

The Role of YEHOVAH's Ecclesia

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1Co 14:26 How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

Have a Great Sabbath!

The Role of YEHOVAH's Ecclesia

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I believe the role of the church (ecclesia) is misunderstood in our day because people do not recognize the identity of the lost tribes of Israel. Christians today do not understand the relationship established by YEHOVAH God between Israel and the church in Israel. The church in Israel is called to do more than just preach the Gospel.

"And Jesus approached, spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been imparted to me, in Heaven and on Earth. **Go, disciple All the NATIONS [of Israel], immersing them into the NAME of the FATHER, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit**'" (Matthew 28:18-20, *The Emphatic Diaglott Containing the Original Greek Text*).

This great commission involved more than just preaching the Gospel of personal salvation.

The apostle Peter explained our identity as Christian-Israelites:

"But ye are a **chosen Race, a Royal Priesthood**, a holy Nation, a people for a purpose; that you may declare the perfection of Him who called you from darkness into His wonderful light" (I Peter 2:9, *ibid.*).

Calling us a royal priesthood implies two things. First, **we are of royal descent**. We are children of the king and our father is YEHOVAH God. He is the ruler and we are destined to rule as princes and princesses in His kingdom. Even in this mortal life we are given authority to conquer and rule:

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and **over all the power of the enemy**: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven [in the Book of Life]" (Luke 10:17-20).

We have spiritual authority higher than that of demons. We can prevent them from carrying out their wicked plans.

"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:18-19).

Two Christian-Israelites can agree in prayer to bind demons. It is up to those Christians to stop demons from taking over the U.S.A., Canada, the U.K., and other Israel nations. **Recognize the demons behind the evil people and bind those demons**. You cannot bind the evil people but you can bind the demons giving power to those people. The people will be bound when YEHOVAH God and the Messiah return.

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When Peter called us a royal priesthood it also means **we are all priests**. Our High Priest is the Messiah who is a priest after the order of Melchizedec, the highest office of priesthood in existence. **As priests it is our duty to intercede for our nations**. We need to pray for our nations because we are the ones the Lord will listen to. We have the ear of the Messiah our High Priest and we are his priests. It is up to us to call on the Messiah and get help for our Israel people. **Priests have a duty to bless the people and teach the people the laws of YEHOVAH God:**

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: **but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven**" (Matthew 5:18-19).

Therefore we see that the duty of the church in the Israel nations is more than just preaching the Gospel. We have a duty to protect our nations from evil spirits, to intercede for our nation before YEHOVAH God, and to teach our people the laws of YEHOVAH God. How are we doing? We are our brother's and sister's keepers. Are we protecting them from evil? *The condition of our nations reflects the condition of the Israel church. If the church is spiritually healthy our nations will be thriving. How are we doing?*

Many people are looking for an Antichrist to blame for the problems in our nations. Recently I saw the person who is responsible for the sin in our nation. I went into the bathroom and looked in the mirror and he was looking back at me. You can see the guilty person if you look in your bathroom mirror. All of us must continually confess that we are sinners and claim the free gift of forgiveness and salvation by the sacrifice of the Messiah given to us when he died on the tree. Then **we must go forth and do our small part in helping the church in our Israel nations do their duty to YEHOVAH God.**

Daniel was proclaimed to be a very righteous man by YEHOVAH God. When YEHOVAH spoke to Ezekiel about the sin of Israel he said,

"Son of man, when the land sinneth against Me by trespassing grievously, **then I stretch out Mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it:** Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the LORD God" (Ezekiel 14:13-14).

However, Daniel did not think he was righteous. He knew he was a sinner. He said,

"And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation" (Daniel 9:20-21).

Daniel was praying for Israel, confessing that they were sinners and that he was a sinner.

Let us follow his example and not think too highly of ourselves. All of us are sinners and all of us are part of a sinful church and a sinful nation. Nevertheless, we of Israel are forgiven and protected from the wrath of YEHOVAH God by the blood of the Messiah, and until our mortal lives end we must work to do our part as royal priests in YEHOVAH's service under the guidance of our High Priest, Yeshua the Messiah!

Baptism into the Priesthood

Since the Bible clearly affirms that baptism is NOT required for salvation, why did the Messiah permit himself to be baptized, and that it should be an example for those called of Israel to follow?

Now let's go to the Messiah and John at the Jordan river. The Messiah has requested that John baptize him to "fulfill all righteousness." Like Aaron, the Messiah needed to be washed and anointed so that he could begin his ministry as High Priest.

Let's see what happened. The Messiah went into the water and was immersed. When he came up out of the water, the

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heavens were opened up and the holy spirit in the bodily form of a dove came and rested on the Messiah. The holy spirit is spirit and therefore invisible. The spirit's descending as a dove was for the benefit of John and the others present.

The dove was a symbol of purity, peace, gentleness, love and truth, all characteristics of the one true God. That John understood that it was the holy spirit descending on the Messiah is made clear by Peter in Acts 10:38 when he is preaching to Cornelius and his family and says, "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the holy spirit and with power..." The Messiah became the "Son of God," but as a fully human being he would need the power of YEHOVAH God given to him in the spirit to accomplish the will of YEHOVAH God here upon the earth.

If we see **the Messiah's own baptism by John as an inauguration to the priesthood**, some light can be shed on a few of the details of that event -- especially as recorded in Luke's account (Luke 3:21-23). First, the question of why the Messiah was baptized at all, especially with a baptism "of repentance for the remission of sins" (3:3), has frequently been answered by saying that the Messiah was identifying himself with his kinsmen Israel. He submitted to baptism as part of his work as the sin-bearing substitute.

This explanation fits very neatly with the view that **the Messiah was baptized into the priestly ministry**. The High Priest of Israel, after all, was a sin-bearer. Throughout the year, the sins of Israel "accumulated" on the High Priest until they were confessed over the scapegoat and sent out of the camp on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The Aaronic priests were ordained to bear the sins of Israel, "baptized" into substitutionary ministry. As Duane Spencer points out in his book *Holy Baptism*, this explains what the Messiah meant when he said that his baptism was part of "fulfilling all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15): The Messiah fulfilled righteousness by undergoing baptism into the priesthood.

Likewise, those called of Israel are also priests of YEHOVAH God and should "fulfill all righteousness" as the Messiah did! In 1 Peter 2 we read:

"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected, it is true, by men, but chosen, precious, with God, you yourselves also as living stones are being built up a spiritual house **for the purpose of a holy priesthood**, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ....But you are 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies' of the One who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light..." (1 Peter 2:4-5, 9. *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*).

Since we of Israel are priests like our elder brother the Messiah is also a (High) Priest, we should follow his example and be baptized so that we can have the power to "proclaim the praises of Him who called [us] out of darkness into His marvelous light."

The early "Church" Fathers Tertullian, Ambrose, and Augustine all claimed that baptism inducts the baptized person into membership in the royal priesthood of the church, and Thomas Aquinas said that baptism, by imprinting an indelible "character" on the soul, **confers a share in the priesthood of Christ**. This was even worked into some ancient baptismal liturgies; the actual water baptism was followed by an anointing with oil, and this was explained by reference to the anointing of priests and kings in the Old Testament.

Second, Luke tells us that immediately after his baptism the Messiah "began his ministry," being "about thirty years of age" (Luke 3:23). Priests likewise began ministry at the age of 30 (Numbers 4:34-37), following their ordination -- which included a ritual bath.

Third, at the baptism of the Messiah, the Father identified the Messiah as the "Son of God" (Luke 3:22). This can be a royal rather than a priestly title (see 2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 2:6-7), and it surely carries that resonance in Luke 3. The Messiah is the royal priest, the priest after the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-3). But sonship is not unconnected with priesthood. The Levites, who served in a semi-priestly capacity, took the place of the firstborn sons of Israel (Numbers 3:38-51). In Hebrews 4:14 the new High Priest is identified as "Jesus the Son of God," and in 5:5 the author interprets Psalm 2:7 ("Thou art my Son") as a prophecy of the Messiah's glorification as High Priest.

When we read Galatians 4 we learn that those called of YEHOVAH's people Israel are also called "sons of God" -- notice!

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son [the Messiah], born of a woman, born under the law,

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to redeem those who were under the law [the Israelites], **that we [of Israel] might receive the adoption as sons.** And because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out 'Abba, Father!' Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ" (Galatians 4:4-7).

So, as "sons" of the Living God we, too, should follow the Messiah's example and be baptized.

While it is true that baptism is NOT required for salvation, and that "In my Father's house are many mansions" (different responsibilities and duties), if we want to fulfill our calling -- the highest responsibility in the Kingdom of YEHOVAH God -- then we should follow the Messiah's example and be baptized.

"And have made us kings and **priests to our God**; and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10).

It was the Messiah's baptism that gave him the legal authority to carry out his priestly ministry. Notice what Ben Rose says:

"As evidence of the fact that **the Messiah was made a priest by John's baptism**, we note that when the Messiah cleansed the temple (Matthew 21:12; Mark 11:15), he was exercising the authority of a priest. And when the Jews came to him asking, 'By what authority doest thou these things, and who gave thee this authority?' (Matthew 21:23; Mark 11:28), Yeshua cited to them John's baptism, which he had received, and asked, 'Was it from heaven or of men?' In Yeshua's mind there is obviously a definite connection between his priestly 'authority' and his 'baptism by John.' He indicates that if John's baptism was from heaven, and he surely believed it was, then **he had been truly ordained a priest and possessed authority to cleanse the temple**" (Ben L. Rose, Reprint from the *Southern Presbyterian Journal*, Weaverville, 1949, pp. 10-11).

We of Israel -- who have been called by YEHOVAH God and as such are named priests throughout the scriptures -- should take our calling seriously and immerse ourselves into the "Royal Priesthood" so that we can fulfill the highest call that YEHOVAH God has offered us. Since we fulfill our calling as priests when we are baptized, we too have the authority and duty to cleanse the Temple as the Messiah did -- but what "temple" are we talking about here? Notice what the apostle Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

"Don't you know that you people are God's temple and that God's spirit lives in you? So if anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you yourselves are that temple" (1 Corinthians 3:16-17, *Jewish New Testament*).

As priests in YEHOVAH's service it is our duty to "cleanse" and protect His people Israel to the utmost of our ability. The Messiah's action in "cleansing" the Temple in Matthew 21:12-13 was symbolic in nature and pointed to his sacrifice on the tree where his blood cleansed YEHOVAH's people Israel who are the true Temple of YEHOVAH God.

See John Keyser's other articles at:

[Keyser, John – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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A symbolic teaching for parents

Comment: I have been meaning to write this short article for a little while but am now getting it out there. I am really

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interested in your input. Please let me know what you think.

Jesus Christ did not give us any specific teachings about parents punishing their children. We just don't have any really specific statements we can point to and find clear teachings on this issue. Yes, we do have biblical information, but it is terse and general and can be interpreted differently depending on who is doing the interpreting. Of course, I have endeavored to address this issue in a more comprehensive way in my own book “Thy Rod and Thy Staff, They Comfort Me: Christians and the Spanking Controversy.” (see www.biblechild.com for more details) However, since I published that book a couple of years ago, I have even learned some new things about this issue, an aspect of which is the subject of this present article. I have been sitting on this particular interpretation and pondering it for a little while, but I think now it is a good time to get it out there.

You know, it is interesting that we are earthly fathers and mothers to children, who we call our own, but in fact, we along with them are all the children of one God and Father of all. This is a precise teaching of St. Paul, who very eloquently quoted a Greek poet, Aratus saying: “For we are His offspring... (Acts 17:28). Therefore, if we are all His children, we who are parents, in a sense, to borrow the phrase of a close friend's wife who said: “We are just babysitting our children for the Lord.” This in some ways is very much the truth. God has entrusted us with the monumental task of being a part of raising His children.

So, we have a specific dynamic in place involving three parties which looks something like this. It involves All Mighty God, the Father of all creation and the One who sustains everything as the first party. Then, as the second party, we have those of us who are earthly parents. Finally, to conclude this relationship we are here talking about, our children (who are also God's children) are the third group.

When we look at the relationship between God the Father, an earthly parent and an earthly child, some interesting ideas come to mind. First, we must understand and appreciate that we have a dynamic in place involving two parties who are somehow on the same level spiritually with God. That is a fact! Both parent and child, while on earth occupy very different places in the social order, but from a heavenly perspective, they are looked on by God very much in the same way. After all, both pray the Lord's prayer to the same Lord (if they are Christians, of course) saying: “Our Father...” So, we have a relationship in place that while on earth, some inequality exists between parents and children, however, from a heavenly point of view, both are really very much in the same boat theologically speaking.

There are many Scriptures which clearly demonstrate this but let me refer only to one here. It is from Romans 3:23 saying: “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ...”

So, we have this ongoing dynamic that while we who are parents are older, supposedly more experienced in life, wiser (supposedly once again), more mature, etc. for all of this, we still are in that same theological boat with our children though we might be above 75 years and have children who are just babes in arms.

Now, since we see this paradigm universally in place, what can we learn about it that might help us better understand our positions as earthly parents and our obligations and responsibilities in that role vis a vis on the one hand, to All Mighty God, the Father of all and on the other hand, to the children that God has entrusted to our care during our and their time on earth? What does Scripture say about this? Do we have any information in this regard that we can latch on to, to help us become at the same time better people and better care givers to our/His children?

On the surface, one might say that we do not have any specific information that covers this issue or addresses these questions openly in Scripture. Yes, we do have the general admonitions about parent/child relations in Ephesians (6:1) and Colossians (3:20), but if a person is willing to look below the surface and to also be willing to look in the not so obvious of places, one might be very surprised at the information one could learn and this, I believe, could very well have great bearing on the role of the parent in the life of children and in their collective relationship with God.

In this regard, I want to refer here to one of the Parables given by Jesus, which I have referenced in the title to this section: The Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. We have all read it many times, but I am going to reference it here for your consideration.

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“21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven. 23 “Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.” (Matthew 18:23-35 ESV)

Now, this is a very interesting parable given by Jesus and the subject clearly is forgiveness. Jesus is using this parable as a comparison to teach forgiveness. However, let us look deeper into this passage in light of the picture I have painted earlier in this article. We can see some similarities to the dynamic relationship that I referenced earlier and to that found here in this parable. In fact, it is all here, and I believe that if a person looks really carefully at this passage, we who are parents might find in this passage some important instruction relative to how we treat our children and what God expects of us concerning His children who He has placed in our care.

First, note the overall example in this passage. Here you have a king, who obviously is in a position of almost absolute power and under him he has a servant who is in great debt to him. This servant obviously has been placed over great responsibility of the king to have become so indebted. Then, we are introduced to another servant underneath the first servant who owes a very small debt to the servant who owes the major debt.

Here we are reminded of Christ’s famous teaching from the Sermon on the Mount: “and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (Matthew 6:12) What we as Christians understand as the primary teaching of the Gospel message is that by accepting Christ, we acknowledge His death, and He has died for our sins. So, we are no longer spiritually in debt, but have been freed from sin by Christ’s atoning death. However, in this life, death still reigns, and we still have sin in our members to deal with and one day we will receive the wages of sin in this life, which is death (Romans 6:23), but we know that spiritually our eternal life is assured through our identification with Christ and His death.

To the Christian believer, this is clear and plainly taught in Scripture, however, when we look at the human experience, we understand that without question, those who are older and have more experience in life and know the difference between good and evil have a greater debt to God as they understand more maturely the Gospel. They are very much like that servant who owed 10,000 talents. Likewise, these people who owe a great debt also have their debtors who also owe them: their children!

When we look at the text once again, we start to see how the comparison starts to make sense. Look, all debts owed are owed to God ultimately, but God allows us who are parents to participate in His redemptive plan, by bringing children into the world. In looking at the comparison here though, note that this description of the relationship between the servants resembles very much that which parents and their children find themselves in their individual and collective relationships to God.

For sure, grown adults who have lived longer and committed more sins are in a greater debt to God for His mercy and forgiveness (they owe the Lord a lot for His forgiveness of their sins – they are like the one owing 10,000 talents) and likewise children also have a debt to the Lord, but because they are much younger and have had less life experience, their level of debt is so much less than their parents, but it still is there, hence the example of the servant who owes a much much lesser amount.

Look at some other aspects of the passage which are interesting in this light. Note that Peter asks Christ about “my brother” and how many times should he forgive one who sins against him? Of course, Christ gives the answer. But isn’t

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it interesting, the term “my brother” could extend theologically speaking to one’s child because as I have already shown, we are all God’s children and as such are all a part of the family of God!

We can also mention here the issue of the whole doctrine of “Love your neighbour as yourself.” A dear brother in the Lord (R.S.) very wisely pointed out to me a number of years ago that in looking at this pronouncement of Christ, he always first referred it not to the individuals who lived outside his door across the street in the traditional sense of neighbour – not at all – in fact, R.S. commented that this passage refers in a Christian home to the primary relationship between first the husband and the wife and (I think R.S. would agree here) secondarily their children! This is in my view an exceedingly important observation full of Christian truth because once again if we refer to the teaching of St. Paul, in fact, all neighbours are in fact our brothers and sisters in the Lord because we are all His offspring. Jesus also mentioned in Matthew 12:48-50 (and Mark 3:33-35) about anyone is His mother and brethren. His point being, all people are equal in Father God’s and His eyes, it is just a matter of time and development, not relationship. (Much thanks R.S.) Jesus follows up this thought by reiterating the phrase “your brother” in the last verse and He clearly links the story to God the Father also in the last verse saying “so also ...” (v.35)

It is also interesting that when you look at the passage you can see that the person who clearly is the one that should be showing the mercy to the lesser debtor (the earthly child) is the one with the greater debt (the earthly parent). In any case, though, note that both owe debts to God. This is a very interesting example which all of us who are parents can really relate to. Our children are constantly in our debt due to the mistakes they make and the sins they commit against us, and those sins are also committed against God ultimately.

The point to this whole discussion of Christ is this: forgiveness. This is the teaching that He is giving. Before you start delivering your children to the jailers and punishing them (like the unforgiving servant did), remember that you have a greater debt to God and a greater requirement to forgive.

Since Jesus has used this method to teach forgiveness, should we who are studying the issue of forgiveness not seek to use this information to help us develop a better understanding of this issue and what to do when it comes to forgiving someone or not to forgive them? I think we should definitely pay attention to this story and “compare” it to situations in our lives where we can use the information to be a person who does not forgive a sinner “seven times” but rather “seventy times seven times.” What better place to start in modelling this teaching than with the children of God that He has placed in our care?

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Another Look at Footwashing

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In the thirteenth chapter of his gospel, the apostle John records a ceremony that Christ performed and instituted on the very last night of His life. It may at first seem strange that the other three gospel writers did not address this act at all in their biographies of Jesus’ life and ministry, but upon closer examination, it makes perfect sense why God chose John to record it. The footwashing ceremony is at its root an act of love, and who better to describe it than “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:7, 20; 13:23; 19:26; 20:2)?

As we have so often been taught, washing another’s feet is an act of humility when we perform it as Christ instructs us. While it indeed should be done with a humble attitude, after a more intensive study of Christ’s instructions concerning it, we will find a deeper and more meaningful reason why it is so vital that we do it with a correct understanding. This deeper meaning will help us realize how important Christ’s example is to us today.

At first, it may also seem strange that, while the other three gospel writers focus on the bread and wine that Christ

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instituted that same evening—and make no mention of footwashing—John does just the opposite. We must remember that John, as the last of the gospel writers, fills in some of Jesus' acts and statements that the others left out of their gospels. The answer could be as simple as that John felt that the footwashing ceremony needed to be included in the New Testament canon. On the other hand, John probably recognized the direct connection between footwashing and the awesome work of Christ in His life, death, and afterlife.



The footwashing ceremony, recorded in John 13:1-17, allows us a window into the character of our Savior. When we apply the lessons of this unique and instructive ritual in our lives, it gives us a better understanding of why some people struggle to find happiness yet never fully achieve it, and why others are brimful and running over with joy.

Master = Servant

Immediately upon reading the account, we notice that Christ performs a menial task generally done by the lowliest servant in the household. Jesus says of this in verses 13-15:

You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

This last statement by Jesus gives us a little insight into His mind. What He says can apply both to earthly relationships of masters and servants as well as to a human's relationship to Christ. We can see in the pages of the gospels that it also describes how Jesus approached His relationship with God the Father. He was always submissive to the Father in everything. Beyond this, God the Father is the greatest servant in the universe. In our behalf, He sustains everything we depend on for our very lives.

Luke probably alludes to the same statement in his account of that Passover evening:

But there was also rivalry among [the disciples], as to which of them should be considered the greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the

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younger, and he who governs as he who serves. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves."

Christ, by His actions, made it very clear that He would not expect anything from us that He was not willing to do Himself. He, as our Governor and Elder Brother, though He should have been served by others, served them. Undoubtedly, service is the essence of godly leadership.

Washed Clean

Notice Peter's objection in John 13:6: "Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?'" The translation does not do Peter's reaction justice. Kenneth N. Taylor, in his *Living Gospels: The Paraphrased Gospels*, puts it this way: "Master, You shouldn't be washing our feet like this!" Christ responds, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (verse 7).

Peter, still not convinced, flatly states, "You shall never wash my feet" (verse 8). Christ's next words, however, finally cause him to give in: "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Jesus' response—whatever His tone of voice—struck the disciple squarely between the eyes: Peter's eternal life was on the line! This time, his response is quite different: "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (verse 9). This sounds a little like Psalm 51:2, where David prays, "Wash me thoroughly. . . ."

Our Savior's answer to this request is not what some would expect: "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet but is completely clean" (John 13:10). The New International Version's translation of this verse makes His thought clear: "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean." Obviously, the disciples had bathed before coming to eat the Passover meal. But having to walk along dusty roads in sandals, they collected a small amount of dirt on their feet. Thus, Christ explains that to be perfectly clean again, all He needed to do was to wash their feet.

Upon repentance, baptism, and receiving God's Holy Spirit, we are at that point perfectly clean in God's eyes. The blood of Jesus Christ has symbolically washed away all our past sins, and we stand before Him completely sinless. We have been buried in the waters of baptism and resurrected to a new life. However, as we all know, our human nature has certainly not departed from us, and it is not very long until the fact that we have sinned again stares us in the face. The old self has not really gone away; our lives are much as they were—with some important exceptions: We now have the Holy Spirit and have been given God's grace.

Having been regenerated by God through His Spirit that He has given us; we have entered a unique relationship with God the Father. The veil that once separated us from having access to Him has been torn away by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 6:19-20; 10:19-22). Through Him, we can communicate with the Father to seek mercy and forgiveness for our sins and weaknesses. Upon repentance, God applies again the sacrifice of Christ to us and forgives us by His grace.

Now we can see that, even though we were once washed completely clean at baptism, we will occasionally sin as we walk through this life. We will spiritually get our feet dirty, and we will need Christ to wash our feet to make us completely clean again. Thus, He tells Peter, if He did not wash his feet, he would have no part with Him. None of us can carry unforgiven sins and still remain part of the body of Christ. This points out why it is so imperative that we seek His mercy and help to repent each day. When we do this, He can symbolically wash our feet and make us clean again. Each year at the Passover service, we reenact this to remind us how important it is.

Washing Others' Feet

In John 13:14, Christ says, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." The common explanation for this is that it teaches us to learn humility by doing good for others, by doing acts of service or kindness for our brethren. This is certainly a good lesson that we can take from Christ's example, but we can perhaps derive another from it.

In John's account, what did Jesus suggest that the washing of feet symbolized? He tells Peter that the washing of his feet symbolizes forgiveness of his sin to return him to a "clean" relationship with God. It is only logical to deduce that God expects nothing less from us in response to the sins of our brethren. In the section of the Sermon on the Mount on prayer, Jesus says: "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive

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men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15).

No doubt, God puts a very great emphasis on our relationships since our lives are to reflect His character. If we have begun to "put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27), would we be a good example of His love for us if we held grudges, hated our brother, or would not forgive another? Obviously, no. Putting on Christ demands that we "put off" these carnal destroyers of relationships and replace them with Christian virtues.

Peter asks Christ, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21). Christ's answer should give us a clue to how He feels about this issue. Peter had ventured a number he thought would be sufficient to establish his forbearance. Christ, though, pulls out all the stops, telling him that there is no set limit: "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (verse 22). We are indeed fortunate and can be thankful that same unlimited forgiveness applies to us when we need God's mercy.

The following verses, Matthew 18:23-35, is the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant. The servant was deeply in debt to his master, and when he sought relief, his master forgave him his gargantuan debt. Then the tables turn. Another man owed him a small amount and could not repay it. Instead of following his master's example, the servant forgot the mercy he had just received and had the man thrown into prison!

Verses 34-35 sum up the story: "And his master was angry and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So, My heavenly Father will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." The language Christ uses leaves little room for exclusions. He Himself, in the agony of crucifixion, says without reservation, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34). His plea applies, not only to those who cried out for His death and nailed Him to the stake, but to all, past and future, who would be just as responsible as they were and need God's forgiveness. That includes everybody.

"Happy Are You . . ."

Finally, we must notice John 13:17, where Jesus concludes His comments on footwashing: "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Observe that His emphasis is on their application, not on whether we know about them or even understand them.

In this verse, Christ makes a very positive statement: *We will* be happy if we put this teaching into practice. He knew that grudges, hate, anger, and lack of forgiveness do nothing but shackle us and hinder our spiritual growth. If we let them hang around, they will eventually destroy us. Forgiving even those who have done things spitefully against us (Matthew 5:44) unlocks our shackles and releases us from feelings of animosity. When we rid ourselves of these burdens, we can find inner peace and true happiness.

If we can now see how much more meaningful the footwashing ceremony is, and how important it is that we emulate the example Christ set for us, then the Passover can have a greater impact this year. It shows the depth of Christ's love in making Himself a sacrifice for us so we could be forgiven of our sins. Remember, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13), and Jesus Christ did just that for our forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life.

Think of these things during the next footwashing ceremony. It may still be humbling, but it should also make us happy that we are following the example of our Savior in serving one another by forgiving one another.

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The Candidate Who Didn’t Have Enough Votes **(Copyright) by Catherine C. Kroeger (Brewster, Massachusetts)**

In the 1930s, Minnesota had a brilliant young governor who captivated my family’s imagination and admiration. His innovative labor program became a national model, and soon his sights had moved beyond the state level to broader objectives. Harold Stassen set the national record as having tried for the presidency no less than seven times!

From my childhood, I understood about a disappointed candidate. The Bible too tells us of a leader who simply did not have enough votes to implement his dream. Born into a slave family, the young Caleb could envision a society where his people would be free from bondage and oppression. There they could own their land, occupy their own homes, and live in peace and prosperity.

As the years rolled on, the impossible dream still lay in his heart. And then one day Moses entered the land with a mission to deliver God’s people. The slave community began to stir, to assess the risks of following Moses’ program, of daring to think of themselves as a free people called by God. The escape from Egypt was anything but easy. Yet at last, they were on the far shores of the Red Sea, a newborn nation with a glorious future ahead.

Traveling through the wilderness toward the Promised Land was not all roses. Petty complaints included the lack of melons, cucumbers, onions, and garlic that the children of Israel had known in the land of their slavery. There were moments of grandeur as well, as when Moses ascended the mountain and gave them the law of God.

But Moses had his own limitations, and the occupation of the Promised Land fell to a younger generation. First, there was a feasibility study. A promising young leader was selected from each of the twelve tribes, one who could be trusted to make a careful assessment of the terrain and conditions in Canaan and to bring back strategic recommendations.

Among that number was Caleb, representative of the tribe of Judah. At the end of forty days the intelligence team returned, bearing evidence of the fruitfulness of the land. The majority report, however, was truly alarming. There were people there of enormous stature and strongly fortified cities impregnable to a newly freed slave population with limited military skills. On a note of further terror, the observers identified the various tribal groups and their exact locations throughout the land. How could a conquest ever be attempted against so many foes?

As desperation seized the children of Israel, another voice was raised, one that could see the potential. Caleb tried to calm the panic of the people as they stood before Moses: Let’s go at once to take the land. We can certainly conquer it. (Num. 13:30).

Although Joshua shared his viewpoint, Caleb seems to have been the more articulate and perhaps the initiator of the strategy that would eventually give them the land. There were indeed formidable occupants, but there was no cohesion among them. They were dissociated from one another, scattered about with different languages, cultures, and loyalties.

Each group had its own set of gods, rooted in a specific area of the land and peculiar to a specific population Caleb seemed already to be developing the strategy that would in time win the land divinely promised to them.

They would move forward not as a group of isolated tribes but as the one people of God. There would be a common language, a common culture, and common objectives. There would be commitment to one another, with each tribe pledged to assist the others whenever need might arise. Above all, they would have a common God and come together to worship at a centralized point.

It was true that there were some unusually large individuals (Goliath had four brothers; see 2 Sam. 21:19. 22 and 1 Chron. 20:4.8), but this tended to build a reliance upon individuals whereas real strength lay in building a unified team. It behooved them to develop weapons that gave superiority to well-drilled forces. While some of the Canaanites were semi-nomadic with no fixed place of settlement, others had imposing fortifications around their cities.

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As we all know, a fortress mentality does not ultimately win the day. A siege can be broken with perseverance and determination. Foot soldiers with a clever strategy might prove more effective. But Caleb’s innovative approach did not gain a hearing. When the speeches were over, the opposition had won. The vote was two against ten, a 16 percent minority.

Then all the people began weeping aloud and cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of complaint against Moses and Aaron. They plotted among themselves, let’s choose a leader and go back to Egypt! (Num. 14:2) A return to the familiar life of slavery seemed preferable to launching out into a new and terrifying world.

Patterns and attitudes do not change rapidly, as many of us know all too well. When we dare to speak out against domestic abuse and demand that the church maintain a policy of zero tolerance, there is resistance. When we challenge believers to obey the biblical mandate to deliver the oppressed from the hands of the violent, we are ignored. When we set forth the Scriptures condemning abuse of any sort, we may find ears just as deaf as those turned toward Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua and Caleb said to the community of Israel, the land we explored is a wonderful land! And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us... don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They have no protection from their gods, but the Lord is with us. (Num. 14:7.9)

No one was willing to accept this presentation of the potential that lay ahead. The people were doubt-filled, demoralized, divided and defiant. There could be no hope of an integrated occupation force. Caleb had been outvoted. His approval rating dropped to zero, and there was even talk of stoning him and Joshua.

Some of us who dare to envision new horizons can resonate with him. When we strive to integrate believing Christians to stop domestic abuse, we too walk into a minefield. There are those who think it is none of our business to meddle in somebody else’s family problems, and those who think a victim must be to blame if there has been abuse. There are those who insist that she must return to the home, even if it is a place of danger for her and her children. There are those who say that we do not heed the Word of God. Besides, it’s a very unpleasant subject for discussion in the first place.

On the other hand, there are persons deeply committed to the elimination of domestic abuse who feel they cannot trust us. They view the mandates of Scripture and the influence of the church as contributing to the endangerment of women. They view with suspicion our interest in faith-based intervention groups for offenders. They are fearful of what we have to offer, yet we can bring special gifts to the spiritual needs of a person caught in volatile situations. Our strategy can incorporate persons of faith in prayer and love and encouragement for those in need.

There is much we should not attempt if we are not trained in safety counseling and care provision. Nevertheless, we can serve as part of a unified team. We can listen with compassion rather than judgment; we can seek to build bridges with the domestic violence community where other needs can be met: From the steeple to the shelter.

Our efforts to build this unified approach are not always understood nor appreciated, just as Caleb’s was not. The candidate was not only disappointed but had become endangered as well. Yet there was one vote that had not been counted yet: Then the glorious presence of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites from above the Tabernacle. (Num. 14:10)

Now the voice of God weighed in: My servant Caleb is different from the others. He has remained loyal to me, and I will bring him into the land he explored. His descendants will receive their full share of that land. (Num. 14:24)

No less than six times in the biblical account, Caleb is described as loyal or following the Lord wholeheartedly... depending upon the translation (Num. 14:24; 32:12; Deut. 1:36; Josh. 14:8, 9). Although Caleb now had a heavenly promise, not much had changed on the ground. There were years of disappointments and frustrations.

There were water shortages, petty arguments and major power struggles. As time wore on, those who had been most opposed to entering the Promised Land found their last resting place in the desert. A new generation was rising, one that was willing to think in new terms of a unified people seeking to do God’s work.

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Introducing new concepts is not an easy task. The conquest itself was not easy nor was it ever complete. But as an integrated force, God's people moved into the land and claimed it as their own. The values that Caleb espoused were at last becoming a reality. Joshua had been the administrator, but the vision and commitment of Caleb is mentioned more than once as distinct from that of his more illustrious colleague (Num. 14:24, Deut. 1:36).

There came a time when he could inherit the full share of land that had been promised to him and his descendants so long before. He approached Joshua with a reminder: I was forty years old when Moses, the servant of the Lord, sent me from Kadesh-Barnea to explore the land of Canaan. I brought him back a report according to my convictions. But my brothers who went with me frightened the people and discouraged them from entering the Promised Land. For my part, I followed the Lord my God completely. And Moses swore on that day, saying, Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God... (Josh. 14:7.9)

At last, after so many years of waiting, the time to realize his dreams was come. Now that the nation had found a new home, he too must find his own. He was still well qualified to claim the land and to settle it: I am as strong now as I was when Moses sent me on the journey, and I can still travel and fight as well as I could then. (Josh. 14:11)

Perhaps his eyesight or his hearing were not what they had once been, but his commitment had not flagged. It remained as strong as ever. He moved into one section of the territory readily enough and then delegated the task of conquering Debir to another of his own tribe. Whoever could accomplish the feat might wed his daughter.

So it was that Achsah received from her father not only land but springs to water it. There the family might dwell in peace as the vision had at last come to fruition.

See Catherine C. Kroeger's other articles at:

[Kroeger, Catherine C. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Thoughts Of Losing Your Mind Is Natural When Experiencing Tragedy

(Copyright 2006) by Richard Markland (London, Ohio)

How many today will experience the loss of a loved one for the first time? Since it is Labor Day weekend, car accidents will take the lives of many and tears will be shed for the first time in a way never before experienced.

Halfway around the world, Steve Irwin, the well-known modern day "Crocodile Dundee", is a name everyone is seeing or hearing today. His wife no doubt felt as if someone dumped a truck load of bricks on her as she was traveling in Tasmania. They were worlds apart when it happened. I tried to imagine the startled look of shock on her face when she was told the news of her husband's death.

The understanding by those who read of such an account is also worlds apart when it comes to the reaction of hearing of such a death. For those who never have experienced a loss, I don't relate to what they are thinking. Every time I hear or read of a death; it is one more person who has to travel the loneliest road in the world.

Death stretches a person's sanity as far as anything can. It takes a person into a world unlike any other. What is seen and experienced can't be explained by the person who shares personal thoughts on such a journey. For someone who has never experienced the loss of a loved one, it is the equivalent of trying to teach someone French without the person

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being told what the English word is before translating it.

The world I now live in is a planet that exists in the "Twilight Zone". I've met Rod Serling along the way. I have been in a few of his episodes he has created for me. Mine are mostly a series of insane moments when I am in a darkened room without a way to escape. It is a pit as deep as any can be. My echo has reverberated off the walls of my prison, but many times there hasn't been an answer. It's the loneliest feeling in the world. Of course, for everyone who immediately wants to tell me that God understands doesn't realize how He allows the darkest moments to come along. Grief in all its glory has to be experienced in order to understand what true grief is.

Sadness, depression and tears are a part of everyday life, but it depends on what nerve is touched at any particular moment. Even thoughts of suicide can be a part of the insane healing process. I've had them. I even had one moment when I placed 24 sleeping pills in front of me and I asked God why I shouldn't take them. I had to do this in order to understand what I was going through. There have been some very loooooow moments.

I have suffered from severe depression ever since Linda died. I have cried out to God for help, but I honestly feel that I am sometimes on the verge of insanity because nothing is the same. The color of Red or Blue is no longer as it was two years ago. Everything is now symbolic in so many ways because I put my feelings into words. Poetry is my heart speaking.

Most people in mental institutions are artistic. They are people who have not been satisfied with what life has dished out. They are overachievers and are never satisfied with who they are or what they do. I am one of the people I have just described. I have been this way all my life. Do I want to be this way? No, but God knows of the struggles I face each day and how my mind never stops thinking. Linda's death has aggravated the problem I have always struggled with. Living alone doesn't help either.

It's been amazing to hear some of the advice I have been given. There have been tidbits of wisdom from those who understand, but others have made me wish I had a lemon pie to decorate their face with. I never had a clue these types of people existed before experiencing this.

If I admit that I feel I am losing my mind, I feel better because I am being honest with myself. Perhaps to the person reading this, I may be told to get a grip. I really have although you may not think so. I've gripped so tight trying to get through each day that my knuckles turn white from holding on to my sanity.

If people who give wrong advice only knew how they would react if they were in my shoes. It takes months and years to recover from a loss. I have come to the conclusion that no one can tell me what to do with my life or how to face each day. By not listening to the advice of others, I may feel I am crazy, but at least I am willing to admit it.

See Richard Markland's other articles at:

[Markland, Richard – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Why Methuselah Lived So Long? (Copyright 1993) by Ernest L. Martin (Portland, Oregon)

Why did God allow Methuselah to live so long? He lived longer than any other human. Was there a major prophecy given by his father Enoch at the time of his birth?

First, let us remember that Methuselah lived to be 969 years of age (Genesis 5:27), just 31 years shy of 1000. The reason I mention the 1000 years as important is because God told Adam and Eve that if they took of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that "in the day that you

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eat thereof you shall surely die" (Genesis 2:17 emphasis mine). But Adam lived on until his 930th year before dying. It seems that Adam and Eve did not die "in that day." But the biblical fact is, they did die "in that day" because God's use of "day" in this instance meant a thousand years. We must always get God's interpretation of any prophecy of his, and not apply our own human reason to the matter. Peter said: "one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Peter 3:8). Adam died some 70 years before that "day" of a thousand years was terminated that God had in mind. The Book of Jubilees written about 150 B.C. also gave this interpretation as proper (Jubilees 4:30) and it is certainly the one followed by the apostles of Christ.

But this point also involves Methuselah. He was also not permitted to live beyond 1000 years – though he almost made it. The Hebrew meaning of the word "Methuselah" according to the Jewish scholar Philo (who lived at the time of Christ) was "a dispatch of death" or, when broken up into its elements, it is: "die/send." Now Methuselah's father was Enoch (who was a prophet – see Jude 14, 15). Since we are told by Isaiah that the meaning of Isaiah's own name as well as those of his children had prophetic significance (Isaiah 8:18), then we can know why Enoch gave his son the name he did. By putting the Hebrew meaning of "Methuselah" into sentence form, it reads "When he dies, it will be sent."

[Click here to order the print version of: 101 Bible Secrets That Christians Do Not Know](#)

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Beast War Machine

(Copyright 2023) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)

"One of the heads of the **beast** appeared to be mortally wounded. But the mortal wound was healed, and the whole world marveled and followed the beast. They worshiped the dragon who had given authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the **beast**, and who can **wage war** against it?" (Revelation 13:3-4).

Is the **Beast War Machine** already in the making?

Tucker Carlson recently interviewed Colonel Douglas Macgregor who provided a dose of reality regarding the future outcome of the war in Ukraine which is negatively impacting Europe and may implode NATO. Macgregor's assessment of U.S. military strength and capability to directly confront Russia is alarming.

If you are a student of Bible prophecy, then be aware that it is very likely that the Russian Army will become a major part of the Beast War Machine predicted in Revelation 13. Colonel Macgregor describes how the Russian Army is a modern war machine unmatched even by the U.S.

Revelation 13:1-2 reveals a future military alliance composed of three nations described as a **leopard** (Germany), a **bear** (Russia), and a **lion** (Britain). This would be a resurrection of the Roman Empire which became divided into east and west. The eastern capital was Constantinople which fell in 1453 to the Ottoman Empire.

Russia became the continuation of the Eastern Empire. Recall that Russian leaders were known as "Czars." Moscow is known as the "Third Rome." Germany became the continuation of the Western Empire. Their top leader was known

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as "Kaiser." Both "Czar" and "Kaiser" mean "Caesar."

Without U.S. support, NATO will collapse. As Colonel Macgregor explains, the day is coming when U.S. hegemony financed by debt will end. Who will fill the vacuum? Will the collapse of NATO eventually lead to the rise of the Beast? Will the Russian Army, which is being strengthened rather than weakened by the conflict in Ukraine and our support of it, become the prophesied Beast War Machine? Are we helping to create the very thing that will someday destroy us?

Take some time to listen to this important interview and the prophetic implications. Here is the link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wyLOd2pOqy0>

See Dwight Fleming's other articles at:
[Fleming, Dwight – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

Alternative Media
(Copyright 2023) by James Lloyd (Medford, Oregon)



Jesus Christ said there would be wars, and "rumors of wars" in the end times -- which is an apt description of the virtual avalanche of Disinformation and Propaganda currently masquerading as news. The solution for these conflicting claims is supposed to be the "Word of God," which is the Bible, as the attached humorous cartoon shows. For instance, "if they shall say to you [the Saviour] is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chamber; **believe it not**" (Matthew 24:26).

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Most of the flood of information is severely tainted with the invisible ingredient that could best be described as **Agenda**, and unfortunately the people that should understand what is occurring – the Christians – are being manipulated just like everyone else.

Although they think they do, the bulk of Christian believers in America do not understand the Holy Bible predicted this time of “Strong Delusion” (*II Thessalonians 2:11*), as they’ve been taught the “delusion” is for the non-believers, when that verse is telling us it is the Christians who are being deceived, because they are being led by the “many false prophets [that] shall rise” (*Matthew 24:11*).

See James Lloyd’s other articles at:

[Lloyd, James – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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God Bless
(Copyright 2023) by Dickerson (Email)

May those who love us, love us. And those that don't love us, may God turn their hearts; And if He doesn't turn their hearts, may He turn their ankles, so we'll know them by their **limping**.

Holy Days 2024

Passover – April 23, 2024 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 23-29, 2024

Pentecost – June 12, 2024

Trumpets - October 3, 2024

Atonement – October 12, 2024

Tabernacles –October 17, 2024, to October 23, 2024

Last Great Day – October 24, 2024

Notes

Notes