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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.

Be Perfect!

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Is it possible to truly BE PERFECT? Or can you only continually STRIVE towards perfection? As a human, is the very BEST you can do only considered "filthy rags" to God?

ABSOLUTELY NOT!

Matthew 5:48 *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

Many say "Well, it means **BECOME** perfect. **Obviously** a process which cannot be completed in this lifetime".

Is your father in heaven only BECOMING perfect, or has He already arrived? Hmm?

Matthew 19:16-21 *And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: **what lack I yet?** Jesus said unto him, **If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.***

Jesus didn't seem to think this goal of "perfection" was unattainable for this man. Yet you've been told you can't BE perfect. Is that so? Does God say that man CAN'T BE PERFECT? That a man, in this life, cannot be beyond reproach? NO!

Job 1:8 *And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

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God said Job WAS PERFECT. PRESENT TENSE. Not “becoming” perfect but without fault or flaws here and now! But what did Satan say?

Job 1:9-11 *Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.*

In other words, Satan's response was “Oh yeah”? He didn't believe Job was perfect! Of course, he couldn't point to any flaws that Job had... but he REFUSED to believe Job was perfect “beyond reproach. In fact, He doesn't believe man CAN be perfect” JUST AS YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN TAUGHT!

A little later in the story of Job, one of Job's friends, Eliphaz the Temanite related a vision he'd had.

Job 4:12-19 *Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; **the hair of my flesh stood up**: It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, **Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly: How much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?***

First of all, think about WHO would be saying this. This was obviously an angel, but which one? How many times have you heard of a righteous angel making the hair on your neck stand up? Never. How many times have you heard of a righteous angel hiding? If God sends an angel, they never hide in darkness and obscurity!

But just look at that quote “ who, of all the beings in heaven or earth, would say “God didn't even trust His angels” He accused ME of folly” and you think YOU are going to do better?

Does Gabriel resent God? Has God accused Michael of folly? Yet God HAS accused Satan the devil of folly “because he was wrong” HE SINNED and WAS NOT PERFECT!

Oh, Satan WAS perfect, once. And yet he failed. And he knows that he is made out of light, while you and I are made out of MUD. And his reasoning is, if HE failed, do you honestly think YOU can be perfect?

And yet God DOES expect you to be as pure as him. He DOES expect you to be like your Maker!

You CAN be like God, you CAN be beyond reproach! You can be utterly BLAMELESS before men, and God, just like Job was! When Christ told you to BE PERFECT LIKE GOD IS PERFECT, He meant what He said!

Do you still think that BEING PERFECT, that doing well, is considered as filthy rags to God?

Isaiah 64:6-7 *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us, because of our iniquities.*

Was God talking to righteous people, who served Him FROM THEIR HEART? NOT even close! He was talking to the SAME people He was talking about in Chapter 1, the REBELLIOUS house of Israel!

Isaiah 1:2-5 *Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. **Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. Why should ye be stricken anymore? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.***

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Isaiah 1:10-16 *Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. **Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;***

These people had drifted, no, RAN is the better word, from God's law, and yet they retained an IMAGE of god-worshipping people. They ACTED righteous, they APPEARED righteous, they sacrificed, prayed, and did all the "righteous things" people do, BUT THEY WEREN'T RIGHTEOUS!

Matthew 23:27 *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*

Yes, the so-called RIGHTEOUSNESS of **these** men IS filthy rags to God! But the TRUE righteousness, like Abraham, Peter, Elijah and Christ had is NOT filthy rags! The "righteousness", the pathetic, pitiful attempt at retaining some PRETENSE of acting like God would want that you see around you today, both IN the church and OUT, IS filthy rags!

2 Timothy 3:5 *Having a FORM of Godliness but DENYING THE POWER THEREOF! from such turn away!*

Your access to the POWER OF GOD is FAITH! These churches have a form of Godliness! They go to church on Saturday (at least most Saturdays), they keep the holy days (more or less), they don't eat unclean meats (when it's convenient), they PRAY, and WORSHIP, and SING TO THE LORD, and they LOOK like people God would like, but they don't have FAITH! They DENY the power of God! And YES, THEIR HALF-HEARTED, WISHY-WASHY so-called "righteousness" IS filthy rags! It IS unclean, and God DOES hate it!

Mark 7:6 *He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, **This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.** Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.*

But that doesn't mean He doesn't want YOU to be *righteous*, TRULY righteous, not just APPEARING righteous to other men. But you've been taught the opposite! You've been taught that God doesn't WANT you to be perfect, that it's impossible, and the very best you can do is to "try". TRY NOT! Do or do not! There is NO TRY!!

You've been taught this by men who, themselves, were not blameless, who, themselves had sins they WOULD NOT REMOVE and so they COULD NOT teach you the **TRUTH** FROM THE WORD OF GOD!

Since they failed, they, like Satan, don't believe YOU can do any better! AND YOU WANT TO BELIEVE THIS! You LOVE this belief because it JUSTIFIES and EXCUSES your utter lack of righteousness and FAITH! If you are only supposed to "Become perfect" then all you have to say to feel you're doing what God wants is "Well, I'm trying to repent".

On the other hand, if God expected you to actually BE PERFECT, NOW, then that excuse wouldn't justify you STUBBORNLY CONTINUING IN SIN! It wouldn't allow you to think that you're OK, that you're more or less doing what God expects of you. Oh, of course... you could do better. But after all... "NOBODY'S PERFECT"!

Which of these two ways of thinking will produce righteousness? And which will produce the stubborn, self-satisfied, lackadaisical, thoroughly LAODICEAN attitude of the GOD HATING church of God today?

Which came from the word of God, and which came from the very mind of the DEVIL HIMSELF?

See Nathaniel Bursons other articles at:

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What Does the Parable of Tares Teach About Judging?

(Copyright) by Gregory Diaz (Wayne, New Jersey)

Judging is an interesting and important subject. Like any other doctrine it should be studied to see what the bible says about it.

Judging has more than one meaning. It can mean either (1) pass sentence; punish; condemn or 2) discern; form an opinion. These definitions are relevant with respect to how the word is used in the bible.

Caution must be used not to reason around the bible's clear intended meaning. All verses on a subject should be considered.

Christians are supposed to judge in the sense of discerning (1 Cor 2:15). Can they judge based on the righteous word of God in the sense of punishing, sentencing, or condemning? No, unless it's done by supernatural means. If we understand that God is both our teacher and avenger, then we can trust Him to teach people their sins and to punish our enemies. There are many examples of God's supernatural protection or vengeance.

While in the Worldwide Church of God I often heard and read that Matt 7:1 meant do not condemn. Condemnation implies that there are no lesser punishments. However, verse 2 shows there are degrees of judgment being spoken of. Jesus teaches not only do not condemn but also do not sentence or punish. This is plain and nothing in the bible contradicts it. Some things may SEEM to.

It is God's job to punish as a father (Heb 12:6). Consider that even Jesus did not judge (John 8:15). He goes on to say, **"And yet if I judge, my judgment is true: for I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me"** (verse 16). Jesus was, and is, AT ONE with the Father. Unless you are AT ONE with the Father your judgment is unrighteous.

There is no question that there will be tares in the church (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43). That is a GUARANTEE. We shouldn't be surprised when something Jesus said comes to pass. Jesus clearly states, **"let both grow TOGETHER"**. As an example of this Jesus said concerning Judas; **"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"** (John 6:70).

Since there SHALL be tares within the church it is logical that these same tares will be the ones disobeying the ESSENTIAL command of Jesus NOT to remove the **"things that offend, and them which do iniquity"** (Matt 13:41). Jesus said they are the children of the wicked one. It is the devil that **"as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"** (1 Pet 5:8). These are wolves in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15). They go forth **"conquering, and to conquer"** (Matt 24:5, Rev 6:2) and are therefore called Nicolaitanes meaning conquerors of the laity (Rev 2:6,15).

The following verses also explain the idea behind the tare's parable...

- That they SHALL be WITHIN the church:

Beware of false prophets, which COME TO YOU in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (Matt 7:15) Comment: Jesus DOES NOT say to prevent them from coming to you.

For I know this, that after my departing SHALL grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the

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flock. Also, of your own selves **SHALL** men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there SHALL BE false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Pet 2:1)

- That they **SHALL** be **WITHIN** the church and **CANNOT BE DISTINGUISHED** from the wheat:

For there are certain men CREPT IN UNAWARES, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. (Jude 4)

And that because of false brethren UNAWARES BROUGHT IN, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: (Gal 2:4)

- That both should grow **TOGETHER** until the harvest and therefore separating from them is unbiblical:

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of EVERY kind: So shall it be at the end of the world: the ANGELS shall come forth, and SEVER the wicked from among the just, (Matt 13:47 & 49)

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark (or observe) **them which cause DIVISIONS** (separate "righteous" from "unrighteous") **and offences contrary to the doctrine** (the doctrine commanded in the parable of tares) **which ye have learned; and avoid them.** (Rom 16:17) Comment: This verse does NOT say remove them.

Therefore judge NOTHING before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God. (1 Cor 4:5)

For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he WITHDREW and SEPARATED HIMSELF, fearing them which were of the circumcision. (Gal 2:12)
Comment: Peter separated himself from gentile sinners contrary "to the truth of the gospel" (verse 14 & 15).

They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, THEY WOULD EXCLUDE YOU, that ye might affect them. (Gal 4:17) Comment: This is describing the teachers of the false gospel. Exclude means disfellowship.

How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who SEPARATE THEMSELVES, sensual, having not the Spirit. (Jude 18-19)

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, RECEIVETH US NOT. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, NEITHER DOTHE HE HIMSELF RECEIVE THE BRETHREN, and FORBIDDETH THEM THAT WOULD, and CASTETH THEM OUT OF THE CHURCH. (3 John 9-10)

Conclusion: SINCE YOU CANNOT KEEP THE WOLVES OUT, THE ONLY LOGICAL WAY TO PREVENT THEM FROM PREYING ON THE SHEEP IS TO LET EVERYONE, INCLUDING THE WOLVES, IN! THIS IS PRECISELY WHAT JESUS COMMANDED!

(This article has been updated and re-printed from “The Church of God Messenger” July/August 2004—Issue No. 22)

See Gregory Diaz’s other articles at:

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School daze; beware professional liars (Copyright 2023) by Curtis Dahlgren (Stephenson, Michigan)

"The reason there's pollution in the world is because the Bible says, 'Subdue the earth.'" – UW-Madison landscaping professor on the first day of class in 1970 (something was lost in his translation, like "Dress and keep it").

IN 1960 (I was at the Kremlin-on-Mendota two times) an economics professor at the UW urged me to stay in college, but many of the professors were already too liberal for my taste (climbing trees was more to my taste).

Parents, you have "got" to prepare your kids for the attempted brainwashing before it's too late! Common sense is deemed too *common* to suit the taste of the Ivory-tower elitists.

Speaking of economics, one of the things people who have really WORKED understand about economics is the difference between "equity" and "equality."

EQUITY IS ASSETS YOU'VE WORKED FOR, AND "EQUALITY" IS THE EQUITY THAT'S BEEN STOLEN FROM SOMEONE ELSE WHO WORKED FOR IT.

Not to "divide" the country, but that last sentence just about sums up the "Two Americas." Never the twain shall meet, I guess. It's like the difference between Green Acres and green-with-envy. "Get a job" versus the Green Raw "Deal" (it's a great deal for the higher classes). There are BIG bucks to be made in carbon taxes and carbon credits trading. An excerpt from my 10/23/09 column and the July-August issue of "Fast Company" magazine ("Tree Huggers Corner a Trillion Dollar Market"); the sub-titles say:

"Legal limits on greenhouse-gas emissions are coming fast, with a \$1 Trillion carbon market emerging. At the core: a cadre of young, idealistic Yale forestry grads. But will carbon offsets do anything to slow global warming? Yale forestry-school grads and professors dominate the emerging carbon market from finance firms to the World Bank."

The idea, in theory, is to plant trees with some of the money to save the Planet (this one, they think). But private business has planted so many trees we have more trees than when Columbus discovered America (thanks to the lumber companies, the paper industry, nursery companies, Christmas tree farms, etc.). I've personally saved more trees as an arborist than most "Deep Ecologists" ever will save. And that in private business, without a Yale forestry degree!

"SAVE THE PLANET," MY BUTT (the following is a one-of-a-kind analysis of the "Green" movement):

One thing I do know is that the very same people who want "separation of church and State" are using their OWN religion to cram stupid ideas down your throat. It's the religion once known in ancient times for the worship of the goddess Cybele or Gaia. As the Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition (1910), says:

"She was also known under many other names, some of which were derived from famous places of worship: as Dindymene from Mt. Dindymon, Mater Idaea from Mt. Ida, Sipylene from Mt. Sipylus, Agdistis from Mt. Agdistis or Agdus, Mater Phrygia from the greatest stronghold of her cult; while others were reflections of her character as a great nature goddess; e.g. Mountain Mother, Great Mother of the Gods, Mother of all Gods and all Men" [as in "It's not nice to fool Mother Nature"].

Now if you're not accustomed to reading past-tense history (as opposed to "social" science), hang with me a few more minutes. The Britannica goes on:

"As the great Mother Deity whose worship extended throughout Asia Minor, she was known as Ma or Ammas. Cybele is her favorite name in ancient and modern literature, while Great Mother of the Gods, or Great Idaen Mother of the Gods, the most frequently recurring epigraphical title, was her ordinary official designation.

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"Her best-known early seats of worship were Mt. Ida, Mt. Sipylus, Cyzicus, Sardis and Pessinus, the last-named city, in Galatia near the borders of Roman Phrygia, finally becoming the strongest center of the cult. She was known to the Romans and Greeks as essentially Phrygian, and all Phrygia was spoken of as sacred to her.

"It is probable, however, that the Phrygian race, which invaded Asia Minor from the north in the 9th century B.C., found a great nature goddess already universally worshipped there, and blended her with a deity of their own. The Asiatic-Phrygian worship thus evolved was further modified by contact with the Syrians and Phoenicians, so that it acquired strong Semitic characteristics.

"The Great Mother known to the Greeks and Romans was thus merely the Phrygian form of the nature deity of all Asia Minor. From Asia Minor the cult of the Great Mother spread first to Greek territory. It found its way into Thrace at an early date, was known in Boeotia by Pindar in the 6th century and entered Attica near the beginning of the 4th century."
[Quoted from university of Wisconsin bulletin #43, 1901]

P.S. Your kids will face an onslaught of anti-Christian slop in college. Perhaps even worse is the swill of perverse grade school garbage, including pornographic books and transgenderism and sexualization of kindergartners (coming soon to preschool). Satan has come out of the closet: a public-school closet!

See Curtis Dahlgren's other articles at:

Dahlgren, Curtis – Church of God, Bismarck (church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Earthquakes

(Copyright 2023) by Ray Daly (Lincoln, North Dakota)

Psalms 104:30

"You renew the face of the earth"

To "renew" something, means to bring it back to its former state or condition. It does not mean to "create anew". It means the returning of the earth to its pre-flood condition and shape. And that is what Scripture supports.

As follows.

1. Isa. 24:18-20. "...The foundations [of the mountains, valleys, and oceans] of the earth do shake [earthquakes]. The earth is utterly broken down. The earth is utterly dissolved [mountain ranges and oceans disappear] The earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro...It shall fall, and not rise again."

Meaning that the earth will return to its form at the time of creation and remain that way until The Almighty creates a new layer over the top. See: Rev. 16:18, where it says. "The mountains [ranges] were not found [can no longer be seen." If you cannot "find or see them", they must no longer be there?

2. Isa. 50:2-3 "...Behold at my rebuke I dry up the seas [oceans]. I make the rivers [in the oceans] a wilderness. Their fish stink, because there is no water. I close the heavens with blackness [smoke and ash from active volcanoes]." See: Rev. 6:12

3. Isa. 51:10. "Are you not it which has dried the sea [oceans]? The waters of the great deep, has made the depths of the sea [now risen up] a way [trail] for the ransomed [returning Israelite tribes] to pass over."

4. Isa. 54:9-10. "This is as the waters of Noah [first much smaller mountains and seas appear] ...should no more

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go over the earth...For the mountains [ranges] shall depart, and the hills removed."

5. Isa. 64:1. "That the mountains [ranges] flow down [sink] at your presence."

6. Jer. 4:23-24. "I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void, and the heavens had no light [volcanic smoke and ash]. I beheld the mountains [ranges], and they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly."

7. Eze. 38:20. "So that the fishes of the sea [oceans. See: Isa. 50:2], and all men that are upon the face of the earth shall shake at my presence, and the mountains [ranges] shall be thrown down. The high places shall fall."

8. Hos. 10:8. "...They shall say to the mountains [ranges]. Cover us. and to the hills. Fall on us. [See: Rev. 6:15-16]."

9. Mic. 1:4. "And the mountains [ranges] shall be molten [sink] under him, and the valleys shall be cleft [raised] as wax. as waters poured down a steep place."

10. Nah. 1:5. "The mountains [ranges] quake at him and the hills shall melt [sink]. The earth burned [volcanoes?] at his presence. Yes, the world, and all that dwell therein."

11. See also: Rev. 6:12-14, As involves both mountain and volcanic activities.

12. Rev. 16:18, 20, "...And there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth. So mighty an earthquake, and so great. [Likely the plural, affecting much of the earth.] ...And every island fled away, and the mountains [ranges] WERE NOT FOUND!" If they cannot be "found", then it should seem obvious that they are no longer there. V.21. Goes on to describe great explosions in the earth's surface to take place at this specific time also.

See Ray Daly's other articles at:

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Word of Life

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"We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.

This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.

We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. Most importantly, I want to remind you that in the last days scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires.

We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy." (1 John 1:1-4 NLT)

Can you feel and hear the excitement in John's words? He had something so important to share that he just couldn't contain it: "We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands." He repeats it three times in those first three verses. Wow, can you imagine what that must have been like to see Jesus' face, to hear his voice, and sit as close to him as John did!

I'm so thankful God inspired John to write down what he saw and heard. Although we don't worship the writings of John

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or Paul or any of the other writers of the Bible, they point us to Jesus, the “Word of life” whom we worship.

My friend, Sally Lloyd-Jones, author of The Jesus Storybook Bible, says it this way:

“The Bible isn’t a book of rules or a book of heroes. The Bible is most of all a Story. It’s an adventure story about a young Hero who comes from a far country to win back his lost treasure. It’s a love story about a brave Prince who leaves his palace, his throne—everything—to rescue the one he loves. It’s like the most wonderful of fairy tales that has come true in real life!

You see, the best thing about this Story is—it’s true. There are lots of stories in the Bible, but all the stories are telling one Big Story. The Story of how God loves his children and comes to rescue them. It takes the whole Bible to tell this Story. And at the center of the Story, there is a baby. Every Story in the Bible whispers his name.”

I hope you are as excited as John was when you read scripture and encounter Jesus there. You can’t reach out and touch him like John did, but his Spirit will be there to teach you and guide you. As we study scripture together, we will experience the fellowship and joy that John hoped we would, and not only fellowship with each other, but “with the Father and with his son, Jesus Christ.”

Hmmm, sounds like a party! We’re all invited.

See Brenda Bransons other articles at:

[Branson, Brenda – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](https://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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The Madness of Crowds

(Copyright 2022) by James McBride (United Kingdom)

Street brawls and mass demonstrations are usually provoked by the actions of a small coterie of antagonists. Bill and Harry disagree, and fisticuffs follow—swiftly joined by onlookers. Or Tom has an issue with his energy company and soon gathers a huge Facebook following of disgruntled and angry customers—exacerbated on other social media, others are vilified for expressing a contrary thought.

A wave of mass hysteria (‘mass psychogenic illness’) can sweep through a nation, often prompted by mental or emotional tension. It was evident in the Salem witch trials. We saw it with the AIDS challenge. We saw it after the untimely death of Princess Diana. We are seeing it with the spurious ‘self-identifying’ and ‘woke’ craze, with often dangerous mask-wearing, with social distancing and vaccination induced by fear tactics. Perhaps even with the Gadarene pay-rush to destruction by various Unions in this time of recession.

It isn’t new. As Jesus was being falsely accused before Pilate, stirred up by a handful of religious leaders (‘doing God service’) the crowds hysterically clamored for him to be crucified. That prefigures the baying crowds in the Colosseum in Rome: *‘get the Christians’*.

What of the future? We have already seen—in India, Africa—militant mobs massacring those professing the name of Christ. The Devil is on the warpath: *‘...the dragon was wrath with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ’*.

Note: Not to compare it to the above but isn’t it odd that many thousands of supposedly upright people in our cities

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degrade themselves by supporting so called ‘pride’ marchers [cf Ezekiel 16:49]. As to the latter: ‘...*The expression of their face’s witnesses against them; they have declared their sin like Sodom; they do not hide it. Woe to their soul! For they have dealt evil to themselves*’ (Isaiah 3:9). Divine law is brazenly flaunted on our streets—and in the corridors of power.

As urges King Solomon of those who associate with or support the unrighteous: ‘...*walk not in the way with them; refrain your foot from their path*’ (Proverbs 1;15). And King David: ‘...*The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts*’ (Psalm 10:4).

So awesome was Sodom’s sin that God sentenced them to total destruction (Genesis 19:13), with the promise of a future resurrection to individually face a period of testing (Mtthew 10:15).

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

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Power of Words

(Copyright 2023) by Gary C. Miller (Pocahontas, Arkansas)



WORDS HAVE A DAY OF RECKONING:

“But I say to you, That every idle *Word* that men shall *Speak*, they shall give an account thereof in the Day of Judgment.” (Matt. 12:36)

THE POWER OF WORDS:

“Death and Life are in the Power of the Tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.” (Prv. 18:21)

“...the *Words* that I *Speak* to you, they are Spirit, and they are Life.” (Jn. 6:63)

“Then Simon Peter answered Him, Master, to whom shall we go? You have the *Words* of Eternal Life.” (Jn. 6:68)

“But those things which *proceed out of the mouth* come...from the heart; and... defile the man [make him unclean]. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man...” (Matt. 15:18-20)

WHAT WE SAY DETERMINES OUR FATE:

“For by *Your Words* you shall be Justified, and by *Your Words* You shall be Condemned.” (Matt. 12:37)

“For with the heart man believes unto righteousness: and *with the Mouth Confession* is made unto Salvation.” (Rom.

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10:10) *Even our Salvation even depends on what we Say...or don't say!*

“He that keeps his Mouth keeps his Life: but he that opens wide his Lips shall have Destruction.” (Prv. 13:3)

“A wholesome Tongue is a Tree of Life....” (Prv. 15:4; also 18:21)

DO NOT ANSWER EVIL WITH EVIL:

“...the Messiah (“Christ”; KJV) ...suffered...leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps. Who did no sin, neither was guile (deceit, trickery) found in His mouth: ...when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not;...” (I Pet. 2:21-23)

BE SLOW TO ANGER:

“A fool’s wrath is presently known: but a prudent man covers shame.” (Prv. 13:16).

“The discretion of a man *defers his Anger*; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.” (Prv. 19:11)

“He that is *Slow to wrath* is of great understanding: but he that is hasty of spirit exalts folly.” (Prv. 14:29)

HONOR TO WHOM HONOR (Rom. 13:7):

“You shall not revile the judges, nor curse the Ruler of Your people.” (Ex. 22:28)

“It is an honor for a man to cease from strife...” (Prv. 20:3)

HOW TO LOVE LIFE:

“For he that will Love Life, and see Good Days, let him refrain his Tongue from evil, and his Lips that they speak no guile.” (I Pet. 3:10)

See Gary C. Miller’s other articles at:

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

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<http://www.icyahweh.org/>

What Does Scripture have to Say about Self Defense?

(2023) Sent by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fDNy_EUjzXI 30 min. video. A minister’s perspective who had to do so. From this video there are other links also.

See James Steinle’s other articles at:

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

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

Origins of the Australian Aborigines (Copyright 2023) by Craig M. White (Australia)

Some typos and grammatical errors have been corrected.

Latest version here

<https://www.friendsofsabbath.org/CW%20Articles,%20Notes,%20Charts/reader/Nations%20&%20Races/Origins%20of%20the%20Aborigines.pdf>

See Craig White’s other articles at:

[White, Craig M. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

In regard to: You Are My Witnesses

Article by William P. Goff

Comments by Richard Markland (London, Ohio)

Thanks for your latest series of newsletters. I read the article mentioned in your letter about the “Two Witnesses” I always keep an open mind.

I’ve never agreed that brethren have to resign themselves to be just seat warmers on the Sabbath. To see only certain individuals doing “the work” can instill complacency. I remember all too well how brethren weren’t to take it upon themselves to provide God’s truth to others when it came to writing anything. It was the reason I was disfellowshipped from Living. I also wasn’t mentally challenged when attending United. How many brethren can explain God’s truth to others? I ask this because doing “the work” is being left to others. I stay in touch with brethren, but I don’t belong to a certain group. I hope they aren’t loyal to a group, but realize we are all God’s people.

I’m trying to publish “Global News & Prophecy” more often. One advantage to this is that it keeps my mind alert when writing reports. It’s a matter of picking a main topic for each issue. I honestly believe brethren are going to be used by God, not just the ministry. It will be in more ways than we realize. I’ve never been satisfied with a “pay and pray” approach. How many brethren are now just sitting on the Sabbath, and they don’t have contact with people in a way that they can provide answers to others? Not everyone of course is a writer, but how many brethren pray to God in order to know if

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there is a way, they can be used by Him? So many members are old-timers. I honestly believe many brethren are frustrated with what is happening in the news, and they don't have a good way to deal with their frustrations? People desperately need answers.

I do believe there is a lot more to Joe Biden than meets the eyes and ears. Newt Gingrich stated a few days ago that it is very possible that Biden is a "Chinese agent." Newt is one of the shrewdest politicians who really understands how the corrupt system works. I always listen to him when he is interviewed on Fox News. All officials in the Biden administration should be charged with treason and if there is ever proof that we are morally corrupt as a people, it is the fact that we are far more complacent than we have ever been. How else is he able to get by with so many treasonous acts.

How would Americans handle an attack similar to what Israel has experienced? We are as soft as melted ice cream, and our conmander-in chief was born without a spine.

Announcements

Announcement from William P. Goff (November 28, 2023)

The November 28, 2023, Kenya Update is now posted at:

<http://www.khofh.org>

Special Edition Article

What Is, What Was, Zoroastrianism (Part 4)

(Copyright) by Rich Traver (Clifton, Colorado)

A Major faith in the Centuries BC, on into the early AD's, played a role in the development of the Christian Religion. Few in the modern world are aware of the Significance this persuasion had upon Modern Christian Denominations.

In the world today, both in the religious world and our secular educational systems, little if anything is ever said about a Great Empire that rivaled Rome, that existed for 500 years, and its significant religion that was the world of the day. Where has the modern churchgoer ever heard of the Parthian Empire or its religion, Zoroastrianism? These things aren't taught in schools, and it isn't mentioned in churches.

The focus in academic world is on Rome and Greece. We have to wonder why? Is the oversight because it exposes an ethnic connection among a particular race of people and an influence upon Christianity that we'd rather not have to consider?

It MUST Be Pagan!

When we hear of the Zoroastrian religion, the typical reaction is to regard it as just another form of rank paganism, without consideration of any significant impact it might have had on the formation of modern belief systems extant among the various Christian denominations known today. Even though we know that modern Christianity (so called) has incorporated many elements of belief and practice from pagan sources. We'll consider a few.

It's widely held that the Christian religion was an outgrowth of the Jewish religion of the first century. After all, the two are identified as exhibiting a common ethic, called the "Judaean - Christian Ethic". But while there's a common ethic, the two have come to present distinctly different belief systems.

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Our Judaic Heritage

While it's correct that the two persuasions originally shared a common heritage, yet there was a distinct divergence out of the older structured system of beliefs and practices that we today regard as Judaism. But the Judaism of the first century was not truly the religion originally delivered to Israel in the wilderness years, even as reformed after the Babylonian captivity. For that matter, the Jewish religion of Jesus' day wasn't identical to what we see today!

Much had changed over the centuries: some things were lost, and a lot of things were added. Jesus offered His assessments of that in several places. ¹

We need to be aware of the religious climate that existed in Judaea by the time of Christ. Was it amenable to His Message? Was it receptive of the new approach to the expression and spirit-of-the-law re-definition that was being introduced? And, most importantly, was it receptive of His Person as the Son of the Living God? Himself Divine and having eternally existed?

This was a major hitch, to say nothing of the rejection among some of their elites of the idea of the angelic or spirit world or of any resurrections. ²

But at this point, we need to ask how the Zoroastrian religion factors into this equation. After all, wasn't it a competing belief system? What was the basis for this other religious belief system?

The curious thing is that the Magi, or their Parthian countrymen, were Zoroastrians! Why were they, the major foreign representatives, found regularly attending the religious Holy Days of the Jews in Jerusalem, as we read in the Book of Acts? And why would high-ranking Parthian elites make the weeks-long trek to Jerusalem to enquire into the birth of Jesus? And for that matter, how did they even know that a “King”, that they should pay homage to, was prophesied to be born there? What did it matter to them?

An Ancient Creed

From historic accounts, there is ample reason to wonder what the connection might be between the Jewish religion and their own. This brief item on that religion from the internet is informative:

“Zoroastrianism is one of the world's oldest [mono-theistic](#) religions, having originated in [ancient Persia](#). It contains both monotheistic and [dualistic](#) elements, and many scholars believe Zoroastrianism influenced the belief systems of other faiths: [Judaism](#), [Islam](#) and [Christianity](#).”

Just this little bit is profound, alleging that the beliefs found in the Zoroastrian religion had a discernable influence on the major religions of the Middle East.

First is the reference to ancient Persia. The Parthian nation dominated what had been Persian territory, encompassing the whole Mesopotamian region, from western India to east of modern Syria that wasn't within the Roman Empire. In fact, Parthia was a potent rival to Rome, being its military match for nearly 500 years. The time of Christ was about the middle of their empirical longevity. To understand how Zoroastrianism influenced the religions of the region, it's necessary to understand Parthia.

Successive Empires

Referring to them as Persia calls for a brief explanation. That same region was the Assyrian Empire before being taken over by Babylon. Then the Babylonians were conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire (see Daniel 2) then by Greco-Macedonia under Alexander the Great. With his decease, one of his generals ruled the region, who we know as the Seleucids. It's they who were thereafter eclipsed by the Parthian Empire, which held power the longest of all, for half a millennium!

¹ Matthew 15:9, Matthew 23:1-39 being examples.

² Acts 23:8

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It was in 224 AD that the Sassanians drove the Parthian populations across the Caucasus Mountains into Europe. Thereafter, the people were identified not as Parthians but as Caucasians (a contraction of the name of the mountain range that they have once lived beyond and ‘Asia’ where they’d come from.) How many have noticed that?

One designation given by later historians of that region was to call it: “Indo-Iranian”.³

But an even more significant connection is the realization that the Parthians were largely of Israelite stock, being descended from the northern Ten Tribes of Israel, exiled first to the Caucasus Mountain region between the Black and Caspian Seas by the Assyrians. These ‘other Tribes’ were well known in the first century by historians of the day, not the least being Josephus, who wrote not long after the time of Christ of the Ten Tribes, that: “...while the Ten Tribes are beyond Euphrates til now, and are an immense multitude, and not to be estimated by numbers.” (*Antiquities: Book 11, chapter 5, para.2.*)

This may enlighten us somewhat as to the connection between themselves and Judeans. We might pose the question, did the Zoroastrian religion ‘influence’ the Abrahamic religions or was it the other way around? Was it developed upon pre-existing belief elements?

More on Parthia

*“The major rival of Rome to the east was the Parthian Empire. The Parthians had a Council of the Magistanes. The upper house of that council was composed of men who also held the top governmental offices in the empire. This dual capacity of priest and counselor (magistrate) is where the civil, political, and religious roles became connected in the Persian environment. They became the supreme priestly caste of the Parthian Empire — the Magi. Their duties included absolute choice of the king of the realm, and that will impact Herod’s reaction when they arrive, seeking “...he that is born, King of the Jews.””*⁴ Herod knew of their high status and had suspicions of their ultimate intentions. It was these of that “upper house” that stood before him!

Now, this ‘choice of kings’ idea suggests a more democratic, or at least a more parliamentary, form of government.

Being More Specific

“Zoroastrianism is an Iranian religion and one of the world’s oldest organized faiths, based on the teachings of the Iranian-speaking prophet Zoroaster. (500 BC?) It has a dualistic cosmology of good and evil within the framework of a monotheistic ontology and an eschatology which predicts the ultimate conquest of evil by good. Zoroastrianism exalts an uncreated and benevolent deity of wisdom known as Ahura Mazda (literally ‘Lord of Wisdom’) as its supreme being. Historically, the unique features of Zoroastrianism, such as its monotheism, messianism, belief in free will and judgement after death, conception of heaven, hell, angels, and demons, among other concepts, may have influenced other religious and philosophical systems, including the Abrahamic religions.” [from the internet]

Finding Common Elements?

When researching the Zoroastrian religion, it becomes apparent that we’re finding a belief system that’s not as deeply ‘pagan’ as first thought. Some researchers are inclined to conclude that this older religion contained elements thought to be strictly of Christian introduction. To see them exhibited in the centuries BC could suggest to some that the Christian religion eventually drew as much, if not more, from Zoroastrianism than from Judaism!

Surprising Similarities

Let’s consider what identifiable beliefs there were: Zoroastrianism is identified being “monotheistic”. It held the concepts of “heaven & hell”, good and evil, that good will ultimately triumph over evil (is that a millennial concept?) They believed in an uncreated Deity, supremely benevolent’. They were Messianic, also believing in free moral agency (free will) and judgment after death. (Wouldn’t that involve a resurrection to stand in such judgement?) If not, then it suggests the idea of an ‘immortal soul’, which would facilitate the heaven & hell idea. They accepted the belief in the spirit world, angels and demons, unlike their Sadduceean counterparts.⁵

³ A not so curious fact is that English and German languages have been identified as being of Indo-Iranian origin! That being the region today known as India and Iran. (Back then, Parthia.)

⁴ Matthew 2:2

⁵ Acts 23:8 “For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.”

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A person could begin to deduce that Christianity had a greater root connection with Zoroastrianism than with Judaism!

Gaining Acceptance

But considering all these similarities with the future belief system to be brought into being by Jesus’ Ministry and that of His personally instructed apostles, we have to wonder which culture would be more accepting of Jesus’ teachings, they, or the Judeans? We know of the Judaic reaction: *“He came to His own and His own received Him not!”*⁶

That’s not to say that the heaven and hell, immortal soul, and certain other beliefs they had were true. Some elements were incorporated from paganism. But the pointed question is, which was the more accepting culture? Does it reflect in Jesus’ proclamation that, *“... I am not sent but unto the **lost sheep** of the house of Israel.”*

Where are those ‘lost’ sheep? Where were they then?

The “lost sheep” were not the well-known ethnicity. That term had to be referring to the dispersed (lost) Ten Tribes of the divided kingdom. We might imagine that He came primarily to convert the Jews. We know how that worked out! They killed Him!

And we should note that Jesus gave instructions to His apostles to do the same. He said: *“But go **rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**”* (Mt. 10:6) Saying “rather” suggests it countered their original intention. *“Do this, rather than that!”* And again, where was the bulk of those ‘sheep’?

A Great Purpose

But let’s not think that this wasn’t the Plan all along. Other articles explain the long-developing series of events that created two related but distinct religious belief systems. One to preserve elements of the Old Covenant belief system, the other to be amenable to embracing and representing the fundamental teachings of the New.

Example to the World

It was God’s intention that Israel (all of it) be the Model Nation to represent His True Religion to the world. That’s not now, it’s millennial.⁷ You could not identify modern day Judaism or practical Christianity as being His authentic religion. Only a small select few represent His ideals and Truths presently, and even they with varying degrees of accuracy.

But the major point here is that the Parthian religious culture was both amenable to the Message brought by the Messiah and were more inclined to be accepting of His Divinity. Their Jewish counterparts took great exception to the idea of a Two-Person Godhead, despite much evidence of it being set forth in their own ancient and reputable texts.⁸

Conceptual Limitations

Their strict adherence to their longstanding idea of a single Being as their God, what’s known as ‘strict Monotheism’, provided an obstacle to any such acceptance, and explains their drastic reaction. That particular concept remains to the present day!

See Rich Traver’s other articles at:

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

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<https://www.goldensheaves.org/>

⁶ John 1:11

⁷ Zechariah 8:23 *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”* (This after their retraining is completed.)

⁸ Examples being Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13. Quoting these two in particular toward the conclusion of His trial is what assured Him of a death sentence and speedy execution. Just in time to be our Passover.

Special Edition Article
Expect the Unexpected (Part 1)
(Copyright 2023) by Warren Zehrung (Little Rock, Arkansas)

Feast of Trumpets (Sermon Notes)

The purpose of this **offertory** message is to address second and third generation Christians. I perceive that because so much time has **seemingly passed**, that there is a real possibility that many are letting their guard down at the very time we should all be on a **heightened alert**.

My title for today's sermon is "Expect the Unexpected." I plan to make that point *a couple hundred times*, so that when I finish today you will be saying to yourself, I'm going to Expect the Unexpected!

For all of our lives we've heard the word "**Warning**," and "**ALERT**" so often, we've become dull of hearing. And that is to our detriment.

The Feast of Trumpets pictures the **direct intervention** of God into world affairs! It is about to happen. That's why it's called the Feast of Trumpets or the blowing of the Shofar, which is a sound of **alarm** for war!

The **blast** of the shofar is a **call to arms**. However, it is not a call to guns and **offensive** weapons. It is a cry to be **spiritually prepared** – because we are in the heightened spiritual battle of our lives.

2Corinthians 10:4 (For the **weapons of our warfare** are **not** carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

Brethren, we must **not** face our day-to-day spiritual battle with a "come what may" cavalier attitude. **Spiritually speaking** we had better be in a "Locked and Loaded," state of mind.

Is The **Feast of Trumpets** a strong reminder to us to resolve immediately to **stand strong** with Jesus Christ at His coming? It should be! Will we lose faith if things **don't work out** as we thought they would?

My **SPS** today [Specific Purpose Statement] is that I want to show that many times the holy men of old did **not** have their **expectations** met. Many times, they thought they had it **all figured out**—but things just did not work out as they expected. The solution to this problem is to **Expect the Unexpected**.

The word "Trumpet" carries a lot of weight - don't think only of the Shofar – but think of the **terrible sound** it makes.

Let me explain by way of an incident in my very young life: I almost died as a year-old baby. It was during WWII, and I lived with my mother at her parents' home. The address was 1140 Holly St. There were **5 tracks** there, and I almost died in my baby buggy. Explain about East bound – West bound trains. Those train horns are exceedingly loud—heard for miles.

Not 'Toot Toot' warnings on the Shofar like we've heard so many times... For just a second brethren, put yourself in a similar situation.

Think like the **BLAST** of a train's horn bearing down on you when you are standing on a **Rail Road Crossing** – facing the wrong way – and you have less than half-second to get off the tracks – and save yourself.

That kind of warning – it is a "save your eternal life – take action instantly" kind of **WARNING**.

That is what you should think of when you hear the word, "Trumpet." And that is the kind of **warning** That God is trying to give us right now!

Think about that **TODAY** on this **Feast of Trumpets**.

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Editor’s Note: Just think if these words from the Prophet Joel (below) had been heeded by the modern State of Israel so that the massacre of the **Last Great Day** 10/7/2023 could have been avoided. None of us expected Hamas to wage jihad from Gaza even though Islam directs their believers to wage military war. These following words turned out to be so much more applicable than we knew. Added by Warren Zehrung

We are instructed to Blow ye the trumpet in Zion **on The Day of the Lord**

“Blow ye the trumpet in Zion,” MEANS **Alert** the brethren of God’s Church!

Joel 2:1 Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand; Joel 2:2 A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. Joel 2:3 A fire devours before them; and behind them a flame burns: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness; yea, and **nothing** shall escape them.

Stark words: Nothing of today’s society will remain.

Sound the **Shofar!!!** End: **Offertory** **Special Music**

Expect the Unexpected

Brethren, we have come to the Fall Holy Days. One of the encouraging benefits of maintaining God’s annual holy days is the reminder that they provide God’s Plan of redemption within them.

Today is the **Feast of Trumpets**. It pictures Jesus Christ returning as King of Kings. He will intervene to save mankind from self-destruction. Mankind will learn the lesson that it cannot solve its own problems.

God’s Kingdom, established by Christ at His coming shall rule directly over the nations to bring about lasting world peace. Christ’s return presents a most beautiful picture described in many places in the pages of the Bible. We have the highest expectations for the fulfillment of this day! God has opened the minds of the Church brethren to better understand the meaning of His Holy Days—the world is unable to understand.

Will end-time events work out as we **expect** them to? This is a **warning** sermon that I’m giving today—time is short. We are assured that every word of God is certain, but our understanding of His prophecy sometimes misses the mark.

What if the church narrative we have learned is not exactly spot on, or our interpretation of events that have to do with subjects like the Temple, the Beast, the False Prophet, the Two Witnesses, and so forth, do not turn out to be perfectly accurate?

Will our faith fail us if things start to go in a way that we did not expect? What would happen to **our faith** when we discovered that we did not have every jot and tittle absolutely, precisely, correct in our minds?

What if our expectations are not met – especially if we thought that our erroneous belief had been “established doctrine” in the church for years?

What if our expectations are not met? **Who** would we turn to at that moment in time? We know that God’s word is true—and it is going to come to pass. I think we know the correct answer: We would turn to God.

Psalm 105:4 Seek **the LORD**, and His strength: seek His face evermore.

That is where our **faith** is founded—in God. That is where our Trust is. That’s easy to say – but hard to do if we have not been in the practice of **drawing near to God**, so that He is near when needed in a crisis (James 4:8).

Not only in the modern era of God’s Church, but throughout the pages of the Bible, many of the expectations of God’s

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chosen people **have not come to pass** as they thought they would.

For example, **all of the Apostles** believed that Jesus’ **second coming** would be during their lifetimes—but He didn’t return then! The Apostles expected Jesus to be a revolutionary commander who would wage war against the Romans and restore the Jewish people’s nation to the power and honor of King David and King Solomon’s Day.

The apostles whom Jesus **had chosen** did not **expect** Jesus to suffer, die on a cross, or rise from the dead. They were wrong on every point.

Acts 1:6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

The apostle **Peter** fully believed that Jesus’ second coming would occur in his day. Peter believed: “The end of all things is at hand” (1Peter 4:7). Peter’s **expectations** were not met.

James 5:8 Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord **draws near**. [there it is again – because God wants us to realize the **urgency**]

Then, James, [this is Jesus’ half-brother] **doubles down**.

James 5:9 “behold, the judge **stands before the door**—*The coming of the Lord is at hand.*”

That is what God wants us to expect and believe!

King David, a man after God’s **own heart**, had the construction plans in his hand, but he did not get to **build the Temple** (Acts 13:22).

I [Warren] **did not expect** Worldwide’s break up after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong. I did not **expect** the breakup at all. I thought that most of the 150,000 members would go to the Place of Safety.

God did the weeding out of those who were not living according to His expectations. God the Father and Jesus Christ have expectations too, and their expectations **WILL BE MET**. I did not expect that 70% of the members were not secure in the truth. Brethren, **I hope** that I’m learning to **Expect the Unexpected**.

During the Worldwide Church of God receivership, I wondered aloud if we might be *headed into the Tribulation*. It looked to me like everything was falling apart. Dr. Herman Hoeh said, “You’re living in a fool’s paradise if you think the Tribulation is anything like this – the Tribulation is going to be so much worse!”

Abraham believed God, and he was called the **Friend of God**, but he did not live to see **God’s promises** to him **fulfilled** (James 2:23).

Here’s a good question: Are we living up to Jesus’ expectations for us. The Scriptures show that He **expects** a degree of **fortitude** in us. When Jesus said, “Eat my flesh,” in John 6, **many** of His disciples walked no more with Him, but He did not go chasing after them (John 6:66). Those disciples had not met Jesus’ minimum requirements – they did not meet **His expectations**.

Moses led Israel out of Egypt, yet he did **not** get to enter the **Promised Land**.

Israel left Egypt—headed for the **Promised Land**—but died in the wilderness because they **failed to be an example** to the other nations around them.

Judah fully believed that they would not go into captivity because they possessed the **Temple of the LORD**—and the Lord would *never allow* His house to fall into disrepute. But Judah’s **expectations were dashed** when Jerusalem fell and went into captivity, just as Shiloh had fallen (Jeremiah 26:6, Jeremiah 7:12): The same is going to befall the United States of America!

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Jeremiah 7:4 Trust ye not in **lying words**, saying, **The Temple of the LORD**, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.

For Judah, that was a classic case of **unrealized expectations**. These few examples tell us that we should always be reevaluating our expectations according to the Word of God. Expect the unexpected.

The **beloved apostle John**, even after receiving the direct revelation from Jesus Himself, **believed** that Jesus’ **second coming** was imminent:

Revelation 1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.
Revelation 1:10 I was in the Spirit on the **Lord's Day**, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

The **Lord's Day** is **not Sunday** as the Catholics have taught the world.

The **Lord's Day** is a clear reference to the many, **many** biblical prophecies of “the Day of the Lord,” the time Jesus would come **a second time** – but **the second time** in great power against **all evil** and establish the Kingdom of God on earth.

Everything of this evil world will be destroyed. The Economy; Military; Government; Taxes; News; Communications – including smart phones and computers; Insurance; School systems; Law and courts; Elections; Retirement systems; Even agriculture and animal husbandry will be new in the world tomorrow.

Continuing with the revelation to John: A great voice, as of a **trumpet** was...Saying: Revelation 1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega [Jesus Christ speaking], the first and the last: and, What thou see, write in a book,

Jesus Himself conveyed to John that time **was indeed short!**

Revelation 1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto His servants’ **things which must shortly come to pass;**

Some people mistakenly say this verse negates the Holy Bible because it has not happened the way **people expected**. In Jesus’ perspective of the Plan of God—time is indeed short—God expects us to understand it this way! If anything, it should tell us to **expect the unexpected!**

John was about a hundred years old when he closed his eyes and died—and when he opens his eyes, in that instant, so much of these writings will be happening! John will not be disappointed at all, because he will find that the **realization** and fulfillment of his writings far exceeds his original **expectations**.

As Paul so astutely stated:

1Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have **entered into the heart of man**, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

That means that the **fulfillment** of God’s works will **far exceed** our **expectations**.

James 5:7 Be patient therefore, brethren, [you Christians], unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth and has long patience for it [all year long], until he receives the early and latter rain.

Today, the **Feast of Trumpets**, pictures the return of Jesus Christ to this earth. It is the Day of the Lord—that is what this Feast Day of Trumpets represents. How many of our **brethren** today believe it is a matter of being in the right **church organization** to make it into the Kingdom? There are things we do not fully understand—or we do not know how to fully apply them.

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Even with God’s instructions and prophecies, it seems that we often underestimate what God has in store for us. We plan, search, and pray, and yet many of the things God has in store for us remain elusive to us.

Even where it comes to God’s prophecies, His ways are past our finding out.

Romans 11:33-36 O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and **His ways past finding out!** For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?

We need to be careful if we say to ourselves, “I’ve figured out just how the latter days are going to play out.

In today’s sermon we are looking at a few of the many prophecies that have been given about the **Great Day of the Lord’s Wrath**. The details associated with the seven seals of Revelation can be not only difficult to comprehend but challenging to keep track of.

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet who ever lived (Matthew 11:11). He knew, believed, and depended on all the Scriptures about the coming Messiah. He committed them to memory. John the Baptist believed the Scriptures. John the Baptist grew up hearing **Messianic Prophecies** like these:

Isaiah 11:4 ...and He [the Messiah] shall **smite the earth** with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.

Turn with me: This is some more of what John the Baptist knew would take place. Jesus would come with a heavy hand against Israel’s enemies:

Isaiah 11:13-16 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be **cut off**: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the LORD shall utterly **destroy** the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.

More examples of John the Baptist’s expectations of Christ:

Isaiah 13:9-11 Behold, the Day of the LORD **is coming**, cruel both with **wrath and fierce anger**, to lay the land desolate: and He shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine. And I will **punish the world** for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

John the Baptist saw that the Messiah would be **cleaning up this entire earth** of its **spiritual wickedness** in preparation for the establishment of the Kingdom of God, and His Millennial Reign. The problem for John the Baptist was that Jesus’ public ministry was **not** shaping up to his expectations. God had not revealed to John the Baptist the **two-fold** coming of Jesus the Messiah.

We should learn from this episode to **Expect the Unexpected**.

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

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Notes