

WORSHIPING GOD IN

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Why Will God *Destroy* All
Human Governments?

from the desk of: the Pastor

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In this issue, we are going to investigate the existence of human-devised governments. As you are well aware, no doubt, there exists a smorgasbord of governments in our modern world. Not all of them are the same. Not all of them are "people friendly." Not all of them serve even the most basic requirements of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Yet, humans continue to construct a wide variety of governments and all of the accoutrement they require...with the hope and expectation that they will achieve some kind of *beneficial* agenda formulated by the "founding fathers."

There has been a long line of *human-devised* governments that have been visited, re-visited, and visited yet again without producing any kind of permanent solutions for the peace and well-being of humans. Why not? Is it beyond the ability of even the best and brightest humans to do so? We can invent and produce some of the most marvelous things and achieve pinpoint accuracy with our technologies, but we cannot seem to find a way to produce peace, harmony, and prosperity for all of mankind. We have the collective ability to *destroy* ourselves many times over, but we do not have the *spiritual* capacity to live in peace and harmony.

Listed below are several types of *human-devised* governments I found on the web site [wdb.sad17.k12.me.us/teachers/bburns/com/units/government/typ....](http://wdb.sad17.k12.me.us/teachers/bburns/com/units/government/typ...) (Whew!) that are categorized according to the question "Who rules?":

Aristocracy: A form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the principal persons of a state, or in a privileged order; an oligarchy.

Autocracy: Government by a single person [not a marital status] having unlimited power; despotism (domination through threat of punishment and violence).

Bureaucracy: The administration of a government chiefly through bureaus or departments staffed with non-elected officials.

Democracy: Government by the people, exercised either directly or through elected representatives.

Gynecocracy: Government by women.

Kakistocracy: Government by the least qualified or the most unprincipled citizens.

Kleptocracy: A government characterized by rampant greed and corruption.

Meritocracy: A group of leaders or office-holders selected on the basis of individual ability or achievement.

Monarchy: A government in which power is vested in a king, queen, emperor, or empress who can pass power on to his[her] heirs.

Monocracy: Government or rule by a single person [not a marital status]; autocracy.

Oligarchy: A government in which a few people such as a dominant clan or clique have power.

Plantocracy: A ruling class formed of plantation owners; leadership or government by this class of people.

Plutocracy: A government or state in which the wealthy rule.

Stratocracy: Government by the armed forces.

Technocracy: A government or social system controlled by technicians, especially scientists and technical experts.

Theocracy: A government ruled by or subject to religious authority.

I apologize to the **Anarchists** whose *lawless* "government" was left out of the list – probably because it is not considered an "-ocracy" since everyone is his own government.

The objective of this issue of *Spirit and Truth* is to answer the question about why God will ultimately *destroy* all *human-devised governments*. I know that somewhere in the back of most religious people's minds is the concept of "the end of the world." That, in and of itself, suggests that they give credence to there being a terminus point for all human-devised governments. Whatever that expression means to any given individual, it suggests that the "world" will not ultimately survive. If that is generally accepted as a given, then it would not be strange for someone to suggest

that the disappearance or "end" of the "world" will be the end of human-devised governments. So, the problem will be to explain by what means the "world" will be "ended." Because I am a pastor in service to the God of the Bible, I will explain this concept from the point-of-view of the God-inspired scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

What is the "World"?

One of the first New Testament suggestions that the "world" will "end" is found in Matthew 12:32 where Jesus Christ speaks of "this world" and "the world to come." If there is a "world to come," then "this world" will surely not survive. Hebrews 2:5 says that the "world to come" will not be ruled over by the *angels* – which does not suggest that the present "world" is necessarily ruled by angels, but it does not preclude that from being the case. Read, for examples, 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Ephesians 6:10-18. At the moment, our quest is to find out what Jesus meant by the word "world."

The Greek term from which "world" was translated in Matthew 12:32 is *aion* – the simplest definition of which is "age." In this case, it means "a segment of time." This, too, suggests that the *present* "world," at least, has a terminus point because it is a *part* into which time has been divided/separated. It had a beginning; it will have an end. This "present world" is set in contrast to an "age to come" that has no end (see John 6:51, 58; 1 Peter 1:23).

Matthew 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; and 28:20 refer to *aion* in the context of this "present world." Matthew 13:24-30; 36-43 says that there is coming a time when the angels of God will carry out a mission to separate the human "wheat" from the human "tares" in order to "end" this present "world" and inaugurate the "world to come." Although they had been allowed to co-exist in this "present world," it should be obvious that the human "tares" will not be allowed to occupy space in the "world to come." Instead, they will be "burned in the fire" (vv. 40-42). In essence, they will be *destroyed*, not perpetuated and punished forever. That's rather *ominous* for human-devised governments, wouldn't you say?

Hebrews 2:5 uses the Greek term *oikoumene* – which is an extraordinary usage in the New Testament that means "the whole world (so far as living beings inhabit it, therefore the realm of spirits as well)." This suggests that there is coming a new "world" – that is, a new *earth* that will be inhabited by *humans* and *spirit-beings*. This, too, suggests that the present "world" will give way to another "world."

This is in keeping with Revelation 21:1-8. All of this is a message to those who rely upon scripture for their beliefs about the eternity ahead after the return of Jesus Christ. It poses a simple question: If God plans to create a *new heaven* and a *new earth* for His people, why is there so much emphasis upon trying to go to *heaven*? The *new heaven* is going to be *new in quality* (Greek = *kainos*). But...it is not

descriptive of the *heaven* which most traditional Christians aspire to inhabit. It is descriptive of an entirely new *universe* in relationship to the new earth. In other words, the *totality of creation* will be *purged* of the effects of sin and made more "people friendly" (see 2 Peter 3:9-14).

There are other Greek words in New Testament scriptures that are translated "world" in English. Suffice it to be said at this point that *aion* is the focus of this part of the discussion about the "end of the *world*."

What's Wrong With the "Present World"?

As some people in the United States commonly say: "Here's where the rubber hits the highway." One would legitimately understand that the demise of this "present world" presupposes that there is something *wrong* with it...that there is a reason why God would not want to perpetuate it and its characteristics into eternity. And...it is not a case of *all good things* coming to an end, as some believe they must surely do. No, there is also *evil* afoot during this present segment of time that poses an extraordinary problem for the inhabitants of the planet (Greek = *kosmos* – another word translated as "world"). Read Matthew 24:1-22 for some insight.

It is the mixture of good and evil that mandates that this segment of time not be perpetuated into eternity. Genesis 2:17 suggests that the moment that humans decided to accept such a mixture would be the moment that their "world" would begin to fall apart into oblivion: *death*. So, we will take a look at ways by which man has imposed upon himself the kinds of *human-devised* governments that have brought the *illusion* of "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness" that will ultimately fall apart and become part of the dust of time.

The Apostle Paul suggests a couple of things that will also be noteworthy in this discussion. In Romans 1:18-32, he suggests that mankind has *suppressed* God's truth as a result of accepting the mixture of good and evil as standard operating procedure. In doing so, they settled for religions that focus more on the *creature* than on the *Creator*. They settled for religions that are *lies* – not the truth of God. They settled for *social degeneration* and *sexual perversion*, rather than a *righteous* society in which sexual relations are conducted according to God's design and intention. Because of this, vv. 24, 26, and 28 explain that God "gave them over to" the natural consequences of that kind of "world." It will be coarse and rude and dangerous. It will self-destruct. It will be an important object lesson about *choices*.

In Romans 8:20, 21, Paul explains that God subsequently subjected this present segment of time to *vanity* and *the bondage of corruption*. In other words, He put it on a course of *self-destruction* unless He ultimately intercedes with a better "world" (read Matthew 24:22 again).

We will discuss these things in more detail below. I encourage you to study this thoroughly and thoughtfully.

In This Issue

From the Pastor: A brief description of several types of human-devised governments and an overview of the main theme of this issue: The Government of God. **Page 1.**

The Role of Law in Government: An examination of the role of Law in government and how *God's* government has a law structure that causes His government to always act in the best interests of His subjects by creating an environment that is free of conflict. **Page 4.**

Administering Law: Exodus 12:49 says: "There shall be *one law* that applies to both the native citizen and the stranger who temporarily lives among you." Why would God insist on such an administration of national law? This is an examination of God's motivation for insisting on evenhandedness in administering His Law. **Page 8.**

The Curse of the Law: This study will help you to determine if Jesus Christ came to do away with God's Law by dying on the cross. If not, then wherein lies the supposed *curse of the Law*? Will God's Law play a significant role in the New Covenant? How does the *faith* that God requires uphold His Law? **Page 14.**

God's Literal Kingdom on the Earth: When you are supposed to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24), how much difference does it make in what you teach about God's message to mankind? Does God hold you responsible for teaching things that make Him appear to be a liar, or things that misrepresent His true message? Many deny that God has planned to establish His Kingdom on the planet earth...instead of taking true believers to *heaven*. What is God's *revealed truth*? **Page 20.**

Panem et Circenses: When governments provide all manner of social, welfare, and health benefits for their citizens, what is the *real* motivation for doing so? How much *real* interest in the "general welfare" is involved? Are they just as likely to be attempting to keep to a minimum the public unrest that is caused by their failed attempts to truly free people from the many problems they face about peace, security, and general well-being? These are things that you need to contemplate as you search for reasons why you exist and the potential you have beyond this present life. Can you depend on human-devised governments to supply the answers? If not, what are your options? **Page 27.**



The Role of *Law* in Government

Harold J. Berman, former Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, laid out the following description to demonstrate the relationship between Law and Religion:

Law is not only a body of rules; it is people legislating, adjudicating, administering, negotiating—it is a living process of allocating rights and duties and thereby resolving conflicts and creating channels of cooperation. Religion is not only a set of doctrines and exercises; it is people manifesting a collective concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life—it is a shared intuition of and commitment to transcendental values. (The Interaction of Law and Religion; New York: Abingdon Press; 1974; p. 24; italics are the author's; other emphasis added)

In this study, we are going to examine the role of Law in government and how *God's* government has a law structure that causes His government to always act in the best interests of His subjects by creating an environment that is free of conflict. While this includes *life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness*, it actually goes far beyond that.

An Overview

Noteworthy in Berman's remarks is that: (a) they presuppose that *government* should not be oppressive or tyrannical, and (b) they make a connection among *law, religion, the ultimate meaning of life, and transcendental values*. Face it, not all *human-devised* governments even pretend to care about such governing principles, while others do *pretend* to care for them.

It is worthwhile to look at Berman's rationale for his statement about the interplay between *law* and *religion* because it alludes to a concept beyond *human ingenuity...beyond human su-*

perficiality:

Even in those societies which make a sharp distinction between law and religion, the two need each other—law to give religion its social dimension and religion to give law its spirit and direction as well as the *sanctity* it needs to command respect. *Where they are divorced from each other, law tends to degenerate into legalism and religion into religiosity.* (Ibid.; pp. 24, 25; emphases added)

Can you imagine having *law* that has no "*collective concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life*" and "*transcendental values*" (that is, values that go beyond the mere *human* realm)? That is *supposed* to be the nature of the Constitution of the United States – you know, the parts based on the concept of all men being created equal and endowed by the *Creator* with the inalienable rights of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." It was the basis for the struggles that led to our Declaration of Independence. It is gradually eroding into insignificance and becoming less and less based on *transcendental values*.

It is self-evident, then, that we should understand this interplay between *law* and *religion*. It is noteworthy for this discussion that mainstream Christianity generally accepts the idea that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ put an *end* to God's *Law* as revealed in the Old Testament. Please note carefully a couple of meaningful comments by Samuele Bacchocchi in his book *The Sabbath Under Crossfire*:

This is a fundamental problem of "New Covenant" theology espoused by the [Worldwide Church of God under Joseph W. Tkach], [Dale] Ratzlaff, and countless Evangelicals today: *it is a theology that ultimately makes each person a Law unto himself*. This easily degenerates into irresponsible behavior. It is not surprising that America leads the world not only in the number of evangelical Christians (estimated at almost 100 million) but also in crime, violence, murders, divorces, etc. ***By relaxing the obligation to observe God's Law in the New Covenant, people find an excuse to do what is right in their own eyes.***

...A covenant denotes an orderly relationship that the Lord graciously establishes and maintains with His people. The Law guarantees the order required for such a relationship to be meaningful. (Berrien Springs, Michigan: Biblical Perspectives; 1998; pp. 114, 115; emphases added).

Is it any wonder that our city, county, state, and federal governments churn out an endless stream of laws, codes, regulations, statutes, and the like – one source saying something like 5,000 per day? Our tax codes alone are said to



be about 20,000 pages long! Does the Constitution of the United States fit in the same mold as a "covenant"? Are we gradually losing sight of the "under God" and "Creator" references in our laws and institutions?

Here is a major *irony*: A majority of "religious" groups accepts the *disposal* of the Law of God while accepting the massive onslaught of laws by *human-devised* governments. I think that it is safe to say that *law* and *religion* are being steadily *divorced* from one another in the United States; yet, there is the growing pretension that the endless stream of laws that we tolerate represent some kind of vague, opaque, transcendental values.

That said, we need to understand the legislation, administration, and adjudication of God's Law in order to understand why it is intended for our ultimate benefit – for the ultimate purpose of our existence and the great potential we have as beings who were created in the image of God to become members of His family (see Genesis 1:26-28 and Ephesians 1).

Why Did God Create Law?

There are several reasons for creating laws (some of which I discussed above), but God reveals a very simple reason that might surprise you. It

makes perfectly good sense when you consider it. It cuts to the very core of the relationship He wants to have with mankind.

The first example of this is found in Genesis 2:15-17 where the Lord God *commanded* Adam to leave the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil alone. A *command* presupposes that the author has the authority to expect compliance. The recipient of the command is not really given the freedom to *disobey*. If he does, there will be consequences to face. In this case, the consequence of disobeying would bring about *death* (see Genesis 3:19-22). Compliance would insure that the relationship between Adam and the Lord God would be preserved, rather than allowed to degenerate. That was a simple test.

Exodus 16 presents us with another simple test: the rules concerning the gathering of manna. The pattern that the Lord God established for gathering the manna He provided for the children of Israel was designed to *prove* to them the sanctity of the seventh-day Sabbath rest that He created for mankind (see Genesis 2:1-3, Exodus 20:8-11, and Mark 2:23-28). What was the Lord God's motive?

One could claim that He was defining *sin* for them (see Romans 7:7, 1 John 3:4, and Romans 6:23). While

that certainly is presupposed by the parameters "baked" into any commandment, it was not His primary motivation. Exodus 16:4 gives us the answer: "I will test them *to see whether or not they will walk in my Law.*" This is prior to the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai. Gathering manna and observing the seventh-day Sabbath were two simple tests. It does not take many of the simple tests to determine if someone will pass a much larger, more difficult test or set of tests. It does not take very many short-duration tests to determine whether or not someone will pass more difficult, longer-duration tests (read Deuteronomy 5:29).

Consider the following while you are contemplating the above: If God's plan was to create man in His image and to ultimately place him into His family, would it make sense for Him to understand whether or not that placement would be a good "fit" (see Amos 3:3)? Anyone who has taken in foster children with the plan to adopt them knows the problem very well. If the children will not learn to obey you or to blend into your concept of "family," it would be a grievous mistake to continue with the plans for adoption.

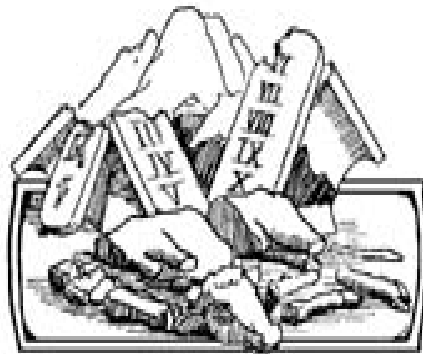
The *unity of mind and heart* is vitally necessary for the survival of the family (see Matthew 12:25; John 10:16, 30; 14:15; 1 Corinthians 1:13; and 1 John 2:4, 5). *Self-righteousness* will not submit to God's rule (Romans 5:5-9). God wants to know if you will do things *His way* (Isaiah 55:6-9). So far, Berman's and Bacchiocchi's observations have useful validity.

The Basic Nature of God's Law

In Matthew 22:34-40, Jesus lays out the basic nature of God's Law. It involves, first of all, loving God with all your heart, mind, and the power of your existence (a more exact way of understanding the term *soul*). This is called "the first and greatest commandment." That is the first part of the ba-

sic nature of God's Law. It contains the element of *transcendental values* – values that go beyond the *limitations* of mere *human thoughts and ways*.

The second part of the basic nature of God's Law is, as Jesus says, "like unto it" (v. 39). By saying that it is the same as the first commandment, Jesus says that we must also have *agapao* for our fellowman. This Greek term is translated as *love* into English. This is an *affection* for others at least equal to what you would typically have for yourself. Paul says in Ephesians 5:29 that: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it in the same way the Lord does the Church" (see also 1 John 2:9-11; 3:14-18).



Jesus adds to this instruction that *all* of God's Law and the contents of His prophecies depend upon, or are supported by, those two great commandments. Anyone with a reasonable amount of language ability can read Matthew 5:17-19 and understand that God's Law has not been abolished. The mission of Jesus Christ is to cause the Law and prophets *to accomplish the purpose for which they were created* (see Isaiah 55:10, 11). There is no way that Jesus Christ thereafter would allow His disciples to circumvent or dispose of His Law and prophets. It is only *spiritual blindness* that supposes any other idea (see Isaiah 6:8-12 and Matthew 13:9-17).

If you understand that Jesus Christ was the Lord God of the Old Testa-

ment, then you will understand the gravity of the Lord God's statement in Isaiah 55:8-11. He does not utter *law* or *prophecy* only to have it fall uselessly to the ground and serve no purpose in His thoughts and ways that He reveals to mankind to prepare him for entrance into His family. Why would He reveal *transcendental values* and *the ultimate purpose of life*...and then change His mind because mankind has not chosen to obey Him or seek Him out? That idea makes no sense.

Notice Bacchiocchi's assessment of Joseph W. Tkach's (WCG) concept about why God changed His mind:

...[Tkach says that at] Sinai [God] agreed to save the Israelites *conditionally* on the basis of obedience to His commandments, or what Tkach calls "the old package of Laws." *When God discovered that such an arrangement did not work*—because the Law "could not make anyone perfect. It could not change their hearts."—*He reverted to the "faith arrangement" He had with Abraham.* To make things *easier*, in the New Covenant, God did away with most of the old package of laws, including the Sabbath, and decided this time to work in the heart through the Holy Spirit. (Ibid.; pp. 106, 107; emphases added)

Such is the nature of "New Covenant" and "Dispensational" theology.

In Luke 16:17, Jesus presses another point about the nature of God's Law: It is *enduring from age to age*. This means that it holds up under even the most painful and intolerable circumstances. His Law is not scrapped just because humans violate it or refuse to recognize its power and authority (Romans 8:3-9). Ephesians 1:4-14 presupposes that, *before the creation of the orderly universe*, God was well

aware of the *possibility* that mankind would need a *Christ* – a specially ordained individual to be a *Savior* (see Philippians 2:5-11). Why? Because He knew that He was going to give mankind an *independent mind* that could *choose* to violate His divine standard of conduct (v. 4). Such a violation, as it is shown in Genesis 2:17, would *require* the death of the transgressor.

It is foolish to think that God did not understand that a human could not *earn* his salvation. The incredible potential that God envisioned for mankind before He even created the orderly universe is a testimony to the great heartedness of a *gracious* God! It is a spiritually ignorant and/or blind person who does not recognize God's *grace* at work *aions* before mankind even had the life in which he could sin (Ephesians 2:8-10)! How could you earn, pay back, or deserve being created in the image of God and being given the opportunity to be placed into His family? Think very deeply about that!

Notice the way Jesus expresses His intended meaning: *Heaven and earth could cease to exist easier than any element of God's Law could/would be disposed of by God.* Jesus says in Matthew 24:13 that one's *salvation* depends upon his ability to *endure to the end* all of the pains and intolerable circumstances of life – especially those of the coming Tribulation Period of the last days. God's Law is designed to allocate rights and duties, resolve conflicts, and promote cooperation (see Isaiah 2:1-5). How so?

Paul says that God's Law *defines sin* (see Romans 7:7 and 1 John 3:4). It is the nature of God's Law to be clear and precise about what constitutes a sin against God – for which the penalty is *death*. Remember that all of this is bound up in the two great Commandments. It also comprises four basic rules that govern man's relationship to God and six basic rules that govern man's relationship with his fellowman. These 10 Commandments govern what

is properly called *righteous relationships*.

If you refuse to obey either of the two great commandments, then you are worthy of *death* because you bring into the community of man a "virus" that insidiously spreads throughout and eventually *destroys* rights, duties, and cooperation (read and understand 1 Corinthians 5).

Paul also adds another aspect of the nature of God's Law in Romans 7:12: "The Law is *holy*, and the commandment *holy*, and *just*, and *good*" (emphasis added). If mankind could ever be impressed with these features of God's Law – and imitate them in their own – think of the change that could take place in the societies of the world. In this description, Paul shows that those who obey God's Law can look forward to relationships with God and fellowman that are *just*, *equitable*, *virtuous*, and *morally right*. Can you imagine a world in which there is true honor shown toward parents (who also live honorable lives), no adultery, no lying, no stealing, no killing, and no jealousy and coveting? That is God's intended role for Law in His government – and that only covers the human-to-human part of it.

The relationship with God is explained by Jesus in John 14. It is amazing that those who would do away with God's Law do not read this as *New Testament* thought (see Matthew 26:26-28 and Jeremiah 31:31-34). Instead, they think of it as a throw-back to *Old Testament* thought. Well...the only scripture Jesus and Paul had was the Old Testament. Frankly, there is no difference between the *Law* in the two Testaments! Pay attention to v. 15 where Jesus says: "If you love me, keep my *commandments*" (emphasis added). What is He talking about?

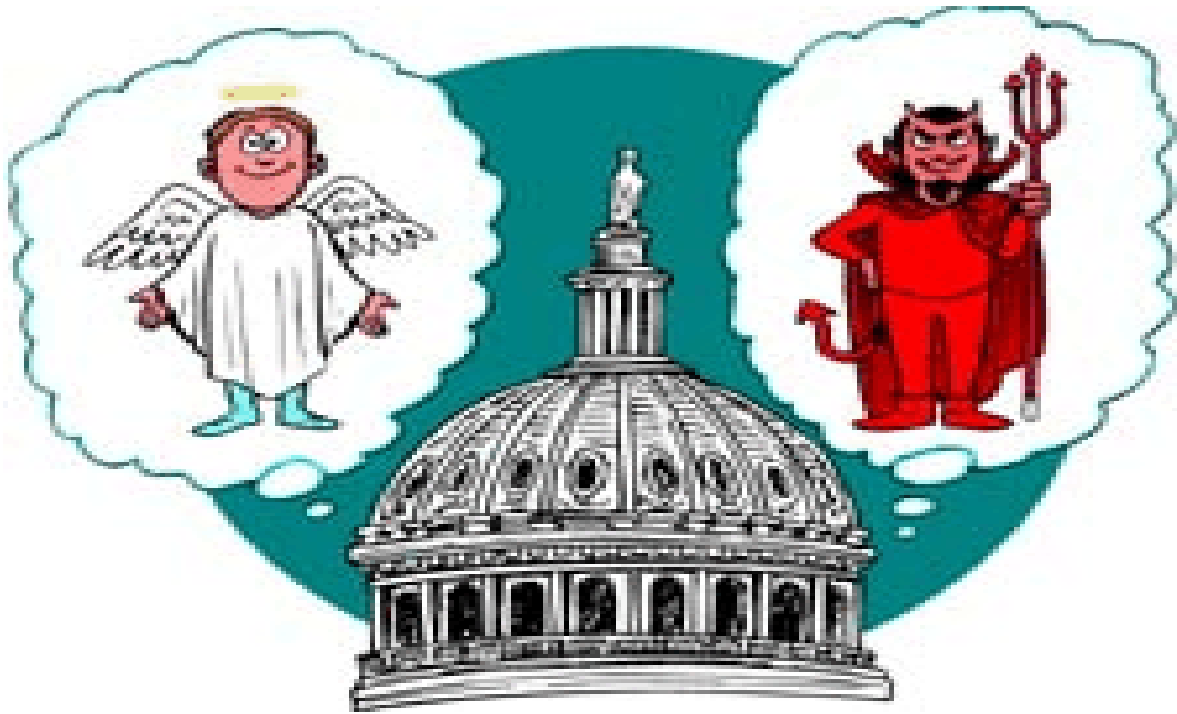
Whether you believe it or not, Jesus Christ was the Lord God of the Old Testament who gave mankind the Commandments to live by. Compare Isaiah 33:22 and James 4:12. Isaiah writes: "For the Lord is our *judge*, the

Lord is our *lawgiver*, the Lord is our *king*; He will save us" (emphasis added). In Isaiah 42:21, he writes: "The Lord...will *magnify the Law*, and make it honorable" (see also Psalm 138:2 and Matthew 5:17-7:29; emphasis added). James writes: "There is one *lawgiver*, who is able to *save* and to *destroy*..." (see also John 5:21-29, Acts 4:12, and Revelation 19:11-16; emphasis added). These scriptures are describing the same holy Being.

Jesus reiterates in John 14:21: "He that has my *commandments*, and keeps them, it is he that loves me: and he that loves me shall be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him" (emphasis added). The Apostle John punctuates this more emphatically in 1 John 2:3-6. Let's focus on v. 4: "He who says: 'I know the Father,' and does not keep His *commandments*, is a *liar* and the *truth* is *not* in him" (emphases added). This is a repetition of Isaiah 8:20: "To the Law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, then they have no light or truth in them." What does this say about those who vigorously preach that God's Law has been *nullified*?

Conclusion

So, we should conclude that the role of *law* in government should be as Berman states it: (a) It should allocate rights and duties, resolve conflicts, and create channels of cooperation; (b) it should have a relationship with religion so that *law* can maintain a *sanctity* about it from which it derives its spirit and direction, and the respect it should have from those who are governed by it; and (c) both the religion and the law should express a connection to *the ultimate meaning of life* and the transcendent values that legislate, administer, and adjudicate the meanings of both law and religion. Of course, the God of the Bible wants His Law to produce holy and righteous relationships between Himself and man and man and man. Enough said?



ADMINISTERING LAW

God did an interesting thing with His Law when He codified it for the ancient Israelites. This is found in Exodus 12:49: "There shall be one law that applies to both the native citizen and the stranger who temporarily lives among you" (see also Leviticus 24:22 and Numbers 15:15, 16, 29; emphasis added). Why would God insist on such an administration of national law? There are, of course, many possible reasons to consider – including a guard against corruption.

So, the objective of this lesson is to consider an assortment of those reasons. It is the hope behind this discussion that you will see the absolute even-handedness of God in administering His Law. That even-handedness is not even close to being achieved by *human-devised* and *human-administered* governments. The hope is also that you will come to understand why *human-devised* governments will ultimately have to be destroyed in favor of the soon-coming government of God.

No...this is not an appeal for a *human-devised* overthrow of all governments. It is a discussion about what God has planned for the near future – as well as what He has revealed to us in holy scripture. All of mankind, past, present, and future, will be the beneficiaries of the peace and prosperity that He has planned for mankind since before the creation of the orderly universe. All who believe in the return of Jesus Christ believe, in one way or another, that the governments of this world are a *temporary* fixture (see Revelation 11:15). Remember this: *Jesus Christ* was the *Lord God* of the Old Testament.

Anti-Semitic Bias

The Apostle Peter was given a momentous revelation in a vision from God that is recounted in Acts 10. Many have assumed that this vision was given for the purpose of making null and void the Lord God's laws about clean and unclean

meats in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. One very famous Bible commentator says that this event wiped out *entire sections* of God's Law! Well, in light of many discussions in scripture about the Law of God, that would be very difficult to believe – unless you are looking for any reason you can find to "liberate" yourself from God's Law. Some use *anti-*

Semitic bias as a reason...you know, they call it "that old *Jewish* law" and put heavy emphasis on the word *Jewish*.

So, before we get into the objective of this study, let's settle the question of whether or not it is *Jewish* law – or, even the *Law of Moses*. It doesn't require a long list of references or extended commentary to do so. Understand, in the meantime, that *anti-Semitic bias* was used to change the Sabbath from the seventh day to the first day against any revelation from God that such a thing should be done. Even today, some Muslims teach that the *Jews* are the offspring of pigs and apes in order to prejudice others against them.

It is possible to find adequate documentation in history to fully defend this claim if you are willing to put in the work to do so. One extraordinary work by Samuele Bacchiocchi (*From Sabbath to Sunday*) can be purchased by contacting the author at SBacchiocchi@csi.com. Bacchiocchi is not involved in any capacity with The Seventh Day Christian Assembly. Here is one quote found among Bacchiocchi's discussions about early Church "fathers" who used *anti-Semitic bias* to make many changes in Apostolic Christianity:

The Sabbath for Justin [Martyr] is a temporary ordinance, derived from Moses, which God did not intend to be kept literally, for He Himself "does not stop controlling the movement of the universe on that day." He imposed it solely on the Jews as "a mark to single them out for punishment they so well deserved for all of their infidelities." The acceptance of this thesis makes God guilty, to say the least, of discriminatory practices, in as much as He would have given ordinances for the sole negative purpose of singling out Jews for punishment. (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press; 1977; p. 186)

Bacchiocchi clearly points out here that God would have been violating His own demand for *one law for everyone*. A reading of Romans 2 and 3 could settle the point very easily.

Also consider the following found in Exodus 20:1: "And God spoke all these words, saying...." It is true that Moses wrote down these words. You can find numerous similar references in the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Bible), all of which were written by Moses. Now, does that make all of the laws given to Moses the laws of *Moses* – or, were they merely *dictated* by God to Moses (see Exodus 24:4; 34:27, 28)?

Look at Leviticus 23:1: "And the *Lord God* spoke to Moses, saying...." Now, the subject of Leviticus 23 is the enumeration of *holy days* that the Lord God commands the *Israelites* to observe. Verse 2 calls them "the feasts of the Lord" and "my feasts." There are four points to be made here that must not be overlooked and must be understood in

the proper context of history and biblical revelation:

1. It is by the authority of the *Lord God* that these holy days are established as *mandatory*;
2. Moses is not directed to apply them only to the tribe of *Judah* – which is only one of the *twelve* tribes of Israel (read Genesis 49 to understand the identities of all 12 tribes of Israel; see also Exodus 12:48-51);
3. *Moses* was not *Jewish* – that is, he was not from the tribe of *Judah* (see Exodus 2:1-10). He was a *Levite*; that is, he was from the tribe of *Levi* (read Hebrews 7 to see the difference between Levi and Judah – the tribe from which *Jesus Christ* came);
4. This list of *holy days* includes the weekly seventh-day Sabbath (v. 3).

How does Peter's vision fit into this discussion?

The purpose of using unclean animals in a vision to reveal something to Peter is grossly misunderstood because people do not consider the entire matter properly (read Proverbs 18:13). Too many think that God is lifting the ban on eating unclean animals; yet, Peter *refuses* to obey God's *command* for him to kill them and eat them. He does this three times without yielding to God's command. How does he get away with it? The answer lies in the *real reason* God showed the vision to Peter.

Acts 10:17-48 shows what Peter came to understand about the true meaning of the vision. Acts 10:34 is the capsulized version: "...Of a truth I perceive that God is no *respector of persons*..." (emphasis added). In other words, God does not show *partiality* based on national, racial, or ethnic origin. In Galatians 2:6, Paul says that he was not impressed by the Church leaders who had acquired *great reputations* because God does not show *partiality* to them as opposed to others. One of them, James, was the *brother* of Jesus Christ. God also does not show *partiality* based on *fame* and/or *fortune*.



You can see in Galatians 2:11-14 that Paul had no regard for their *reputations* when they showed themselves to be *partial* to their own people as opposed to the Gentiles! If Peter had learned this lesson from the vision in Acts 10, why did *he* act differently just because some Jewish brother with a great reputation came into town? Paul could not accept the tacit *hypocrisy* involved.

In God's Law, there is no executive privilege. There is no diplomatic immunity. There is no advantage of the rich over the poor – or the famous over the infamous. You would think that all *theocracies*, at least, would be the same in that regard, but...they are not.

Even God Himself is bound by His own Law. He will not execute commandments that set a standard for *you* and then exempt Himself from the requirements. Reflect on how there are exemptions allowed from the new Affordable Health Care Act recently passed in the United States – with *lawmakers* in the Senate and House of Representatives, among others, seeking exemptions for their staffs because of the cost to them. And...they have their own health care provisions that are *better* than the new health care law they voted into existence.

Righteous Abraham refused to take spoils from the war that he fought alongside some allies while rescuing his nephew Lot. He told the king of Sodom: "I will not take anything that is yours so that you cannot say that you have made me rich" (Genesis 14:22-24). How many politicians have used their elected offices to enrich themselves? Many foreign rulers have taken the foreign aid provided by the United States to do just that. Politicians in the U.S. have rolled back legislation that would have prohibited them from being able to do *insider trading* on the stock market to benefit their personal wealth – an act that would get the ordinary citizen arrested.

God is not a God who says: "Do as I say, not as I do" as He acts contrary to what He commands. He is a God whose desire is for you to reach the spiritual maturity that He has (see Leviticus 19:2; 20:7 21:1-8; Exodus 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9; and Matthew 5:48). After all, His Law emanates from His own thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:6-9). In this, God has no room for *anti-Semitic bias* or the like. It is very difficult to read passages like Isaiah 35 and think that such a God shows respect to persons.

God's Judgment According to His Law

There is the common concept that there was no Law between the creation of Adam and the giving of God's Law to Israel at Mt. Sinai – a period of over 2,500 years. That concept is mistakenly based on Paul's comment in Romans 5:13: "...*Sin* indeed was in the world *before the Law was given*, but *sin* is not imputed where there is *no law*" (emphasis added). The proponents of such an opinion are very selective about

their use of scriptural revelation.

There are some things in Paul's statement to which you should pay attention:

1. Paul says that *sin* existed from Adam to the *giving of the Law*, and
2. He says that you cannot attribute *sin* where there is no law.

Clearly, Paul is not saying that God waited 2,500+/- years before setting forth *law* by which to *judge* one's behavior. If nothing else, Genesis 2:17 clearly shows an expectation of obedience to a divine standard of behavior – the transgression of which would result in a summary judgment of *death*.

In God's Law, there is no executive privilege. There is no diplomatic immunity. There is no advantage of the rich over the poor – or the famous over the infamous.

The expression "*before the law was given*" is intended to mean *before the Lord God codified the Law at Mt. Sinai*. It does not mean "before any Law of God existed." Ephesians 1:4 presupposes that God, before the creation of the orderly universe, had a *divine code of conduct* built into His plan for mankind to be adopted into His divine family: *holiness, blamelessness, and love*. Surely He had set some parameters for what constitutes those three characteristics. The proponents of the doctrine that God's Law was set aside because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ are very selective in their use of the scriptural revelation. Follow the logic very carefully.

In 1 John 3:4, we have the definition of *sin*: "*Sin* is the transgression of the *Law*" (emphasis added). Romans 6:23 says the "the wages of *sin* is *death*" (see also Ezekiel 18:4, 20; emphasis added). Consider the *death sentence* imposed on Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:19-24. Read v. 22 very carefully and understand that the Lord God *blocked* their access to *the immortality involved in eternal life*. When they died and returned to the *dust* from which they were created, they would never live again unless and until the Lord God chose to bring them back to life for whatever reason He might have. Ask yourself how that judgment could have been made *without any law* (1 John 3:4).

Now read Genesis 2:17. Here, the Lord God gave to Adam a *commandment*. He clearly delineated between acceptable and unacceptable behavior. The result of *unacceptable behavior* would be *death*. How does that compare with the above-stated definition? The word used by the Lord God to mean *death* does not describe the mere cessation of the

physical life. It is indicative of the *impossibility* of any kind of life after the cessation of all physical functions – a *death* from which there is no recovery. If there had been no *Law*, then Adam and Eve would have had *no sin imputed to them*, and they would not have been judged worthy of *death*. It is evident from the outcome of the temptation in the Garden of Eden that Adam and Eve did not experience an *immediate* death upon the occurrence of the original *human sin* (Genesis 3).

Genesis 3:19-22 reveals to us how the Lord God executed His judgment:

1. He sentenced them to return to the *dust* (from which they were created) upon their physical deaths (v. 19); and
2. He removed from them the possibility of acquiring eternal life upon the cessation of their physical lives (v. 22).

With no element of *innate immortality* – that is, no *immortal soul* – then they had no *automatic failsafe default* on which to depend for an *immediate perpetuation* of their lives in another state after their deaths. How, then, would they ever have any hope of life *beyond the grave*?

We say that we agree with the Creator's concept that we should be allowed *equal* inalienable rights to "...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...", but we build in so many *exceptions* that it eventually devolves into having no *equal* law at all!

The answer to that question is also contained in Genesis 3:15-18. Genesis 3:15 is largely recognized as the first prophecy about the coming of a future *Savior* who will deal a mighty death blow to the Serpent (see Revelation 12:9 and 20:10). It is *speculation* on my part that Genesis 3:21 is a very brief description of a larger lesson He gave them about a *coming sacrifice* for the sins of mankind that will remedy the problem of life after death. I believe this because some innocent animals *died* in order to provide clothing for Adam and Eve. It is reasonable to assume that He explained why He was doing what He did.

So, I *speculate* that the Lord God (who is the One who later became Jesus Christ) gave Adam and Eve a lesson in the *sacrificial death* of an innocent man *for their sins* (see John 1:29 and 1 Corinthians 5:7). It was in this instruction that He gave to them a *ritual of sacrifice* that would *typify* and *foreshadow* the coming of the *woman's seed* to complete

the work necessary for mankind's *salvation* from the *death* imposed upon them for *sin*.

Genesis 4:1-7 shows the first family practicing ritual sacrifices – no doubt, following the pattern the Lord God had earlier established with Adam and Eve. This ritual sacrifice became part of God's *Law* until its *type* had been fulfilled, but it also *remained* part of His *Law* thereafter because its fulfillment became the *eternal Law* for mankind (see Matthew 5:17-19, Acts 4:12, and Hebrews 10:1-14). It is not likely that such a sacrificial system would have been the product of the *human ingenuity* of that time.

What does this have to do with the *one law* concept? Take note of the following two scriptures so you can understand this more fully:

Romans 3:10-12: "As it is written, There is none righteous, no not one: there is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. They are all gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no not one."

John 3:16, 17: "God so loved the world [mankind] that He gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but so that the world might be saved through Him."

Notice how both references are *all-inclusive*. Both are part of the fabric of *one law*. There is no respect of persons in either scripture. It does not matter who you are with regard to the matter of *sin*: *You have been part of the problem*. In the same way, it does not matter who you are regarding the access you have to be *saved* out of the penalty for your sin.

There is no *favoritism* shown to the Jew or the Gentile...to the rich or the poor...to the famous or the infamous. Isn't that the idea embodied in the declaration of our founding fathers that "...all men are created *equal*..."? We all have been taught about the intended *equality* to succeed or fail on our own merits...with the intended *equal* justice before the law of the land. In essence, we *say* that we agree with the Creator's concept that we should be allowed *equal* inalienable rights to "...life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness...", but we build in so many *exceptions* that it eventually devolves into having no *equal* law at all! Where is the "...*liberty and justice for all*..." in that? Such grandiose concepts eventually wither on the vine because the *partiality* with which they become infected eats away at them like the cancers for which we have found very few, if any, actual *cures*.

Read the parables of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 and Luke 19:12-27. Did the "nobleman" (who is symbolic of Jesus Christ) distribute the talents *equally*? In Matthew

25, he did not. In Luke 19, he did. Are there situations in life in which God distributes "talents" *unequally*? Yes, but it is based on the principle that *those who receive more are required to produce more* (read Luke 12:22-48). Test this in your present world: Who receives the highest salaries and bonuses? Those to whom the *greatest responsibility* is given. The minimum wage worker is generally not prepared to run General Electric – not by education, experience, or ability. Luke 19 shows that *equal distribution* does not *guarantee* that each individual will *produce equally*. So, the reward is distributed according to one's ability to produce. Each individual is expected to put out the effort to be *productive according to his ability*. Those who do not do so (pictured by the one who hides the "talent") have the "talent" taken away from them and given to another who will use it effectively. In the end, the *unproductive* are not even allowed to participate in the kingdom given to the "nobleman."

How God Remedies the "Curse" of the Law

With no element of *inherent immortality* in their physical make-up, humans have no *automatic failsafe default* on which to depend for immediate life in another state after death (see Ecclesiastes 9:4, 5, 10). How, then, will they ever have any hope of life beyond the grave? The answer explains to us how God will remedy the "curse" of the Law.

There are two parts to God's Law that are not necessarily part of man's laws: *justice* and *mercy*. There is also the element known as *grace*: unmerited divine favor that cannot be earned, deserved, or repaid. For example, how could mankind have ever earned or deserved being *created* by this marvelous Being? How could mankind ever repay Him for setting into motion the process by which the perpetuation of mankind has been possible? *Grace* through *faith* is a means by which God makes possible mankind's remedy for the "curse" of the Law. This is the "trigger" mechanism by which the "mercy" side of His Law goes into effect. Some focus only on Ephesians 2:8, 9 to preach "grace." You should focus on the complete discussion in Ephesians 2.

Paul demonstrates how God has you "dead to rights" because of your involvement in *sin* (vv. 2, 3). However, he also demonstrates how God has such great love for you that His main objective is to complete the plan He has to make you part of His divine family (vv. 1, 4-7; see also Ephesians 1:4-14, Genesis 1:26-28, Hebrews 2:6-18, and Philippians 1:6). Why has God shown Himself to be this way?

Psalms 103:8-18 shows that He is *merciful* and *gracious* because He understands the type of creature with which He is dealing (vv. 14-16); therefore, He has not dealt with us as our sins really deserve (v. 10). He has provided a means by which His *mercy* and *grace* can be brought into play: The *sinner* must turn to *righteousness* by entering into a *covenant relationship* with Him and *obeying His commandments* (vv.

17, 18; see also Jeremiah 31:31-34, Matthew 26:26-28, and Ephesians 1:12-14). This requires that we must *repent* – that is, *change* the way we think about obeying God (see Romans 12:1, 2 and Acts 2:38).

Psalms 103:7-9 reveals three important things: (1) God has shown us His thoughts and ways through *Moses* (the first five books of the Bible; see also Luke 16:27-31 and Acts 15:1-21); (2) He is *merciful*, *gracious*, and *slow to anger*; but (3) He will not *perpetually* extend those qualities to those who continue to wallow in sin and try to take advantage of His *grace*, *mercy*, and *patience* (see Romans 6:1, 2 and Hebrews 10:26-31). The great revelation about this glorious Being is found in v. 12: *Upon our sincere, heartfelt repentance, He will totally forget that we have ever sinned!* That is the gist of Romans 6 and 2 Corinthians 5:17. God will treat us as though we are *newly created!*

Do the governments of man offer any such benefits to lawbreakers? Not really. Even if they "pay their debt to society," their "record" is maintained for future reference purposes. That "record" is, for many, a hindrance to a meaningful existence in the society of man – blocking "normalcy" and employment opportunities because of the taint...even if the law-breaker has fully repented and wants to return to "normal" status. Perhaps that is one reason for the high rate of recidivism (chronic relapse and return to crime). The message of Isaiah 65:17 is that this present world will not be remembered in any way at all when God creates the New Heaven and New Earth.

Adam's *Intended* Role in Creation

Paul says a strange thing about Adam's *intended* role as the first human male on earth: "...he was a *type* of the one who was to come" (Romans 5:13; emphasis added). He makes a similar comparison between Adam and Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:45: the *first* and *second* Adam. Jesus Christ, of course, is the *captain* of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10). The word *captain* is translated from the Greek word *archegos* – which means that He is a *pioneer* who blazes a trail for others to follow (see 2 Peter 2:21). It can also mean that the *captain* is the *head of a family*. So, it should be apparent that the Lord God intended for *Adam* to be the *head* of the human race and to be the *example* of a *pioneer* who would lead, by example, his family into God's thoughts and ways. So, we could reasonably conclude that Adam was supposed to be a *representative model* – in human form – of what Jesus Christ was supposed to be. What does that suggest? The answer might very well surprise you.

First, consider Jesus Christ's claim in Matthew 25:34 that God had planned, before the earth was even created, for there to be a "Kingdom of God" (*aiōnios basileia tou kuriou* – "before time began a kingdom of the Lord God"). This is the same claim Paul makes in Ephesians 1:4 when he says

that "...God chose us in Christ *before the creation of the orderly universe* that we should be *holy, blameless, and loving*." It is reasonable to conclude, then, that Adam was to be the ruler – the *basileus* (king) – over the *physical* Kingdom of God (see Genesis 1:26-28). Eve, therefore, would have been considered to be the *queen* of the Kingdom.

It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the Lord God was going to *train* Adam and Eve to comport themselves according to the specified criteria of *holiness, blamelessness, and love* before He moved on to change them from *flesh to spirit*. John 4:24 says that God is a *Spirit* – that is, He is not composed of *flesh*. If mankind is destined to enter the *God family* as an *eternal reward*, then they have to be changed from *flesh to spirit* (read John 3:3-8, 1 Corinthians 15:50-54, and 1 John 3:1-3). The Lord God had to know if Adam and Eve would *willingly* follow the laws necessary for them to "graduate" to the fulfillment of God's design and plan for the creation of humankind (see Deuteronomy 5:29 and Romans 8:5-9). That was the reason for the *command* about not eating of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17). Was there an *obedient* heart in them? The Lord God did not create man with any kind of *innate* or *inherent* immortality; so, going from flesh to any kind of spirit state would not have come as an automatic consequence or subsequence of physical death.

The *knowledge* of good and evil was not just the understanding of the *theory* of good and evil. It included the *experiences* that are associated with that understanding – the pain and suffering and deception that accompany the mixture of good and evil. Unlike God, they would have not been able to control the effects once the consequences were released into mankind's social environment. Paul takes up that discussion in Romans 1:18-32 and Galatians 5:16-21, where he says that God allowed them to suffer the *natural consequences* of that mixture in *self-government* outside of God's thoughts and ways. Notice that the built-in consequences include all manner of *social* and *sexual* degeneration. Once they chose to ignore the Lord God's instructions, it was pretty much predictable that human society would degenerate into a quagmire of social and sexual opinions and practices (see also Romans 8:20, 21 and pay attention to the terms *vanity* and *bondage of corruption*; you can read a fuller discussion of this in our free downloadable book *God: Accused or Defended?*, chapters 10 and 12).

Second, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was set in apposition to the Tree of Life and all the other fruit trees in the Garden from which Adam and Eve could derive life-giving sustenance (see Genesis 2:8, 9). The essence of the story is that Adam and Eve chose to be *self-righteous* as opposed to taking in *God's righteousness* (read again Isaiah 55:8, 9). From that simple command, the Lord God learned the nature of the independent human mind not vested with the Holy Spirit – which the Tree of Life would

have provided had they eaten from it instead (see the result in Genesis 3:22-24).

So, Adam – had he chosen to eschew the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil – would have become a *type of Christ* who would have led his progeny into *God's righteousness*. The human world would have been a much different place had that been the case. How so?

There are two scriptures that describe what that world would have been like: Isaiah 65:17-25 and Jeremiah 31:31-34. Longevity of life. Peace. Contentment. Economic freedom. Independence. Productivity and bounty. No hurt or destruction anywhere. Everyone having the guidance of God's Holy Spirit. No need to preach and teach about sin and shame. Why? Because the people will have learned how to manifest "...a collective concern for the ultimate meaning and purpose of life [and] a shared intuition of and commitment to transcendental values." *Christ* would have been *all in all* (read Romans 8:1-4; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 12:4-7; 15:24-28; Philippians 2:5; Ephesians 1:15-23; and Colossians 3:1-17).

The most important aspect of Ephesians 1:4 is this: God had in place a *contingency plan* for the intervention of a *Savior* should mankind use their independent minds to become *self-righteous* and, thereby, sin against God by *not* being *holy, blameless* and *loving*. We were "...chose[n]...in Christ..." Through this *Christ*, God would place us as His children, make us acceptable to Himself, redeem us through His blood, and forgive our sins (vv. 5-7). In this work of *Christ*, He will reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father (v. 10).

It is patently evident that the governments of the world do not have any such *contingency plan(s)* to correct all of the evils inherent in the human milieu and to be able to provide a means by which the transgressors can be effectively remediated and placed as *bona fide* children of *God the Father* – in effect, moving the Father to *erase* the past infamy of man's *inhumanity* to fellowman (see Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21).

In the relationship that God intends to exist, mankind's responsibility is to trust in *Christ* by willingly listening to the good news about how our salvation can be achieved – believing that it is *God's truth* and receiving a portion of *God's Holy Spirit* as *God's guarantee* that He will be merciful and gracious to us by recovering us from the dust (see Ephesians 1:12-14, Job 14:10-15, and Daniel 12:1-3). God has provided a way out if you will accept it (see Acts 2:38). There is no *human-devised* power or government that can do this for you. In order for it to be done according to *God's will*, then all *human-devised governments* must be destroyed. Then, and only then, can mankind realize the great potential offered by this marvelous God – a potential so great that it has not even entered the mind of man except by His revelation (read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16).

The CURSE of the Law

Many in mainstream Christianity believe that God's Law is a *curse* because it calls for the *death* of the sinner. They believe that it is a means by which mankind is held in *bondage*. In fact, Paul says in Galatians 4:24, 25 that the Old Covenant "...*genders to bondage*..."; so, they assume that there was something *wrong* with the Law of God that brings a *curse* upon those who follow it. Some, like the *New Covenant* and *Dispensationalist* theologians, have even gone to the extent of revoking the 10 Commandments, which were the basic law of the covenant the Lord God had with Israel (see Exodus 34:28 and Deuteronomy 10:1-5). If they have a basis in *truth* for doing so, then we have to sort out what Paul meant in Romans 3:31 when he wrote: "Do we, then, *abrogate* the Law through faith? Not at all [God forbid (*KJV*)]; instead, we *uphold* the Law" (*Modern Language*; emphases added). Is Paul conflicted about Jesus Christ's purpose in the New Covenant? The objective of this study, then, is to determine if Jesus Christ came to do away with God's Law by dying on the cross (read Matthew 5:17-19 and Romans 3:3, 4 in preparation for this study). If not, then wherein lies the *curse*? Will God's Law play a significant role in the New Covenant? How does the *faith* God requires uphold His Law? You need to know.

Gendering to Bondage

Let's talk for a few moments about *gendering to bondage*. In Galatians 4:24, 25, Paul seems to equate the Old Covenant with *slavery*. The most "logical" step that many have taken is to say that only an *abrogation* of God's Law will solve the problem of this *slavery*. Is that a correct assumption?

The Greek word that is translated into English as *genders* is *gennaō*, which means "to beget" (in the sense of a *man* begetting a child). When you read the entire account from v. 21 to v. 31, you should see that there are some related factors that come into play in this allegory that Paul is using to make his point: Hagar and her son Ishmael are compared to Sarah and her son Isaac. Paul assumes here that his readers are familiar with the story about these women and their sons – familiar enough to understand the point made about *gendering to bondage* (begetting offspring who are *slaves*).

The Greek word from which we get the English word *bondage* is *douleia*, which in this context is a figurative expression that has to do with "a spirit of slavery." In Romans 8:15, Paul says that Christians "...have not

received the *spirit of bondage* again to *fear*..." (emphasis added). What was it, then, under the Old Covenant that produced a *spirit of bondage to fear*? Was it the *covenant* itself – or something else?

Hebrews 8:8 says that the fault lay with the *people*, not with the *covenant* itself. That means that the fault was not with the *Law* itself; it was with the way the *people* dealt with the *Law*. So, Paul uses two types of *people* to make his point about those who desire to be under the *Law without understanding the nature of the Law* (Galatians 4:21).

Under man's *human-devised* governments, mankind has suffered from a plethora of laws that *gender to bondage to fear*. In other words, they have conceived of laws that actually *enslave* their citizens. A reporter on the Fox News Channel program "Fox and Friends" (May 4, 2013) cited two recently-passed laws in the United States that are over 30,000 *pages* long and little understood by those who are to enforce them, much less by those who are to obey them. These laws, by the logic of some *theologians*, are worthy of being *abrogated*...as are all other such *human-devised* laws. Yet, they

tolerate *them* and call for the *abrogation of God's Law*! To use a familiar colloquial expression: Go figure!

The *Living Bible* takes an *anti-Semitic bias* approach to its so-called "translation" of Galatians 4:21: "Listen to me, you friends who think you have to obey the *Jewish laws* to be saved: Why don't you find out what those laws really mean?" If the *Living Bible* is referencing the laws that the Jews *added to God's* laws after the Babylonian captivity (see examples in Matthew 15:1-9 and Acts 10:28), then I can accept this interpretation. But, God did not give His own law as a means of *salvation*. Otherwise, this interpretation comes off as *anti-Semitic bias*.

From whom did the Law of God originate? The *Jews*? No. *Moses*? No, *Moses* was not a *Jew* – he was a *Levite*. It was given to *Israel* by the *Lord God*. However, there is some merit in what the *Living Bible* does with its "translation": (a) It points out the fact that some were attempting to acquire *salvation* by obeying the *Law*; and (b) it points out that some of them apparently did not know with what they were dealing. If either or both of those points are true (I have no reason to doubt that they are), then it is logical

to ask if that is the source of the *bondage to fear*. Those who pursued *salvation* through endless works of the Law so that God would *owe* them salvation obviously did not know with what they were dealing. The Law of God was never intended to be the means by which we receive salvation.

Consider a recent experience in *human-devised* lawmaking in the United States. U.S. Representative and Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives at the time, Nancy Pelosi, strongly urged the passage of the *Affordable Health Care Law* (affectionately now known as "Obamacare") *without reading it first*. She thought that *passage* was more important than *understanding*. So, the Democratic majority of Congress passed the bill into law. It is now patently obvious that the faulty *human-devised* law is flawed, does not *really* address the problem it was supposed to solve, and is not understood even by those who constructed it. To quote Elmer Fudd: "There is something vewy scwewy going on here."

It is growing more and more apparent to some that this law is going to be *enslavement by subterfuge* because of increases in insurance and health care costs, hidden taxes and fees, exceptions, exemptions, et cetera ad nauseum (not to mention the early retirement of many physicians, fewer medical students to take their places, and rebellion by various States regarding some of the mandates in it). Why? Because the creators of the law were seeking *by the law* some type of *salvation* from some perceived health care crisis without fully understanding with what they were dealing! At least at present, the health care problem in the United States has become more complicated instead of simpler and more beneficial.

In Exodus 19:1-8, Moses recorded his experience with the Lord God concerning His covenant proposal at Mt. Sinai in Horeb. The Lord God wanted to make Israel "...a peculiar treasure

unto [Himself] above all people...a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (vv. 5, 6). The people agreed to the proposal – perhaps *without fully understanding what it would mean* for them to be a holy nation and a kingdom of priests (v. 8). Maybe they thought they were being granted some national exceptionalism that they could parade before the other nations of the world with disdain for their existence. Maybe they thought they would derive from the Lord God rights and privileges not extended to other nations. One could only speculate, based on their subsequent history, what they might have had on their minds.

Paul, however, reveals that there was something in Israel's history prior to this covenant that was descriptive of the path they took. That path was not toward the *freedom* they should have derived from their exodus from Egypt. It was toward a *slavery* into which they *ignorantly* walked. It was a *slavery* that resulted from a *misuse* and *disregard* of the laws that the Lord God gave them to make them exceptional *in the manner that He intended* (see Deuteronomy 4:5-13). That ignorance, misuse, and disregard *gendered to bondage* for the Israelites. Begin at this point to understand that the *Law* itself was not the culprit (see Romans 3:31 and 7:12).

The Two Women

Paul knew and understood the pre-history of Israel. I say *pre-history* because Israel did not exist when the two women and their sons were alive. You see, *Israel* was the son of one of the sons and the grandson of the man who fathered both sons. Paul speaks often of this grandfather: Abraham. In order to understand that pre-history, we have to go back and take a brief review of the problem that arose. We begin that pre-history review in Genesis 12.

The Lord God calls Abraham to His service by telling him three important things: (a) He will show Abraham

a land that He will give him; (b) He will make of Abraham's descendants a great nation; and (c) all families of the earth will be blessed in Abraham. Abraham was 75 years old at the time. In Genesis 13:15-17, the Lord God repeats His promise to Abraham and reveals more fully the number of Abraham's future descendants.

In Genesis 15, Abraham sets out to *personally fulfill* the Lord God's promise regarding descendants. We learn a few things here: (a) Abraham had no children (because his wife was barren); (b) he wanted to *adopt* the administrator of his estate and finances, Eliezer (who had been born among Abraham's servants and had grown up in his household), as his heir; and (c) the Lord God said "No" to that and informed Abraham that *he* would be the actual father of his own heir (vv. 1-5). In vv. 13-21, the Lord God foretold the 400-year captivity of Abraham's heirs and named the land mass that He intended for them to inherit.

In Genesis 16, Abraham's wife Sarah is shown to have been a *barren* woman. She has been privy to the Lord God's promise to Abraham, so she decides to *personally fulfill* God's promise by giving to Abraham her handmaid Hagar as his wife so he can have a child by her (vv. 1-3). Sarah's plan works, and Hagar becomes pregnant by Abraham (v. 4). Now the problem between the two women and their sons begins. When Hagar gets pregnant, Sarah sees that Hagar despises her; so, she tells Abraham that she made a mistake with her scheme. Hagar subsequently flees into the wilderness out of fear.

An angel of God confronts Hagar in the wilderness and tells her to return to Sarah as her handmaid – with the promise that the Lord God will significantly increase her descendants. But, her son, Ishmael ("God shall hear"), would be "...a wild ass of a man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him..." (v. 12; RSV). Abraham was 86 years old

when Ismael was born.

Smith's Bible Dictionary (Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Company) adds some interesting information to this vignette:

[Ishmael] had a wife with whom he had 12 sons and a daughter [Genesis 25:12-18]. Esau [Jacob's brother] married [Ishmael's] daughter....

The Arabic historians divide the Arabs into two races: 1. Pure Arabs, descendants of Joktan; and 2. Mixed Arabs, descendants of Ishmael. (p. 137)

It is interesting that Jacob (Israel) will later become Abraham's grandson and will also father 12 sons and a daughter. It is also interesting that Jacob's brother Esau marries the daughter of their half-uncle.

Genesis 17 is a pivotal chapter in this story. Thirteen years after the birth of Ishmael, the Lord God appears again to Abraham (now 99 years old) to inform him that he and Sarah made a *mistake* in their decision to have Abraham have a child with Hagar. It is here that He changes Abram's name to *Abraham* and Sarai's name to *Sarah* (vv. 5, 15). Then the Lord God "drops the bomb," figuratively speaking, on Abraham: *He will have a child with Sarah* (now 89 years old) at the same time next year (vv. 15-21). Not only that, but the child: (a) will be a *son*, (b) will be named *Isaac*, and (c) will be the *heir* to the covenant and the promises the Lord God had made with Abraham. The sign of the covenant agreement was to be *circumcision* of the males (vv. 10-14). Even Ishmael (13 years old at the time) was circumcised (vv. 24-27). Any male not circumcised will be considered a non-participant in the covenant (v. 14)

This sets the stage for the allegory Paul uses in Galatians 4. There are, however, other factors that need to be

considered in the interpretation of this allegory. Romans 4:13 says that the covenant was not a matter of *law*; it was a matter of *promise*. Paul says that the *promise* is a matter of "...the righteousness of *faith*..." (v. 13). This is a revelation that the Promised Land is not to be claimed as a matter of *legality*. No one can claim that it is an inheritance that is *owed* to them on the basis of *law*. Paul describes it in v. 16 as a matter of *grace* – a *gift* that is undeserved, incapable of being earned, and incapable of being paid back. Why? Because...if it becomes a *legal* matter, only certain ones can lay claim to it. It was not the Lord God's intention that any of Abraham's *seed* be excluded from inheriting it with Abraham (v. 16) – even Ishmael.

That is Paul's meaning in Galatians 3:1-9: *Everyone who accepts God's promises to Abraham by faith will become one of Abraham's descendants; all who thereafter maintain "covenant" with God will be included in the inheritance.* That is indicative of God's great generosity – and Abraham's. Galatians 3:26-29 tells all who are interested how to become one of Abraham's heirs.

In Galatians 3:10-25 is a discussion about how the *curse of the law* plays its part in this matter. What is the reason for the *curse*? Paul says in the latter part of v. 10 that it comes as a result of *not continuing in all of the things written in the book of the Law [nomos]* – that is, in the *Law and the Prophets* (see Matthew 5:17-19; John 8:31, 32; and James 2:10).

It is very difficult, as James says, to live your life without failing in at least one point of the Law and Prophets (read Romans 7:13-25). That is why Paul says in Galatians 3:11 that *justification* is not a product of the *Law*. *Justification* comes as a result of *faith* – the unwavering confidence that God has made us acceptable to Himself through Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 1:6). This is the act by which God *imputes* (attributes as though it

were so) to us a righteousness of which we fall short. It is an aspect of *grace* (see Genesis 15:6; Galatians 2:19-3:7; and Ephesians 2).

The word *curse* is derived from the Greek term *epikataratos*, which means "to be relegated to suffering some kind of evil." The original *epikataratos* for violating God's Law was *death* (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4, 20; Romans 6:23; 1 John 3:4). Paul says in Galatians 3:22 that all have been judged as being under *sin* (see Romans 3:10-20). In Romans 1:24, 26, 28, Paul says that God "...gave them up to..." the consequences of their sins – essentially, He allowed the natural results of their morally wrong behavior to have naturally-occurring adverse effects on them (see Matthew 7:13-29). In Romans 8:20, 21, Paul says that He subjected the world of mankind to *vanity* and the *bondage of corruption* – in effect, to a life of *futility* – because that is the ultimate reality of not being in covenant with God. There are no "blessings" that will prevent or negate the effects of knowing the "evil" derived from the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:17) unless a person repents and turns to God through Jesus Christ.

All of this is the lesson of John 3:16-19: (a) Those not "in Christ" are actually subject to *perishing*; (b) the objective of Christ's mission is to provide a way out of that destruction (see Revelation 20:14, 15); (c) the entire world is *already condemned*, but can come out from under that condemnation through Jesus Christ; and (d) the problem is simple: if you love darkness because you are evil, then you are in *bondage to God's condemnation* (see Romans 3:19, 20, 31 and 6:16). Therefore, being *under the Law* means that you are subject to God's *judgment* when you break the Law – in actual *bondage* to sin (see Romans 6:16-23)! Now, what does this have to do with the two women of Galatians 4?

An *allegory* is instructive; it teaches a lesson by using people, things, and/or events as *symbols* by which that

lesson can derive its meaning. Hagar, a *bondwoman* (a type of *slave*), and her son Ishmael are used as *symbols* of those under *bondage*. They, in turn, are *symbols* of Mt. Sinai (the place where the Law was given to Israel) and Jerusalem (the place from which the Law was issued to Israel) which are also in *bondage* because of misusing a Law that they did not understand. Sarah, Abraham's wife who was not a *bondwoman* (she was "free"), and her son Isaac are *symbols* of those who are in covenant with God and, therefore, not in *bondage*. Paul draws an interesting conclusion to this allegory in vv. 28-31. He says that Hagar and Ishmael represent the *Old Covenant*, and Sarah and Isaac represent the *New Covenant*. It is the Old Covenant that "...genders to bondage...." That comment is aimed at the idea of the *slavery* involved when the *people* are at fault. We need to understand that comment.

The Two Sons

There was a struggle between Abraham's first son by Hagar and his second son by Sarah. It was, apparently, a *legal* struggle on Ishmael's part. Why so? As the *firstborn*, he had the expectation of inheriting the double portion usually allotted to the *firstborn* son (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). The problem with Ishmael being the *firstborn* son is that his birth was not by the *determinate will of God*; he was the result of a *human-devised* scheme to get what God had promised Abraham. Isaac, on the other hand, was the *son of promise* – the heir that God had originally intended to give to Abraham through Sarah.

In Hebrews 11:17-19, Paul reveals that *Isaac* was Abraham's "only begotten son" (remember John 3:16) – a term that essentially means that he was the *only son* for whom the inheritance was intended. The sparing of Isaac's life is called a *figure* (v. 19), which means that it was a *type* of the resurrection of Jesus Christ because Abra-

ham had faith that God would raise Isaac from the dead once he sacrificed him as he was told to do (Romans 4:17-25). Galatians 3:13-17 is Paul's argument that supports this conclusion: Jesus Christ, the actual seed of Abraham, is the means by which the whole world will be blessed (Jesus came through the lineage of Judah, who was Israel's son; Isaac was Judah's grandfather and Abraham was his great-grandfather; see Luke 3:23-38). In my book "*And God Remembered Babylon*," I speculate that Abraham might have thought that *Isaac* was to be the sacrifice for the sins of mankind. You will have to order the free book to get the reasoning process involved because it is lengthy.

Be aware of some important information from Genesis 15:13-16:

1. Abraham's descendants (Israel) would be in captivity for 400 years; and
2. Abraham would die at a good old age and would be buried just as his ancestors had been.

This information was a signal to Abraham that he would not live long enough to realize the fulfillment of the Lord God's promise about inheriting the land. It follows, then, that Abraham believed that He would fulfill His promise to him beyond the grave at a time of His choosing. Jesus' statement in Matthew 22:29-32 presupposes that God *must* resurrect Abraham and other dead believers in order for Him to be their God.

Paul takes up the argument further in Colossians 1:12-23 by pointing out that Jesus Christ is the *firstborn* of every creature (v. 15) and all things were created *by* Him and *for* Him (v. 16). This why the Lord God (the One who became Jesus Christ) lays claim to the earth and all that is in it (Psalm 24:1-5; 25:12-15; 37:1-11). This is how He is able to *share* His inheritance with those who become Abra-

ham's seed through Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).

Notice in Galatians 4:25 that Paul compares Hagar to "Mt. Sinai in Arabia" (emphasis added). He says that this "corresponds to the Jerusalem that now is" – implying that "Jerusalem that now is" was in *slavery* as a result of the first covenant. Why? Paul had answered that question in Galatians 3:17-19: *The Law was added because of sins – until the seed to whom the promise was made should come*. That would be *Jesus Christ*.

Read Exodus 16 to figure out why that *slavery* was imposed. Read Isaiah 1 and Jeremiah 3 to understand how that *sin* affected the first covenant with the Lord God. He scattered 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel to the four winds... and they have never returned to it to this day (what is there today is a remnant made up of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi). All 12 tribes have been the *slaves* of Philistia, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. In Paul's day, they were under the domination of Rome. Read Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 to understand the clear warning that their *sins* would eventually bring them to that sorry state. Read Hebrews 8:8 to understand that the fault was with the *people*, not with the *covenant*. The addition of the *Law* proved that.

In addition to that, after the Babylonian captivity most of the remaining *Jewish* members of Israel came to believe that the *Law* would be their savior. They added so much minutiae of *human traditions* to it that they were virtually *enslaved* by trying to keep track of the minutiae. It should be obvious from this perspective that they did not understand with what they were dealing.

That's rather like the current *In-sperity* advertisement that says that the original Affordable Health Care Act ("Obamacare") of 2,000+ pages now has 15,000+ pages of legal minutiae added to it! As we become increasingly known as the "regulation nation,"

we are becoming virtually *enslaved* by all of the *legal minutiae*. Senator Mark Rubio (R-FL) revealed 5/7/13 on Fox News that 300+ amendments have already been added to the proposed immigration bill by the so-called "Gang of Eight." Rubio said that it was a good thing because they are mostly constructive. We'll see. Read Matthew 15:1-9 for a glimpse at how the *minutiae of human-devised legal interpretations* had affected some of the Jewish religious groups – how they used the *commandments of men* like they were the *commandments of God*.

Now, what does this have to do with the two sons? In Galatians 4:29, Paul says that Ishmael *persecuted* Isaac. It seems to have been a developing problem. Hagar was disrespectful toward her mistress (Genesis 16:5) and her son Ishmael mocked Isaac (Genesis 21:9). When Sarah saw that, she was indignant and demanded that both of them be expelled from the household – with the proviso that Ishmael should *not* be an heir with Isaac (v. 10). The Lord God agreed with Sarah and reiterated that *Isaac* was His intended heir of the covenant He had with Abraham (compare Genesis 17:15-22 to 21:21:11-21). Mocking Sarah and Isaac was tantamount to mocking God Himself because it was *His* plan and will, not Sarah's and Isaac's.

This is part of the Lord God's prerogative to make whatever choices He deems proper for His plan to work as He intends. Read His own statement in Exodus 33:19: "[I] will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy." He did the same thing in His choice of Jacob over Esau (see Romans 9:1-15). This is called *election of grace* in Romans 11:1-6 – the *election of grace* by which the custodianship of the covenant with Abraham became the responsibility of God's True Church (see 1 Timothy 3:15), the *holy stump* of Israel into which the Gentiles are being grafted (Romans 11:16-29).

It is interesting that the descen-

dants of *Ishmael* and *Isaac* have been at loggerheads over the territory in the Middle East for centuries. The claim on both parts seems to be a *legal* claim. The main difference being the demand by most Islamic nations that Israel should be pushed into the ocean to her destruction, while Israel would be content to co-exist with them in peace. *Ishmael* still mocks *Isaac* by claiming that the *Jews* (one of Isaac's grandsons) are the offspring of pigs and apes – fit only for utter destruction as a people.

On "Fox and Friends" May 8, 2013, it was revealed that the Obama administration sent a Muslim cleric to speak at the funeral of at least one U.S. Navy Seal. This cleric consigned the Seal to the fires of hell as an infidel and railed against the God of Moses. If this is true, then I think that he fulfilled the *prophecy* that the Lord God made about Ishmael: "...He shall be a wild ass of a man, his hand against every man and every man's hand against him..." (Genesis 16:12; RSV). *Smith's Bible Dictionary* says: "This prophesy [sic: *prophecy*]...is now and ever has been true..." (p. 137).

So, both Hagar's offspring and "Jerusalem that now is" were *enslaved*. Hagar's offspring because they are not in "covenant" with God, and "Jerusalem that now is" because of the *legal* approach they were taking with the religion God had revealed to them (that is, they had made the *Law* their Messiah because they thought they could do enough *works of the Law* to cause God to *owe* them salvation and the covenant promises). How does that amount to a *curse*?

The "Curse" of the Law

All of their *legal claims* will not ever in this present age be settled. Why? If both insist on *legal claims* to the territory, then that argument will only "...gender to bondage...." Neither side will ever be "free" in the land even if they should prevail *legally*. It

is plainly shown in scripture that the argument will never be settled until the Lord God (Jesus Christ) returns to settle the "curse of the law."

Galatians 3:18-21 gives us some noteworthy insight into this: (a) God gave the territory to Abraham by *promise*, not by *law*; (b) the *Law* came in order to define the *sins* that took Abraham's descendants out of "covenant" with the Lord God; and (c) the *Law* does not in any way annul the *promise*. Paul says in Romans 4:13, 14 that the covenant was a matter of *promise* and *faith*. Abraham was expected to believe that God is as good as His word – regardless of what life's circumstances might otherwise indicate.

If Abraham had insisted on a *legal* arrangement, it would have implied that God has to be *forced by law* to do what He says He will do. Paul says that such a *legal* arrangement would have made "...faith null and the promise...void" (RSV). Romans 4:17 explains the power of God's word (read also Isaiah 55:10, 11). Read vv. 18-25 in order to understand the gravity and depth of Abraham's *faith* in the Lord God's *promise*: (1) He had hope in something that seemed to others to be a *hopeless matter*; (2) he was not *weak* in faith; (3) he was not *staggered* (that is, *overwhelmed by astonishment* to the point of *doubt*) by the promise of the Lord God; and (4) he was *fully persuaded* that the Lord God was able to deliver what He had promised – even knowing in advance that he would not live so see the promise fulfilled. *That*, in its utmost sense, is the definition of *faith* given in Hebrews 11:1.

Hebrews 11:8-16 reveals what Abraham expected God's promise to be like once it is fulfilled. Verse 9 says that he occupied the territory as though he was a *pilgrim* and a *stranger*, living in tents (temporary dwellings). Verse 10 says that he expected God to design and build a *permanent city* (note the term *foundations*) in that territory. Verse 16 says that Abraham and his

descendants want a city that is a *heavenly city* (a *product* of "heaven" – not *in* the present *heaven*; see John 14:1-3 and Revelation 21:1-3).

Verse 13 plainly states that Abraham and his descendants have not "...received the promises, but hav[e] seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." This does not prove, by any stretch of the imagination, that Abraham and his descendants expected to have mansions on a hilltop on streets of gold in *heaven* in the future...much less *immediately* upon their deaths.

Hebrews 11:39, 40 are particularly enlightening when you understand exactly what Paul is saying:

1. All people of true faith who have died have *not yet* received the promise; and

2. All people who are called the *firstfruits* of true faith will receive the promise *at the same time*.

This is the *Prophets* part of the *Law* of God (Matthew 5:17). If you cannot believe and trust in the *prophetic word of God* to reveal to you God's *truth*, then you are in *bondage* (see John 8:31, 32 and Isaiah 8:20). You do not have "eyes that see or ears that hear" (see Isaiah 6:8-13 and Matthew 13:9-17). You are not a person of *true faith*. The *curse* of the *Law* is that you will be *excluded* from the inheritance and be destroyed and forgotten forever (Romans 6:23). You are under God's *judgment* (see John 5:21-29). To understand this more fully, read Hebrews 12 – especially vv. 12-29 – along with Hebrews 6:4-8 and 10:26-39. Now read Daniel 2:31-45 and focus on vv. 44, 45. This is when Abraham will see

the Lord God's promises fulfilled.

Conclusion

The *curse* of the *Law* is two-fold: (a) If you break the *Law*, it will break you, and (b) if you persist in your law-breaking, you will be eliminated from being among the numerous heirs the Lord God promised to Abraham – in effect, you will be destroyed and forgotten. This is the idea behind such scriptures as John 3:3-8, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 1 John 3:1-6, and Revelation 20:6,14, 15.

How much about this do you truly understand? If you want to make sure of your part in this all-important inheritance, then you need to follow Acts 2:38 and Romans 6. Please contact us to discuss this most important matter – if you *really* want to avoid the *curse of the Law*.

Heaven or Earth?

One of the most misunderstood biblical concepts is *the reward of the "saved."* I say that because it is obvious that a very prominent *promise* of God is overlooked in favor of "going to heaven" when you die. I can demonstrate this with just a few scriptures based on the question: What did the Lord God *promise* Abraham? I will summarize the scriptures; you do the "legwork." Read them and compare the common message. Think seriously about Romans 8:16, 17.

Genesis 15 involves the *promise* to Abraham in *perpetuity* of a specific *territory on the earth* (vv. 18-21). It is subsequently referred to as "the Land of Promise" and the "Promised Land" (see Hebrews 11:8-10). Abraham's *descendants* will inherit it with him. Romans 4 is a discussion of how Abraham and his descendants came to receive this promise – v. 13 showing that he will also inherit the *world* (Greek = *kosmos*: "all of mankind"; see Genesis 15:5, 6 and Galatians 3:6-9). Hebrews 6:13-20 shows that God's *promise* is *unchangeable* (vv. 17, 18) – and Paul's use of *we* relates to *Christians* who should have this *promise* both as a *hope* and a *strong consolation*...a sure and steadfast *anchor* for our faith. Galatians 3:26-29 shows that Jesus Christ will inherit the same territory with Abraham. Those who are "in Christ" will also inherit the same "Land of Promise" with Abraham (read Mark 1:14, 15).

It is interesting that traditional "Christianity" in general has set aside this most important promise of the Lord God (the one who became Jesus Christ) in favor of the *myth* that *heaven* is the reward of the saved. They can "prove" their claim by using scriptures like John 14:1-3, 2 Corinthians 5:1-8, and Hebrews 11:16. But...their "proof" is bogus because it does not take into account the scriptural revelation I have shown you. What they have done, in essence, is to fall in line with the centuries of practice by which they *change the truth of God into a lie* (Romans 1:25)! They are well-meaning and devoted people. They are sincere in their hope...but they are *sincerely wrong*. All of the well-meaning sincerity in the world will not change the truth of God's word. It is *God's truth* that ultimately matters. Read Matthew 7:21-23 and see how well-meaning, sincere people do all manner of religious things in the name of Jesus Christ...only to find themselves rejected by Him because they do not do them according to the will of the Father. All of God's revelation of His thoughts and ways in the *Law* and the *Prophets* are His will. God will not give you something that He has not willed – even *heaven*.

Now, what *eternal reward* do you want: *heaven* or *earth*? **Think long and hard about your answer.**

God's Literal Kingdom on the Earth

Jesus was born to be a king (John 18:36), yet He did not assume that position while He was on the earth. Some have concluded that He has assumed a *spiritual* kingship and will become the "Lord" of our lives and "rule" in our hearts if we invite Him in. They assert that it is *self-evident* that God has sovereign power over all of the universe, but that the *major emphasis* of the New Testament is placed upon accepting Christ as Lord and Savior and allowing God's reign to take place *in your heart*. Our question: *How does that compare to what is revealed in scripture?*

They teach a second coming; they teach that Christ is to be King of Kings and Lord of Lords; however, they rob the gospel of its truth and power when they assert that the *Kingdom of God* is not going to be an observable government that literally reigns over all nations on the face of the earth for 1,000+ years. Instead, they teach that Jesus' second coming is for the purpose of taking the saints back to *heaven* where they will live in peace and splendor for eternity.

When you are supposed to worship God in *spirit* and in *truth* (John 4:23, 24), how much difference does it make in what you teach and believe about God's message to mankind? Does God hold you responsible for teaching things that make Him to appear to be a *liar*, or things that *misrepresent* His true message? The Apostle Paul made a case for that in 1 Corinthians 15:12-15 where he showed that it is wrong to *misrepresent* God's message. Jesus also made a case for that when He said: "In *vain* do they worship me, *teaching the commandments of men as though they were [God's true] doctrines*" (Matthew 15:9; see also Galatians 1:6-12). The objective of this study, therefore, is to discover God's *truth* about this coming Kingdom.

Caught Between Two Worlds

If we are to understand and obey the *truth* of God's ancient and present message to mankind about the coming Messiah, then we must understand the nature of His literal, observable Kingdom and this soon-to-come world ruler. People of faith are caught between two worlds: the one that presently exists and the one that is to come. The very heart and core of the concept of a coming Messiah is the expectation that He will return to conquer the enemies of God and subject all of them to His rulership and reconcile them to the Father (Philippians 2:9, 10; Colossians 1:19, 20).

The problem with getting people to understand that concept is caused, in large part, by the interval between the coming of Jesus Christ as the crucified Savior and His coming as the victori-

ous Messiah/Christ. Since the visible return of Jesus Christ has not yet occurred, then neither has the establishment of His literal, observable Kingdom. However, being caught between these two worlds – and expected to act as though one already lives in the world to come – is a difficult position, that is, one must accept the Kingship and Lordship of Jesus Christ, as well as abide by the laws of the Kingdom *as though it were already established*.

How do we understand this properly? The Apostle Paul, in discussing Abraham's great faith, wrote that God "...speaks of those things that do not *presently* exist as though they *already* exist..." (Romans 4:17b; emphasis added). Should we accept Jesus as Christ and King of our lives? *Absolutely!* Should we, thenceforth, live our lives as though He presently rules all of the earth? *Absolutely!* Does this mean that He has already accomplished that

which the scripture says He is to accomplish? No, but by faith we believe that it is as good as done. Does that *eliminate* the *literal* truth spoken by God through His prophets for millennia that He intends to have His Christ rule the earth? No. We are simply caught between two worlds and have to figure out what we must do to be obedient until the Kingdom actually comes.

How Do We Know?

How do we *know* that God intends to set up a literal, observable government on the earth? Surely this would be easily discerned in His word from Genesis to Revelation! Surely there would be plain, unmistakable evidence in the record pointing out the reality of such a plan! It is the contention of Isaiah 8:20 that the *law* and *testimony*

of God are the means by which you can verify God's truth. Isaiah 55:10, 11 lays down the fact that God does not utter His word in vain...just to have it fall uselessly upon the ground. If these claims are true, then, how did God's *truth* get changed to another message that is not even remotely the same as that which God has revealed? Let's look at the record.

One of the first things God (the Father and the Lord God) decided to do with mankind when They created them was to give them *dominion* over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28). That word means that mankind was to maintain *rulership* and *authority* over the earth – not only over the plant and animal life that occupied the earth, but also the human population that would eventually spread over the face of the entire planet. How were they to conduct themselves?

Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:4 that "...God chose [humankind] in Christ before the foundation of the created orderly universe that we should be *holy* and *blameless* before Him in *love*..." (emphasis added). Apparently, this would have been under the tutelage of the Lord God (the member of the Godhead who later became Jesus Christ). Notice in Genesis 2 how He created and instructed mankind.

Satan the Devil sabotaged this plan by enticing Adam and Eve to sin against God (Genesis 3; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). One would correctly suppose that this sabotage merely set into motion the necessity of man's *redemption* from the sinful condition – not God's *abandonment* of His plan to make mankind rulers over the planet. The fact that God originally decided to redeem mankind in Christ – even before mankind had ever been created – shows that God understood the *possibility* of mankind going astray from His plan. Why have a Christ-in-waiting if there is no *possibility* that God would ever need Him?

Did the judgment of God in the Garden of Eden stop the work of Sa-

tan? Did it prevent mankind from falling under his influence any more? Unfortunately, no. The truth of God is hidden from those who have been blinded by the god of this world system, that is, Satan the Devil (2 Corinthians 4:3, 4). Paul wrote in Romans 1:24-28 that "...God *gave them up* to uncleanness...God *gave them up* to vile affections...God *gave them over* to a reprobate mind..." (emphases added) because they chose not to be obedient, and *they changed God's truth into a lie*.

Allowing multiple generations to pass in order for mankind to thoroughly learn the lesson about the natural consequences of sin does not mean that God, therefore, changed His plan about the planet earth in favor of heaven.

These expressions carry with them the idea that God determined to allow mankind to suffer the natural, built-in consequences of such rebellious choices. In order to make that point clear, generations of mankind would have to learn that each time they submit to a temptation they make themselves more vulnerable to the next one. So, Paul's point in this section is that three things happen as a *natural* consequence: uncleanness, sexual aberration, and social degeneration – all of which distort all human relationships. If they continue to pursue such a lifestyle, they will also come under the *ultimate* judgment of God (see Genesis 2:17 and Romans 6:23). *Allowing multiple generations to pass in order for them to learn that lesson thoroughly does not mean that God, therefore, changed His plan about the planet earth* (see Matthew 25:34 and Luke 12:31, 32).

All generations between the Garden of Eden and the Flood proved to God that they could not rule the earth the way He wanted it ruled. So, He destroyed them in a great flood. The problem was simple:

...God saw that the wickedness of man was great upon the earth, and that every imagination, purpose, and desire of the thoughts of his heart were perpetually evil every day. (Genesis 6:5)

Could God accomplish His purpose when that was the prevailing attitude among mankind? No.

Genesis 10:8-14 shows the rise of Nimrod as a world-ruling kingdom builder whose home-base was Babylon. Many sources reveal that Nimrod considered himself to be the "seed of the woman" prophesied in Genesis 3:15. In fact, in Isaiah 14:4-23 he was revealed to have been the pawn of Satan. Because God did not want the work of Nimrod to succeed, He scattered people all over the earth after He had confounded their language (Genesis 11:1-9). Through all of this, God was teaching us a valuable lesson: If you turn your back on His revealed truth, you will be left to suffer the terrible consequences.

When God chose Abraham to be the Father of the Faith, He did so in order to further reveal what His plan is about. Look at Hebrews 11:8-10, 16:

...Abraham...was called to go out to a place which he was about to receive for an *inheritance*...he lived in the land of promise...expecting the city which had the foundations, whose builder and constructor was God...He has prepared for them a city. (*Anchor Bible: To the Hebrews*, p. 177)

Ask yourself this: Why should Abraham *expect* a city built by God to be in

the promised land – the land he would inherit? Did he understand so little of God's intention and will that he got it all confused? Should he have understood that God was pointing him to **heaven** instead of the **earth**? It is, after all, called "a *heavenly* country." Does that mean that Christians should put their hope into going to **heaven** itself?

No, it means that the land they sought was to be one with a peculiar characteristic not seen in the kingdoms of this world. Look at verses 14-16. To Paul, it was clear that they called themselves "pilgrims and wanderers" because they were looking for a "fatherland." They could have easily returned to Haran and had a "fatherland." The fact that they left Haran showed that they did not consider it worthy to be their future home. Besides, it was not **God's will** for them to stay in Haran.

Note this:

Just as the author of Hebrews was the only author in the Bible who called the land of Canaan "the land of promise" (11:9), so he was the only one to call it a "heavenly" land (11:16), **but it is clear in both instances that *Palestine* was the land intended.** (Ibid., p. 191; emphases added)

You can see the boundaries of the "land of promise" in Genesis 15:18-20. The "heavenly country" means "...that it is a divine land which God himself has promised" (Ibid., p. 192).

There is nowhere in the Old Testament where any of the great Patriarchs of the True Faith ever expressed any desire to go to *heaven*. They expected to inherit the land of promise right here on earth. It is true, however, that Abraham did not expect to inherit this "land of promise" during his lifetime. How can we be sure of that? In Genesis 15:13-16, we find the Lord God telling him that his descendants were

going to be held captive in a strange land for 400 years and he was going to die at a good old age.

This information makes Paul's comments in Romans 4 about Abraham's great faith even more profound. It implies that Abraham believed that God would *resurrect him from the dead* in order to fulfill His promise (see Hebrews 11:17-19 for another example of this). Read all of Romans 4 very carefully so you can understand it thoroughly. This is also profoundly underscored by Paul in Hebrews 6:13-20 about the episode in Genesis 15 (note Paul's comment about the **immutability** – the absolutely *unchanging* nature – of God's promise and oath). This is Paul's commentary to *Christians* about their future *hope*.

There is nowhere in the Old or New Testaments where any of the great Patriarchs of the True Faith ever expressed any desire to go to *heaven* for their eternal reward. They expected to inherit the land of promise right here on earth.

The "Acid" Test

Let's apply an "acid" test to this situation. This is important because there is the prevalence of teachings by "New Covenant" and "Dispensationalist" Evangelicals that say that God made "earthly" promises to the Old Testament saints and "heavenly" promises to the New Testament saints. Did God do such a thing, that is, promise the *earth* to the saints of the Old Testament and *heaven* to the saints of the New Testament? Well, let's use some New Testament thinking to get our answer.

Hebrews 6, in referring to God's

covenant with Abraham, says that God not only made the covenant binding with His **promise**, but also with His **oath**. I like the translation in *The Anchor Bible: To the Hebrews*:

So when God wanted very much to show the heirs of the promise the **unchangeableness** of His will, He imposed an oath [on Himself], so that through two **unchangeable** things in which it would be **impossible** for God to falsify, we who have recourse [in the oath and promise] may have a strong encouragement to seize the **hope** set before us, which we have as a secure and steadfast anchor of the soul.... (vv. 17-19a; emphases added)

This presupposes that God's intended will could not be changed even by Him without Him suffering some kind of self-imposed penalty.

The ritual that you read about in Genesis 15 is the *oath* that was *added* to the promise. It is widely understood that the meaning of such a ritual is this: *Whatever happened to the animals involved would happen to the parties involved in the oath if either of them broke the agreement.* Usually, both parties walked among the slaughtered animals. In this case, only the Lord God walked among them.

Would Jesus Christ come along and change that promise to the Father of Faith? According to Malachi 3:6 ("I change not."), He would not have done so. Yet, many teach that Jesus Christ did exactly that when He said: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-3). They say that Jesus has prepared a place in *heaven* for the New Testament saints. **That is patently false.**

The Apostle Paul was wonderfully clear on this point. In Romans 4:13, he wrote:

For the promise that he should **inherit the earth** ["mankind" –

the "multitude of seed" that would fulfill the meaning of his name "the Father of many nations"; see Genesis 17:4-8, 15, 16] was not to Abraham **or to his seed** through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. (emphases added)

This certainly does not imply that **God** changed His mind about a Kingdom on the earth in favor of going to *heaven*.

In Galatians 3:16, Paul writes: "The promises were made to Abraham and his *seed*." Paul argues that the term "seed" is singular and refers to Jesus Christ. By application under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is pointing out that all that was promised to Abraham will become the inheritance of Jesus Christ (vv. 26-29), i.e., He would inherit it by *unchangeable*, divine promise and oath. Has He already prepared it *in the land of promise* as an abode for any of the saints? No, but He is the designer and future builder (Hebrews 11:10).

Dare we to simply *spiritualize* away these plain statements and claim they mean something other than what is prophesied?

But Paul adds the clincher in verse 29: "If you belong to Christ, then **you** are Abraham's seed and an heir according to the promise." If you belong to Christ, then "Christ" will be formed in you (Colossians 1:27). In that case, wrote Paul, you will be the children of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ (Romans 8:16, 17). You will inherit the *earth* with Him! You can be sure of that and use it as an anchor for your faith. How simple is that?

Reigning on the Earth

Ask yourself this most important

question: Why should God go to the trouble of **revealing** His truth if people are going to simply **ignore** it? This is the case with two important prophecies in the book of *Revelation*.

In Revelation 5:10, Christ revealed to the Apostle John that the saints of God are going to become "...kings and priests: and... reign **on the earth**" (emphases added) In Revelation 11:15, Christ proclaimed that the last trumpet that announces His second coming will signal a momentous occasion – and millions of "Christian" people sing about this in Handel's *Messiah* every year and claim to believe it:

...There were great voices in heaven, saying, The **kingdoms of this world** are become **the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ**; and He shall reign for ever and ever. (emphases added)

Dare we to simply *spiritualize* away these plain statements and claim they mean something other than what is prophesied?

What is the revelation? The saints of God will become kings and priests for the express purpose of reigning with Christ in His Kingdom **on the earth**. Revelation 20:4, 6 reveals that the length of this reign will be at least 1,000 years. The context of all of this goes far beyond the mere reign of Christ in the hearts of the believers.

Yet, some dare to say that belief in this fundamental revelation from Jesus Christ is not a test of *orthodoxy* – that Jesus sought to guard against the idea of an *earthly territorial kingdom*. Well, we should be warned that acceptance of God's revealed truth **is** a test of orthodoxy (I John 2:3-6). It is not a light thing to have the truth revealed to you only to have you ignore it. *Believing* and *acting* upon God's word is a fundamental trait of the true disciple of Christ. We dare not ignore His plain truth.

Now, ask yourself why Jesus

would have begun His ministry among us by preaching about the gospel (good news) of the coming Kingdom of God (Mark 1:14, 15). It would make little sense for Him to do that if He *really* intended to take His people to *heaven*. And...please do not get caught up in the semantic sidestep and say that we can have *heaven* most anywhere. That is an evasion of the problem we face where men have changed the truth of God into a lie.

Fundamental Prophecies About the Kingdom on Earth

If two witnesses establish the veracity of a matter (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16), then there is no need to get really exhaustive about the numerous references to the earthly territorial kingdom of God. To keep this from being an "Old Testament" -vs- "New Testament" fight, we'll explore references from both.

The prophet Daniel is a reliable witness in this regard. Called upon to interpret a dream for King Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel told him that "...the great God has shown the king what is going to happen in the future. It is a true dream and an exact interpretation" (Daniel 2:45). Is Daniel exaggerating the importance of his role as a God-inspired interpreter? Hardly. He had warned Nebuchadnezzar ahead of time that "...there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and He is making known to the king Nebuchadnezzar **what shall be in the latter days**" (v. 28; emphases added). Now, notice his interpretation of this dream.

Daniel described the significance of the various parts of the great, bright statue and pointed out that they represent succeeding, world-ruling kingdoms. Even though they would degenerate from "gold" to "iron mixed with miry clay," they would, in fact, control the world and its inhabitants right up to the time when the God of heaven will set up His own kingdom (v. 44). This is the place where you must pay close

attention to the revelation.

Notice Daniel's inspired description of God's kingdom: "...it will **shatter** and **absorb** all the previous kingdoms" (v. 44b; *The Jerusalem Bible*, 1971). In other words, Jesus Christ and His Saints will conquer the nations of this earth and **absorb** the humans who survive the warfare into the citizenry that will make up the human population over whom Jesus Christ and His Saints will rule. After God's kingdom is established, there will never again be another *human* kingdom set up. The idea is simple: Jesus Christ will come against the kingdoms of this world, shatter them, and establish His own holy rule on the face of the earth. This is God's **revealed** plan.

In Daniel 7, there is another dream that involves successive human governments. The inspired interpretation given to Daniel is no less a witness than the interpretation of the dream in Daniel 2. It is, for all practical purposes, a different dream that leads to the same conclusion. This time the dream involves different *beasts* that represent the succeeding human kingdoms.

The various thrones will be overthrown (v. 9), and God will sit in judgment (v. 10). The beast will be destroyed (v. 11), and those who were his fellows will have their power taken away and wait for their judgment to come (v. 12). Christ will appear before God the Father and will be crowned as King of Kings and Lord of Lords to rule over "...all people, nations, and languages...his dominion... shall not pass away, and his kingdom shall not be destroyed" (vv. 13, 14).

When Daniel received the interpretation of this dream from God, he was told that the saints of God will "...take the kingdom and possess it for ever and ever" (v. 18). As a matter of fact, the fourth beast will make war with the saints and prevail against them until the Ancient of Days comes and gives them power to take the kingdom and to judge over it (vv. 19-22). Then Daniel is shown that:

...the Kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him. (v. 27; emphases added)

The New Testament counterpart to this is found in various scriptures, not the least of which is Matthew 25:31-46. This reveals that Jesus Christ will come and sit in judgment over the *nations* of the earth. He will gather them before Him and start a sorting process that identifies those who are His and those who are not. This is a compressed description, so we must not assume that this is accomplished in one fell swoop of time. After all, He is going to reign for the first 1,000 years in order to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father (see Ephesians 1:10; Philippians 2:10; Colossians 1:20; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; and Revelation 19:11-21; 20:4-6!)

The fundamental message of God to the rulers of this present world system – human and spirit – is that a day of conquest is looming large on the horizon. Spiritualizing this away does not change it.

First Thessalonians 4:13-18, Zechariah 14, and Isaiah 2 show some of the process a bit more clearly. First, Jesus Christ reaps out the *firstfruits* of salvation (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and Revelation 14:14-16). Then, the Lord returns to the Mount of Olives (see Acts 1:11, 12) to fight against the nations of this world system (Zechariah 14). When He conquers them, He will be King over all the earth (Zech-

ariah 14:9). Zechariah 14:16 reveals that He will have certain expectations of "...every one that is left [the survivors] of all the nations which came against Jerusalem..." These **human beings** will be judged according to how they accept the worship requirements set forth in the government of God's kingdom (vv. 16-19).

First Corinthians 15:24-28 shows that Christ will thus reign until He has conquered all of God's enemies – even death (see Revelation 20:4-6; 14, 15). This will not be something that will be accomplished in one fell swoop of divine wrath and judgment. It will take time. At the end of the *1,000 years*, He will turn over the Kingdom to God the Father. Most of this should make clear the interpretation of Revelation 11:15.

When you read the prophetic accounts in the chapters that follow, you see a definite pattern that is in lockstep with the revelations to Daniel. Satan is cast out of heaven and immediately influences the actions of the *beast* to make war with the saints. He prevails for 3½ years (ch. 12, 13). Christ then sets up the mechanism whereby He can "harvest" out the saints before He comes to pour out His wrath upon the Whore "Babylon" (ch. 14-18). The 10 "fellow kings" join the beast to make war with Jesus Christ (17:12-18).

In Revelation 19, we see that the saints will have been changed from flesh to spirit (1 Corinthians 15:50-54; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17). One of the most telling verses in this chapter is verse 11: "...in righteousness He *judges* and *makes war*" (emphasis added).

If your only objective were to come back and take the "saved" to *heaven*, why would you come to *judge* and *make war*? If you understand what has been said up to this point, you should understand that the idea is **to conquer the human-devised governments and rule over the nations of this earth**. How do you do that if you beat them up and take off back to *heaven* for eternity? This earth is not *de-*

stroyed in the fray; this "age" (that is, the present segment of time) is brought to a close.

Another telling verse is in Revelation 19:15:

And out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He shall smite the *nations*; and He shall *rule them* [that is, the nations of this world] with a rod of iron: and He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

The fundamental message of God to the rulers of this present world system – human and spirit – is that a day of conquest is looming large on the horizon. Spiritualizing this away does not change it. Not accepting this belief as a *test of orthodoxy* does not change it. There is no human or spirit power that can or will stop it. To deny the truth of this teaching is to *pervert* the plain revelation of God through His prophets and His Christ.

Finally, Revelation 20 teaches us that Satan will be confined in the bottomless pit during the 1,000 years while Christ and the saints rule over the Kingdom that will never again revert back to human dominion. It is very plainly revealed that the saints will sit as priests and kings under Jesus Christ and will judge the inhabitants of the earth (vv. 4, 6). It should not surprise you, at this point, to learn that they will rule over flesh-and-blood subjects. This should also tell you that Jesus Christ will also arrest the spiritual forces that also have a hand in ruling this present world (see 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 6:10-18, and 1 Peter 5:6-9).

Traditional Christianity does not even venture to address this idea in their various theologies. The 1,000-year period of reconciliation is an effort to bring to *salvation* the survivors of the horrors of the climatic battle. Part of the sorting process that Jesus Christ oversees (Matthew 25:31-46)

involves overseeing the remediation and education of the surviving *human* population over whom Christ and the Saints will reign (see Isaiah 2:1-5).

Beyond that, there will continue to be a *human* population as God adds more and more to His family. Isaiah 9:7 indicates that His government will *increase* – which implies *growth* in the number of subjects, the size of the territory, the amount of goods and services, et cetera. Isaiah is shown additional indications of this in Isaiah 65:17-25. Notice that much of the description of the coming creation of "new heavens and a new earth" involves *human beings* – indicated by such things as *death* and *childbirth*.

Revelation 21 implies the same thing when it says that the throne of God the Father will be set up on the *earth* among His *people*. Revelation 22:2 also indicates this when it speaks of the Tree of Life being there for the *healing* of the nations. The Greek word from which *healing* is derived is *therapeia* – which is the word from which we get our English word *therapy*: "treatment of mental and physical disorders." The human population will continue to make mistakes, no doubt, that will require physical and spiritual "therapy" – but they will not be subject to sin and death beyond recovery – that is, the *second* death.

A Prophetic Description of the Kingdom of God at Work

There is no better description of how God's kingdom will work as that which is given by the prophet Isaiah. This description is set "*...in the last days...*" (Isaiah 2:2; emphases added). Daniel's description in Daniel 2 was also for the last days. God revealed through Isaiah that His Kingdom will be set up over all the other governments on the earth, and all nations will stream to His capital city for instruction about God's way of life. They will not only learn about the laws of personal success, but they will also

learn about the religious concepts that God deems to be *truth* and *life*. As Isaiah put it:

...He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. (v. 3b)

This is the fulfilment of that "sharp sword" that will go out of the mouth of the conquering Christ (Revelation 19:15). This is the means by which He will separate the "sheep" from the "goats."

Notice, too, that He will "judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people..." (Isaiah 2:4). Does it strike you as being a bit strange that not everyone will simply fall in line and be obedient? This is why the *judgment* is not finished in a fell swoop fashion. The objective of the Kingdom's government is to bring these people to salvation, not to destroy them (John 3:17). They must undergo a spiritual change in order to be spiritually conquered by Christ. He must rid them of everything that causes them to war against themselves, one another, and God.

The redeemed saints are joint-heirs in this Kingdom, so it is in their hearts and minds to assist Christ in this work as priests and kings and judges. When the job is successful, the following will occur:

...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn of war any more. (v. 4b)

How can Isaiah use such language if there is no literal, earthly kingdom? Please do not attribute it to Zionist fervor and exaggeration...religious hyperbole. That's partisan religiosity. If Isaiah 55:10, 11 is correct, then there is

no reason for us to believe that God will do anything less than what He has purposed to do!

The Answer to a Prayer

How fervently do you desire God's response to your prayers? How eagerly do you accept the instruction from Christ about the things for which you should pray? There is a prayer model that was given to the disciples of Christ that should be very instructive to us regarding this soon-coming Kingdom of God.

Matthew 6:10 is the specific reference: "[May] your *Kingdom* come [so that] your will [can] be done in earth as it is in heaven" (emphases added). In light of what we have seen in this study, I do not feel that this paraphrase is a perversion of the intention of Christ in giving us this model. In light of the prophetic revelations we have seen, why shouldn't we pray for such a Kingdom to come and conquer the misguided attempts of human governments to rule over this earth? Surely the rulership of Jesus Christ is more

highly desirable than what we have seen in our day or any other in the long history of *human governments!*

How earnestly do you desire the *government of God* to be established not only in your personal life, but also the lives of the mass of humanity all over the earth? Is it worth it to you to have faith in God's *true* revelation? Or, would you rather continue to believe and perpetuate the teachings of men as though they are the doctrines of God? Your decision can make you either a "sheep" or a "goat."

Suppressing God's Truth and Changing It into a Lie

Paul tells us in Romans 1:18-32 the results of suppressing God's truth and changing it into a lie. Let us first recognize that he says that it is the same as *idolatry* (v. 25). In effect, the suppression of God's truth and the subsequent substitution of the lie is the product of the *human mind* – which becomes the basis for the person's concept of "God" (read Isaiah 55:8, 9). Thus, "God" is created in the image of *man*.

Next, let us recognize three very serious actions by God that put us in a place where unity with Him is impossible without some extraordinary intervention on His part (see Romans 5:6-9). Let's explore this a little bit...a little should tell us more than sufficiently how this has affected our relationship with Him. It is predicated on Genesis 3.

- ❑ First, when God's truth was suppressed, mankind became *vain in their imaginations* and *their foolish hearts were darkened*. Instead of being truly wise, they became *fools* – to the point of corrupting who/what "God" is. The result: God gave them up to *uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves*. This, no doubt, resulted in all manner of sexual abandon (read Genesis 6:1-5).
- ❑ The net effect of this sexual abandonment was that *they changed the truth of God into a lie*. Now the result had a cascading effect: They were given over to *vile affections*. If you note carefully Paul's description, you will note that this involves *homosexuality*, among other types of *sexual perversions*. God has historically abhorred *homosexuality* and *sexual perversions* (read Leviticus 18:22-25; 20:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).
- ❑ As this curse unfolded, it cascaded even more: *They did not retain the true God in their knowledge*, so He gave them over to a *reprobate mind*. Pay attention to vv. 28-32 and note the catalog of the resultant unprincipled and depraved things that have entered into the social milieu – things that God judges as being worthy of *death*.

How deep into this quagmire are you willing to descend? It is quicksand of the worst sort. It is even worse when governments treat it as though it is nothing unusual – even *legalizing* some of those reprobate things that are under the judgment of God. There is a way out. We can help you to understand it. Do not be foolish and think that all of this is of no significance to God. It most surely is. Read and understand Romans 12:1, 2. Contact us.

Panem et Circenses

Is this Government *Subjugation by Stealth*?

It is no secret that governments are concerned about unrest among those over whom they rule. There is no exception. Even rulers who have absolute power of life and death over their citizenry have to be concerned about the time when the citizenry will want change so strongly that they will rise up like a horrible tsunami and bring to nothing the government that supposedly has their best interests in mind. The more the government wants to *subtly* control the citizenry, the more the possibility that the government will employ *panem et circenses* – “bread and circuses” – to forestall the inevitable as long as possible. And...its provision can look like the most generous, benevolent action possible (see Proverbs 14:12).

With that in mind, we need to take a look at the net effect of so-called "government handouts." Are they really part of the concern for the nation's "general welfare" clause? Or, are they merely political payoffs to keep someone in power? How can a ruler serve the needs of *all* of the people if he has to look back over his shoulder to protect himself from supporters who find him going astray from the promises he made them? These are serious concerns – not just for the ruler in question, but also for the larger population of the nation in question. Failure of *panem et circenses* could lead to civil war or worse.

A Basic Definition

The problem with *panem et circenses* is that it is generally cloaked in the garment of *necessity* for the public good. The dictionary definition shows it to be provision by the government of livelihood and recreation to appease discontent. Such provision is also generally cloaked in the garment of *gratuity* – that is, being *free* of charge, as it were. It is as if the *government* has a large, magic warehouse from which it can retrieve anything it deems as necessary to quiet public suffering, unrest, and opposition. This is *illusory*.

Usually, the handouts come in the form of *food* and *entertainment* – “bread and circuses.” But, it can also include money, goods and services, and political favors (food stamps, “welfare” checks, medical, dental, telephones, bridges to nowhere, et cetera). If the general populace is fed and entertained, then it is generally believed that they will cast a blind eye to many political and social evils...especially if their personal welfare *depends* on the government's support. It is what some call a "slippery slope" (read Revelation 13:11-18 as an example of a future prophesied occurrence).

The First *Kingdom* Builder

Genesis 10:8-12 introduces us to the first *kingdom* builder among mankind. His name was *Nimrod*. He was one of Noah's great-grandsons through Ham. You, no doubt, have seen camping equipment and travel trailers that are named after him. However, you might not be aware of the kind of man he was. Such knowledge might make you wonder why anyone would name their company and/or products after him. Let's take a look.

The first thing we see is that he was a *mighty hunter* (v. 9). While that

seems harmless enough, it does not give us a good enough picture about what constituted a *mighty hunter* with regard to Nimrod. According to ancient historians like Justin, Diodorus, and Siculus, there are three basic ways by which he was a *mighty hunter*:

1. He was the first who carried on war against his neighbors for the purpose of conquest and subjugation – conquering most tribes from Assyria to Libya;

2. He was the first to train young men in the art of warfare by long, strenuous exercises in the hardships and fatigues of war – which conditioned them to face war with fearlessness and bravery. He also was the first to employ *cavalry* – *warfare on horseback* – for which he is mythically known as the archers *Centaurus* and *Sagittarius*; and,

3. He was the first to bring his subjugated people into walled cities and to control them there by the means of *tyranny* (the *Moffatt* translation says that he was “...the first man on earth to be a despot...”; *The Jerusalem Bible* says that he was “...the first potentate...”).

So, this *tyrant* actually *hunted people for conquest* – after which, he more or less held them “captive” behind walled cities! Apparently, he used these same people to build Babylon and the tower of Babel (Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*; Neptune, NJ:Loizeaux Brothers; 1916; p. 23).

It is difficult to accept the *Living Bible*’s translation that he was a hunter “...*blessed* of God...” (emphases added) because, ultimately, he was, in fact, a *tyrant* – an oppressive, harsh ruler. Why would God *bless* such a man? It is also difficult to accept *The Anchor*

Bible’s translation that he was a mighty hunter “...by the *will of Yahweh*” – unless you understand their explanation that such a will can involve a *regretful judgment* against him (E. A. Speiser, “Genesis”, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc; 1964; p. 51; emphases added). Sometimes God uses such a tyrant to punish rebellious people and subsequently punishes the tyrant (compare Isaiah 10:5 to Jeremiah 50:17, 18).

They were so *ill-instructed* in the thoughts and ways of God that they did not obey Him.

As he prospered in his conquests, he moved on to build places like Erech, Accad, Calneh, and Resen (vv. 10-12). All of these were located in what is present-day Iraq. As Hislop puts it: “...Every new victory paved the way for another [and] he [eventually] subdues all the peoples of the East” (Ibid., p. 25). In doing this, Nimrod actually paved the way for mankind to be led *away* from God. Thus, the translation of Genesis 10:9, according to some commentaries, should read: “...a mighty hunter *in opposition* to God.”

Note how Adam Clarke puts it:

His name Nimrod comes from [the Hebrew word] *marad*, “he rebelled”; and the Targum [an Aramaic translation or paraphrase of a portion of the Old Testament] on 1 Chron[icles] i. 10, says: “Nimrod began to be a mighty man in sin, a murderer of innocent men, and a rebel before the Lord.” The word which we render *hunter* signifies “prey”; and is applied in the Scriptures to the hunting of men by persecution, oppression, and tyranny. Hence, it is likely that Nimrod, having acquired power,

used it in tyranny and oppression; and by rapine [pillaging and plundering] founded that domination which was the first distinguished by the name of a *kingdom* on the face of the earth. (*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; 1967; p. 32)

Thus, a reasonable conclusion would be that Nimrod was an *apostate* from God’s truth – a truth that was preached by Noah before the Flood and, no doubt, after the Flood. So, Nimrod’s great-grandfather and his grandfather, at least, were acquainted with it. Hislop, referring to Gregorius Turonensis’s work (*De rerum Franc.*, lib. i., *apud*) and *Bryant’s Mythology* (vol. ii. pp. 403, 404), concludes that Nimrod’s father Cush had a prominent role in leading man away from the true worship of God (Ibid.). By implication, Nimrod took it to a whole ‘nother level.

The next understanding of the term *hunter* has to do with hunting *animals*. Exodus 23:29, 30 provides a reasonable example of what the post-Flood environment must have been like. Among the many things the Lord God did to make the Israelites safe in the Promised Land was to deal with the over-population of the animals. As He systematically drove out the inhabitants of the Land, the wild animals would fill the void left by them. The Lord God did not want His people to fall prey to animal depredations. What must the earth have been like *after the Flood* when the animals outnumbered the humans – and their reproductive abilities were greater than the humans?

Hislop suggests that Nimrod ingratiated the world’s scant population to himself by hunting down the animals and keeping their numbers at a manageable level. Part of the reason for the walled cities was to provide them with safety and security. In this, Nimrod accrued to himself a reputation of

mythic proportions – of greatness that was “worshipped” to the point that he eventually was considered to be “god-like.” *He* was their “Emancipator” and “Deliverer.” Ancient historians like Pausanias, Hyginus, and Lutatius Placidus show him to have been the first to gather mankind into communities, the first mortal to reign as king, and the first that offered *idolatrous* sacrifices (Ibid.; p. 51).

What was the net effect of this man’s reign? Well, as already shown, he was a *rebel* and an *apostate* from God’s truth. Not being content to hunt men and animals, he set to work to emancipate them from the *fear of the Lord* (see Job 28:28 and Psalm 111:10). Consider this opinion given by Hislop:

All tradition from the earliest time bears testimony to the apostacy [sic] of Nimrod, and to his success in leading men away from the patriarchal faith, and delivering their minds from the awe of God and fear of the judgments of heaven that must have rested on them while yet the memory of the flood was recent. And according to all the principles of depraved human nature, this too, no doubt, was one grand element of his fame; for men will readily rally around one who can give the least *appearance* of plausibility to any doctrine which will teach that they can be assured of happiness and heaven at last, *though their hearts and natures are unchanged, and though they live without God in the world.* (Ibid.; p. 52; emphases added)

How did Nimrod do such a thing?

The Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, wrote in his *Antiquities of the Jews* that Nimrod excited the people in the post-Flood world to rebel against God – openly insulting Him with their

contempt. Why? How? God had commanded them to move out into the wider world in order to settle it, to populate it, and to enjoy the plentiful fruits they could derive from cultivating the earth. Josephus says they were so *ill-instructed* in the thoughts and ways of God that they did not obey Him.

It is not uncommon among the politicians of the world to tell their people that they are great people capable of overcoming any calamities that befall them and achieving great things.

When they fell into calamities that were the natural result of their disobedience, God again admonished them to spread out all over the earth and do what He had planned for them to do about having dominion over the entire earth (see Genesis 1:26-28). They came to two conclusions: (a) the prosperity they enjoyed was *not* derived from anything *God* had done for them – it was something *they* had done by their own ingenuity and power, and (b) the only reason God wanted them to spread out was so that He could more easily *oppress* them. Nimrod taught them that God was actually their *adversary* and they would be base, senseless cowards to submit to Him (Book I, Chapter IV). You can imagine the effect of such *propaganda*.

The prophet Hosea gives us a glimpse of the problem caused by not retaining the knowledge of God – as well as God’s response to it:

...The Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no *truth*, no *mercy*, nor *knowledge of God* in the land....My people are *destroyed* for lack of

knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you...” (Hosea 4:1, 6; emphasis added).

This *knowledge* includes *discernment*, *understanding*, and *wisdom* that is derived from God’s thoughts and ways. It includes *willing obedience* toward God because of what one *knows* of Him. Paul says that God gives people over to a reprobate mind who do not retain God in their knowledge (Romans 1:28-32). Such was the work of Nimrod.

How did Nimrod become such a *tyrant*? Josephus says that he was a man of great strength and power of persuasion. He taught the people that their own courage was what would help them acquire the wealth and happiness they desired. He constantly trained young men to be warriors. And, he saved mankind from the ravages of an exploding animal population after the Flood. Josephus makes an interesting comment that demonstrates my point. Pay close attention to the *gradual* way Nimrod carried out his program of tyranny:

[Nimrod] *gradually changed* the government into *tyranny*, —seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into constant dependence upon *his* power. He also said that he would be revenged on God, if he should have a mind to drown the world again; for that he would build a tower too high for the waters to be able to reach! [sic] and that he would avenge himself on God for destroying their forefathers! (Ibid.; emphases added)

It is not uncommon among the politicians of the world to tell their people that they are great people capable of overcoming any calamities that befall them and achieving great things. The invocation of *God’s* name – if there is

one – is usually in vague, general terms...the ubiquitous "God" that is supposedly common to all religions. That is *not* the God of the Bible.

It is also not uncommon for governments to provide “bread and circuses” (*panem et circenses*) to ingratiate their citizens to them and to keep their discontent at the lowest level possible – ultimately making them *irrevocably* dependent on the government for their general welfare. The current crises in Greece, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, and other nations are examples of the result that such *panem et circenses* can have on citizens. They become too accustomed to the “perks” and “benefits” to which they supposedly have a “right.” Such practice is, in reality, *subjugation* of the masses by *stealth* (read again Revelation 13:16, 17).

It is the rare politician who is not concerned with how s/he can remain in office “for the greater good” – and, therefore, be primed to offer various goods and services to campaign donors and supporters.

Career Politicians

It is common knowledge that career politicians are suspect in their motivations for making promises that they either have no personal, individual power to keep or that they have no real intention of keeping. There is much conversation nowadays about how they are constantly looking forward to the next election cycle and doing things that will benefit them for that upcoming election. It is here that major monetary contributors, lobbyists, political action committees, voter blocks, unions, big business, and the like come into play.

Do not think that *panem et circenses* is aimed only at the disenfranchised who seek “welfare” from the government. It is not. It is also aimed at those who seek some kind of personal advantage or political favor for whatever agenda they are pursuing. It is the rare politician who is not concerned with how s/he can remain in office “for the greater good” – and, therefore, be primed to offer various goods and services to campaign donors and supporters. It is the rare politician who is *really not concerned* about reelection.

Dr. Thomas Sowell, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, broached this in a recent article in his syndicated column titled “Interrupting careers of politicians no easy task” (*The Albany [GA] Herald*, March 19, 2013, p. 7A). It was an opinion piece about the concept of “term limits” for politicians. Dr. Sowell posited that the career politician will not be affected by term limits because s/he will figure out how to move from one political position to another unless there is law that calls for a long interval of time between positions. He says: “In short, we need to make political careers virtually impossible.” Why? Would it put an end to “money funneling”? You know, all the “pork” added to otherwise important bills in the House and Senate that adjust the costs way upward and necessitate more taxes.

Dr. Sowell (and Dr. Benjamin Carson) makes the point about “...short-sighted policies, looking no further than the next election, and *the same cynical arts of deception and logrolling* to get reelected at all costs” (emphasis added). In case you do not know, “logrolling” in this context refers to “the mutual exchange of favors, especially among legislators.” He says that the career politician gains the experience and expertise “...in the arts of *evasion, effrontery* [impudence, audacity], *deceit* and *chicanery* [trickery].

None of that serves the interest of the people” (emphases added). Indeed!

So, it is obvious from what we *should* know about human-devised governments that they include all of the elements of human foibles and frailties (see Jeremiah 17:9-11 and Galatians 5:19-21). Even *democracy*, largely touted as the greatest form of human-devised governments, is not free from such character attributes – and...may be open to many more individual expressions of it (through lobbyists, political action committees, and the like) than many other forms of human-devised government.

Utopian Societies

Whether they are based on religious concepts, economic concepts, or concepts about freedom and liberty, the utopian societies are largely human-devised concepts that offer their participants specific advantages that place them in an *idealized* state of perfection. That, in essence, is also a type of *panem et circenses*. So, its benefits do not have to be *tangible*. The benefits can appeal to one’s philosophical, political, and/or religious aspirations. In other words, “Peace and safety” can be just as attractive as “a chicken in every pot.” Advertisers know that “benefits” are more attractive to a target audience than are “features.” They will say that “You will look great in...”, instead of saying: “This is a beautiful red automobile with comfort seats.” They target the “What’s in it for me?” button in human nature.

George Orwell warned us about the “perfect society” in his work *1984*, and Aldous Huxley warned us about it in his work *Brave New World*. Each took a point-of-view that described the breakdown of “normal” society based on either “love” or “hate.” *Government*, as we know it on the *human* level, will either eventually overwhelm us with restrictions and invasions of our privacy, life, liberty, and

pursuit of happiness (consider the present squabble about the alleged intrusions of the Internal Revenue Service into the lives of political "enemies" and the secret metadata gathering done by the national security branches), or it will fall apart and society will degenerate into *anarchy* (consider the problem recently faced in Greece). Eventually, a frustrated citizenry will rise up in revenge for such things.

Kurt Vonnegut wrote a social satire set in 2081 titled "Harrison Bergeron." This short story showed the ridiculous extent to which the government of the United States goes to insure that everyone is "equal." Note how he introduces the theme of his work:

The year was 2081, and everyone was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was any better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and the vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

This sounds very ominous, huh?

The Handicapper General's job was to provide the means by which all citizens could be made "equal." For examples: the smarter citizens were required to wear a mental-handicap radio in their ears at all times. It would emit a sharp noise about every 20 seconds that would prevent them from taking advantage of their brains. Those who weighed less than others were required to wear bags of bird-shot around their necks in order to bring them in line with the heavier people. The citizens were propagandized into

believing that *competition* would cause society to fall apart and degenerate into total anarchy. I suppose that this was the ultimate in "political correctness." Rebels were not tolerated – they were shot to death.

Vonnegut, obviously, takes the idea to an extreme to make his point, but it is a valid point: human-devised governments go to human extremes in order to enforce ideologies that may or may not *really* be in the best interests of the citizenry.

To get a better idea about this, take the time to do some research in an encyclopedia under the heading "Utopia." You will find information about the various types: religious, communal, socialist, secular, et cetera. Some of the most prominent will be named: the Ephrata Cloister, Inspirationists, the Rappites, Shakers, English Pietists, the Perfectionists, the Mormons, the Bible Communists at Oneida, (New York), New Harmony (Indiana), Brook Farm, the French Icarians (Nauvoo, IL), the Amana Society, and The Great Awakening – to name few. The basic justification for establishing such communities was, in one way or another, to realize an ideal of *perfection* in communal living. If they could just divorce themselves from the "normal" society, then they could overcome the sins of the flesh and realize a completely new level of life.

We can ill afford to put our hope and trust in human beings (see Psalm 49:5-15; 146:3). Their ability to "save" us out of the calamity of this physical life is at best temporary and severely limited.

As the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1969 edition) puts it in its article titled

"Utopia":

The themes of all subsequent and pre-Marxian socialist appeals...are present in Moore's *Utopia* in their classic form: "the optimistic faith in human nature, the overweening emphasis upon environment and proper education, the nostalgia for lost innocence and integrity, and the exaggerated uniformitarianism (from clothes to equal apportionment of children among families) which is the measure of every utopian's revulsion against rugged individualism." (D. D. Egbert and Stow Person [eds.], *Socialism and American Life*, vol. 1, p. 34, Princeton, N.J., 1952). {vol. 22, p. 821}

And so it goes as man strives to become his own savior – as he strives to circumvent or ignore *God's* revelation of truth.

Now put this in context with the revelation that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ to deliver to the Apostle John (see Revelation 1:1). Revelation 6 is a finely woven tapestry of prophetic events that begin at certain points in history and continue to affect mankind until the return of Jesus Christ. The famous *Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* begin with *false Christs* (v. 2), which includes every humble or arrogant politician and tyrant who has ever promised to deliver a people from whatever their perceived woes and foes might have been.

These *false Christs* do not have to be *religious*. Hitler was a false Christ, just as surely as Lucifer is a false Christ. So have been the politicians of the United States and other countries who have not been able to legislate enough to bring us the peace, security, prosperity, and health they have promised – even though they have laid burden upon burden upon us to finance their fanciful schemes and agendas. In

too many cases, it is all too obvious that too many of them serve their own agendas behind the smoke screen of "improving" the living conditions of their constituents.

Read God's warning through His prophet Samuel to Israel regarding their demand for a king like the other nations had:

...This will be the manner of the king that shall rule over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them *for himself*, for *his* chariots, and to be *his* horsemen; and some shall run before *his* chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear *his* ground, and to reap *his* harvest, and to make *his* instruments of war, and instruments of *his* chariots.

And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to *his* servants.

And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to *his* officers, and to *his* servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to *his* work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: *and you shall be his servants*.

And you shall cry out in that day because of *your* king whom you shall have chosen for *yourself*; ***and the Lord will not hear you in that day.*** (1 Samuel 8:10-18; emphases added)

Today, we would count ourselves most

fortunate if our national, state, and local leaders only took the *tenth part* of our income and other "wealth." In spite of such a dire warning, Israel's desire to have a king like the other nations was so strong that they "...refused to obey the voice of Samuel..." (v. 19).

Let's be realistic here: Did they get what they deserved for their flintheadedness? When Samuel told God what the people wanted, God's answer was very incisive and direct: "...They have not rejected you, but *they have rejected me, that I should not rule over them*" (v. 7; emphases added).

Even citizens in so-called *democracies* are subject to the same thing from their executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government. The plethora of laws and programs and taxes and *panem et circenses* are merely the government's method of extracting from the citizenry the means by which those who run the *government* can pursue their own agendas, not *God's*. Consider, for example, how the concept of *eminent domain* has so radically changed recently. It is slowly becoming a means by which *government* can seize one's private property for *tax purposes* rather than for public use (like a much needed bridge or highway). They are not even held accountable to pay the fair market price or to compensate the landowner for any losses suffered.

Is political advantage *really* more important than the good of all the people?

City and county governments increase the value of property, not because it has increased in value, but in order to increase the amount of *taxes* they can collect for "projects" they have imagined for their governed territories. And, they do the same thing with gasoline taxes. Citizens of the

United States have become subject to more concepts of taxation than King George III of England ever imagined for the colonists!

And...let's not even get started on the concept of the *redistribution of wealth!* Or...what constitutes an individual's "fair share" of the tax burdens imposed. Or...the irrationality of the sequester decision not to allow departments of government to pick and choose areas that can be easily eliminated so that across-the-board, draconian budget cuts will not damage the American economy.

Is political advantage *really* more important than the good of all the people? One might legitimately wonder how all of the political posturing and unrestrained claim on the wealth of the citizens serves to maintain the *United* status of the *States* (see Matthew 12:25).

It is reasonable to ask how long we can sustain payments to anti-poverty programs (\$15 Trillion since President Johnson's introduction of the "Great Society" program in 1964) and the "food stamp" program that has soared 70% since 2008 (now serving 47.8+ million people as of May 2013). We shall never run out of poor people (Matthew 26:11). But, why should we make *panem et circenses* so permanent and profitable that able-bodied recipients can *refuse* to look for meaningful, "fair share" employment because they would *lose money* for awhile by doing so? Too much of the problem involves *fraud* and *government inefficiency*. Yet, the World Bank is presently drawing up plans to *end extreme poverty worldwide* by 2030! This is their stated goal: "We are no longer dreaming of a world free of poverty; we have set an expiration date for extreme poverty." They are aiming to reduce *extreme poverty* to 3% globally by 2030.

And...you might well wonder how adding more and more laws and regulations to the stacks and stacks of laws and regulations that are not being en-

forced – or that government leaders *refuse* to enforce – serves any real, useful purpose. We don't even seem to know how to prevent the \$743,000,000.00 per year in "food stamp" *fraud* or how to prevent *prisoners* from getting welfare benefits or filing bogus income tax returns! And... there's the *free cell phone program* by which individuals *fraudulently* get for themselves multiple cell phones – one man in Florida reportedly receiving as many as 30! Sadly, that is not an isolated case.

The *fraud* and *cheating* in the system of *panem et circenses* is rampant. Recent news reports showed that one worker supports 13 unemployed people – a 1:13 ratio. Social Security claims for *disability* are called "the new welfare." That program is also rife with *fraud*. What is the implication? Such practices are totally *unsustainable* – it is but a short trip from this to *bankruptcy*. Is this what *God* wants for us? Does He want us to be liars, cheats, frauds, thieves, and deceivers? How long can we sustain such behavior and exist as a nation? It is totally inconceivable that the liars, cheats, frauds, thieves, deceivers, and political prostitutes care one way another – until their gravy-train disappears!

How God Provides for the Poor in His Government

Ecclesiastes 9:11 says that we are all subject to *time* and *chance*. That is the result of *sin* having entered our world through Adam and Eve. The reaction of the Lord God in Genesis 3 was probably predictable based on Genesis 2:17 and 3:19-24. In Romans 1:24, 26, 28, Paul says that God "...gave [mankind] over to..." the naturally occurring consequences of choosing to eat the "...fruit of the knowledge of good and evil..." It was such a serious offense that He also subjected mankind to *vanity* and *bondage of corruption*

(Romans 8:20, 21). He was determined to teach mankind a tough-love lesson about the futility and worthlessness of choosing to be your own center of morality above learning His thoughts and ways – and...being in a state of *slavery* to whatever time and chance might bring upon you.

The ultimate goal of God for the poor and needy beyond this present world system is found in Psalm 113:6, 7: *To raise them out of the dust and dunghill and set them among princes.*

That said, it is not unreasonable that Jesus Christ would point out to His disciples that there will always be *poor people* in our present-world society (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7). It should not be surprising, therefore, that God would have something to say about how the *poor* should be treated by His people. Let me say up front that His commandments about this treatment are not predicated on the idea that *you can choose to be poor because of your personal laziness or design to take advantage of others like a social sponge.*

When the early Christian community struggled against persecution on many fronts and shared "...all things in common..." (Acts 2:43-47), it was vitally necessary that those who claimed to have *true faith* would deal *righteously* with one another. The Apostle Paul even told this struggling community of believers that "...if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10). The *true faith requires* that you have as much concern for others – in or out of the true faith – as you have for yourself (Matthew 19:16-22; 22:34-40; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12)). This applies to even the

poor. Taking advantage of the goodness of others for your personal benefit is a selfishness that will ultimately destroy any sense of *community* that might otherwise exist.

The ultimate goal of God for the poor and needy beyond this present world system is found in Psalm 113:6, 7: *To raise them out of the dust and dunghill and set them among princes.* In the meantime, He set forth laws by which His community of faith would take care of those who have fallen victim to *time* and *chance* – which could include falling victim to crime, adverse weather, economic situations, et cetera through no fault of their own. As Clarke expresses it in his commentary about Deuteronomy 15:11:

God leaves [the poor] in mercy among men to exercise the feelings of compassion, tenderness, mercy. And without occasions afforded to exercise these, man would soon become a Stoic or a brute.

God's historical concern for the poor has been far different from the quagmire that we see before us today in the "welfare" systems of human-devised governments.

God's Welfare System

There are a couple of laws by which the poor were to be "rescued" from their circumstances...neither of which allowed the poor to be mere receivers of the grace involved. One is found in Deuteronomy 15:7-18. The most salient points in this law are as follows:

1. The poor is to be *loaned* sufficiently enough to take care of his *needs*. This is not a *loan-for-profit* arrangement; it is also not a loan that is not repaid because it implies that he will become an *indentured*

servant who will work for the lender for a specified period of time and be subsequently released (vv. 7-8; 12-18).

2. The lender will not be *stingy* toward the poor servant, or refuse to release him when he has served out his indenture (the lender will have been blessed by God enough to cover the trouble he went through to do what is right; vv. 9-11; 12-18).

So, it appears that the poor, in this case, have a personal responsibility to be worthy of the benefit afforded them (Matthew 10:10; 1 Timothy 5:18). Both the benefactor and the beneficiary have a responsibility to have as much concern for the other as they have for themselves.

The other is found in Leviticus 27:26-34 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29. This is the law about *tithing* – which some might classify as *taxation*. Interestingly enough, this law includes provisions for the social welfare needs of God's people in ancient Israel.

The *tithe* discussed in Leviticus 27:26-34 is related to the provision for the national priesthood. The Israelite tribe of Levi was not numbered among the Children of Israel who were given a land inheritance (Numbers 1:47-54). They were to be responsible for the Tabernacle, sacrifices, and other duties among the various tribes of Israel. The Lord God took them instead of the firstborn sons of the various tribes (Numbers 3:11-13). In effect, the Levites were left with no land inheritance; so, the Lord God appointed for them the *first tenth* paid by the other tribes. The *first tithe* became their inheritance. Non-Levites were *not* allowed access to those funds and materials. Everybody paid his "share."

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 describes a *second tithe* that the Israelites were to set aside for use when observing the

feasts the Lord God revealed to them in Leviticus 23. They were to use it *in the place where God designated the feasts to be celebrated* (v. 23). The tithe of the produce and cattle could be sold if the place was too far away for them to effectively and efficiently transport it to the site (vv. 24-26). In v. 27, they were specifically reminded to *share* their *second tithes* with the Levites who were stationed in their territories as judges, lawyers, teachers, et cetera ("...within your gates..."). It is also implied that they would not forget the poor, widows, and orphans.

Deuteronomy 14:28, 29 describes a *third-year tithe* that was to be paid during the third and sixth years of a seven-year time cycle (the seventh year being a "Sabbath" year when no crops were grown). This *third-year tithe* was to be collected in the *local areas* and stored there for distribution to Levites, strangers, orphans, and widows in that local area. It was, in effect, an emergency fund for the purpose of welfare relief for the poor and disenfranchised. It is important to understand the reason for the *local* aspect of this *third-year tithe*. Everybody paid his "share."

The *local aspect* of the distribution of the *third-year tithe* has to do with *local knowledge* of the true nature of the recipient's needs. It would be very difficult for any recipient to do so fraudulently. They could not hide their laziness or their hidden agendas from all of the people who were contributing to the fund – whether it was produce, grain, or cattle. Any type of *fraud* would be dealt with very quickly. It required *righteous* administration by the local leaders...or, they would also suffer great penalties (see Leviticus 19:11-13).

Finally, there was the *gleaning program* described in Leviticus 19:9, 10. The landowners were not to gather all of their crops during the harvests. The *gleanings* were to be left for the poor and strangers. This presupposes that the poor and strangers could not

sit on their...porches and expect someone else to gather for them and deliver it to their doors. Only the sick and infirm could have such expectations.

You can read Ruth 2 and discover that she and her mother-in-law Naomi were *gleaners*. Both were widows and had no husbands or children to care for them. One of Naomi's kinsmen through her late husband allowed them to glean his fields. His name was Boaz. You can tell that he was a righteous man who did not deal fraudulently with the gleaners. He was generous. Beyond this, God expects us to be *generous* with the poor and disenfranchised – *open-handed*, as it is expressed in Deuteronomy 15:7, 8.

The point of this is to demonstrate that God does not intend for the poor and disenfranchised to merely sit by, be unproductive, and expect others to provide for them. The *righteous* thing to do is to make every effort to provide for you and yours to the best of your ability and to take advantage of every opportunity to do so. Dealing *fraudulently* with your neighbor is a recipe for failure that will eventually cause an unexpected collapse. *God* will bless the *righteous society*. When it becomes a society dominated by frauds, cheats, liars, thieves, dope dealers and addicts, and all manner of "prostitutes," then He will turn it over to the consequences inherent in His laws (see Romans 1:18-32).

The Year of Release

Deuteronomy 15:1-18 describes what the Lord God legislated as "the year of release." This system works very well when everyone deals *righteously* with everyone else. If they do not, then there is a terrible price to be paid by the offenders. The law deals with those who need assistance from others, as well as those who provide that assistance. In the Lord God's plan, there was a seven-year time cycle – the seventh year being a "Sabbath."

Exodus 23:9-13 is a description of this "Sabbath" year:

...Six years you shall sow your land and shall gather the produce from it. But in the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie unplanted so that the poor of the land can gather whatever produce grows upon it. Whatever they leave, the wild animals and cattle can consume. You shall treat your vineyards and oliveyards in the same manner. (vv. 10, 11; read also Leviticus 25:1-7)

You have to remember that the grains and produce would leave seeds that would sprout and produce some measure of "crops." The vineyards and the oliveyards would produce their fruits regardless of the "Sabbath" year, but the owners were not allowed to tend them in any manner. The poor were to be allowed access to whatever they produced.

With the Lord God's blessings, the poor would be provided for in abundance. The idea was that the land, the laborers, and the working animals needed to *rest* in a manner pictured by the seventh-day Sabbath (Exodus 20:8-11). Remember, too, that the *third-year tithes* were paid in the third and sixth years of that seven-year time cycle.

Also, understand that this worked like the *manna* in Exodus 16: the sixth-year harvest would be sufficient for *three years* (read Leviticus 25:18-22). Leviticus 25:17 shows that the law works only insofar as each person deals righteously with his neighbor and does not oppress him.

So, Deuteronomy 15:1-18 deals with the Lord God's expectations of the *creditors...and His expectation that they would have an open-hand policy toward the poor*. In actual fact, this law dealt with any kind of credit extended to anyone:

...This is the manner of the ["Sabbath" year] release: Every creditor that lends *anything* to his neighbor shall *forgive* [remit] the debt; he shall not *require* his neighbor or his brother to repay it because it is called *the Lord's release*. You may require a foreigner to repay it, but you shall not require your brother to repay that which you have loaned him. (vv. 2, 3; emphasis added)

Verses 9, 10 warn the creditors about having a wicked heart in this matter. Why? It has to do with the nature of the "Sabbath" year. The indebted person (which includes thieves repaying debts, indentured servants, borrowers, et cetera) does not have to serve six years of indebtedness. If they become indebted in the sixth year, *they have to be released* during the "Sabbath" year. The Lord God did not allow them or the creditor to "game" the system.

The *human-devised governments* of the world can give us all the *panem et circenses* that we can stomach, but it will not *really* make them our *saviors*. They cannot perpetuate our lives beyond the grave.

Read Matthew 25:31-42 for insight into the Lord God's reasoning – paying close attention to vv. 40 and 45. Also, read Jeremiah 34 to understand the terrible consequences the Israelites suffered because of dealing unrighteously with the indebted of their nation. Anyone who calls himself by the name of the God of the Bible and claims to be a participant in the New Covenant with Jesus Christ is at terrible risk when

they deal deceitfully with their fellow-man...when they "game" the system created by God for their benefit (read also Jeremiah 5).

Paul had plenty of understanding of the Old Testament when he wrote in Galatians 6:7, 8 that God cannot be mocked without penalty. Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.

This nation once called itself a "Christian" nation. It has steadily and surely divorced itself from God's truth in favor of a social gospel that is a device of the *human mind*. *Panem et circenses* is not our true Savior; it is the wreck and ruin of a society that does not retain the knowledge of the True God (Romans 1:25, 28).

Conclusion

I dare say that this is the very thing that God warned us about when we chose to form *our own* governments, religions, education systems, and every other *human-devised* thing that is, supposedly, "...good for food,...pleasant to the eyes,...and desired to make one wise..." (Genesis 3:6). I also dare say that we are suffering an ever-increasing barrage of *consequences* for continuing to push the knowledge of the true God out of our thoughts and ways (read Isaiah 55:8, 9 and Romans 1:18-32). We can ill afford to put our hope and trust in human beings (Psalm 49:5-15; 146:3). Their ability to "save" us out of the calamity of physical life is at best temporary and severely limited. They can give us all the *panem et circenses* that we can stomach, but it will not *really* make them our *saviors*. They cannot perpetuate our lives beyond the grave in bodies that are suited for the eternity ahead! *That* is the real problem.

If you need more help understanding this, please contact us. We can assist you in understanding God's truth as He has revealed it in the Bible.

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