



THE FOUR BLOOD MOONS

OMENS OF DOOM, OMENS OF HOPE, OR NO OMENS AT ALL?

By Albert James Dager

SOMETHING WICKED COMETH our way. Omens—signs in the heavens—portend the rise of anti-Christ; eeviiiil will soon engulf the entire world, especially the land of Israel and the Jewish people.

Or not. Maybe those signs are pointing to the imminent appearance of the Lord in the sky to whisk away His people before a supposed Great Tribulation period of seven years ensues.

The signs in question are the “four blood moons”—a series of total eclipses that will occur on Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles in consecutive years, 2014–15. Those four “blood moons” will form what is called a tetrad, or series of four total eclipses without any partial eclipses between them.

A number of “prophecy” teachers are heralding the coming tetrad of total eclipses with speculation on what this sign in the heavens might mean. One of the more popular of these is Mark Biltz, senior pastor of El Shaddai Ministries in Bonney Lake, Washington, who suggests that “a rare string of lunar and solar eclipses said to fall on God’s annual holy days seven years from now [2008] could herald what’s come to be known as the ‘Second Coming’ of Jesus.” Biltz was quoted in a *World Net Daily* (WND) interview in 2008, titled “Blood Moon Eclipses: 2nd Coming in 2015?”:

“God wants us to look at the biblical calendar,” says Mark Biltz, pastor of El Shaddai Ministries in Bonney Lake, Wash. “The reason we need to be watching is [because] He will signal His appearance. But we have to know what to be watching as well. So we need to be watching the biblical holidays.”

In a video interview on the Prophecy in the News website, Biltz said he’s been studying prophecies that focus on the sun and moon, even going back to the book of Genesis where it states the lights in the sky would be “be (sic) for signs, and for seasons.”

Biltz adds the word “seasons” implies appointed times for God’s feasts and festivals.

“When we hear the word feast, we think food. But the Hebrew word has nothing to do with food. It has to do with a divine appointment, as if God has a day timer, and He says, ‘OK, I’m gonna mark the day and the time when I’m going to signal my appearance.’”

Hal Lindsey wrote his novel, *Blood Moon*, in 1996, in which he weaves biblical truth with non-biblical facts to tell a “prophetic” tale that spans the time from Abraham to the coming anti-Christ. In fact, many authors, both Christian and secular

have used the term “blood moon” in their titles, most of which have nothing to do with a true blood moon, which we will see.

With the publication in 2013 of John Hagee’s book, *Four Blood Moons* (Brentwood, TN; Worthy Publishing), the theory of “blood moons” being omens of significant events in the history of Israel has been given far more attention than it had when propagated by lesser known mortals for many years prior. Most of these bill themselves as “prophecy” experts, and their ministries focus primarily on last-days prophecy, usually from a dispensationalist eschatological viewpoint, as does Hagee.

Although the theory has been around for some years, it is hitting mainline Christianity as never before because of Hagee’s widespread fame as a *New York Times* best-selling author. Thus, I felt his book should be given special attention. Our analysis of this theory is based primarily on Hagee’s book, but what he says is not new or different from what has been said before.

The “four blood moons” in Christian “prophetic” writing is a reference to four consecutive total lunar eclipses that occur within a single twelve-month period, regardless of the location on earth in which they are observed. They may take place from a time in one calendar year to a time in the next calendar year. The “blood” refers to the color that the moon seems to turn to when it enters into the full umbra of the earth’s shadow in a total eclipse as the earth passes between the sun and the moon.

Hagee states it thusly:



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MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

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WHY MEDIA SPOTLIGHT?

Media Spotlight is a ministry to the Body of Christ, bringing understanding of the ways in which the world shapes our thinking and lifestyles through the influence of the mass communications media.

God's Word exhorts, "buy the truth and do not sell it" (Prov. 23:23). Therefore we do not sell *Media Spotlight*. Begun in 1977, *Media Spotlight* was the first ministry on a national scale to address the ungodly nature of the secular media—motion pictures, television, toys, games and myriad other things that contribute to Christians living no differently than the rest of the world.

The mass media have impacted the Body of Christ as much as they have society. Many Christians are so dependent upon the media that they aren't aware of how lukewarm they have become. We have many testimonials from readers who tell us that, because of *Media Spotlight*, they have become aware of the effect the media have on their thinking, and are now more selective in their choices.

But the problem of ungodliness is not exclusive to the secular media. Of major concern are the religious media that present messages contrary to God's Word. *Media Spotlight* addresses the impact that religious teachers have upon believers in Christ, whether for good or for evil.

It has escaped the understanding of many Christians that what they believe is more often shaped by the teachings and traditions of religious men and institutions than by Scripture. Most teachers in the institutional churches rely more upon their theological disciplines than on the pure Word of God. Yet the wisdom of the world is no substitute for God's Word, even if offered from the pulpit or in the Christian media.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:24 that in the last days false christs and false prophets would arise and would show great signs and wonders, "so that, if possible, they will deceive the very elect." He also states in Matthew 24:12 that in the last days the love of many toward Him would grow cold because evil would increase in the world. If we believe Him, then we would be foolish not to guard ourselves against deception. There is little time to waste in the short span of life granted us by God. We must choose today whom we will serve. **MS**

Scripture quotations in *Media Spotlight* are from the King James Version of the Bible, rephrased in modern U.S. English unless otherwise stated.



A Personal Note

Dear Friends,

This issue is coming close on the heels of our previous issue because that issue was very late in coming out due to time constraints related primarily with our attempt to sell our home. So far we've had no offers, but we realize that we probably missed the best window of opportunity during the peak selling season. The work we had to do to get the house show-worthy and saleable took longer than we had expected.

Also, we decided to try selling our house through For Sale by Owner (FSBO), but after a month with very little interest we decided to engage a real estate agent. A number of them had contacted us from our FSBO ad, and we looked at six as possibilities. Because they came to us, we felt no pressure or obligation to any of them, but we wanted to give them each a chance to give us their best shot. It turns out that going the FSBO route was a good idea simply because once a person approaches a real estate agent, it becomes difficult to leave him without feeling bad about it. This way, they all understood that they were competing for the job.

Just a tip for anyone else contemplating selling their house.

We appreciate the love and concern expressed to us by a number of our readers. We're just trusting the Lord that all will go according to His plan in His time.

We are picking up where we left off on our "History of Anti-Christ" series in the issue before the last one. A lot of people are asking when the series will be concluded, and if it will form the basis for a book. To be honest, we don't know how many installments there will be. It gets written from issue to issue, and Al just writes as he feels led. But if the Lord is willing, the series will become a book, albeit possibly in more than one volume. We've already reached part 26, and still have some way to go before completing it. Also, if the book is produced there may be added information, which would make the series even longer.

It's good to know that the series has been a blessing to a good number of our readers.

As always, we thank those of you who have supported *Media Spotlight* with your prayers and gifts. The Lord is faithful in providing for us just what we need as we need it, and He has blessed us greatly over these many years through your faithful hearts.

We pray His blessings on all our readers, and especially on those suffering hardships of diverse kinds. We hope that Al's message on "Testing" (page 28) may be an encouragement to them. We are thinking of the growing number of prisoners who have asked to be placed on our mailing list. It's been a great blessing to us to see through their letters how they are growing in the Lord. We can't name them, but it is our hope that our readers will remember them in their prayers.

Thank you again for being there for us.

In Jesus' love,

Al and Jean
Al and Jean



FOUR BLOOD MOONS

(Continued from page 1)

A Blood Moon occurs during a total lunar eclipse; the moon does not actually turn to blood, but it does appear blood-red. (p. 19)

I don't know why Hagee had to inform us that the moon does not actually turn to blood; it would seem his readers are not among the superstitious savages of the Stone Age. In any case, the term, "Blood Moon" is not valid as used by Hagee and others who relate it to eclipses of the moon. Some teachers use hyperbole and sensationalism to attract people to their teachings, using the term "blood moon" for total eclipses as an identifier of omens that pertain to the nation of Israel.

In nature, the moon may appear to be red or "bloody" during a total lunar eclipse. This is generally localized according to the particular event, and is caused by the bending of the light emanating from the moon passing through the atmosphere of earth under certain conditions. The moon may be obscured by dust or smoke particles from volcanic eruptions, industrial pollutants, forest fires, or other natural and man-made phenomena, causing it to look red.

The "blood moon" in astronomical and earth science terms does not refer to the eclipsed moon. In fact, a blood moon does not turn red at all. A blood moon is the first full moon after the harvest moon, and almost always occurs in October. It is synonymous with the hunter's moon or sanguine moon. NASA explains what a blood moon really is:

According to folklore, October's full moon is called the "Hunter's Moon" or sometimes the "Blood Moon." It gets its name from hunters who tracked and killed their prey by autumn moonlight, stockpiling food for the winter ahead. You can picture them: silent figures padding through the forest, the moon overhead, pale as a corpse, its cold light betraying the creatures in the wood.¹

According to the science website UniverseToday.com:

Traditionally, each month's full moon has been given a name, although these names differ according to the source. Other moons include the Wolf Moon in January, the Strawberry Moon in June, the Sturgeon Moon in August, the Cold Moon in December, and the Pink Moon in April. The Hunter's Moon, which is also known as blood moon or sanguine moon, is October's full moon. It follows the Harvest Moon, which is September's moon. Sometimes though, the Harvest Moon is mistaken for the Hunter's Moon because once

every four years or so the Harvest Moon is in October instead of September. When that happens, the Hunter's Moon is in November.²

A totally eclipsed blood moon is very rare. And the name has nothing to do with its color, except on the rare occasion that the blood moon is totally eclipsed. And the blood moon does not occur in any month other than October or, rarely, November.

The blood moon is not as sinister as its name implies, nor is it specifically referenced in biblical prophecy. Whoever first attributed the phrase "blood moon" to significant events related to the state of Israel erred. They should have merely called the events total lunar eclipses. They may, with reservation, have been able to call them "blood-red moons" or even "bloody moons." But that would not sound as sinister or mysterious as ooooo, "~~blooood~~ moon."

Relating the "~~blooood~~ moon" to prophecy works well as a hook to get people's attention. Once they are hooked, they can be sold the goods that the "hooker" wants them to buy. In the case of the "prophetic" blood moon, an entire book can be sold using the name, even though only about ten percent of the book is about the erroneously-named blood moon.

Okay, putting that nonsense aside, let us consider this theory of four blood moons. In doing so I will retain the term "blood moon" to not cause further confusion as to what we are addressing—the theory that these particular total lunar eclipses are celestial omens sent by God to warn of impending events related to the state of Israel today.

In spite of the title, Hagee's book spends few of the 260 pages actually discussing blood moons. Most of it is extraneous material, which isn't necessarily bad, particularly those pages that discuss personal salvation through the blood of Christ, and the very few true aspects of his dispensational eschatology (most of which is full of dispensational myths such as a coming seven-year tribulation period (as opposed to the three-and-one-half years for Jacob's Trouble), the anti-Christ being shot in the head and coming back to life, a pre-tribulation secret rapture, etc.). To his credit he defends the idea of the coming Millennial Kingdom of Christ, one of the few dispensational tenets clearly supported by Scripture (see my book, *The Day of Yahweh: A Biblical Eschatology with a Study on the Book of Revelation* [Redmond, WA; Sword Publishers, 2013]).

Hagee also rightly takes to task replacement theology and, without naming it, preterist eschatology.

Total eclipses, or "blood moons," aren't significant in themselves. It is when they form what is called a "tetrad" that Bible prophecy buffs sit up and take notice. Although the four-blood-moons theory is a small part of his book, Hagee manages to explain it fairly well, although many readers may still be scratching their heads wondering exactly what a four-blood moon tetrad actually is. They may do better searching for it on the Internet where they will find more lucid explanations. NASA states it quite simply: "When four consecutive lunar eclipses are all *total* eclipses, the group is known as a tetrad." (Emphasis in original)

(Continued on page 12)

¹ <http://www.nasa.gov/vision/universe/watchtheskies/13octlunareclipse.html>.

² <http://www.universetoday.com/61121/hunters-moon/>



Catholic students protest firing of homosexual teacher

STUDENTS AT EASTSIDE Catholic School in Sammamish, Washington, are protesting the forced resignation of popular administrator and swim coach Mark Zmuda because he married his same-sex partner. The students have also waged an online campaign demanding that the church abandon its opposition to same-sex marriage.

The protests at Eastside Catholic are the latest in a series taking place at Catholic schools nationwide because of homosexual and lesbian teachers.

In July, 2013, Ken Bencomo, a teacher at St. Lucy's Priory High School in Glendora, California, was fired after an article in the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin featured his marriage to his male partner. Bencomo was very popular, having taught at the school for 17 years. In that incident, former students and staff at St. Lucy's launched an online petition against Bencomo's firing.

At Eastside Catholic High School, students have staged sit-ins at the school and public protests in Seattle and other areas in the Puget Sound region. Students from other Catholic schools are joining in the protest in support of Eastside students.

The students are receiving significant support from the community as well.

Seattle's then mayor-elect Ed Murray, a practicing Catholic and homosexual who recently married his longtime partner, joined in voicing his support of the protestors. Because of the Catholic Church's prohibition against same-sex marriage, Murray and Michael Shiosaki were married at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in August.

In a tweet to Pope Francis, one student wrote @Pontifex: "Hey big guy, we need you over here in Washington. A teacher is being fired for love."

"The Archdiocese of Seattle could learn a thing or two about the Golden Rule from these Catholic students," said Collin Jergens, a Catholic who works at the leftist advocacy group Fuse Washington.

Anne Levinson, a former judge and Seattle deputy mayor, and a leader in the state's marriage equality campaign, stated: "In the name of religious freedom, LGBT Catholic teachers across the country are being fired from their jobs for nothing other than marrying the person they love."

Seattle Archbishop J. Peter Sartain campaigned against Washington State's marriage equality act, Referendum 74, in 2012. When Washington voters passed the referendum, Sartain ordered that no Catholic church, facility or school be used for such a "marriage," and that priests not counsel same-sex couples who planned to wed.



Seattle's then mayor-elect Ed Murray voices support for Eastside Catholic students' protest.

COMMENTARY

Does this come as a surprise after Pope Francis, almost immediately after taking office, declared that he is "no one to judge" a homosexual who is a person of good will and in search of God? That single statement, coupled with his words that "God in creation has set us free: it is not possible to interfere spiritually in the life of a person," is now being used to justify same-sex marriage. In the broad context of the pope's comment, not only are homosexuals not to be judged, but homosexuality itself is not to be judged. Considering the more liberal attitudes among today's youth, including Catholic youth, what can be expected but that they would protest the church's apparent hypocrisy in firing homosexual teachers at Catholic schools for marrying their same-sex partners.

Would the protests be as vociferous were a single teacher fired for cohabiting with an opposite-sex partner, or for a married teacher committing adultery? In view of the devolution of social mores in the West, perhaps so.

Will the day come when the Roman Catholic Church follows the course of its sister churches in not only allowing same-sex marriage, but celebrating it?

Why not? This is not a matter of "church doctrine," but of morality. And the church's stance on moral issues has changed in the past. At one time it was considered moral to burn perceived heretics at the stake; today that is considered immoral.

The Magisterium of the church is such that only certain doctrines that have been defined ex-cathedra—that is, affirmed by the pope as an essential tenet of the church, declared as such

from the “throne of Peter” cannot be changed. All else can be changed according to the decision of the pope and cardinals. Pope Francis’s loose approach to homosexuality has opened the door to a new, perverse, reformation that in time will be embraced by the Catholic hierarchy.

And it must happen if one-fifth of the world’s population is to be brought into the New Age of amorality.

Did the Lord not tell us that when He returns, conditions in the world will be as they were in the days of Noah and Lot (Matthew 24:37)?

I find it interesting that many of the protestors displayed the “Devil’s Horn” sign with their fingers as they rallied in support of Zmuda. They may not all have understood what they were signifying, thinking it represents “I love you,” as it has been adopted by others. In ancient cultures it was used to signify Satan. It was adopted by some acid rock bands, some of whom were openly given to Satanism. Lately it has been adapted to signify “love” and, in this case, the love of homosexuals toward one another. How fitting is it that a satanic symbol would be used to justify sin as “loving”?



Eastside Catholic H.S. Students exhibit “Devil’s Horn” sign in protest of homosexual teacher’s firing.



Satan displaying the Sign of the horns in the Kitab al-Bulhan (A late 14th century AD Arabic manuscript)



The Devil’s Horn

The pope has opened the floodgates for homosexuality to be justified among the young, liberal members of his church.



Those who think the Catholic Church would never alter its stance on the moral issues of homosexuality, and even abortion, are placing too much faith in human nature and in the institution itself. The sex scandals involving minors have been rampant within the Catholic hierarchy. But what is really telling is how they have been covered up for centuries not only by local bishops but by cardinals and popes, including the late Pope John Paul II. The cover-up itself was deemed proper. Does that not reveal the true moral attitude of the papacy?

Roman Catholicism is a false religion; why should we expect its leaders to always uphold righteousness, or to even define righteousness according to God’s Word? If the Episcopalian, Lutheran, Methodist and other (originally) more biblically-oriented religious institutions have strayed from the path of righteousness, there’s no reason to think Roman Catholicism won’t as well.

But it would be good if it did officially stray away from biblical righteousness. Right-thinking Catholics may begin to question their allegiance to that false religion and see that they can have nothing to do with it. They may be prompted to heed the call of God’s Word:

Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with unrighteousness? And what fellowship has light with darkness? And what agreement has Christ with Satan? Or what part has he who believes with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God, as God has said, “I will live in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”

“Therefore come out from among them and be separate,” says the Lord, “and do not touch the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters,” says the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Evangelical leaders and their duped followers who today admire and support Roman Catholicism because they think they share a revulsion of abortion and homosexuality are in for a rude awakening tomorrow. The Catholic students protesting the firing of teachers over the issue of moral turpitude are the leaders of tomorrow, not only in society, but in their church. The day is coming when Roman Catholicism will display its true nature as the religion of the False Prophet (Revelation 16:3).

We can rejoice that it may not be long before the mighty Mystery Babylon will fall. ❖

LGBT magazine names Pope Francis Person of the Year

POPE FRANCIS I was named Person of the Year by *The Advocate*, America's oldest "Gay rights" magazine, for his liberal approach to homosexuality. Although acknowledging that, according to current social norms, the pope's position is still lagging, *The Advocate* considers his stand as progress for the LGBT movement. While considering several candidates from the legal profession, entertainment and government who have aided the LGBT cause, the most important issue, *The Advocate* decided, is not political but spiritual:

The most influential person of 2013 doesn't come from our ongoing legal conflict but instead from our spiritual one—successes from which are harder to define. There has not been any vote cast or ruling issued, and still a significant and unprecedented shift took place this year in how LGBT people are considered by one of the world's largest faith communities.

Pope Francis is leader of 1.2 billion Roman Catholics all over the world. There are three times as many Catholics in the world than there are citizens in the United States. Like it or not, what he says makes a difference. Sure, we all know Catholics who fudge on the religion's rules about morality. There's a lot of disagreement, about the role of women, about contraception, and more. But none of that should lead us to underestimate any pope's capacity for persuading hearts and minds in opening to LGBT people, and not only in the U.S. but globally.

The remaining holdouts for LGBT acceptance in religion, the ones who block progress in the work left to do, will more likely be persuaded by a figure they know. In the same way that President Obama transformed politics with his evolution on LGBT civil rights, a change from the pope could have a lasting effect on religion.

Pointing out Pope Francis's former hard-line stance against same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples when he was Argentina's Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, *The Advocate* contrasts the pope's present, more tolerant attitude:

But it's actually during Pope Francis's time as cardinal that his difference from Benedict and hard-liners in the church became apparent. As same-sex marriage looked on track to be legalized in Argentina, Bergoglio argued privately that the church should come out for civil unions as the "lesser of two evils." That's all according to Pope Francis's authorized biographer, Sergio Rubin. Argentine gay activist Marcelo Márquez backed up the story, telling *The New York Times* in March that

Bergoglio "listened to my views with a great deal of respect. He told me that homosexuals need to have recognized rights and that he supported civil unions, but not same-sex marriage."

In addition to *The Advocate's* endorsement, the LGBT Catholic organization Equally Blessed has stated, "Pope Francis today uttered some of the most encouraging words a pontiff has ever spoken about gay and lesbian people. In doing so, he has set a great example for Catholics everywhere.... Pope Francis did not articulate a change in the church's teaching today, but he spoke compassionately, and in doing so, he has encouraged an already lively conversation that may one day make it possible for the church to fully embrace gay and lesbian Catholics."

COMMENTARY

The Advocate's position that the conflict for LGBT equality is not only a legal one, but especially a spiritual one is on the mark. That's exactly what any true believer in Jesus would say. And on the surface, a true believer in Jesus cannot fault the pope's call for compassion toward LGBT people. We are to love all regardless of their sins. What is lacking is the calling of LGBT people to seek a relationship with the Savior who can deliver them from their sin. In the process of calling upon Catholics to show compassion to LGBT people without addressing the reality of their sin, the pope has essentially given his blessing to such unions, even if not endorsing their legalization as "marriage." Any fool would know that such an approach opens wide the door for further acceptance of homosexuality as a normal human relationship.

Although we must acknowledge that "sin is sin" regardless of its nature, there are certain sins that beg God's judgment because those sins are against nature:

For this reason [leaving the true God and turning to idolatry] God gave them up to vile affections, for even their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also, the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another—men with men, doing that which is indecent, and receiving within themselves the return of their error, which was suitable. (Romans 1:18-32)

LGBT people do not worship the true God who has revealed Himself to mankind in His written Word. They worship a false concept of that God which is inwardly turned to idolatry, loving their flesh to a greater degree.

It is not the individual homosexual that is hateful; God has called us to love them, pray for them, and lead them to the truth. It is the spirit that drives the LGBT movement that is hateful. That spirit has deceived those caught in this sin to believe that they are acceptable to God without having to repent. They have been led to think that their sin is not sin at all, but merely a natural sexual preference.

Because the pope does not understand this, he has unwisely given greater impetus to that spirit of rebellion against God's natural order. But then, what can we expect from one who is caught in the same spirit of idolatry, albeit of a more religious nature? ❖

Did an angel appear at Promise Keepers event?



PROMISE KEEPERS CLAIMS that on July 20, 2013, “Something SUPERNATURAL took place in Cedar Falls today. As hundreds of men repented of sin in their lives, a man in attendance took two pictures. Both had an angel on them. As the worship band said ‘Jesus take all of me,’ God sent a miraculous sign to confirm what He was doing.”

The image of what appears to be a figure fitting the stereotypical concept of what an angel might look like is reported to have appeared in the digital photo of the Christian rock band One Body as they played at a Promise Keepers rally. The picture was taken on an iPad by an unnamed “Southern Baptist, self-described ‘conservative, non-prophetic’ pastor.”

According to David Jesse, a spokesman for Promise Keepers, “He looked down at the screen to see a strange glow on the stage that sent chills down his spine. He then showed the picture to the man standing next to him, and proceeded to take another picture of the stage. When he looked at the second picture and saw the same image, he was overwhelmed with emotion, as he was convinced that what he saw in these photos was an angel. He immediately came to stage right and showed the pictures to our program director,” said The pastor’s wife released this statement:

“My husband took these photos. No photo shop. Enjoy debating angels and stage lights but don’t miss the miracle of a few thousand men gathering to praise God and to be challenged to be men of honor who keep their promises! At least 17 of them were our guys. That’s a miracle. They were in our church Sunday gathering at the front praying with their families and friends. Miracles happen.”

COMMENTARY

God’s Word tells us that His angels are among us as ministering spirits sent to serve those who will be heirs of salvation. When the Syrian army surrounded the city of Dothan where Jehoram, the king of Israel was, the prophet Elisha’s servant was in fear. Then Elisha prayed that the Lord would open the eyes of his servant, and his servant saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha (2 Kings 6:17).

Is it possible that the Lord opened the eyes of this pastor’s iPad to reveal an angel in the Promise Keepers camp? Or was this merely a refraction of light from an unknown source?

I was reminded of Hal Lindsey’s book *A Prophetic Walk Through the Holy Land* in which he reproduced a photo that he alleges shows the image of an angel standing in a window near the podium from which he was speaking.

I have reproduced on the next page the photo in question, which was printed across facing pages in the book. Close examination reveals some double images suggesting double exposure and/or movement of the camera that caused the dramatic effect. One can see the window sill passing through the heads of those in front of it, a double image of the “tongues of fire,” the arch under which Lindsey was speaking passing through his head and shoulder, a disembodied woman’s head to the left of the stairs, the balusters of the stairs passing through the outstretched arms of people in front of the staircase, and other anomalies. I’ve also reproduced accompanying photos that expose discrepancies in the book’s claim.

I’m always skeptical of these things, especially when they come from the charisma camp or from organizations that espouse false teachings. With all the false teachings, ecumenism and other errors associated with Promise Keepers, who’s to say this wasn’t a devil rather than an angel? Or that it wasn’t a glitch in the iPad camera? The position of the figure would be highly coincidental in the last case, so it may well be something more than just a camera glitch or a light refraction.

Would God give such a sign in order to lend credibility to Promise Keepers? Or might he have allowed it to create a delusion for those caught in spiritual error? We know that in the last days He will send a delusion that will be so powerful that, if it were possible, even the very elect would be deceived:

And now you know what holds fast so that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity already works, only now holding fast until coming forth. And then shall be revealed that wicked one whom the Lord shall consume with the breath of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming—even him whose coming is according to the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all the deception of unrighteousness in those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth so that they might be saved.

And for this reason God shall send them strong delusion so that they should believe a lie, that they all who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, might be damned. (2 Thessalonians 2:5-12)

People believe what they want to believe, and trust whom they want to trust. That the image from Promise Keepers is of God is highly unlikely. Believe what you will, but I don’t know what this is. In any case, I would never follow Promise Keepers into their psychologized, feminized and ecumenical agenda no matter how many signs and wonders accompany them.

Our faith doesn’t rest on phenomena; it rests on the Word of God and the person of Jesus Christ. ❖



Homos “marry” during Rose Parade



AUBREY LOOTS AND Danny Leclair, two hair dressers from Los Angeles, won a lottery to be married atop the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) float during the 125th Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California, on January 1. The theme for the Parade was “Living the Dream.” The AHF’s theme for its float, which was in the shape of a giant wedding cake upon which the ceremony took place, was “Living the Dream: Love is the Best Protection.” The theme was meant to celebrate the Supreme Court’s June decision to allow same-sex marriage in California, and to suggest that long-lasting, committed relationships between couples help reduce the spread of HIV, regardless of the sexes of the couples.

Is this an angel?

The photo at the top purports to show an angel at a “totally boarded-up window” in the “Upper Room” of the Church of the Dormition, which Catholic tradition says is the place where the Lord ate His last Passover meal with His apostles.

Below, left, is a picture of the hall showing the staircase landing from which Hal Lindsey spoke. The photo below, center, purports to show the windows boarded up on the upper floor.

However, the window next to Lindsey is not boarded up, and the arch is different from those shown from the outside (below, right).

The window’s type is that with a Gothic arch; the exterior of the building shows windows with Syrian or Segmental arches.

There are too many discrepancies for these claims to be taken seriously.

COMMENTARY

The gushing remarks of the parade commentators, Al Roker and Hoda Kotb (KOT-bee), underscored the celebratory nature of the same-sex marriage to which everyone on the parade route was subjected, including children. It also belied the TV-PG rating given the parade coverage.

One thought that stood out to me, besides the affront to God this float represented, is that, from the beginning of the AIDS epidemic that struck homosexuals in the United States in far greater numbers than even junkies who share needles, the homosexual community lambasted those who associated AIDS with homosexuality. They labeled as “homophobic” those who would make that association.

So why, then, does the AIDS Healthcare Foundation suggest that same connection with their float? Might it not be because they know in their hearts that homosexuality is against nature and, by its own nature, invites diseases upon those who practice it?

Ooops. There I go again with my homophobic ideas. ❖

He who stands for nothing will fall for anything.

Alexander Hamilton

Widow forgives murderers of husband in Benghazi

ANITA SMITH TOLD CNN's Anderson Cooper that she forgives the men who ambushed her husband and killed him as he was jogging in Benghazi. Ronnie Smith, a chemistry teacher at the city's International School, was slain December 5, 2013, by Muslim gunmen. Smith was jogging near the U.S. Consulate, where American Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans were slain in the infamous attack that took place September 11, 2012.

During her interview by Cooper, Anita Smith explained to Cooper that it was the Spirit of God prompting her to do so:

Anita Smith: What I want people to know about him, what he wants [people] to know about him, is really—it's not about what Ronnie did—it's what Ronnie wanted to show to the Libyan people, and that's—he wanted to shine the light and the love of Jesus to the Libyan people that he knew. He really did. He didn't want any attention onto himself about being a good guy, or a good teacher, or the fun teacher. It was just about the love and the forgiveness that we know from God. That's what he wants to leave behind.

Anderson Cooper: And I've heard you say that, I mean, you wrote a letter in part to the people who killed him, saying that you love them, and that you forgive them. That's an extraordinary thing.

AS: I do. I honestly do not have any anger towards them, and I want them to know this. I don't have—I don't want—any revenge. I just really want them to know that I do love them, and I forgive them. And Ronnie would want this.

I pray and hope that our son José will believe this, and I pray with all my heart that the attackers—that maybe this incident would call them to know the love and the forgiveness that's found in Jesus. I really do.

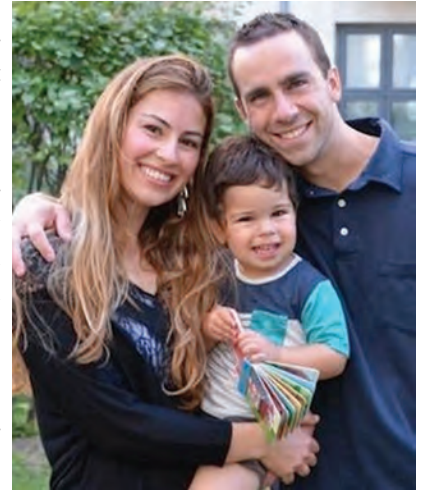
AC: Is that something you were able to feel right away? I mean, it's only been a few weeks. Sometimes, you know, people may get to that stage months or years later, but to feel that so soon, I think, is going to surprise a lot of people.

AS: The first day of the incident, I wasn't even thinking in regards—any emotions in regard to the attackers, but it came really soon. It came within that evening or the second day. It's got to be God's Spirit pouring into me, replacing that anger with His love.

Yeah, they took away my husband, and I love my husband, but it's got to be God's Spirit that's pushing me to show them that this is what God wants them to see. He wants them to see that love and forgiveness is

real, even if they've done this to my husband. And I want them to see this, and to know this.

AC: And you really feel that in your heart. You don't feel angry; you don't feel hatred toward them. I'm sorry I keep bringing this up, I think just, it's an extraordinary thing to be able to feel that.



Ronnie and Anita Smith with son José

AS: Yeah, I just envision the black Jeep driving up to him and, I don't know their faces, I just want them to know that God loves them and can forgive them for this. And, I don't know them, but, yeah, that's how I honestly feel. It may sound crazy but it's God's Spirit that's putting this inside of me.

AC: It doesn't sound crazy. It sounds like you're a remarkable person to feel this. Do you—what will you tell your child, when your child grows up, about what your husband was doing there—about what their father was doing there?

AS: We want our son José to know that we love him so much, and Ronnie loved him so much. And what Ronnie and I would want as parents for José is that God loves him more. And God wants him to know, just as Ronnie and I want him to know, is there's no greater thing to live your life for than to live for Jesus. And Ronnie didn't waste his life. And so that's what Ronnie and I want José to see.

Anita Smith's wrote an open letter to her husband's killers that is posted on the *Mail Online* website.

She is planning to return to Benghazi to visit the couple's friends and neighbors, who have rallied round and sent messages of support since the shooting.

Before the couple left for Libya, her husband had made a video for the Austin Stone Community Church, in which he said he was worried about adapting to Libyan life but felt a desire to spread a spiritual message. "If there's any single person in the entire universe that you can take a chance on," he said, "it's God."

COMMENTARY

Cooper's description of Anita Smith's expression of forgiveness was correct; it truly is extraordinary. We all must wonder just how forgiving we might be, were we found in a similar circumstance. It's not an easy thing to forgive, especially when an offense is brought so close to home. I commend Anita Smith for her willingness to be used by our Father to demonstrate His love toward all, including His and our enemies.

Ronnie Smith's murder seems senseless to us. But we do not know God's purpose in this. We may be blessed upon entering eternity to find that Anita Smith's demonstration of love touched, not only the hearts of the men who killed her husband, but the hearts of many other Muslims and even Anderson Cooper, so that they eventually came to Christ for salvation.

What a surprise that would be. Muslims, yes, we hear that many are turning to Jesus.

But a CNN anchor?

Why not? Miracles do happen.❖

VA bans religious Christmas cards

STUDENTS, PARENTS AND teachers from Grace Academy of North Texas were stunned to learn that the Christmas cards they had planned to take to veterans at the VA hospital in Dallas were banned because they contained the words "Merry Christmas" and "God bless you." The Department of Veterans Affairs has banned such religious expressions from VA facilities.

Susan Chapman, a teacher at the academy who organized the Christmas card project for veterans, sent a letter to the VA demanding the department rescind its discriminatory policies.

"It is so sad that the VA is sending a message to our children that after all the veterans have done to fight for freedom across the world, the children have no freedom to say 'Merry Christmas' or 'God Bless You' to these honorable men and women," she said.

James Meiseman, Commander of the Bill Bryan Post 110 of The American Legion (McKinney, Texas) stated, "We served to defend the Constitution of the United States and we should be protecting the rights of these children to say Merry Christmas to the veterans not censoring them."

On December 24, a lawsuit was filed against the VA on behalf of Grace Academy by Liberty Institute, a nonprofit legal group dedicated to defending and restoring religious liberty in the United States. Liberty Institute has stated:

This is not the first time the VA has been in legal trouble for engaging in religious censorship. In 2011, Liberty Institute uncovered national VA policies that unlawfully discriminated against religious speech that eventually led to a court order signed by U.S. District Judge Lynn Hughes that enforces a continuing consent decree prohibiting the VA from engaging in religious censorship.

"The VA is once again engaging in unlawful religious discrimination. It is shameful that the VA continues to censor religious speech in Christmas cards when the VA knows it is against the law to do so," said Hiram Sasser, Director of Litigation for Liberty Institute. "What makes this situation so extraordinary is that the VA's censors are now banning 'Merry Christmas.' The VA's stubborn refusal to abide by the law

and their continued censorship and unlawful discrimination against religious speech will once again force us to go to federal court to vindicate the rights of children across the country."

Paragraph 21 of the September 22, 2011 federal court order banning the VA from engaging in religious discrimination orders the VA "not to ban religious speech or words, such as "God" and "Jesus," in condolence cards or similar documents given by non-VAVS volunteer[s]." It also ordered the VA in paragraph 22 "not to ban, regulate, or otherwise interfere with the giving of gifts, including gifts that contain a religious message or viewpoint." The consent decree remains in force and federal judge Lynn Hughes retains jurisdiction to enforce the consent decree until the year 2026.

COMMENTARY

Okay, Christmas is not the real birthday of Jesus; December 25 was the date of the Roman Saturnalia in honor of the Roman god Saturn. The Roman Catholic Church took the date for the Lord's birthday as one among many transferences of pagan holidays to Christian holidays. Many Christians want nothing to do with the pagan aspects of Christmas—some want nothing to do with the day at all. Regardless of how one feels about Christmas, news like this exposes the bias against Christ (albeit in ignorance of the origins of the holiday) that is increasingly becoming the policy of the Obama administration.

While he bends over backwards to embrace aspects of Islam in White House ceremonies, the self-proclaimed "Christian" Obama seems unconcerned that government establishments under his authority continue to demonstrate bias against Christianity.

The excuse given for such bias is that the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution prohibits Congress from making any law "respecting an establishment of religion." This means that the government cannot impose any religious institution upon the people. But the Clause continues, "or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."

The left loves to convolute the first portion of the Establishment Clause by insisting that all expressions of a religious nature (read "Christian nature") must be banned from public institutions and property. But all the Clause was meant to do was prohibit any religious institution from using the power of the government to impose its religious beliefs and practices upon the citizenry. The second part of the Clause allows religious institutions and individuals the right to express their religious beliefs and practices on public property. And, yes, this means all religions, not just Christianity.

But the anti-Christ "president" and his cronies are purposely (and selectively) engaged in the practice of denying only Christians from expressing their religious beliefs, not only in government facilities, but in private business.

Brethren, be aware that the day is close at hand when any expression of true faith in Jesus will be confined to religious institutions within the perimeters of their property. The thought police are starting to crawl out from under their rocks, and will swarm like cockroaches to contaminate everything they touch.❖

Major Christian leaders join with LDS for common purposes

OF LATE, SEVERAL leaders of major Christian denominations have been making overtures toward The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), extolling the virtues of Mormonism and encouraging greater cooperation in social causes, as well as apologizing for past efforts to stigmatize Mormonism. On Monday, October 21, 2013, Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr, president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, gave a speech at Brigham Young University (BYU), in which he expressed gratitude for the opportunity to speak at “this greatly respected center of learning.”

Careful to remind his listeners that he knows what they believe, and they know what he believes, Mohler chose to address the evils of secularism and modernity which he believes threatens the spiritual and moral foundations of society. Quoting “the wonderfully prophetic Catholic novelist Flannery O’Conner,” Mohler affirmed that “we must ‘push back against the age as hard as it is pressing you.’”

Mohler’s speech assailed the evils of same-sex marriage, divorce, cohabitation, the loss of religious liberty in commerce and in the raising of children, and other woes plaguing society today.

Toward the end of his speech, Mohler did make a modest reference to the difference between his theology and that of his host Mormons:

This is what brings me to Brigham Young University today. I am not here because I believe we are going to heaven together. I do not believe that. I believe that salvation comes only to those who believe and trust only in Christ and in his substitutionary atonement for salvation. I believe in justification by faith alone, in Christ alone. I love and respect you as friends, and as friends we would speak only what we believe to be true, especially on matters of eternal significance. We inhabit separate and irreconcilable theological worlds, made clear with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity. And yet here I am, and gladly so. We will speak to one another of what we most sincerely believe to be true, precisely because we love and respect one another.

I do not believe that we are going to heaven together, but I do believe we may go to jail together. I do not mean to exaggerate, but we are living in the shadow of a great moral revolution that we commonly believe will have grave and devastating human consequences. Your faith has held high the importance of marriage and family. Your theology requires such an affirmation, and it is lovingly lived out by millions of Mormon families. That is why I and my evangelical brothers and sisters are so glad to have Mormon neighbors. We stand together for the natural family, for natural mar-

riage, for the integrity of sexuality within marriage alone, and for the hope of human flourishing.

The great Christian theologian Augustine, writing in the final years of the Roman Empire, reminded Christians that we live simultaneously as citizens of two cities: a heavenly city and an earthly city. The one is eternal, the other is passing. But the earthly city is also a city of God’s good pleasure and divine compassion. As a Christian, I am instructed by the Bible to work for the good and flourishing of this earthly city, even as I work to see as many as possible also become citizens of the heavenly city through faith in Christ Jesus.

In this city, I am honored to come among those who, though of a different faith, share common concerns and urgencies. I come as a Christian, and I come as one who is honored by your kind and gracious invitation. I come in the hope of much further conversations—conversations about urgencies both temporal and eternal. I am unashamed to stand with you in the defense of marriage and family and a vision of human sexual integrity. I am urgently ready to speak and act in your defense against threats to your religious liberty, even as you have shown equal readiness to speak and act in defense of mine. We share love for the family, love for marriage, love for the gift of children, love of liberty, and love of human society. We do so out of love and respect for each other.

Prior to Mohler, Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina, and executive editor of *The Christian Post*, also gave an address at BYU on the subjects of “family, faith, freedom and America.” After his lecture Land attended a BYU football game with Mormon leaders and then joined them to listen to the Mormon Tabernacle Choir perform with singer-songwriter and five-time Grammy Award winner James Taylor.

Dr. George O. Wood, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God has also visited with the same purpose in mind.

Stephen Webb, an evangelical writer sympathetic toward Mormonism and author of *Mormon Christianity: What Other Christians Can Learn from the Latter-day Saints*, has expressed the sentiment that such dialogue will produce “tangible benefits” for Mormons who are seeking greater acceptance within mainstream Christianity.

COMMENTARY

Mohler and, it may be assumed, the Southern Baptist Convention, evidently think that joining with religious enemies of the Gospel to war against irreligious enemies of the Gospel is somehow virtuous in the eyes of God. They don’t understand that while rejecting secular modernity they are engaging in religious modernity—an ecumenism that places the truth of God’s Word secondary to their fervor for moral and social causes. If they don’t understand this, it seems they are deluded into thinking that this kind of consorting with God’s enemies on the religious front of the spiritual battle is acceptable to God.

Would these evangelical leaders join with a homosexual organization that espoused the same values except for same-sex

(Continued on page 21)



FOUR BLOOD MOONS

(Continued from page 3)

The word “tetrad” merely means “series of four,” and may be applied to anything or any event that is found in orders of four or consecutively as four occurrences in a row.

Astronomically, then, a tetrad is the absence of partial lunar eclipses between any four consecutive total eclipses during any period of time. Tetrads are somewhat rare in geological history. Three will take place during the 21st century. One occurred 2003-2004; the next will take place 2014-2015, and the final one 2032-2033.¹

Hagee errs in stating, “There will be a fourth series of Four Blood Moons in the near future [2014-2015]. NASA has stated that this will be the last appearance of a tetrad in this century.” (p. 221) In truth, NASA predicts the final tetrad to occur 2032-2033. Yet the 2014-2015 tetrad is not insignificant because of how the previous three tetrads lined up with three very significant events in the history of Israel and the Jewish people.

Hagee’s search for understanding of the significance of tetrads in relation to Israel (particularly the modern state of Israel as opposed to the people themselves) began when he was prompted by a question put to him by Mark Biltz some six months after Hagee had founded Christians United for Israel (CUFI). As Hagee and Biltz were discussing the seven feasts of Israel and their connections to the Lord’s first and second comings, Biltz asked Hagee if he had ever studied the sun, moon and stars as a source of prophetic revelation. To Hagee’s response of “No,” Biltz responded, “You should!”

Biltz’s question haunted Hagee for some time, until one day he decided to take up Biltz’s challenge. Hagee’s first approach was to search the Internet to see if he could find scientific evidence supporting the concept of the erroneously named “blood moons” or total eclipses relative to Israel’s history. Says Hagee:

After more than an hour of finding nothing, I was ready to quit when it occurred to me that maybe God was using the heavens to send a sign to Israel and the Jewish people. I began a more focused search; I went to the NASA site and suddenly, *there it was!* It leaped off the screen, and I gasped with excitement.

The sun, moon, and stars *are unmistakably connected to Israel and biblical prophecy*—and that connection inspired this book. God will use them to light up the heavens with an urgent, top-priority message for all mankind. (p. 41; Emphasis in original)

¹ National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), “Five Millennium Catalog of Lunar Eclipses: 2001 to 2100 (2001 CE to 2100 CE)”, eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEcat5/LE2201-2100.html.

What did Hagee discover? We don’t find out until we’ve read through 130 more pages to reach Chapter 12, titled, “The Four Blood Moons and Two Feasts.” From that point on we learn the four-blood-moon theory according to Hagee’s understanding.

And here it does get interesting:

My first attempt was to open the NASA website and search for lunar signals. I’m not a computer whiz. My secretary is; I am not. But she wasn’t with me, so I just kept searching and could find nothing to validate the connection of the Four Blood Moons to prophecy....

Then I thought for a moment and remembered my conversation with Pastor Mark; maybe these lunar signs are meant for Israel. God is the defender of Israel. He created Israel. Israel is His firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). So I chose the first date that came to my mind, which was the year of Israel’s rebirth, and typed in the following statement: “Total moon eclipse in 1948.”

What I saw in the middle of the computer screen made me literally leap out of my chair.

Four “blood-red” total lunar eclipses will fall on Passover and Sukkot in 2014 and 2015, the same back-to-back occurrences at the time of 1492, 1949 and 1967.

Those three dates were the most important dates in all of Israel’s history!

There have been several Tetrads (four consecutive blood moons) since NASA first recorded their occurrences, but Tetrads linked to significant Jewish history have happened only three times in more than five hundred years. These specific occurrences could not be ignored. My further research led me to the unmistakable biblical and scientific truth that they are about to happen a fourth time. (pp. 171-172)

From these sentences, one gets the impression that Hagee read this on the NASA website. So I consulted the NASA website myself to see what would come up if I searched for “Total moon eclipse in 1948.” The response was, “Sorry, no results found for ‘Total moon eclipse in 1948.’ Try entering fewer or broader query terms.”

This prompted me to try various similar searches on the NASA website, all to no avail.

So I came to the conclusion that, in this case, Hagee’s search for this term was to the Internet in general, and not to NASA specifically. In fact, it is from Bill Koenig of *World Watch Daily*.

Searching the Internet using that term, I found that the overwhelming number of sites to which one is directed are Christian and Messianic “prophecy” sites, as well as to Hagee’s book. I found no NASA or other scientific sites responding to this search.

However, that doesn’t mean that the theory is invalid; it merely means that the world has no particular interest in even thinking about biblical prophecy or how the heavens might be used by God for signs of important events according to God’s economy. The important thing is whether or not what the

Christian websites were saying about the particular dating of the tetrads is true. And if true, then perhaps we should sit up and take notice.

So what are Hagee and the “prophecy” websites saying? How do the lunar tetrads relate to Israel, and what are they telling us? Says Hagee:

As I have stated, three Tetrads that are specifically linked to Jewish history have appeared in the past five hundred years. Each Tetrad series, consisting of four consecutive Blood Moons with a total solar eclipse occurring somewhere within the sequence of the total lunar eclipses, announced a time of tears and tribulation that would end in national triumph for the Jewish people.

In 1493–94, the first Tetrad of Blood Moons occurred on the Jewish holidays of Passover and Feast of Tabernacles:

- Passover, April 2, 1493
- Feast of Tabernacles, September 25, 1493
- Passover, March 22, 1494
- Feast of Tabernacles, September 15, 1494

Hagee notes, “There was a total solar eclipse on September 24, 1493—one day before the blood moon of the Feast of tabernacles, September 25, 1493.”

Here, Hagee introduces another peculiar aspect to the tetrad: a total solar eclipse occurring between two of the lunar eclipses.

Why would this particular tetrad be of significance to the Jewish people? According to Hagee, it signaled the Edict of Expulsion issued on March 31, 1492, by the joint Catholic monarchs of Spain (Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile), by which the Jews of Aragon and Castile were expelled in the midst of the Spanish Inquisition. Hagee notes correctly that after the Edict of Expulsion, Spain’s standing as a world power diminished greatly, and today that nation is again being overrun by Islam. It is interesting to note that 1492 was the year that Christopher Columbus, under the auspices of Ferdinand and Isabella, discovered the New World, which would offer refuge to those under religious persecution throughout Europe, including the Jews.

Hagee calls the tetrad of 1493–94 “a heavenly billboard to mankind.”

Although the Jewish feasts may coincide with full moons, the issue is that four total eclipses would occur on the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles in successive years. But if this was a signal to mankind at the time, why is it just now being discovered? There is the possibility that the Lord has withheld this information for centuries until it might be used as a guidepost for future omens. Aside from the fact that the 1493–94 tetrad occurred a year after the Edict of Expulsion, and so could not be an omen as such, it seems that the same thing occurred on the same feasts in 1949–50:

The second appearance of Four Blood Moons that are significantly linked to Jewish history was reported by NASA during 1949–50. They occurred during the rebirth of the State of Israel, which began in 1948. The mighty right hand of God gathered the Jewish people

who, beginning in AD 70, had been scattered across the earth when Titus besieged Jerusalem. The Jewish people of the Diaspora were brought back to Israel, just as the Old Testament prophets had prophesied.

This Tetrad, beginning in 1949, occurred on the Jewish holidays of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles:

- Passover, April 13, 1949
- Feast of Tabernacles, October 7, 1949
- Passover, April 2, 1950
- Feast of Tabernacles, September 26, 1950

This is impressive, and it bears consideration. Especially when we learn that another tetrad of total lunar eclipses that occurred in 1967–68 mirrored that of the previous two:

The Tetrad of Blood Moons of 1967–68 occurred on the Jewish holidays of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles:

- Passover, April 24, 1967
- Feast of Tabernacles, October 18, 1967
- Passover, April 13, 1968
- Feast of Tabernacles, October 6, 1968

Mark Biltz goes further than Hagee and others, suggesting that there have been “blood-red moons on the first day of Passover and the first day of Sukkot [Feast of Unleavened Bread] on back-to-back years seven times since 1 A.D.,” according to Bill Koenig of *World Watch Daily*.¹

Koenig states:

The others were in 162/163 A.D., 795/796 A.D., 842/843 A.D. and 860/861 A.D. We don’t have any historical connections for these years at this time, but we do know of significant Jewish persecution during the eighth and ninth centuries.

In all eight examples, the eclipses have fallen or will fall on the first day of Passover and Sukkot.

If true, these occurrences would seem to be more than mere coincidence.

Of course, the first step for me was to indeed search the NASA website for the dating of tetrads since NASA began to accumulate that data. What I found is interesting.

One cannot simply search for “tetrad(s)” on the NASA website to find any useful information. When I tried that, the only two results were 1) the particular eclipse that occurred during the blood moon of 2004, referenced above, and 2) “Apollo 11 Photogrammetry – NASA”. The latter mention of a tetrad had nothing to do with lunar eclipses, but with certain “camera locations that nearly coincide in the tetrad 5967 5970” for the Apollo 11 moon landing.

To get information on eclipses and tetrads of eclipses, one must go to the NASA Eclipse Web Site devoted exclusively to eclipses (<http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/eclipse.html>) which is a separate entity. The Introduction to this website offers this important information about eclipses in general:

Eclipses of the Moon can occur when the Moon is near one of its two orbital nodes [1] during the Full

¹ <http://www.watch.org/showart.php3?idx=104119>

Moon phase. It is then possible for the Moon to pass through Earth's penumbral or umbral shadows thereby producing an eclipse. There are three types of lunar eclipses:

Penumbral - Moon traverses Earth's penumbral shadow (Moon misses Earth's umbral shadow)

Partial - Moon traverses Earth's penumbral and umbral shadows (Moon does not pass completely into Earth's umbra)

Total - Moon traverses Earth's penumbral and umbral shadows (Moon passes completely into Earth's umbra)

Furthermore, total eclipses can be classified as either central [2] or non-central.

There is no quick method of searching through the thousands of lunar eclipses that have occurred within the time frame of five millennia that NASA provides, because NASA breaks down the eclipses into Saros cycles:

The periodicity and recurrence of lunar (and solar) eclipses is governed by the Saros cycle, a period of approximately 6,585.3 days (18 years 11 days 8 hours). When two eclipses are separated by a period of one Saros, they share a very similar geometry. The two eclipses occur at the same node [1] with the Moon at nearly the same distance from Earth and at the same time of year. Thus, the Saros is useful for organizing eclipses into families or series. Each series typically lasts 12 to 15 centuries and contains 70 or more lunar eclipses.¹

To determine if the four-blood-moons theory is accurate, one must search each of the 180 Saros, note the dates that fall into the time frames posited by the theory, then bring them all together to form the tetrad expected. For example, in Saros 92, the first eclipse of that type occurred May 17, 208, and the last eclipse of that type occurred June 13, 1470. In Saros 93, the first eclipse of that type occurred May 30, 291, and the last eclipse of that type occurred June 25, 1553.

Both types of eclipses occurred numerous times within the timeframe that fits the 1493–94 tetrad hypothesis. Besides these, there are 89 more Saros cycles (series of specific types of eclipses according to numerous factors) that would contain eclipses that could fit the 1493–94 tetrad hypothesis.

Once one selects a particular Saros, one is then met with a catalog of lunar eclipses which displays the calendar date and the phase durations for all three classifications of eclipses: penumbral, partial umbral, and total. It is the total eclipses that concern us.

We find in Saros 92 that there are listed 12 total eclipses, none of which occurred any time near 1493–94. The same is true for Saros 93 through 103.

But then, when checking Saros 104, we discover that, yes, on April 2, 1493, at approximately 1:30 AM, a total eclipse did take place; its full umbra was visible in China, Russia, Australia and what would become Alaska. A very small partial umbra was visible in Jerusalem.

Saros 105 provided no eclipses that would fit our selected time frame. Nor did Saros 106 through 108. But there, in Saros

109, we find the total eclipse of September 25, 1493, which took place at 2:23 PM. Its full umbra was visible in eastern North America, South America, West Africa, and Europe west of Italy. Its partial umbra was visible in Jerusalem.

Continuing on, in Saros 114, we find a total eclipse took place on March 22, 1494, at 1:37 AM. Its full umbra was visible in very much the same areas as was that of the April 2, 1493, total eclipse.

Saros 119 reveals the final part of the equation with a total eclipse occurring on September 15, 1494, at 6:32 AM. Its full umbra was visible in East Africa, Asia, and Asia Minor, including Jerusalem.

So we have established that the four-blood-moon theory is correct as far as there occurring on the 15th-century dates cited, total lunar eclipses.

What about the 1949–50 tetrad? Hagee and others related this tetrad to the founding of the modern state of Israel in 1948.

I again consulted the Saros information on the NASA Eclipse website, and found the following:

In Saros 121, April 13, 1949;

In Saros 126, October 7, 1949;

In Saros 131, April 2, 1950;

In Saros 136, September 26, 1950.

These all coincide with the blood-moon theory for the 1949–50 tetrad.

Next, I consulted the NASA Eclipse website for information on the 1967–68 tetrad, which would relate to the Six-Day War in which Israel gained control of the old city of Jerusalem. I found this tetrad also verified:

In Saros 121, April 24, 1967;

In Saros 126, October 18, 1967;

In Saros 131, April 13, 1968;

In Saros 136, October 6, 1968.

Amazing! What about the future predicted tetrad? Hagee states:

There will be a fourth series of Four Blood Moons in the near future. NASA has stated that this will be the last appearance of a Tetrad in this century. What historical event will take place during their occurrences that is significant to Israel and the Jewish people? (p. 221)

The next predicted tetrad of total lunar eclipses is as follows:

Passover – April 15, 2014;

Tabernacles – October 8, 2014;

Passover – April 4, 2015;

Tabernacles– September 28, 2015.

NASA's Eclipse website reveals that, indeed, there will be total lunar eclipses on those dates:

In Saros 122, April 15, 2014;

In Saros 127, October 8, 2014;

In Saros 132, April 4, 2015;

In Saros 137, September 28, 2015.

So the four-blood-moon theory is borne out through NASA's five millennia chart of eclipses. But Hagee made one error in saying that the next tetrad to occur in the near future will be the last for this century. There will be two more tetrads that will occur after that one: 2032–33 and 2043–44.

¹ <http://eclipse.gsfc.nasa.gov/LEsaros/LEsaroscat.html>.



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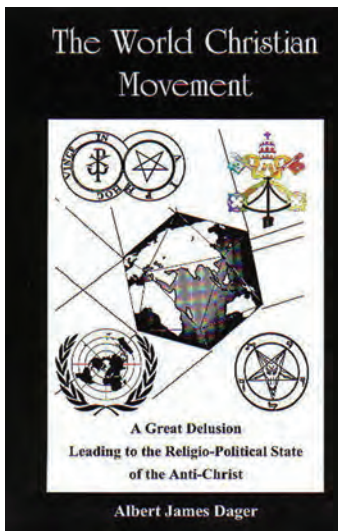
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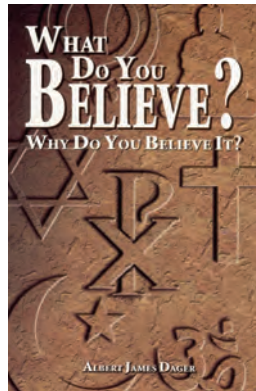
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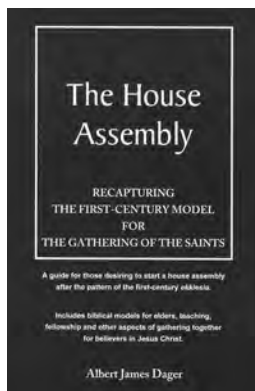
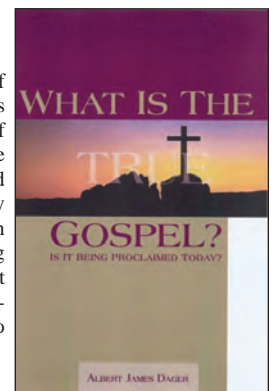


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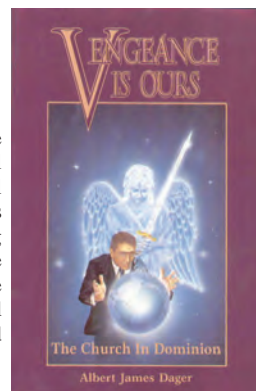


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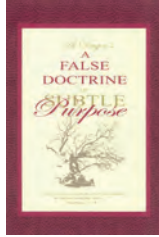
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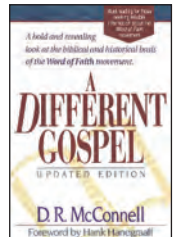


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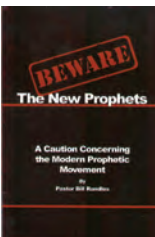


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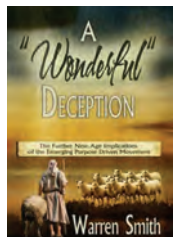


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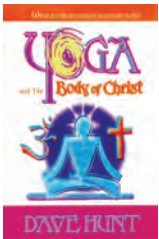


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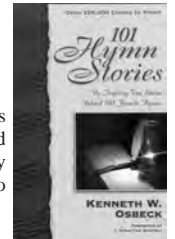


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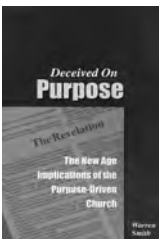
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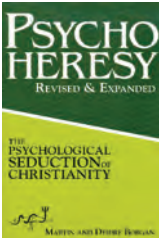


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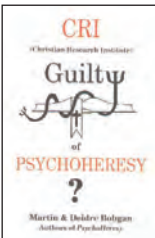


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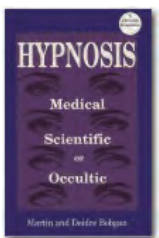


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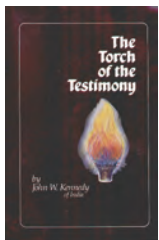


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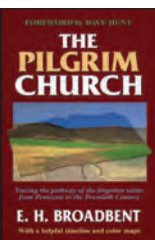


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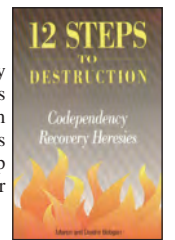


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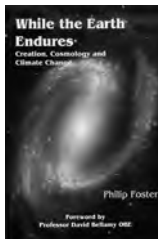
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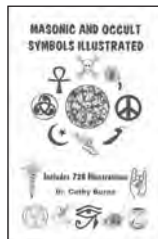
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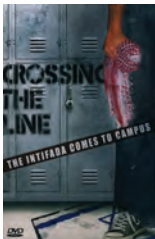
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Neither the tetrad of 1985–86 nor 2003–2004 revealed anything of substance regarding Israel in that time. But these did not occur on Jewish feast days, so they are discarded as insignificant. However, the 2014–2015 tetrad will again occur on the Jewish Passover and Feast of Tabernacles, as did the previous three tetrads cited by Hagee and those before him. So it is expected that this tetrad will portend something of great importance for Israel and the Jewish people.

So what can we do about it?

Nothing.

Although it's interesting to consider these things, there is nothing we can do about them but wait to see what, if anything, happens. And although the previous three tetrads may have come close to coinciding with the important historical events in Jewish history, they occurred after the fact, not before. The Edict of Expulsion was decreed in 1492; the tetrad occurred 1493–1494. Israel became a nation in 1948; the tetrad occurred 1949–50. The capture of Jerusalem took place in 1967; the tetrad occurred 1968–69. So the tetrads did not portend anything. And if the pattern fits, something of significance for the Jewish people and Israel should have taken place in 2013. But 2013 has passed, and nothing significant has happened.

Yet Israel lives in a perpetual state of intrigue due to being surrounded by her enemies. So although the kind of extraordinary events that preceded the previous three tetrads relative to Israel's feast days has not occurred as yet, that's not to say it won't occur. As the United States government under Barack Obama continues to show less favor toward Israel, it's very possible that her enemies may be emboldened to again attack her. But such an event would not signal the Lord's imminent return, as some are suggesting. Before that happens the man of sin must be revealed (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

We must conclude that the four-blood-moon theory has merit, although we do not know, nor can we know, until after the fact, to what the next tetrad may relate. But whatever one needs to know about this theory can be found in more detail in this article than in the whole of John Hagee's book, much of which is speculation as to what the future tetrad may portend, whether for good or evil upon Israel and the world.

The extraneous material he offers contains some errors that should be addressed lest his readers accept them at face value.

I have written in the past about Hagee's inordinate love for the state of Israel that causes him to ignore proclaiming the Gospel to the Jews, choosing rather to focus on material and emotional support for them, and to call for the destruction of the state of Israel's enemies through military action. All of this is unscriptural and contrary to the Lord's command that we love all men. It is not love to withhold the Gospel from the Jews; it is preference for goodwill over the risk of offending in the name of Christ Jesus. It may even be classified as cowardice by some.

On page 4 of his book, Hagee offers a reason for his approach through the organization he founded, Christians United for Israel (CUFI):

...The purpose of our organization is to bring Christians and Jews together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and brotherly love, in order to emphasize that what we

have in common is far greater than the differences we have allowed to separate us over the centuries. (p. 4)

We do love the Jews, but it is not brotherly love. Brotherly love pertains to brothers in the flesh or in the Spirit of God. Unbelieving Jews are not our brothers in the Spirit of God. They have been cut off from the commonwealth of the faith through their rejection of Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord. They are the enemies of God and, thus, our enemies. Yet we love them as our enemies, just as the Lord has commanded us to do. Our love should be manifested through our willingness to risk their anger and worse by bringing them the good news of their Messiah and His love for them.

Further, what we have in common is not far greater than the differences that separate us. What separates us is the Gospel of Yeshua HaMeshiach (the Gospel of Jesus the Messiah). There is nothing greater, let alone far greater, than that.

Hagee constantly cites God's promise to bless those who bless Abraham by relating the blessing to Israel. This isn't necessarily wrong, but he applies it to the secular modern state of Israel when, in truth, it should be applied to the people alone, not to the godless Zionist state. Now, our readers know that we, too, prefer Israel to her anti-Christ Muslim neighbors in any conflict. And we are all for the other nations giving her aid up to a point. But God is Israel's (the people) protector. We must agree with Him to bring upon the nation whatever He desires to lead them to faith in His Son. Scripture tells us that this will happen only when they look on Him whom they have pierced, and then they will mourn (Zechariah 12:10).

Hagee confuses "the laws of Moses" with the rabbinical laws that developed over the centuries:

Biblical evidence of God's promised blessing is found in Luke 7, where a Roman centurion who had a sick servant wanted the Rabbi from Nazareth to come into his home and heal his servant. Jesus was an observant Jew; yet He would have to break the laws of Moses to enter the house of a Gentile, who was considered unclean. (p. 5)

Nowhere in the Law of Moses is it forbidden for Israelites to enter the home of Gentiles. That was a rabbinic prohibition. The Lord never broke, nor would He ever consider breaking, the Law of Moses while He walked the earth as a mortal man.

Jesus healed the sick servant because a Gentile had performed a practical act of kindness to bless Israel and the Jewish people. (p. 5)

No, Jesus healed the sick servant to bless the centurion for his faith:

When Jesus heard these things, He marveled at him, and turned around, and said to the people who followed Him, "I say to you, I have not found a greater faith—no, not in Israel." (Luke 7:9)

Another of Hagee's appeals is, "We are commanded to pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

Praying for the peace of Jerusalem is not a request—it's a command! "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you" (Psalm 122:6)...

When you pray for Jerusalem, you are praying for world peace. History proves that when there is peace in Jerusalem, there is peace in the world. When there is war in Jerusalem, the blood flows on planet earth. (p. 7)

None of this is true. There have been wars throughout the earth at times Jerusalem was at peace, and there will never be peace on earth until the Lord returns to establish His Kingdom on earth. Even then there will be rebellion in the hearts of men, which will lead to the final battle of Gog and Magog against the King in Jerusalem at the end of the Millennial Age.

The words of the Psalmist to "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" must be kept in context.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go into the house of YHWH."

Our feet shall stand within your gates, O Jerusalem.

Jerusalem is built like a city that is compacted together, where the tribes go up, the tribes of YHWH, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of YHWH. For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Those who love you shall prosper. Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.

For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, "Peace be within you. Because of the house of YHWH our God I will seek your good. (Psalms 122)

David's appeal to pray for the peace of Jerusalem centered on the house of Yahweh—the tabernacle and the temple that would be built by his son, Solomon. Without the temple, Jerusalem was no more than any other city. The history of Jerusalem has been that of a harlot; it has been defiled time and again by the unfaithful Israelites, and will be trodden under the feet of the Gentiles until the Time of the Gentiles is ended. Even now, although controlled by the Israeli government, Jerusalem remains a ward of the nations. And three apostate religions lay claim to it: Roman Catholicism, rabbinical Judaism and Islam. There will be no peace in Jerusalem until the Lord brings it Himself. To pray for it in the interim is contrary to His prophetic Word.

Hagee also applies the prophecies of Ezekiel to the present age:

God is going to shake the world with "signs in the heavens" when He personally destroys the Iranian and Russian armies that invade Israel in the Gog Magog War of Ezekiel 38. (p. 5)

Ezekiel 38 is a prophecy related to the Millennial Age, not the present age. Gog and Magog will attack the city of Jerusalem that will be dwelling in safety after Israel is brought back into the land by the Lord at His return:

Son of man, set your face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, "YHWH says this: 'Look! I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of

Meshech and Tubal. After many days you shall be visited; in the latter years you will come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have always been waste. But it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them...."

YHWH says this: "It shall also happen that at the same time things will come into your mind, and you will think an evil thought. And you will say, 'I will go up to the land of un-walled villages; I will go to those that are at rest, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey"—to turn your hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, who have gotten cattle and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land. (Ezekiel 38:2-12)

Jerusalem sits within the walls being erected by the Israeli government. The people are not living in safety. Israel is under constant threat of invasion and destruction. Virtually every citizen is armed and on alert. Ezekiel 38 speaks of a different time than the present. Even if it were speaking of this age and not the Millennial Age.

Hagee reiterates his often-stated phrase: "Christianity cannot explain its existence without Judaism. That's why our faith is referred to as the *Judeo-Christian faith*. Our roots are found in Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (Emphasis in original).

The roots of our faith are indeed found in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the term "Judeo-Christian" has nothing to do with our faith for two reasons: 1) that term is an invention of theologians; it is not biblical; 2) it is based on the erroneous assumption that Christianity grew out of Judaism.

Judaism is an apostate pretender to the faith of Abraham, and even of Moses. It is a mishmash of rabbinic tradition, Tanakh truth, and Jewish Qabbala. Christianity is a mishmash of Roman Catholicism, biblical truth, and Gnosticism. True faith in Jesus Christ is found in the Word of God and nowhere else.

Finally, why, throughout the book, Hagee opts for the acronyms BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) in place of BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini [Year of Our Lord]) respectively is a puzzle. Is it to pander to the Jews and other anti-Christians who reject our Lord?

There are many other erroneous assumptions posited by Hagee, particularly along the lines of his dispensational eschatology. But we will leave it at this with the caution that our faith is not guided by the elements; it is guided by the inerrant, Holy-Spirit-inspired Word of God.

Whatever happens in the heavens, we trust the Lord to show us the meaning in His time. Let us trust God's Word, not man's esoteric theories, for our future. ❖

Evangelical leaders join with Mormons

(Continued from page 11)

marriage? That's not so far-fetched. One argument that conservative self-professed Christian homosexuals put forward is that they are for all these same things, with the exception that they believe same-sex marriage is honorable to God.

The answer from evangelical ecumenists might be, "But that one thing is enough to keep us from joining with them because same-sex marriage is an affront to God."

And the Mormon "Jesus" isn't an affront to God?

Their god that was once a man isn't an affront to God?

Their gospel of salvation through submission to their pagan temple ordinances is not an affront to God?

To be truthful, these evangelical Christian leaders have more in common with self-professed Christian homosexuals than they do with Mormons. The reason they don't see this is because their focus is on temporal matters, not spiritual matters.

They would deny this, of course, but to ignore the false gospel of Mormonism in order to bolster their moral stance on social issues places those issues above the Gospel of the Kingdom. "Christian" homosexuals largely affirm the true Gospel, even if they have been deceived by the enemy to think they can engage in their sin with impunity.

These are all spiritual deceptions. Evangelical leaders have just chosen the deception they feel is more palatable to them.

Let us not forget the Lord's warning about false christs arising in the last days (Matthew 24:24-25).

There are many false christs in the world today. More difficult to discern are the false prophets who come as wolves in sheep's clothing—men and women who are held in high esteem within their particular institutions.

I knew Dr. Wood personally when he was pastor of Newport-Mesa Christian Center in Costa Mesa, California. I admired him then because he exhibited soundness in his teaching. His church was not a radical Pentecostal or charismatic madhouse. I sent him a personal letter expressing these same concerns. His answer was that he believes he was prompted by the Holy Spirit:

Thanks, Al, for your note. I did read it. I did not err in what I did.

As I have talked with our pastors in Utah, they all believe that my being at BYU and meeting with LDS leaders has been of help to our Assemblies of God pastors and other evangelical leaders (who are in a ministry called Standing Together). I would rather receive counsel from those who are working closest to the situation; and, I believe also that the Spirit bade me go.

Blessings!

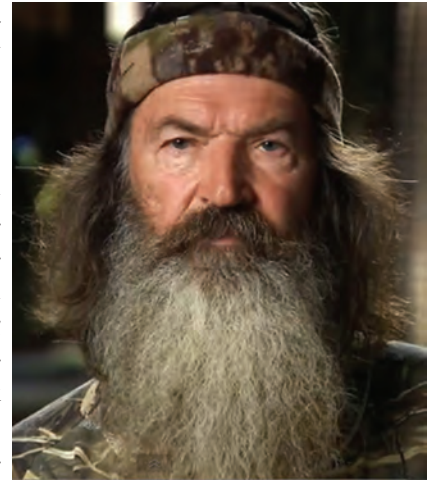
George Wood

I believe Dr. Wood and all of these men are sincere in their belief that God's people can work alongside God's enemies while not only ignoring their aberrant doctrines, but neglecting to call out their spiritual errors.

Let us pray that their eyes be opened and they repent. ❖

O'Reilly says Phil Robertson wrong to condemn homosexuals.

FOX NEWS'S BILL O'Reilly, author of *Killing Jesus* (see our analysis in Vol. 36 – No. 3), has criticized *Duck Dynasty* patriarch Phil Robertson for making so-called homophobic comments which resulted in his being banned from the program by A&E network (and recently reinstated).



Duck Dynasty's Phil Robertson

"Mr. Robertson, I believe, made a mistake by the condemnation line.

It's not about the Bible, or believing or not believing in the Bible," said O'Reilly on his December 19 program.

"It's singling out a group," he continued. "It could be any group, and saying to that group, 'Hey, you are not worthy in the eyes of the Lord, or in the eyes of God. You are not worthy because of who you are.' So once you get that personal, once you get down and into that kind of a realm, problems arise."

In his "Talking Points Memo," O'Reilly offered what he called "a biblical analysis of the Gospels in question."

"Robertson has a constitutional right to define his religious beliefs but is misguided by targeting specific groups of people for damnation," O'Reilly said. "If you adhere to the Christian philosophy you know that Jesus was quite clear, all judgments about the consequences of sin are to be made by God and God alone. We're all sinners, and because of that the Gospel of Luke 6:37, mandates—mandates that Christian human beings refrain from judging others. Again, that is God's prerogative.

"Now you either buy into Christianity or you don't. So Mr. Robertson's vision is flawed, according to Luke. As I said last night, this controversy is helping anti-Christian forces in the USA. The secular progressive movement seizes upon stuff like this to portray Christians as cruel fanatics. People only interested in imposing their point of view on the nation."

"Jesus was adamantly against bad behavior that injures other people but he would not condemn a woman in his presence who was an adulteress," O'Reilly said.

"And time and time the Nazarene persuaded folks that his way of living was worthy because it was so compassionate. Homosexual Americans should not be demonized just like devout Christians should not be demonized and people who

have strong beliefs should understand the big picture. Portraying gay Americans as sinners gives license to harm them. It's insulting and demeaning."

O'Reilly did, however, criticize A&E's decision to suspend Robertson, claiming it was meant "to marginalize a Christian who has a big platform."

COMMENTARY

I'm not a fan of *Duck Dynasty*, and I am well aware of the earthier side of the program's content, but the Robertson family has been very clear about their faith in Jesus Christ. The controversy around Phil Robertson began with an interview he gave to GQ magazine in which he used graphic language to explain how he cannot understand why any man would choose another man over a woman.

In the article, written by Drew Magary, Robertson made only one mention of homosexuality being a sin:

"That's just me. I'm just thinking: There's more there! She's got more to offer. I mean, come on, dudes! You know what I'm saying? But hey, sin: It's not logical, my man. It's just not logical."

Such an innocuous statement has caused apoplexy among the anti-Christ elements in the media. Imagine how the apostle Paul would be treated if he were with us today.

In spite of the Robertsons eschewing of profanity and cussing on their program, Magary peppers his article with such raw language in obvious disdain for the man he was interviewing.

More to the point concerning O'Reilly's criticism of Robertson, the *Duck Dynasty* star did not condemn anyone to "hell." Nor did he make any disparaging remarks about homosexuals. In essence, all he said was that he couldn't understand why any man would want to practice the filthy, perverse acts that homosexuals practice with each other, rather than the wonderful thing God created for men and women together.

It's just like the leftist media and sycophants of the LGBT community to twist the words of those who call the sin of homosexuality what it is. How can calling such perverseness "sin" be "insulting and demeaning"? How do you insult or demean sin?

Had Robertson called out an individual by name and condemned him to damnation he would have been out of line; God's grace and mercy is extended to all men who repent of their sins, and no one can say who will or will not come to Him for salvation. But to call out a militant movement or a sin that is practiced, condoned and celebrated by groups of people is not unloving. It may, as O'Reilly said, give the leftists reason to portray Christians as cruel fanatics, but what's new about that? They're going to call Christians that anyway. How does it honor the Lord to refrain from calling sin what it is? The left has been effective in convincing especially the younger generation that homosexuality is perfectly acceptable, even to some weird concept of a god. O'Reilly has unwittingly played into the hands of the left by joining them in their condemnation of Phil Robertson.

Or does he not think of homosexuality as a sin? Considering how he picks and chooses which parts of Scripture should be accepted, it's difficult to understand how he can offer his commentary as a biblical analysis. ❖

Senate bill to prevent gov. from penalizing religious groups for refusing to perform same-sex marriages

SEN. Mike Lee (R-Utah) has introduced a bill that would prevent the Internal Revenue Service from denying tax-exempt status to any person or group that refuses to perform same-sex marriages.

"What we're talking about here is the freedom of religious belief, the freedom of a church, for example, to adhere to its own religious doctrine so that it cannot be discriminated against by the government," said Lee in an interview with *Newsmax*.

Citing Obamacare mandates for contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs, Lee said the federal government's failure to protect religious liberty was a "key motivation" for him to introduce the "Marriage and Religious Freedom Act," which protects clergy from being punished for refusing to perform same-sex marriages.

Noting that Obama has specifically stated he has no intention of revoking the tax-exempt status of any church that does not recognize gay marriage, Lee stated, "In light of the fact he said that, I think it's important that we memorialize that in legislation. If he in fact feels that way, then he should be just fine with this legislation."

COMMENTARY

Lee's bill is receiving bi-partisan support, although a similar measure in the House of Representatives may not have enough support from the Democrats. Thus, Lee is all the more determined that the Senate bill passes.

The United States is in a cultural battle for its life. The more the government forces its will upon the people's consciences through mandated "tolerance" of sexual perversion, the closer we are coming to being judged as a nation by Almighty God.

With all respect to the office of the president, this administration has proven itself the most ungodly and perverse representation of the American people. It is a disgrace and a shame upon a nation that not only tolerates such an administration, but fawns over it as the answer to the woes it has created.

Let's just get it over with. ❖



Obamacare discriminates against married couples

CONSERVATIVE POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS have analyzed how Obamacare will affect married couples by penalizing them through lowered health-care subsidies.

Robert Rector, senior research fellow for health policy at the Heritage Foundation, has said that Obamacare “really places a very high financial reward on particularly middle-aged and other couples to cohabit rather than to be married. Charging that Obamacare shows what little value Obama and “liberals” (read Marxists) place on the institution of marriage, Rector stated:

The liberals have been anti-family for decades. They have a welfare system, which for poor people deliberately penalizes them when they get married. They treat marriage as some sort of medieval institution that should be done away with. I think this says a lot about liberalism as an ideological movement.

According to Rector, many married couples will lose thousands of dollars in federal subsidies that are granted to singles. The law, he said, “is designed so that you get a subsidy based on your income, but if you are married, the two incomes are added together.”

“The higher the income, the less support you get from government, meaning a couple who cohabitates, their incomes are treated separately. If they marry, their incomes are put together and their subsidy goes down,” said Rector.

“I think this is absolutely horrible public policy,” says Bryan Fischer, director of issues analysis for the American Family Association.

“Public policy should incentivize marriage, support marriage, strengthen marriage, affirm marriage. And here is a massive piece of legislation that penalizes marriages,” Fischer said.

Fischer said he watched one anecdotal news account of a couple in New York who were considering divorce because they could not afford healthcare if they stay married.

“In other words, we’re way past the point now where this is just a theoretical issue. This is already having a direct impact on people’s lives,” Fischer said.

“We have enough challenges as a culture trying to preserve and protect intact marriages and families, so the last thing we need to do is reward people for breaking up,” he added.

“Liberals have a vested interest in seeing single women not get married,” Fischer said. “Single women represent a reliable voting block for liberal causes.”

Rector said the incentive not to marry or to divorce could amount to thousands of dollars each year, which could add up to substantial amounts for those who are aging.

“Clearly that would affect matrimonial choices for some people,” he said.

“I think some couples will actually divorce because they can get \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year. People look at this as a one-year thing, but this a very large amount of money over the course of 10 or 15 years,” he said.

COMMENTARY

Now that the Affordable Care Act (Obamacare) has passed so that Sen. Nancy Pelosi could find out what is in it, we are beginning to find out what is in it besides reduced care for the elderly and death panels which will determine who is worthy of the government’s care. It seems deliberately designed to punish people for marrying rather than cohabitating.

Well, this may be just the answer the National Organization for Marriage and other Christian right groups have been working toward and praying for. An incentive for same-sex couples not to marry.

Why not? Nothing else has worked. ❖

HS valedictorian rips up approved speech; says Lord’s Prayer

RAY COSTNER IV, valedictorian for his graduating class at Liberty High School in Pickens, South Carolina, stunned his audience when he abruptly tore up the pre-approved speech and proceeded to thank his parents for leading him to Christ at an early age. He then recited the Lord’s Prayer, bringing cheers and applause from many in attendance.

Costner’s purpose was to demonstrate public disapproval of the Pickens County School District’s decision to forbid prayers at all school events in response to complaints from atheist activists.

“Those that we look up to,” said Costner, “they have helped carve and mold us into the young adults that we are today. I’m so glad that both of my parents led me to the Lord at a young age,” he said. “And I think most of you will understand when I say, ‘Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name....’”

And that’s when the cheers began.

Concluding the prayer, he pointed toward the sky, “For thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, Amen.”

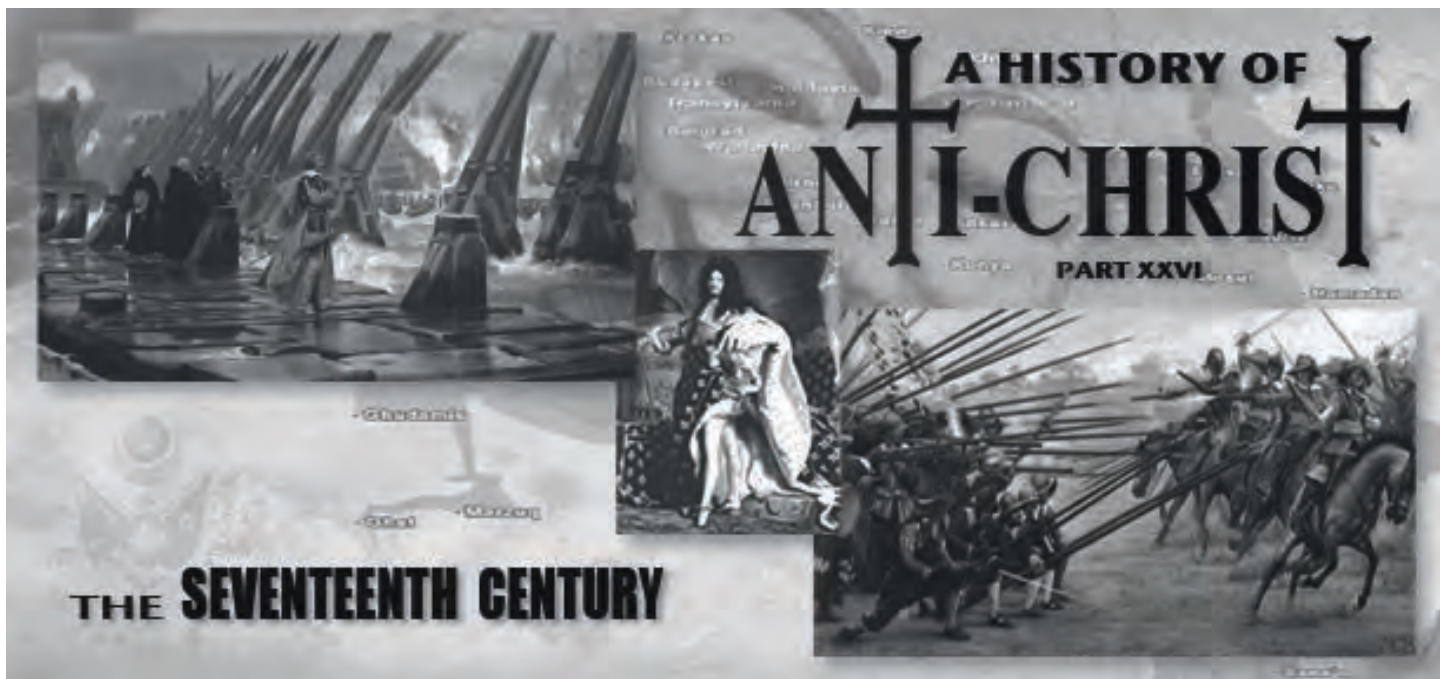
The school district has no ability to punish the former student for his actions because he is no longer under its authority.

COMMENTARY

Some Christians might think that believers in Jesus should never display what may be perceived as an act of rebellion. But is the exercise of a constitutionally-granted right to free speech truly rebellion? I believe this young man demonstrated that the Constitution of the United States, and, even the higher authority of God, trumps a cowed school district’s policy.

Yes, this could open the door to religious prayers to other gods by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and others. But that would be between them and the true God. He will be their judge.

Ray Costner IV has given us hope for at least some of the youth coming up these days. ❖



THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY began with much turmoil in Christendom. Beginning in 1600, the Ottoman Turks attacked Central Europe and occupied large areas there, in the Middle East and in North Africa. Persecution of Christians and Jews throughout the Ottoman Empire (although not in all areas) served anti-Christ’s objective to hinder the Gospel and destroy as many of God’s people as possible.

It is estimated that the Russian famine of 1601–1603 killed about one-third of the Russian population.

In 1603 the Shogun Era (military dictatorship) began in Japan when Tokugawa Iyeyasu seized power. He began a pogrom against Christian missionaries and drove out European traders, ending the great period of Portuguese trading there. The shogunate lasted until 1868.

In India, upon the death of the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev, in 1606, Sikhism, which was founded in the early 16th century, began to gain political strength. Sikhism holds a seemingly contradictory concept of a god that is both transcendent apart from, and yet immanent to creation. It also believes in a form of reincarnation similar to karma. Contrary to the belief of some, Sikhism is not the same as Hinduism, although it draws from some aspects of Hinduism and, to a lesser degree, other religions.

The 17th century saw a great surge in witchcraft in Europe, which displaced many Christian influences. This occurred while conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Europe continued to make the Gospel of little effect. As well, there were protracted wars between Christian nation states. The Anglo-Dutch Wars lasted 22 years as the Dutch and English fought for supremacy over trade routes. The Dutch also fought against the French through many land wars from 1672 to 1713. Louis XIV, known as “the Sun King,” sought to make France the most powerful country in Europe through numerous military campaigns. The Thirty Years War was a terrible series of wars that started with a religious dispute in Bohemia.

Just as in ancient Israel, when God’s chosen were unfaithful, witchcraft proliferated, so, too, in Christian Europe, the more Christian factions warred against one another the easier it was for anti-Christ to goad people into alternate forms of worship. If the Christian God was represented by bloodshed, greed and warfare, why should the formerly pagan people not return to their roots?

The Great Elizabethan Age came to an end in 1603 with the death of Elizabeth I. We have previously discussed the ascension of King James I of England and his commissioning the Church of England to produce his Authorized Version of the Bible, which has been a formidable weapon by true believers against the spiritual forces of darkness. For this, and many other reasons, anti-Christ deigned to keep Christendom on the edge of extinction through continual conflict between warring Christian denominations.

Thus, James’s reign would be threatened by Roman Catholics who were unhappy with his treatment of Catholics, even though Catholics retained high offices during his reign. This led to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, also known as the Jesuit Treason.

The object of the plot was to blow up the House of Lords with the hope of assassinating James I, and installing his nine-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth, as the Catholic head of state. Led by Robert Catesby, a recusant Catholic (one who refused to swear the Oath of Supremacy or attend Anglican services in England), the Gunpowder Plot was discovered through an anonymous letter sent to William Parker, 4th Baron Monteagle. During a search of the House of Lords, one of the conspirators, Guy Fawkes, was found guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder—enough to totally annihilate the English Parliament. Eight of the conspirators, including Fawkes, were convicted and sentenced to be hanged, drawn and quartered.

Although Fawkes is most often identified with the Gunpowder Plot, it was Catesby who was the architect of the rebellion.

It appears as if the Jesuits were associated with the plot because a particular Jesuit priest, Henry Garnet, allegedly knew of the plot, possibly through hearing the confession of one of the conspirators. Because he was bound by oath to the confidentiality of the confessional he could not divulge the plot to the authorities. He was convicted of treason and executed.

As a side note, confidentiality of the confessional would not have prevented Garnet from divulging the plot, as long as he did not name the person from whom he learned of it. And he certainly could have informed the authorities anonymously. By remaining silent he was complicit in the conspiracy.

Roman Catholicism gained much prestige with the completion of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1612. It remains the cathedral of the Roman bishop—the pope—and is the largest Christian church in the world. Anti-Christ's use of Roman Catholicism to destroy the ability of individuals to possess the Bible would continue as the political and religious power of the papacy fought against the Protestant Reformation through every means and opportunity available.

The 17th century saw many innovations in science, technology, literature, art and other human endeavors. In 1605 Cervantes wrote *Don Quixote*, the first proper novel; in 1607 forks were introduced as eating utensils in Italy; 1608 saw the invention of the first telescope by Dutchman Hans Lippershey; in 1623 William Shakespeare's plays were published in book form for the first time under the title, *First Folios*. The brilliant Italian astronomer and physicist, Galileo Galilei gains prominence for many inventions and discoveries, including the fact that Copernicus was correct that the earth revolves around the sun, thus igniting the pope's animosity for challenging the ancient superstition that the earth is the center of the universe.

Until the 17th century, much of the most important world history, and certainly the warfare between Christ and the anti-Christ, was confined to the Middle East as the center of God's plan for earth, and the Christianized Western Europe. As exploration of the New World began to increase, spreading Christianity to theretofore unknown parts of the world, the battleground increased substantially. Now the forces of darkness would be spread far and wide with more intensity than ever.

THE NEW WORLD

With the discovery of the New World, there came an increase in mankind's travels to find riches and new opportunities for a better life, particularly by Europeans. At first, the nations were content to send out explorers to garner the natural resources and riches of the relatively untouched land. But the New World would prove to be too small for the nations that sought to expand their boundaries through colonization. The prospect of wealth and freedom created ideal conditions for the anti-Christ to use the inherent pride and greediness of men to goad the Christian nations of Europe into warfare over the territories.

In 1607, the first permanent English colony in North America, Virginia, was established by the Virginia Company of London as "James Fort." Under the leadership of Captain John Smith, Jamestown survived harsh conditions and attacks by the Powhatan nation.

Smith was the first to call the region New England, and trained the settlers how to farm and work to sustain the colony, thus enabling it to survive. Paraphrasing the biblical admonition of Paul to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 3:10), he proclaimed, "He who does not work, shall not eat."



Captain John Smith

Jamestown served as the capital from 1616 to 1699. Eleven more of the final thirteen colonies would be founded during the 17th century: Massachusetts (1620); New Hampshire (1623); Maryland (1632); Connecticut (1635); Rhode Island (1636); Delaware (1638); North Carolina (1653); South Carolina (1663); New Jersey (1664); New York (1664); Pennsylvania (1682). The thirteenth colony, Georgia, would not be founded until 1732.

Pertinent to this study, the First Charter of Virginia (granted by James I of England) stated:

We, greatly commending, and graciously accepting of, their Desires for the Furtherance of so noble a Work, which may, by the Providence of Almighty God, hereafter tend to the Glory of his Divine Majesty, in propagating of Christian Religion to such People, as yet live in Darkness and miserable Ignorance of the true Knowledge and Worship of God, and may in time bring the Infidels and Savages, living in those parts, to human Civility, and to a settled and quiet Government: DO, by these our Letters Patents, graciously accept of, and agree to, their humble and well-intended Desires...

The second charter (May 23, 1609) iterated in different words these same sentiments, but added that no Roman Catholic should enter the colony unless they express allegiance to the Oath of Supremacy.

The third charter (March 12, 1611) affirmed the same but in less stringent words, omitting mention of Roman Catholicism.

The colony of Massachusetts received a similar charter from King James I, expressing the desire that the colony, in addition

to its purposes of commerce, would be a source of conversion to “the Indians Natives of the Country to the knowledge and obedience of the onely true God and Saviour of Mankinde and the Christian Faith which his royall Majestie our Royall Grandfather king Charles the first in his said Letters Patents declared was his Royall Intentions...”

Charles also granted a charter for the entire Province of Carolina, but in 1691, dissent over the governance of the province led to a split between the northern and southern districts. South Carolina was never chartered independently, although North Carolina was later granted a charter by Charles II.

James I’s successor, Charles I, further administered his father’s intentions that the colonies act as missionary outposts for the spread of the Christian faith by stating so in the charters he granted to Maryland.

Charles found himself embroiled in warfare against the armies of the English and Scottish parliaments during the English Civil War. Defeated in 1645, he was handed over to the English Parliament by his Scottish captors. Refusing to accept Parliament’s demand for a constitutional monarchy, Charles was imprisoned. After escaping and being recaptured he was sent in exile to the Isle of Wight. He was eventually tried, convicted and executed for high treason under the army’s general Oliver Cromwell in January, 1649.

The Interregnum in England ended when Charles’s son, Charles II, took the throne of England upon the start of the Restoration of the Monarchy. Charles II continued in his father’s and grandfather’s footsteps regarding the colonies, granting new charters that contained much the same provisions as before.

Although a number of the colonies had been founded years earlier, their charters came much later under Charles II. These were Connecticut, Rhode Island, Delaware, Pennsylvania and North Carolina.

Only the colonies of New York, New Hampshire and New Jersey were never directly chartered by the English monarchy, and so no such references to the lordship of Jesus Christ, the Christian faith, or the desire for the conversion of the natives to Christianity is mentioned in any of their constitutions or other legal papers.

Territories in other parts of the Americas granted to loyal subjects by the kings of Spain, France and Portugal often carried references to these same desires, but directed toward the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy.

Even so, anti-Christ has worked over the centuries to divest the United States of America of any knowledge or understand-

ing of the faith (although often misplaced) that was intended to guide the governance of the New World nations. So, too, anti-Christ has managed to substitute other religions for the allegiance of Americans. It is no little thing to realize that, whereas the intent of the early colonists was to convert the American Indians to the Christian faith, today American Indian religion is gaining popularity among former Christians.

The native populations living in the Americas during the time of colonization were still very primitive in their technologies, although they did manage in some areas to build large civilizations by ancient standards.

Central and South America

The major civilizations of the New World were principally the Maya, the Aztecs and the Incas of Central and South America.

The Maya civilization began around 2000 BC and reached its peak during the Classic period (c. AD 250 to 900) when it occupied most of Mesoamerica, from today’s central Mexico to northern Costa Rica. It continued until the arrival of the Spanish.

Around AD 1100 the Incas recognized their first king, Sinchi Roca. The Inca kingdom continued until it was transformed into an empire sometime in the early 13th century. At its peak, the Incan Empire stretched along the western coast of South America, encompassing present-day Peru, Bolivia, most of Ecuador, and northern Chili. With the arrival of the Spanish the destruction of the Incan Empire began, culminating in a final victory over the last ruler, Túpac Amaru, in 1572.

The Aztec Empire was a newer civilization that ruled the area in and around the Valley of Mexico, a highlands plateau in central Mexico. The empire grew out of a triple alliance that developed after protracted 15th-century warfare over the territory among competing kings. Although the Aztecs did not expand their territory beyond the valley, the population grew to over 1 million people by 1520. The empire met its demise when the Spanish conquered all of Mexico during the 16th century.

Although with the Spanish Conquistadores came missionaries determined to convert the native peoples of the Americas to Christ, many of the conversions were accomplished through force and persecution. And the conversions were not to Christ as much as to Roman Catholicism. At the time the Pilgrims from England were establishing the Reformed faith among the natives in the New England colonies, the Papacy’s emissaries were establishing Roman Catholicism among the natives of western North America all the way to the southernmost tip of



Charles I of England



Charles II of England

South America. If any gospel was going to sway the natives from their animist religions, anti-Christ was going to make sure that as many as possible would be shuttled into one form of false Christianity or another.

By the 17th century the southern areas of the Americas became a mishmash of Roman Catholic/pagan culture and religion. In truth, the Roman Catholic missionaries allowed the natives to engage in their satanic rituals as long as they were practiced under the watchful eye of a Catholic priest. Even today, there can be found in Mexico and many Central and South American churches, pagan rituals alongside the Catholic Mass.

Also, in the process of “converting” the natives, unspeakable atrocities were committed against the native populations. However, it must be pointed out that the overall material welfare of those native populations was greatly enhanced due to the superior industrial and technological achievements that grew in Western Europe. That does not justify the often-imposed slavery and servitude that the natives suffered, but the truth is that they suffered those same things under their rulers and other conquering native tribes. What the Spanish accomplished, at least, was the elimination of human sacrifices and unsanitary religious practices. But beyond that, anti-Christ religions in one form or another have dominated.

North America

As the Spanish were enslaving the native populations of Central and South America, there began a period in North America that would leave a black mark on the history of an otherwise admirable civilization, superior to any that had ever existed anywhere in the world prior, or that would most likely ever exist again.

Slavery in North America began in 1619 when the first boatload of African slaves arrived in the colony of Jamestown, Virginia, to bolster the labor force for various crops, most notably tobacco. Prior to the introduction of African slaves, wealthy European settlers relied on indentured servants, mostly poorer Europeans. There were many problems with indentured servants, including a high mortality rate. Also, many left for better positions after they had become skilled workers. Add to this the fact that the English economy had improved over time, resulting in fewer willing to suffer the perils of travel to the New World.

The conditions were ripe for anti-Christ to institute an evil that would, to this day, threaten the stability of the one nation throughout history that would become the wealthiest and yet godliest, apart from Israel under David and Solomon. With the arrival of a Dutch ship carrying the first African slaves, human greed overrode the faith to which the Christian settlers claimed allegiance. There grew a lucrative business of importing and selling slaves throughout the American colonies.

Although history teachers and the media focus their attention on slavery in the south of what would become the United States of America, less than 7% of the twelve million slaves imported from Africa were sent to work in British North America. The vast majority of slaves were imported to sugar colonies in the Caribbean. Originally colonized by Spain, the Spaniards enslaved the native populations to work the sugar cane fields, and supplemented that labor with slaves imported from Africa. Later, after the decline of the Spanish Empire, the British would take over the lucrative sugar trade and import even more slaves from Africa. Over one-third of all African slaves were sent to Brazil, which had been colonized by the Portuguese, and by 1800 the slave trade yielded 88 percent of Brazil’s revenue.¹

Most of the slave owners in North America would have identified with one or another Christian denomination, both Catholic and Protestant, but one little-mentioned fact about the slave trade is that the majority of slave traders in Africa were Muslims who contracted with African tribal kings to buy their strongest subjects and sell them in the Americas.

Even so, that Christians would join with them in the evils of slavery demonstrates how far from the faith anti-Christ was able to move them through greed. It may have been argued that it wasn’t greed as much as necessity to maintain one’s business that required the importation of slaves. That may fly in the presence of unregenerate men, but God will ultimately judge slavery for the evil it is.



A slave market in sub-Saharan Africa

Some point to God’s provision for slavery in the Bible to justify the kind of slavery that was engaged in throughout the New World. And it is true that slavery as an institution is not prohibited in Scripture. An Israelite could purchase slaves with certain provisions; he could also acquire slaves through the conquest of Israel’s enemies, and for repaying of debt. But in all instances slaves were to be treated with kindness and even had the opportunity to become members of their master’s family under certain conditions.

Slavery in the Americas was often brutal, certainly lacking any aspect of love toward one’s fellow man. Some slaves were treated with kindness, particularly those indentured to small landowners. The large plantations were the most harsh and destructive toward not only the bodies, but the minds and morale of their slaves.

In any case, this great evil of slavery gave justification for anti-Christ to attack the new nation that would come into existence in the next century. Today the United States of America is paying for having engaged in such brutal slavery, and for myriad other sins that may have been stifled early on due to the moral climate that existed then, but has always been in the sinful hearts of men. ❖

¹ *The Encyclopedia of World History: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern Chronologically Arranged*, Peter N. Stearns, Gen. Editor (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2001), p. 394.



Testing

DUE TO SOME bad teaching in churches and the Christian media, there are some within Christianity who believe that Christians should always live a victorious life, defined as having good health and prosperity (to varying degrees) according to their faith. They believe that the more faith they have, the more they will avoid difficult times. Faith itself becomes the object of faith, rather than the Lord. But the reality is that those who believe this way suffer just as much as those who do not believe that way, and those who do not believe that way enjoy the same degree of blessings as those who do believe that way. The question is, how do we respond when the trials, tribulations, temptations and other forms of testing come our way? Because how we respond to testing, not the absence of testing, defines victory or defeat.

James 1:2-4 is offered for those who may be going through some difficult times:

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into [or caught up by] different trials, knowing this: that the testing of your faith works patience. And let patience have its perfect work so that you may be perfect and whole, lacking nothing.

When we fall into these different tests that we endure through our walk with the Lord, He expects something different from us than what we experience, and how we reacted, when we were non-believers. When people came against us back then—let me put it in the first person—when people came against me back then, I did my best to win out; I did my best to get the better of them, whether verbally, physically, or any other way. I did not like to be pushed contrary to my will. The natural instinct in all of us is to fight back—to resist what is happening against us.

But in Christ, we're supposed to be joyful in such circumstances. Think about that. He doesn't say, "Be patient" when you endure different tests. Or, "Be placid," or "Be peaceful." He merely says, "Be joyful": "Count it all joy!"

That is absolutely contrary to our human nature—contrary to our sin nature. It's contrary to nature itself in this fallen

world, to be joyful when different trials come into our lives—when people rub us the wrong way; when circumstances in life create conditions that cause us sorrow. Yet I have found that we can be sorrowful and still be joyful. We can endure the slings and arrows, the abuse of others, and still be joyful.

Perhaps not immediately. The first reaction is to feel hurt; the first reaction is to be angry, or to be disgusted—whatever the circumstance might be.

Part of our problem lies in our attraction to the world's entertainment. One of the most recurring themes of movies and TV shows hinges on revenge. It's "the American way," as the song goes. Heroes and super-heroes are applauded for wreaking vengeance on their enemies, even for the slightest offense. Admittedly, there is something within us that finds satisfaction in seeing the bad guys pay the price for their badness, even if their badness isn't downright evil. A pushy boss; a nagging wife; a prankster. They all beg for retaliation, and we are happy to see them get their comeuppance.

But that is the world's way of dealing with problems. God has something far more noble and, yes, difficult for His people:

"But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you, and persecute you, so that you . . . may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

"For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans the same?"

"And if you greet only your brethren, what do you do more than others? Do not even the publicans so?"

"Therefore, you be perfect, even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:44-48)

As we think about it—as we surrender to the Lord and the Holy Spirit does His work in our heart and in our mind, we realize that we should be joyful because the Lord is working something in us. And that is our perfection, to conform us to the image of Christ.

One of the most difficult circumstances in which one may find oneself is when there is conflict with one's spouse. Sometimes it can get to the point where it can be downright hateful. And yet, if one can stop and allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in the heart, they will realize that they have not yet suffered unto blood; they have not yet gone to the cross. They have not even yet been betrayed, beaten with stripes, or had a crown of thorns pressed into their skull, let alone gone to the cross.

And so, who is our model when we fall into these different trials and tribulations?

It's the Lord Jesus Christ.

And if we can put that into proper perspective, we will realize that He was so abused by His creation, far beyond what we will ever endure. He suffered this for us.

Can we at least for Him endure, and even count it all joy, when these tests come, realizing that through them He is working more and more perfection in us?

This is the reason for the joy. Because without these tests we would just continue in our selfish, self-centered, complacent lives. If everything in life went well for us, if there were not trials and temptations, how could we become perfected? All we would attain is an even more inflated ego.

If everyone fawned over us, and gave us all we wanted, treating us like royalty and deferring to us in every way, and every day were sunshine, chirping birds, and warm temperatures, how could we grow in Christ?

We did not come to Christ in order to have a good life in this age. Some may have entered into faith thinking that because of some bad teaching, but we are preparing for the age to come. That preparation requires us to suffer the tribulation necessary to enter into the Kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

We are in the Kingdom of God for this age—that is, the Body of Christ. But here Luke is speaking of the coming Kingdom of God on earth—the Millennial Age. The trials we endure today are meant to bring us into greater standing in the next age—so that we may gain greater rewards as we rule and reign with Christ.

It is a faithful saying, for if we are dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him. But if we deny Him, He also will deny us. (2 Timothy 2:11-12)

The Greek word used for “deny” is *ameomai*, which means to “contradict,” “disavow” or “reject.” It does not necessarily mean saying, “I am not a believer in Jesus,” although it includes that as well. But it may also mean disobeying Him willfully—contradicting His Word in our words and/or actions.

If His Word tells us we must suffer for Him, and someone contradicts that by saying that if we have true faith we can live well in this age—that we are entitled to prosperity, good health, and every “blessing” we can imagine, then we must choose whom to believe.

If we are going to rule with Christ, it is expected that our ruling will be righteous. And righteous ruling requires experiences of tribulation. The worst kings in history are those who never experienced any tribulation or opposition in their lives. They have been spoiled from their birth. And although their parents may have been righteous, if their parents failed to allow them to suffer anything, they become spoiled, leading them to become unrighteous rulers.

We see it in the histories of Israel and Judah where some righteous kings raised unrighteous kings, who raised more unrighteous kings. After David there was never again a fully righteous king in Israel. And there were very few in Judah. Even Solomon, with all his wisdom, failed greatly.

The trials that the Lord brings upon us, or allows in our lives, many be of varied types. They may be physical trials, emotional trials, financial trials, or any number of trials, in order to bring us to surrender—to the place where we give up and say, “Okay, Lord. What am I but dust anyway?” “What do I have that was not given to me?”

Everything we have is a gift from God. That may even be said of unbelievers who exist by His grace and mercy, although we who are in Christ have so much more.

The fellowship we enjoy; the physical health (even if in some areas we are impaired); the material blessings; the food; the companionship of others; these are all gifts—undeserved, but granted to us by a loving and merciful Father.

So we must also understand that the testings that come are also granted to us by a loving and merciful Father for our benefit. They are given to us in order that patience may be perfected in us so that we may become perfect and whole, lacking nothing.

“Lacking nothing” does not mean what the heretical word-faith teachers would tell us. It doesn’t mean lacking a new Mercedes, or other forms of material wealth. It means lacking nothing spiritually; it means having all we need in our spiritual lives to serve the Lord and to become more and more perfect.

Not that we will ever become perfected in this mortal flesh. It is in our spirits and in our minds that He wishes to bring us to perfection, ultimately to be conformed to the image of Christ.

Now, when abuse comes from others, our first reaction might be to fight back—to resist the testing. That’s natural. But it’s not godly.

So accept that it’s natural. Accept, when it comes, your first reaction may be to lash out, or at the least lament the testing. When this happens, and we recognize our natural tendency to fight back, we must allow the Holy Spirit to do His work. We must, through an act of our own will, determine to love that person; to do good to that person; to pray for that person. We must not make an issue of what has been done to us, no matter how unrighteous a manner we’ve been treated. We must not allow the hurt to fester.

It may take a few hours, even a few days, to come to that place. But we must eventually get there or we will make things worse—not for that other person only, but for ourselves especially. As long as we hold on to the hurt, we destroy our own peace and joy.

And the joy comes, not particularly in enduring the testing, but when we overcome the testing—when we can look back and say, “Wow! The Lord brought me through that trial, and I did not fail Him!”

Okay, sometimes we do fail. Maybe initially we fail, but in the long run, if we are faithful and we allow Him to do His work in us (and that’s where patience comes in), we become patient with the person or the circumstance that is abusing us. And we will have become a little more perfected.

If we can endure that testing and allow the Lord to do His work in us, when we come through to the other end, then we can truly rejoice and be joyful.

The hard part is having joy as we go through the trial. The real joy comes at the end of the trial when we have succeeded in being faithful to the Lord. But even while enduring the trial we should seek the Lord’s joy to get us through it in the first place.

Now, admittedly, it’s very easy to tell people who are suffering, “You should be joyful.” In truth, we should not even attempt to tell them this unless we have overcome trials first. How can we minister to others undergoing trials unless we have allowed the Lord to bring us through our own trials? Then we can say, “Look, I know what you are going through, and the Lord gave me the grace to get through it myself. Here is how.”

And you minister to them the Word of God, especially those Scriptures that encourage us to endure the trials and temptations set before us.

But recognize this also: no matter how many trials you go through, it is a never-ending battle. The trials and tribulation will not end until we are placed in the grave.

So I may have joy getting through this trial, but will I have the same joy trying to get through the next one? And the next one? And the next one?

The Lord does not let up on us. He is a good Parent. He will put us through one trial after another, after another. But what does His Word say?

No testing has taken you but such as is common to man. But God, who is faithful, will not allow you to be tested above your ability, but will with the temptation also make a way to go through, so that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

It is unfortunate that some versions use the word “escape”: “also make a way to escape.” The idea is not to escape the testing, but to get through the testing. The Greek, *ekbasis*, means “to go out an exit.” But going out an exit doesn’t necessarily mean escaping from something. I means passing through to the end.

Our Father will always make a way for us to come through the testing, causing us to become more joyful with each success, and more equipped to minister to others going through their testing.

We can apply this to other brethren in Christ to whom we may minister the Word of God, and hold them accountable to it.

Often, when ministering in this way, I hear the response, “Yes, yes. That’s right. But...”

There is no “but.” God’s Word says it; accept it.

This may sound harsh, but it’s really the way it must be. We can’t say, “Yes, God’s Word says that, but...”

That’s one of the worst words in the English language—“but.”

There’s always that, “Yeah, but you don’t really understand what I’m going through.”

Yes I do; I’ve been through it. Maybe not exactly the same thing, but I’ve been through it. And I can’t say that I’ve attained perfection as yet. Still, I understand what it means to go through the things that test our walk in Christ.

“Yeah, but...”

No “but”!

“Yeah, but...”

No “but”! Sorry.

“Well, okay, but...”

No! No “but”! Here’s what it says....

If you are a believer, and you say you truly want to serve the Lord, you read this and you receive it. And by the grace of God, you change your life. You ask the Lord to give you the grace to go through it.

I know we can’t do it in the flesh. So I understand why you want to say, “but....”

But! I’m not counting on *your* strength. I’m counting on the Lord’s strength through you.

For unbelievers, we can still minister to them the Word of God and say, “This is what God’s Word says. Now, here is how

you can receive from Him and overcome this trial with joy and look forward to eternal life with Him. It’s going to take perseverance on your part, and it’s going to take surrender and a willingness to endure some terrible things, often from other people—abuse from your boss; abuse from your spouse; any number of things.”

There is nothing any of us have endured that others have not endured, often to a worse degree. But there is nothing that the Lord cannot overcome through us. It’s up to us to allow Him to overcome it through us. He does not circumvent our will; He works to break us of our will in order that His will be done in us as it is in Heaven.

All those reading this will be going through trials very soon; some are already enduring trials. The trials will come this week, and the week after, and the week after, for the next ten, twenty, thirty, forty, or fifty years and beyond, depending on one’s present age, and barring the Lord’s return beforehand.

It’s never going to end in this lifetime. So don’t think, once you’ve gotten through the present trial that, “Ah! I made it! Now I’m standing on top! It’s over!”

Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

No adversity has overtaken you but such as is common to man. But God, who is faithful, will not allow you to be tried beyond your ability, but, with the adversity, will also make a way to go through so that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:12-13)

The next trial is on its way. You just haven’t looked through the rear-view mirror to see it yet.

Those of you who have seen the movie Jurassic Park recall the scene where the T-rex was bearing down on the jeep and the side-view mirror that said, “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear.” And the passengers could see the beast’s tonsils.

Well, that’s how close our next trial may be. We don’t know when they’ll catch up to us, or what they’ll be like, but wherever we go, there we are; and so are they.

I’m not bragging. I can tell you that I have failed many times. And my initial reaction has been, “Oh, man! I could get people so bad!”

And I’ve wanted to!

I’ve even gone so far as to write out what I wanted to say to them. Boy, what I could say!

But I’ve got a wife who said to me, “You’d better not do that. You’ll only fan the flames.”

Yeah, I know. But I just had to get it off my chest.

So then, we just sit back and allow the Lord to do His work in us—to bring us to more patience.

Because that’s what it takes to deal with some people more than others—even some brothers in Christ.

It takes patience. And patience is perhaps the most difficult thing for the Lord to work in us. Patience keeps us from flying off the handle, from sinning in response to the enemy’s onslaught against us, thereby giving him the victory over us.

There is never an end to the trial for patience. Never.

So I thank you for being patient with me in reading through all this.❖



Hi Friends,

I have a question regarding Matthew 7. My leader made the statement that God answers every prayer whether you are a believer or not. I have always been taught He just answers prayers of His children, the born again believers. Her statement was so bold. I just would like her to at least make a statement that there could be two schools of thought on this. I believe the one I've been taught and the Scripture I've read is correct. Sure would appreciate your feedback on verses, etc.

B.B., Sammamish, WA

Dear B.B.,

God's ears are open to all mankind, but that doesn't mean that He approves of, or answers the prayers of all mankind. His ears are open to hear cries of repentance and true worship. Many people don't know the Lord personally for the simple reason they have never heard of Him or don't fully understand the truth about Him. They may be on the road to salvation, and in the meantime He may hear their prayers. But He does not hear the prayers of the rebellious or those who, knowing His Word, do not live by His Word. This is His indictment against rebellious Israel:

The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah:

"Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the LORD has spoken. I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me.

"The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel does not know; My people do 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 to anger; they have gone away backward.

"Why should you be stricken anymore? You will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it, but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. They have not been closed or bound up, nor mollified with ointment.

"Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire; your land, strangers devour it in your presence and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers. And the daughter of Zion is left like a cottage in a vineyard, like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

"Except the LORD of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have been like Sodom, and we would have been like Gomorrah.

"Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah [Jerusalem].

"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?" says the LORD. "I am fed up with the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I do not delight in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats.

"When you come to appear before me, who has required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot endure; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

"My soul hates your new moons and your appointed feasts. They are a trouble to Me; I am weary to bear them.

"And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide My eyes from you! **Yea, when you make many prayers, I will not hear!** your hands are full of blood!"

"Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean. Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well. Seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

"Come now, and let us reason together," says the LORD. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

"If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured with the sword," for the mouth of the LORD has spoken it.

For those who think this is "Old Testament," and doesn't apply to the Lord Jesus, let us consider His words and those of Peter:

And He said to them in His teaching, "Beware of the scribes, who love to go in long clothing, and love salutations in the marketplaces, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and the uppermost rooms at feasts, who devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These shall receive greater damnation." (Mark 12:38-40)

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:12)

There are many Scriptures that delineate between the true believer and the false believer and unbeliever, and none allow for the prayers of the latter two to be heard by God. But He will hear their cry for repentance and salvation should they call out to Him.

In Jesus' love,

Al



Jean's Turn

Prayer

By Jean Dager

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God." (Col. 4:6)

How comforting it has been to us to receive letters from the brethren letting us know that they are keeping us in their daily prayers! For those who have inquired, we have not yet had any offers to buy our home in our efforts to downsize. Let's continue to pray and trust that the Lord will answer this particular prayer, as we do in all other matters according to His will.

I've started reading a small book by Oswald Chambers titled, *Prayer, A Holy Occupation*. When we intercede on one other's behalf, our desire is for the Lord's will to be done. I found the following statement to be thought-provoking in that regard:

One of the most subtle burdens God ever puts in us as saints is this burden of discernment concerning other souls. He reveals things in order that we may take the burden of these souls before Him and form the mind of Christ about them. *It is not that we bring God into touch with our minds, but that we rouse ourselves until God is able to convey His mind to us about the one for whom we intercede.* (Emphasis mine)

Isn't it glorious to know that the Lord wants His people to pray? Through Jesus, we have a direct communication line to our Father's throne when we pray. Special "apps" aren't required to open the door. Our Almighty Father listens to

prayers and knows what we are in need of even before we ask. Yet He still invites us to pray.

In times of quiet prayer before the Lord, He is able to speak to our hearts through His Holy Spirit. You've probably experienced times during prayer that, without a shadow of a doubt, you know the Lord has touched your spirit or spoken to you in some way. Perhaps He has given you direction in some matter that has been bothering you, or directed you to a portion of Scripture that revealed something of Himself to you.

When this happens, your faith takes a big leap forward. In Luke 3:21, it says that as the Lord was praying, Heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the bodily form of a dove. Then a voice came from Heaven saying, "You are My Son whom I love; with You I am well pleased."

Generally, we don't expect such a dramatic audible voice from Heaven when we pray. Nonetheless, it's a tremendous blessing when we are confident we've received a spiritual touch from the Lord.

To me, one of the loveliest prayers in Scripture is John 17. The Lord prays for His own and His heart could not be more open or transparent as He expresses His love for us to the Father. He is our prime example in our prayer life. However, because of our sin nature, we first need to examine ourselves and seek forgiveness where we have failed before we approach the throne of grace. When our hearts are right before the Lord, the Holy Spirit will intervene and grant us discernment as we pray.

In today's T. Austin Sparks's devotional, he said that the Holy Spirit communicates with us but Christ is the ladder set up in our hearts. That "we are in the heavenlies, because Christ is in us....there is a direct and immediate communication with God, and the Holy Spirit can reveal to us heavenly things."

Because the Lord Jesus has opened this door, think how privileged we are to have direct personal communication with Yahweh God. What a supreme blessing we receive each day when we come before the Lord in prayer!

Errata: A valued reader pointed out that in Vol. 36 #1, Jean's Turn quoted "C" Austin Sparks instead of "T".

AGREE OR NOT

THIS BOOK PROMPTS READERS TO RETHINK SOME DEARLY-HELD TRADITIONS CONCERNING THE LAST DAYS AND ETERNITY.

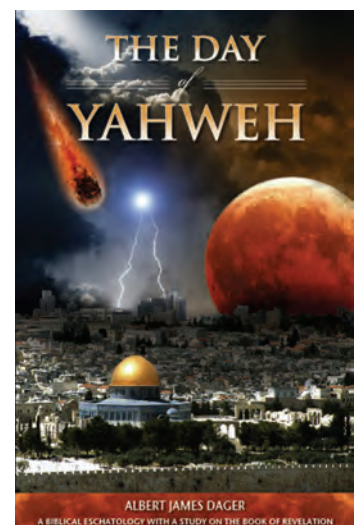
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