116:15: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” Wayne was a true saint and his passing is a loss to God’s Church, but we can rejoice that he is now reserved for a resurrection that will place him in God’s Kingdom as a king and priest. He’s finished his race and now waits for his name to be called upon our Lord’s return to this planet. God speed that day, while we praise His name for all He has given us as co-heirs with Him.



*13 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. 14 For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. 15 For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 18 Therefore encourage one another with these words (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18).*

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in his sins, may in fact have his name blotted out of the Book of Life. This is consistent with Paul’s admonition to the Gentiles who had been “grafted in” to God’s “olive tree”:

“Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches [unbelieving Israelites], He may not spare you [grafted-in Gentiles] either. Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off. And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Romans 11:20–23).

Notice the conditional element here: “if you continue in His goodness...if they do not continue in unbelief...”

In Paul’s “olive tree” analogy, the natural branches that have not been broken off are the Israelites who make up the “remnant, chosen by grace,” the

“elect” who obtained the salvation Israel sought (Romans 11:5, 7). The rest, symbolized by the branches that were broken off, are the Israelites who “were hardened” (verse 7). They have been given “a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear” (verse 8). They are clearly *not* a part of the elect body! They are in fact *contrasted* with the elect remnant.

Yet, Paul makes it clear that these spiritually blind, deaf, and hardened Israelites—the broken-off branches—*can* come to faith in Christ and be added to the elect body. He also makes it clear that members of the elect body can be “cut off” if they do not continue in faith.

To put it another way: The names of the believing Gentiles have been recorded in the Book of Life, but if they do not continue in faith, their names will be blotted out. And if the unbelieving Israelites turn to God in faith, their names will be added to the Book of Life.

Election, then, is conditional.

## 2022 HOLY DAY CALENDAR

*These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times (Leviticus 23:4).*

**NT Passover:** April 14 (observed at sundown)

**Feast of Unleavened Bread:** April 16–22

**Pentecost:** June 5

**Feast of Trumpets:** September 26

**Day of Atonement:** October 5

**Feast of Tabernacles:** October 10–16

**Last Great Day (Eighth Day):** October 17

### Open Church Policy

**The Church of God International is an open church.**

**W**e have many people attending who are new in the faith. Some will not always keep each of God’s laws as they should, and some will not believe everything we teach. We pray that they may be strengthened through the services we render and the examples we set as they come to a closer walk with their God. We request that you be neither judgmental nor base your standard for obedience on what you see your brother do. Christ is our standard, not weak and sinful men. Always remember that you will be judged for what you do, not what others do. Your job is to pray for them, set the right example, and please the Father in all that you do.



# Forgiveness in Today's Society

by W. Adam Boyd



## Forgiveness: A Cursory Refresher

What is *forgiveness*? It is the release of resentment or anger. Psychologists generally define forgiveness as a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness. It does not mean condoning or excusing the offenses. According to man's definition, forgiveness does not mean forgetting. Interestingly, God is so gracious that He actually does forget our sins after we repent! (Isaiah 43:25; Acts 3:19; Hebrews 8:12). Should we forget and extend this same courtesy to others?

There are many examples and topics on forgiveness in our Bibles. There are many questions people have regarding forgiveness. Let's briefly look at some of the questions that arise.

### 1. Will God forgive me?

We know that God says He will forgive us if we repent. First John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." He says He will forgive and remember our sins no more: "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Hebrews 8:12, NIV).

### 2. Will you be forgiven if you don't forgive others?

"For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins" (Matthew 6:14–15, NIV).

### 3. Is forgiveness a one-time deal? How many times will I be forgiven or need to forgive others?

Jesus replied "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22, NIV)

Luke 17:3–4 says: "If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."

Matthew 6:14–15: "For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

### 4. What about the wicked folks out there—do they have a chance?

Jeremiah 31:34 states, "No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the LORD,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the LORD. "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

In our cursory review, we can easily appreciate what forgiveness means to God. When we truly repent of our sins, He forgives us and remembers them no more. His mercy is abundant, and His forgiveness is immeasurable. Forgiveness is an equal opportunity for everyone regardless of what sin has been committed. However, it requires action on our part on how we get forgiveness—we have to repent

and ask God for it. Finally, He wants us to extend this same forgiveness to others.

## Finding Forgiveness in a Cancel Culture Society

Now that we have a firm understanding of God's forgiveness, let's think about how we should be conducting ourselves and explore a few observations in today's "cancel culture" society.

*Merriam-Webster* defines cancel culture as: the practice or tendency of engaging in mass canceling as a way of expressing disapproval and exerting social pressure.

To cancel is to cause (something) to end or no longer produce a certain effect; to stop (something) from being effective or valid or to stop doing or planning to do (something); to decide that something (such as a game, performance, etc.) will not happen.

Culture defined: the beliefs, customs, arts, etc., of a particular society, group, place, or time; a way of thinking, behaving, or working that exists in a place or organization.

In summation, we can see that cancel culture is basically when a particular group that thinks and behaves a certain way stops someone or some other group from doing, saying, or planning to do something that the group does not agree with. Most of the time, cancelling an individual involves investigating their past and bringing up something they've said,

We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love.

— Martin Luther King —

done, or some event that may be used as evidence on why they should be cancelled. In some instances, a cancellation may simply be due to a diametric point of view or opinion. For the purposes of this article, let's think about when an "investigation" is conducted into someone's past.

Should we cancel people and attempt to ruin their lives because of a sin they committed in the past that is brought to light (or perhaps one they are accused of)? Does God do this to us?

In today's society, these cancelled people are usually fired from their job, castigated, and even harassed. Some are quickly judged without any chance for explanation then usually forced to apologize whether it is necessary or not. A recent example is with comedian and UFC commentator, Joe Rogan. He hosts a very popular podcast that discusses various topics which he discusses with a variety of guests, one topic happening to be COVID-19. The media are digging up any old dirt from his history to use to shut him down because his and others' opinions on the show don't coincide with their own opinions. Notice how many times I used "opinions." In a country that guarantees free speech and freedom of thought, how can you shut down an opinion and say your opinion is the only one that matters? I digress. Don't get me wrong, some people have done or said some things in the past that most of us would not agree with. Are you sin-free? Are the cancellers sin-free and perfect? Is that behavior a Christ-like quality we should be exhibiting? Imagine if God pulled up your old sin from 20 years ago that you've already realized was wrong, repented of, and learned from. Is that what He does to us? Are we to condemn our brothers and sisters? That behavior isn't forgiv-

ing, and simply doesn't follow along with Christ's instruction in our Bibles.

I'm reminded of a striking similarity in our Bibles: "Jesus went unto the mount of Olives. And early in the morning he came again into the temple, and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them. And the scribes and Pharisees brought unto him a woman taken in adultery; and when they had set her in the midst, They say unto him, Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him. But Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground.

"And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:1–11).

Does God wish us to cancel people who we disagree with or don't share beliefs with? Are we to pull out old sins from their past and use it against them? Imagine if God just canceled us instantly upon sinning—BAM! Lightning strikes you down and you're gone! There would be no one left alive today! Does forgiveness come into play here? Shouldn't we be more forgiving to one another? Have we been moving towards an era of less forgiveness and more intolerance? We must be

very careful in not culminating and nurturing hate, which is what I have seen form over the last decade. People are showing hatred towards each other for petty reasons such as political views, personal health choices, and so on. It's very sad to see. Be careful you don't let yourself be caught up in the hate for any reason!

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that." He surely had great insight.

God has agape love for all of us which is unconditional love. Jesus tells us, "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:12–13). Jesus gave His life for us, for all of us. Let us remember what Matthew 7:1–5 says: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

Finally, Ephesians 4:32 says, "Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Let's remember to always be loving, kind, patient, and forgiving to each other!



# Are You Experienced?

by Jeff Flanick



“Purple Haze” is legendary guitarist Jimi Hendrix’s most famous song. The original lyrics were from a poem he wrote entitled “Purple Haze/Jesus Saves.” In a less well-known psychedelic song, Jimi asks the question: “Are you experienced?” This was not only the name of the

song, it was also the title of the album. Being an avid fan of music, I could write an entire article on rock songs containing Bible references and allusions. The focus of this article explores the question, “Are you experienced?” Experience is a key factor used in job hiring. A person’s developed skills, combined with their educational training, are strong indicators of likely success within an occupation. What a person has learned, as well as what one has produced in the past, strongly correlates with one’s future potential. Experience is not just related to employment. Common experiences are usually found to be the very basis of strong human relationships. People are likely to make friends with those whom they share activities with. Friendships can be initiated at a karate studio, a stamp club, or a yoga class for example. It is common for veterans of the military to form lifelong friendships as a result of intense close side-by-side interaction. This is especially true of those who served in battle together. There is no substitute for having shared interests and shared experiences in developing close relationships.

Similarly, in order for one to develop a closer bond with God, one needs shared interests and experiences; a person needs to develop comparable thinking, attitudes and outlook. How does one “share” experiences with the Eternal? How can one develop similar thinking, outlook, and perspective as God their Father (or, for that matter, with the patriarchs of the Old Testament, along with the apostolic fathers of our faith)? The short and simplistic answer seems obvious enough: spend a significant amount of time in the Word of God, increase your prayer life, your reflective meditation, and your Bible study. This sounds easy enough, but how do we take it to “the next level,” how do we manifest a truly *transformative* experience with our Creator?

Walking with God should be a goal of every believer. Ardent seekers of Truth should desire to deeply understand our Savior’s life, mission, and teachings. How do we walk with God? How do we “experience God”? Let’s look at some of the experiences preserved for our instruction and example in the Scriptures.

**Genesis 6:9**, as interpreted by the Amplified Bible, states: “These are *the records of* the generations (family history) of Noah. Noah was a righteous man [one who was just and had right standing with God], blameless in his [evil] generation; Noah walked (lived) [in habitual fellowship] with God.”

Notice the Amplified Bible version gives the English reader more substance than the streamlined NIV or NKJV renderings of this passage. No Bible version is perfect, as the difficulties with language translation, as well as the discernment of language as understood by the reader, are always at play. In order

to understand more deeply the experience Noah lived, these additional nuanced words help provide richer comprehension. The Amplified Bible version places emphasis on *why* Noah was righteous (he had “right standing” with God). Noah was “blameless” as *opposed* to those around him. Instead of simply reading Noah “walked with God” we are given greater illumination on what this “walk with God” *meant*. Noah lived everyday with his focus on the Creator. Noah had “*habitual* fellowship” with God. Noah’s fellowship with God was not passive—it was *active*.

It is helpful to read different versions of the sacred scriptures in order to avoid having the wisdom contained therein become simply “words on a page.” English is not usually found to be the most illustrative language in conveying active emotional depth. For instance, the Hebrew language may explain “the love of God” in this way: “A loving Elohim” (that is, “a God who loves”), while English translations may



render this idea as “God is love.” These passages may not seem to be much different at first glance; however, upon closer examination, we can see that the Hebrew is more *active* in its presentation of God’s love as compared to the slightly more *passive* “conceptual idea” presented in English to the reader (credit to *Restoration Times Magazine* for elucidation on language variations).

Understanding languages and word meanings is helpful in all aspects of life and is certainly of great benefit in the study of Scripture. Understanding the titles of God and His names are worthy of examination and study. I will not broach the “Sacred Names” subject here except to say that “language” can at times get in the way of our understanding of who God is. Let us consider political speeches as an example. For as long as I can remember, presidential speeches end with the same “old mantra”—some version of “God bless the United States” or “God bless America.” Politicians who find it necessary to invoke God on these occasions are usually not all that spiritual in nature. In fact, in many cases these political figures implement policies in direct opposition to God and His Word. Who is this “god” they are calling upon? Is it Yahweh, the Creator God (Elohim), or some nameless “god” who covers all religions? The name of “God” in this instance loses its essence, and its identity, when applied “universally” as a “one size fits all” obligatory deity designa-

tion.

Reading Scripture, especially familiar stories and passages, has the potential to become a sort of “background noise” if we are not careful. For a period of time I lived fairly close to railroad tracks. At first, when trains passed by my house it was quite startling. In no short order these train disruptions became less and less noticeable. The sounds of the passing locomotives did not change; however what did change was my familiarity with the sounds and noises around me. In a parallel to increased familiarity with our environment, familiarity with certain Bible heroes and scriptural passages can potentially render them to become “invisible” to an extent. Those of us growing up with Snoopy and the Peanuts Gang television cartoons might compare this to Charlie Brown’s teacher’s speech. In the cartoons we were never able to clearly hear Charlie’s teacher; her speech was made to sound like “...wah wah woh, wah...” (just an indistinguishable group of words/noises.) To avoid this trap, it is helpful to examine scriptures thoughtfully on different levels, not to just simply read passages with preconceived notions and interpretations of the subject matter already firmly implanted in our minds. To maximize our scriptural understanding, it takes more than grasping for context. We should strive to make the pages come “alive” in our minds.

Turning back to Noah’s experience, do we vibrantly interpret what those pages of text present to us? There is scholarly debate on exactly how long it took Noah to construct the ark. The length of time it took Noah is estimated to be in the range of several decades, to possibly over 100 years! No matter what the exact number of years it took was, it certainly was an extremely long period of time. Going further, anyone who works in building and construction must surely appreciate the immensity of the project. Noah had no power tools. A DeWalt power saw was not readily available with its lithium power pack batteries and chargers. Fine quality metal handsaws and precision machine hardened axes were not to be found. The ark was a stupendous accomplishment just considering its construction. In addition to this, if one takes into account the gathering of the livestock, as well as the procurement of the journey’s supplies (within a society diametrically opposed to Noah’s ways), this story takes on an extreme level of awe! Do we give this story its true grandeur when we simply read: “Noah was a good man, built an ark, took animals two by two on the ark, and lived with his family through a flood” without sincerely attempting to digest all the information available on the written pages? Do we even begin to scratch the surface, within our minds, of the intensity of Noah’s experience?

Exploring the story of Abraham, we are all familiar with passages explaining the ordeal of Isaac’s near sacrifice—a monumental event in biblical and human history. There can be a tendency to take this story for granted. This may be because we already “know” the outcome, or perhaps we “know” it was a foreshadowing of the Messiah’s sacrifice. Yet, to truly attempt to grasp Abraham’s experience we must go further. Abraham was 75 years old when he was called by God. He had to wait until he was 100 years old to receive his promised son. This incredible ordeal is recorded and known by most Christians, but how often is it read with such understanding that

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the believer “feels” the emotions of the characters involved? Is the reader simply being “told” by the text what happened in a passive way, or is the reader viscerally “experiencing” what Abraham may have felt as he made the trek to the altar alone with his son? Can the pages of Scripture transmit the feeling of tying your son up, and being mere moments away from thrusting a sharp knife into his body with deliberate premeditation? The experience of Abraham is without a doubt one of the more powerful stories to unpack in our minds. The list of tremendous biblical experiences to contemplate is long. The passion of Jesus Christ; Moses’ transition from son of Pharaoh, to slave and to eventually becoming God’s messenger at Mount Sinai; Daniel in the lion’s den; Paul’s conversion on the road to Damascus—among many others are preserved for our example. We should strive to distill these traumatic breathtaking events into “actionable lesson plans” for our lives.

Understanding God’s expectations for our lives, and for our behavior, is a necessary condition for spiritual growth. Utilizing the lessons learned through the experiences of biblical heroes, so as to follow in their examples of courage, will be of great benefit during *our times of adversity*. These same levels of resolve, grit, and dedication may be required of each one of us in the future.

We are told in **Matthew 16:24–26**, “Then Jesus said to His disciples, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?’” (NKJV).

Christ’s words here confirm that a believer’s “dedication to mission” may potentially include losing one’s physical life. We have ample confirmation of Christ’s proclamation being in fact true, as we read the experiences of people’s lives as recorded in the Bible. Examples of hardship and martyrdom are recorded in the history of the Church of God, as well as in the general history of the Christian Church. Have you taken these examples to heart? Have you meditated on these experiences and absorbed these lessons in your mind sufficiently so as to be able to weather personal battles of faith that may arise?

Crises of faith are not limited to external forces and circumstances such as those depicted in the tribulation passages of Revelation. The struggle with one’s faith internally is preserved for us in the experience of Peter as recorded in the scriptures surrounding Jesus’ arrest.

**Luke 22:60–62**: “Peter replied, ‘Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!’ Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: ‘Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.’ And he went outside and wept bitterly” (NIV).

Peter’s dilemma here is a powerful experience of doubt, shame and failure. Fortunately, Peter leveraged his bout with failure into an advantage by choosing to learn lessons from the experience, fortifying his resolve to become more faithful to his Master, and his God, even unto death! Failure can be a powerful teacher! We tend to learn more from our mistakes as opposed to those things which we do right. This principle can apply to our spiritual experiences just as well.

The global experiences of the past two years within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic are worthy of examination. How have congregations and indi-

viduals reacted to this unforeseen experience? Dealing with fear of the unknown has had a definite impact on society, the church, and individuals. Many of us had to navigate our lives under unfamiliar circumstances. How did we conduct ourselves in these recent times? Did we panic and lose our primary focus on things above because of fear? Did we overreact? Did we allow division within our congregations? These are important questions to examine. All of us are human. Each and every one of us makes mistakes. Even if we handled this Covid-19 experience with grace and spiritual maturity, there is always room for improvement. The pandemic surely caused undue suffering, death, and hardship, however it did not rise to the level of the “Black Death” in Europe during the 1300s. Self-examination of how we personally dealt with the experience of Covid-19 will be beneficial as we move forward into times of uncertainty.

The Bible tells us in **Revelation 9:18**, “By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed—by the fire and the smoke and the brimstone which came out of their mouths” (NKJV). Compared to the destruction to come as foretold by our Master in **Matthew 24**, as well as in the **Book of Revelation**, the Covid-19 experience was in fact quite mild. We need to employ the lessons learned during these recent events as a source of inspiration for continuing to build our “spiritual muscle.”

Performing a “debriefing” of our behavior during the pandemic has the potential to positively impact our attitudes and behaviors in the future. Debriefing entails examination of a past experience. In a general sense, debriefing looks at what was your objective: Did you accomplish your objective, why did (or didn’t) you do so, and finally what should you do (or not do) in the future? With respect to our recent pandemic experience: Did you rely on God, or man, for direction in your life? Did you value your spiritual life over your physical life? Did you fear God or man? Did you pray more earnestly and honestly? Did you help your fellow man, your fellow brethren? Did you stay strong in your congregation? I could go on as these questions (and more importantly, these

demands], to stand firm [in your place, fully prepared, immovable, victorious].” We prepare to “stand” by learning from our experiences, as well as from the experiences of others (both past and present.) Our Lord and Master warns us in **Matthew 24:21**: “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again” (NIV). These future times will by definition be more intense than the Holocaust, world wars, the persecution of the Christian fathers in the early days of the church, the slaughters of Herod’s day, or the slaughter in the days of the Pharaoh. We must understand this coming reality in order to avoid being caught unaware and unprepared.

We should do more than simply focus on traumatic experiences as we contemplate improving our faith, and our walk, with the Almighty. We experience life every day, every Sabbath, every holy day. The question is *HOW* do we experience these days, these Sabbaths? Do we reflect *agape* love in our daily lives? Do we treat the Sabbath with the reverence, respect, and awe it deserves; or do we “go through the motions mechanically”? If we are able to attend a congregation, is it similar to “punching a clock” at a job we know is indeed necessary to pay the rent but, truth be told, there is no passion for your work? Is it simply a case of knowing you “have to do it,” but you’d rather be fishing or watching reruns of *Law and Order* with a bag of Doritos and a Pepsi in hand? Do we treat the Sabbath and holy days as the psalmist exhorts in **Psalms 100:4**? The psalmist writes, “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!” On a more personal and introspective level, do we practice **Isaiah 58:13**, which states, “If you turn back your foot from the Sabbath, from doing your pleasure on my holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight and the holy day of the LORD honorable; if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure, or talking idly; then you shall take delight in the LORD, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken”?

Do we truly experience the Sabbath as the Creator intended? We will need the power of God’s instruction, combined with our own learned experience, to endure what will come in the future. The holy days are of course important “rehearsals” for our training and experience. To quote Adrian Davis in a recent sermon, “Passover is an opportunity to tap into the mind of Elohim.” We need to strategize—to game plan—this level of “experience” and commitment in our walk.

The last aspect of experience to consider in this article involves the intended long-term purpose of our experiences in this life. It should be clear in the mind of the reader that the eventual goal of getting “right with God” in this life is to enter the spiritual realm of eternity. **Revelation 20:6** tells us, “Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years” (ESV). It should be apparent those who are worthy to share in this resurrection will have had the learning, training, and experience to be entitled to such a glorious state. **Revelation 3:12** goes further, stating, “To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne” (NKJV). What are these individuals “overcoming” exactly? They are overcoming the world, its experiences, and especially its most distressing and most difficult circumstances. In addition

*Continued next page*

## EXPERIENCED HELP WANTED

**EXPERIENCED MECHANIC**  
Experience required in auto diagnostics  
& repair. Must have own tools.

answers) are valuable to each individual moving forward. If you find that the answers, or grade, you gave yourself is less than you would have expected, it is okay. There is no future in the past; it is all about learning from your experiences and moving forward with improvement. We learn from our experiences. **Proverbs 24:16** tells us, “For the righteous falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in times of calamity” (ESV). It is always important to remember **Isaiah 41:10**: “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand” (ESV). Moving forward, we must fortify our will to steadfastly obey God in the face of even greater threats. We must put on the full armor of God as explained to us in the sixth chapter of the book of Ephesians. **Ephesians 6:13** is interpreted in the Amplified Bible this way: “Therefore, put on the complete armor of God, so that you will be able to [successfully] resist *and* stand your ground in the evil day [of danger], and having done everything [that the crisis



tion, these individuals will also have to overcome themselves, especially their carnal nature. Overcomers will have the privilege of helping Christ bring in the beautiful world depicted by the Millennium.

**Hebrews 4:14–16** clearly tells us: “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (NKJV). Christ partook of the human “experience” enabling Him to acquire the highest feelings of empathy so as to transcendently understand our human condition. Christ’s experience gave Him insight, on a very deep personal level, to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of our human existence, along with our human experience. He “walked in our shoes,” so to speak; He didn’t just theorize what it would be like to be human. We can have an experiential and intellectual connection with the Messiah (at least on some level)

if we set our minds to it.

Our experiences may also benefit others in this present life, as well as those present in the next. Sharing our struggles and successes with others who navigate problems similar to those we have faced is a powerful force. Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous have had innumerable cases of success as a result of combining shared experiences with the ability to relate to others on a deeply empathetic level. Counselors and leaders of AA groups have indirect relational knowledge of current alcoholics’ addictive experiences. The exact circumstances are always different; however, there is a common theme that weaves the patterns of addiction together. Similarly, overcoming spiritual obstacles can be accomplished by learning from Scripture as well as by connecting with brethren of like-mind and circumstance. Experiences and spiritual growth in this lifetime will surely translate positively toward our mission of helping members of God’s Kingdom in the future Millennium. God is recruiting people for His “team” on the earth right now. He expects you to use your experiences as an opportunity for the growth and improvement of yourself, as well as for

the benefit of other members of the human family.

At the end of the song “Are You Experienced?” Jimi Hendrix states:

*Trumpets [and violins] I can hear in distance  
I think they’re calling our names  
Maybe now you can’t hear them, but you will....*

Jimi may not have been thinking biblically as he wrote those words; however, they do lead to an appropriate closing of this article. I am reminded of **1 Thessalonians 4:16–18**:

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (NKJV). Will our experiences be counted worthy to be able to hear the call of *that* Trumpet? I dearly hope so!

(Jeff Flanick attends the Church of God International, Medina, Ohio.)

## Ministers, Elders... What are we to be?

### A Review of the Book *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch

by Ed Szalankiewicz



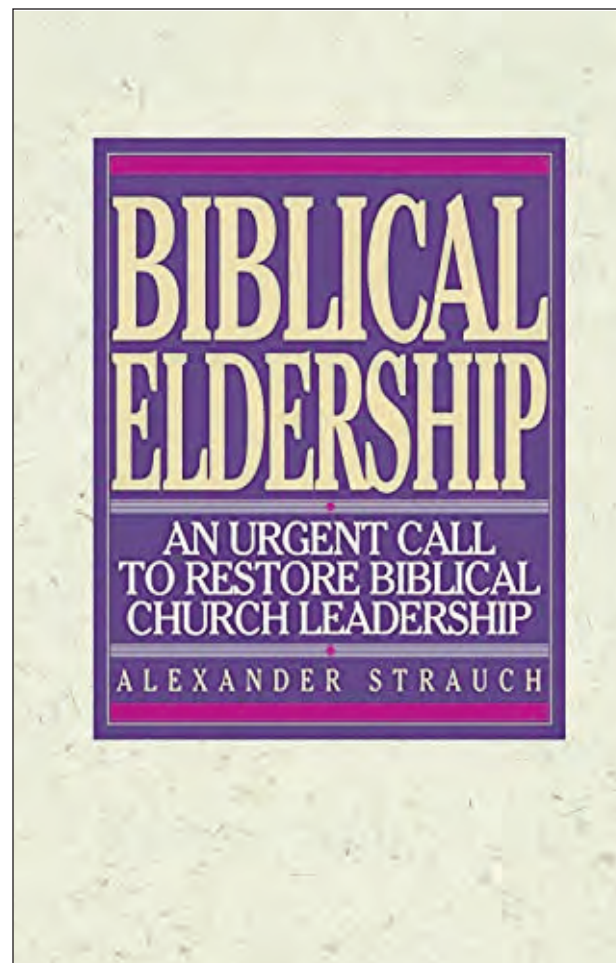
#### Teaching and Defending the Faith

Alexander Strauch, in his book, *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, defines the proper biblical role of elders as qualified, competent,

and loving “servant leaders” who work together in a collaborative shepherding atmosphere with the primary role of teaching sound doctrine and defending the “faith once delivered.” It is interesting to note that there is no evidence that Mr. Strauch himself keeps the seventh-day Sabbath or the correct holy days as taught by Scripture. I am not certain what faith he defends; yet, for the most part, the principles he asserts in the book seem biblically sound. Certainly, it is also important to consider that we see a long history of church leaders who have taken “this stand” or “that stand” to defend what they “perceived” as the truth of God, yet they were clearly in error. So, if we accept his concept in understanding the role of elders, I would suggest that we must also add to it the vital understanding that the true called and chosen first fruits eldership must be led by GOD’s Holy Spirit in this effort and not rely solely on the logic and philosophy of man. Otherwise, what we define as “the truth” (as all ministries do) will be simply one’s own view – one’s own personal preference – as opposed to what others do and not necessarily what GOD defines as truth. It seems to me that Elders must always defend the truth as reconciled by the whole of scripture at all costs.

I would submit for your consideration that “truth” is a concept that is easily muddled. It seems that all groups point to their traditions and beliefs as being “THE truth,” though many of the things they believe are not based on what is *actually* true according to God’s Word. The more common practice is to conscript the word “truth” to give “power” to one’s own

preferences. Yet by doing so, they weaken the value of the very real concept of what is actually true—a thing the people of God are supposed to love! Truth is what IS TRUE in every case according to God’s Word and revelation—otherwise we cannot learn or grow. Saul of Tarsus thought he was right, but he was very wrong. The Jews thought they were right, yet they rejected the very Messiah they had longed for! Even the disciples believed Christ would conquer Jerusalem—He will, but not as they thought! When we depart from obedience to God’s Word we are vulnerable to being led by any “spirit” that happens along. The only leading that matters is that which comes to those who obey God and receive *His* Holy Spirit.



So Strauch is correct that we must teach and defend the faith *as defined by God*, not only by the logic of man. I personally would emphasize, however, these things in particular: the message of the coming Kingdom of God, His law, including (and preeminently) the Sabbath and the holy days, repentance from dead works, faith toward God, the doctrine of baptisms and the laying-on of hands, the giving of God’s Holy Spirit, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment—i.e. the wages of sin and the gift of eternal life. It seems to me that, as shepherds, we do our best to hold to the leading of God’s Holy Spirit and teach that we must live according to every word of God. Clearly, this is THE primary role that we share—to teach the word of God purely. What we teach and what we defend must “square” with the whole body of Scripture. Acts 5:32 says that we are HIS witnesses and if we obey HIM we will receive His Holy Spirit. Then, in John 16:13, we find that IT will lead us (notice “it”) into *all* truth (what is true) and further it will show us things to come. Jesus Himself said that we are to teach “whatsoever I have COMMANDED you”—that’s obedience! If we join these two concepts into this responsibility of eldership in defending the faith and teaching what is (really) true, our reliance is never upon our own intellect or our own personal musings but upon God Himself, as it should be.

#### Loving Shepherds

Clearly there is a higher visibility when one is in a leadership role. This “higher visibility” carries with it certain pitfalls, not the least of which is the blossoming of one’s ego which must be acknowledged and restrained at all costs if one is to have any chance of being effective in the role of being a Godly shepherd. Strauch speaks of the need (essential quality) for the elders to truly “love the sheep” (Romans 12:10: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another”). Elders are shepherds who *must* love—and give themselves for the sheep, following Christ’s example—fully embracing the balance of this Godly



process for the sole purpose of building and nourishing the first fruits family of God in love, not out of vain glory or a need for personal validation. This kind of humility is not a sign of weakness but evidence of true spiritual strength. Though there is a high sense of fulfillment and purpose in the privilege of this service, this Godly labor is—in the truest sense—to be a labor of love!

### Male Leadership

Mr. Strauch spends considerable time emphasizing the different roles of males and females and makes a strong argument for the biblical basis and directives regarding male leadership in the church, family, and community. Clearly God has given each a different and no less important role as His plan moves forward for mankind. He explains the concept of “first among equals” as it applies to the man’s role in that he is most assuredly the one who bears the leadership responsibility in most cases, when considering the sexes. God designed men for this role. I would only add, that Adam sinned *knowing* what he was doing but Eve sinned in deception. When that is fully considered, we might find that the role each plays is set in place by God for many reasons, not just alone that the man was created first and subsequently the woman from the man as Strauch asserts. There is an expression “it is lonely at the top.” That is the point I make here—that holding the final authority on an issue is rarely “fun” or “glorious.” I would suggest that the first Adam was placed in his leadership role to “learn obedience by the things he would suffer” in his physical struggle to survive. Paul writes about Christ (the second Adam) in Hebrews 5:8, stating that He “learned obedience by things that He suffered,” though certainly not in the same way nor for the same reasons. But it is interesting that Adam and Christ are analogized as the first and second Adam, and He (Christ) is the “husband” of the second Eve, the church.

Clearly, the focus of Strauch’s book is on leadership (eldership) in the church. It would seem that we should understand that the role of the woman as the “weaker vessel” is also analogous to a “fine crystal goblet” with great beauty and high value as opposed to a “coffee mug.” The “fine crystal” needs to be protected and cared for properly; this is the very reason Paul says, “Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it.” The mug can take a lot of thumping around while the fine crystal must be treated delicately. God’s Word beckons that this part of the “weaker vessel” analogy also be emphasized—and had it been so in the past there would have been less abuses by men over women in families, communities, and, sadly and to some extent, in the church itself.

Another consideration of this “role assignment” by God is to keep the woman off the front lines of battle precisely because of her great value.

It bears noting that not all women in the church are “wives.” We must remember and emphasize to our women that Christ did not come from the “rib of Joseph” but from the “womb of Mary” and through the “seed of the woman”! There was no human man involved in the coming of our Savior!

This “precious weaker vessel” explanation helps to put to rest the false connotation that “weaker vessel” somehow means of lesser value or of lesser intelligence. Clearly, we find that Scripture shows that each sex was created, designed, and fashioned for the role which God has assigned them. Both are made for a specific purpose and in the image of God and equally valued as His children.

### Qualifications of Elders

When we think of “worthiness” each of us stands wholly inadequate before Christ, knowing that the standards and qualifications for entrance into the very family of God are that we become without spot

or wrinkle or any such thing—perfect, as He is perfect and holy! Certainly we know that God does indeed call the basest of men to confound the mighty and says clearly that not many noble are called at this time. Each of us can easily relate to these beginning standards; yet we know that we are also instructed to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ and that only through Him we can indeed achieve these lofty goals. So, too, we find the standards and qualifications for eldership are high.

As we are chosen, called, and become students of God’s Word, some may develop a certain zeal and passion which may lead to a leadership role in the body if the correct “spiritual fruit” is evident. Paul writes that God himself “sets into the church” (Ephesians 4:11) some who are designed and prepared for these roles. Strauch stands firm in his writings that there be a strict adherence to the public and obvious qualifications to identify those whom God has called to this role. Mr. Strauch militates against any other standards that may “gloss over, exclude, or go beyond” the strict biblical standards.

Yet he acknowledges that churches are better

**The battle Satan wages against us is usually in the mind, and it is no different for the elders than for any man.**

served by “councils of elders” who “share” oversight responsibilities primarily because each of us (as he quotes C.S. Lewis) has “some fatal flaw” serious enough to destroy us (page 40). He asserts these weaknesses can be overcome by a spiritual consensus in a group of elders rather than by one “prime all powerful” leader.

So, strict standards aside, Strauch recognizes and states clearly that even qualified elders will bring some strengths and some weaknesses to the mix of spiritual oversight. He encourages that the way this is mitigated is through shared and collaborative oversight, recognizing that the elders are at their best when they work together. Though Strauch is adamant regarding qualifications, even he clearly acknowledges there will be weaknesses and infallibilities in anyone who would be an elder.

Going forward to discuss the actual biblical qualifications, he states that elders are to be “entrusted with God’s dearest and most costly possessions, His children.” As such, he speaks of three vital areas of qualification that must be met:

1. They must be of high moral character and capable in the use of Scripture (apt to teach).
2. They must be a good example of godly living to all.
3. They must align with and be accountable to the biblical qualifications for eldership.

He rightly enumerates and expands upon the key qualifications as found in 1 Timothy, Titus, and 1 Peter:

- Above reproach
- Hospitable
- Not a drunkard (or similar addictions)
- Not pugnacious (aggressive)
- Gentle and uncontentious
- The husband of one wife
- Temperate
- Loves what is good
- Is sensible and just
- Prudent and manages his household and affairs well
- Respectable with a good reputation outside the church
- Having children who believe
- Not self-willed
- Not quick tempered
- Not a novice

- Holds fast to the Word of God to exhort and to refute false doctrine
- Serving not out of compulsion
- Not serving for monetary gain or possessing a love of money
- One who does not “lord it over” his brethren
- Is clearly a good example

Strauch encourages that an elder must certainly meet these qualifications and that some processes should be set in place to achieve a certain degree of assurance of this. He suggests some kind of a deep probe or inquiry; yet, in Matthew 7:16 Christ Himself is clear that “ye shall know them by their fruits”! There is to be “fruit” or “evidence” of these things—it needs to be obvious and “known.” Christ’s own words and authority on this subject, then, preeminently form the basis for the selection of elders.

It is reasonable to consider that each man who aspires to the position of elder will find that he is strong in some areas and weaker in others. Also, each of us most likely came to repentance at baptism and began on the pathway of growing in grace and knowledge of godly living. Paul, after all, had once been an unholy zealot and most likely an accomplice to murder; yet he was used as one of the greatest apostles of all time. Everyone, including every elder, has sinned, and to say otherwise is to be wholly dishonest.

The battle Satan wages against us is usually in the mind, and it is no different for the elders than for any man. That is why Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 10:5 that we are to bring every thought into captivity. It should be noted that something that is “in captivity” still exists but is fully restrained—that is the goal—to be fully (as much as can be achieved) in control with the help of God’s Holy Spirit supplying the power. Paul is clear that his own personal struggle with temptation (“the thorn in his flesh” that was “a messenger of Satan”) was allowed or sanctioned by God to keep him humble (2 Corinthians 12:7). It should be noted that Paul wrote this well after he had been taught personally by Jesus Christ and called to be the apostle to the Gentile nations. Paul, like us, had things he had to bring into captivity, temptations to wrestle against.

In the eldership, we above all must fully embrace the understanding that “If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Timothy 2:21). This, written by Paul’s own hand, is how one becomes “meet for the master’s use.” Not that elders haven’t sinned (for all have sinned), but that they do not give themselves over to it but purge themselves from it, living in a godly manner, buttressed all the while by the mercy of God.

Though there are some very good church elders out there, it is unlikely that any of them achieve Christ-like perfection in this physical life. Sometimes, one gets the sense that the elders and leaders become a larger, more obvious target for the enemy. So when you consider it, it almost seems that the qualifications to be an elder are actually reiterated in a broad sense in “the whole armor of God” found in Ephesians 4:11. The elders should clearly be wearing that armor.

Certainly, true godly elders find that not a day goes by when they don’t feel unworthy in some way. Yet, true godly elders also recognize that this important leadership responsibility is a great privilege which allows a very special relationship with God and His people. It is “special” in a way—an awesome way, a humbling way—a way that engenders great anticipation and longing to bow, along with our brothers and sisters, before the One who did what He did to make it possible for us to live and grow and someday to be present with Him in His fantastic Kingdom.

May God hasten that day!



# A Bio-Digital World is Emerging

*Klaus Schwab, founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum, has some major plans that include redefining what it means to be human. He is an adamant advocate of trans-humanism and is the author of *The Fourth Industrial Revolution* and *The Great Reset*, which speak to the development of nanotechnology implants that intend to augment human beings with AI. Where is this leading us?*

by Bill Watson



Regardless of what you might think of this SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, I'm sure we can all agree our lifestyles have been affected in a variety of ways. At present,

depending on whether or not you elected to be inoculated, the effect on your lifestyle will vary in degree. Presently, protocols underpinned by mandates encouraging the injections provide greater public freedoms to move about for those that choose to be inoculated. However, unlike what is going on in some other nations around the world, in the United States these federal mandates are currently being challenged. Just recently, the Supreme Court ruled President Biden's mandate for companies employing 100 or more workers to be unconstitutional. However, the healthcare industry was exempted—they remain under the mandate.

But regardless, what has materialized out of this global event is remarkably revealing for some of us. What I'm talking about in particular is how easy it was, under the threat of a worldwide pandemic, to lock down so many national economies in unified succession. Many have been surprised by the ease of this coordinated event of economic shut downs in multiple countries.

In addition, another striking observation of what has happened over the last, approximately, two years is the outgrowth of governmental monitoring, surveillance, and data acquisition. There has been an enormous amount of information collected by federal governments and health agencies, which has resulted in the documentation and profiling of millions of people that have been inoculated and issued what is now labeled a "vaccine passport." Clearly, the intent is obvious: to know who is and isn't inoculated and, additionally, for purposes of controlling, fining, tracking, and surveillance; or perhaps, in the future, *like in China*, to qualify for social credits toward citizenry status—similar in principle to the results here, which allow specific public services to be exclusively available for only the inoculated. This is a significant "control and profiling factor" that obviously emerged out of this pandemic and presently restricts certain freedoms of individuals that declined. Right or wrong, it is an undeniable observation!

## Considering the "Mark" of Revelation

In Revelation 13:16–18, we are introduced to a "mark" that will be used by the combined religio/fascist government known as Mystery Babylon the Great (a.k.a. "the Beast"). This "mark" will be used as leverage to control the population of those that are under its jurisdiction. Notice: "And he [the Beast] causes [Greek: *poieo*, to appoint, commit, execute, ordain, order, enact by decree, constitute, mandate] all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive [Greek: *didomi*, to bestow, bring forth, commit, deliver, grant, yield] a mark [Greek: *charagma*, a scratch, or etching, a stamp, or badge, graven] in their right hand, or in their foreheads" (Revelation 13:16).

Many are well aware this same governmental combine (Revelation 17:12–13) will "change times and



Klaus Schwab, founder and Executive Chairman of the World Economic Forum

laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Daniel 7:25). Daniel explains, for approximately three and a half years this autocratic union of ten kings that "have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast" (Revelation 17:13) will change times and laws and mandate the people to observe these decrees—these appointed times! Assuredly, Sunday worship will be a part of this, along with many other Babylonian traditions, which sadly are being observed today, unbeknownst to enormous amounts of traditional Christians throughout the world.

But, curiously, based on this Greek word *charagma*, it would seem to appear this "mark" goes beyond just Sunday and other Babylonian seasonal and liturgical observances. Notice in Acts how this Greek word is used. "For as much then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven [*charagma*, scratched, etched, stamped] by art and man's device" (Acts 17:29). This is the only other place this word is used outside of the book of Revelation, and it clearly describes an etching, carving, scratching, or stamping, obviously by a device—a tool (a technology of sort)—to make an image of God. Interestingly, this opens up consideration for the plausibility of an external mechanism that presents a possible means of implementation for governmental social engineering and control.

Notice the specific action of control this "mark" will cause: "And no man might buy or sell, save [except] he that had the mark [*caragma*, the etch, stamp, or scratch], or the name of the Beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:17). **Now, I'm not saying the inoculation is the mark of the Beast—far from it! That is absolutely not my intent, so please don't read that idea into what I'm saying here;** I'm simply saying that what we have seen in this pandemic helps us to see how an external mechanism—government-mandated protocols—can serve as a means of deployment by governments for social engineering. Many countries are presently marching in "lockstep" to decreed protocols that, in some cases, are neither sensible nor practical and have been confusing to a broad segment of society throughout the world. Clearly, this has been demonstrated by literally millions of people protesting in the streets of cities around the globe (most recently the trucker convoys) against some of these government edicts and protocols.

This situation has provided a "fruitful platform" to

build enormous national databases for artificial intelligence (AI) profiling, tracking, steering, managing, and penalizing people; *but more importantly*, how about considering what this "practice run" reveals to the global leaders that have designed the objectives of Agenda 30 and the Great Reset? Where could this be guiding us? Could there be ulterior reasons for this pandemic event that has unfolded over the last two years?

## Could It Be Leading to Digital Identification?

Well, whether or not the pandemic is considered to be the catalyst *isn't important*; instead, what is important is that the old adage, "Never let a good crisis go to waste," would certainly seem to be in

play. And the reason we can say this is, regardless of the role the pandemic has played, it should be plain to all of us that methods, technologies, strategies, and new systems of doing business have clearly emerged from the disruption and have seriously changed the landscape of the world's geopolitical, technological, and workplace conditions. And these new circumstances are currently becoming the *genesis of new processes* on how to manage commerce and the populations of nations around the world.

Let me explain.

Due to some progressive ideas and circumstances that are being driven by the pandemic, like vaccine passports, quarantine tracking, fines and arrests, as well as China's social credit system and an effort in developing a "central banking" *cashless currency* (unlike crypto currencies), there is a growing interest to *digitize all the information* these enormous social programs/processes require.

For instance, China has been using a social credit system as a framework intended to report on the trustworthiness of individual citizens, corporations, and government agencies for many years now. Former V.P. Mike Pence sounded a *warning shot* when he said, "China's rulers aim to implement an Orwellian system premised on controlling virtually every facet of human life—the so-called social credit score." The Western media described it as the "*sinister*" social credit system intended to be a system of *total control*. So, the consolidation of data for enhancing AI and the ability of surveillance of a nation's population demands a *digital platform* to accomplish such a large-scale task.

Surprisingly, we see some progression being made in Canada, of all things! Recently, there has been a lot of activity implementing vaccine passports for shopping, banking, work, or recreation; but, in addition, there are plans to implement a digital program to move Canada primarily into a cashless society. In the halls of the Canadian government, discussions about a *digital currency* with all citizens being facilitated with a *digital wallet*, much like what is used in the crypto currency world, is being explored.

According to Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, "the *Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated* that we simply cannot be an *offline* government in an *online* world. That is why our government [the Province of Ontario] has developed its first Digital and Data Strategy. This ambitious strategy is an important step in making the province a

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world-leading *digital jurisdiction*.”

The news goes on about the launch of Ontario Onwards Action Plan, financed with \$500 million dollars to bring major changes to the government (of Ontario) by embracing this technology for harnessing innovative ideas with measurable results to improve the way people and business interact with government. As we can see, the intent is said to be for convenience, reliability, and easier access to government services—but, the truth is, it’s all about *managing citizens digital assets and data* as the Mission Statement goes on to say! (<https://www.ontario.ca/page/building-digital-ontario>)

The article continues: “the *Covid-19 pandemic* has made our province’s ability to harness technology more urgent than ever,” and then proceeds to make a case for how this will improve your privacy and the protections that matter most to the people of Ontario. It goes on to assure “mobilizing new digital and data opportunities will also ensure that Ontario doesn’t go back to the status quo [offline], but keeps moving forward to build [online] a more prosperous future for everyone.” But, you can’t help but notice, *reading between the lines*, how this will put a lot of your personal data into the digitized network (a database, whether admitted or not) that obviously produces certain vulnerabilities to manipulate and perhaps control your personal life over the long term and out into the future!

### Could It Ultimately Lead to Bio-Digitalization?

Interestingly enough, continuing to use what’s going on in Canada as our example, you can’t help but wonder, what does “a more prosperous future for everyone” mean? Where is this driving us? What other developments are on the table, viewed as improving (Ontario’s digital footprint) the anticipated additional improvements this digitization project is supposed to bring?

In an article in *Policy Horizons, Canada* titled “Exploring Bio-digital Convergence” (<https://horizons.gc.ca/en/2020/02/11exploring-biodigital-convergence/>) the question is presented, “What happens when biology and digital technology merge?” It is this same question that underscores Klaus Schwab’s interest and efforts in researching trans-human convergence!

Interestingly, a disclaimer is published for the article but certainly doesn’t dismiss the content and who is exploring this possibility as a consideration. Notice the disclaimer: “Policy Horizons Canada (Policy Horizons) is a STRATEGIC FORESIGHT ORGANIZATION ‘WITHIN’ THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA WITH A ‘MANDATE’ [emphasis mine] to **help the Government** develop future-oriented policy and programs that *are more robust and resilient in the ‘face of disruptive change’ on the horizon* [in the future]. The content of this document does not necessarily represent the views of the Government of Canada, or participating departments and agencies.” But, curiously, it “*does operate within*” the Canadian government and *for* the government, with a “*mandate*” to help the government develop POLICY and PROGRAMS that are more robust and resilient, as disruptive changes occur in the future! What exactly do you think is being said here? Does it sound as though they may be talking out of both sides of their mouth?

Consider the Forward: “In the coming years, *bio-digital technologies* could be woven into our lives in the way that digital technologies are now. Biological and digital systems *are converging*, and could change the way we work, live, and even evolve as a SPECIES. More than a technological change, this *bio-digital* convergence may *transform* the way we understand ourselves and cause us to *redefine* what we consider HUMAN, or NATURAL” (emphasis mine).

This paper, from the Director General of Policy Horizons Canada, Kristel Van der Elst, is quite

shocking as to what is being considered as “policy exploration” for future impacts on the economy, ecosystems, and society and culture in general. What is being discussed and considered are questions of how managing the risks, with care and sensitivities, will shape the way to navigate the cultural and ethical challenges that will arise and ultimately shape future government policy and governance!

However, what is surprising, as early as the 1970s and 1980s, Canada’s legislative body understood the digital era was upon us. They foresaw the development of the growing digitization of data and how it could be used to benefit the government and populace. But recently, digital technologies and biological systems have developed to the degree that *merging the two* is not only reasonable but, for some, undeniably doable! This combination of merging these two sectors presents a profound disruption of our concepts about society and culture, the economy, and frankly, our bodies and what it means to be a human being—they call it **bio-digital convergence**. **Klaus Schwab calls it TRANS-HUMANISM!**

This concept of merging human beings with technology is built on three main platforms, according to Policy Horizons. They are: 1) Full physical integration of biological and digital entities. 2) Coevolution of biological and digital technologies. 3) Conceptual convergence of biological and digital systems. What we’re talking about here is *infusing* a human being with technology—much like what was portrayed in the movie, *The Matrix!*

Policy Horizons openly admits this “bio-digital convergence” (a.k.a. *trans-humanism*) will open doors to change human beings—our bodies, minds, and behaviors. It will change or create other organisms and alter ecosystems. It will provide new ways to sense, store, process, and transmit information as well as manage biological innovation, meaning the enhancement of human capabilities. (Do you remember the T.V shows back in the 1970s called *The Six Million Dollar Man* and *The Bionic Women*?) We’re talking about a whole new world—a “Brave New World” that is moving in a direction of consolidation for a globalization of humanity, controlled by what may be leading to what Daniel described.

Notice: “And in the latter time of their kingdom [plural; the Beast and ten kings], when the transgressors are come to the full [are accomplished], a king of fierce [harsh, greedy, rough] countenance [face, presence], and understanding dark sentences [sententious, hard questions, proverbs, riddles], shall stand up. His power shall be mighty [powerful, craunching], but not by his own power [remember the ten-king combine will support him]: ...And through his policy [knowledge, discretion, wisdom] also he shall cause craft [fraud, deceit, subtlety, treachery] to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify [boast, advance] himself in his heart [mind, understanding], and by peace [prosperity, abundance] shall destroy [spoil, lose] many” (Daniel 8:23–25). John tells us this system will become very prosperous by fraud and deceit, and the world will wonder at it and will appear to be so invincible and sententious that people will worship the system and its leaders (Revelation 13:4–9). And it is confirmed to be a global system (Daniel 7:23–24; Revelation 13:1–3; 18) that ultimately will be treacherous for the people of the world and especially for God’s Church (Daniel 7:25; Revelation 6:9–11; 13:6–9).

### Globalist Infrastructures are Incrementally Being Built

The exponential development of so many technologies over the last few decades has caused world leaders to consider *globalization a growing necessity*, especially since trends have been going that way for a long time. Keep in mind, thirty years ago the UN held a summit meeting to reveal their Agenda

21. A total of 179 heads-of-state signed on, boldly claiming it to be a “Comprehensive blueprint for the reorganization of human society.” This Agenda has moved along in recent years with some additional ideas from organizations like the WHO, the IMF, and the World Economic Forum and World Bank, along with many non-government organizations (NGOs) to claim what Agenda 21 was all about, but with an enhanced explanation (now Agenda 30) that is plainly explained in Klaus Schwab’s book entitled *COVID-19: The Great Reset*. Curiously, the book was published in August 2020, *just five months after* the SARS-CoV-2 virus lockdowns commenced! And furthermore, he claims the book was based on much of what was learned during the pandemic! But, how could that be when considering the time it takes to write and publish a book? It would seem, making that statement is extremely suspicious—wouldn’t you think?

However, in his book he outlines the details of the Great Reset and its plan to create global interdependence, both economically and socially, resulting in “the return of big government.” This “Reset” has been in the making for decades and has been quietly and consistently planning for a crisis like the one we’re contending with—and the trans-human, or bio-digital convergences is now beginning to make strides because surveillance, control, accruing data, profiling our personal habits for future social status ratings, is becoming more significantly necessary to have for managing a global community.

Additionally, we see this building momentum as we begin to recognize microchips becoming more accepted as a means of convenience. Take for instance, the concept of *full physical integration of biological and digital entities*. Today, we have digital technologies already being embedded in organisms. I’m sure we know that identity chips with GPS capability are regularly inserted into pets, like dogs and cats. And, surprisingly, NPR recently reported thousands of Swedes are inserting microchips under their skin under the guise of “convenience.” It turns out many claim it has made their daily routines and lives much more manageable. They can access their homes, offices, and gyms by just simply swiping their hands against a digital reader.

The science of merging “digital technology” with an organism, *including humans*, is now accelerating the progression from our phones to our watches and now actually packing some of that information in a microchip designed to speed up a user’s daily routines. These chips can store emergency contact details, social media profiles, or e-tickets for events and rail rides within Sweden, eliminating the need for tickets—all with just a swipe!

Proponents of this rice-grain-size chip claim they’re safe and protected from hackers. They are typically embedded into the skin just above each user’s thumb, using a small syringe, similar to what is used for an inoculation. The procedure costs about \$180.00. It’s become so popular in Sweden that the main chip manufacturer can’t keep up with the demand. The main benefit that many enjoy is the reduction of carrying different cards and tokens that now are all contained in the chip, making you hyper-connected to the surroundings you live in.

So, it’s become obvious, a lot of what will be needed for future control to manage a global community is being developed and beginning to be used in a variety of areas. People are getting used to the digitization of information and the deployment of merging it into our biology for the purpose of accomplishing the bio-digitization that Klaus Schwab calls trans-humanism! ***The technology is here and growing in use!***

How it will be used and for what purpose and how it will be presented to the world’s population for acceptance, all remains to be seen. But, one thing is

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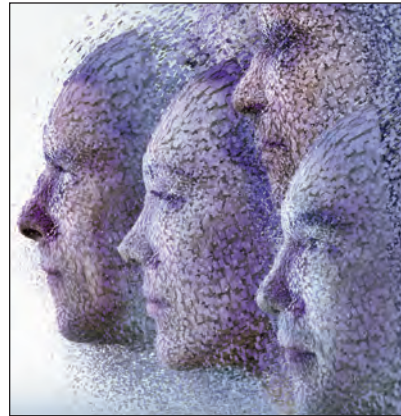


for sure, there *will be decisions to be made* along the way, just like what we're going through today regarding the choices we're faced with when contending with this pandemic—it's *the same principle*—it's like a practice run! And the question all of us will have to face at some point out ahead concerning this future "mark" is, what will we decide to do when faced with the choice of not being able to work, eat, shop, travel, or enjoy some entertainment or sports event within the social structure, without it—what

will be our choice?

Remember, God does not want us to receive this *caragma* (scratch, etch, stamp, badge). Notice: "And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, if any man worship the beast and his image [embraces it, becomes a part of it, complies with its laws, its culture] and receive his mark in his forehead, or his hand, the same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God..." (Revelation 14:9-11).

Yes, it is time to use the conditions around us to build spiritual strength and courage so that we might be bold and become the example of faith we should be as ambassadors for Christ in these evil days!



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