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

How Should We Bear Fruit?

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Most religions of the world teach in some way that there are two classes of people: an "ordained" ministry or priesthood responsible for teaching others—harvesting their Father's fields, and a lay-membership responsible for physical service and financial support. What does the Bible say? For what kind of fruit is each person responsible?

Before we begin talking about bearing fruit, we need to establish the scriptural need to bear fruit. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, **that you bear much fruit; so, you will be My disciples**" (John 15:1-8)

What happens if those with the Holy Spirit do not bear fruit? Our Father, like a good man tending an orchard, digs about us and puts in some manure (Luke 13:6-9). If we, in this life occasionally feel as if we are getting more than our share of digs and manure, this may be what is happening to us. The purpose of these trials is not to make our lives miserable, **but to help us bear fruit**. We must remember that we have a purpose for being here. "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1Pet 2:9). Revelation 20:6 shows this priesthood will continue into the thousand years of Messianic rule.

Rewarded According to Works

Salvation comes by grace, through faith, not because of our works (Eph 2:8-9). But the purpose for our salvation is so that we can do good works (Eph 2:10). Indeed, we will be rewarded according to the works that we do: "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. **If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.** Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1Cor 3:11-16).

This concept is illustrated through the parable of the minas. While the parable is long, every word is worth reading. It should be "required reading" for anyone that feels there is no real work that can be done now.

"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So, he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' Likewise, he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. For I feared you because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit and reap what you did not sow.' And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at

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my coming I might have collected it with interest?’ And he said to those who stood by, ‘Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.’ (But they said to him, ‘Master, he has ten minas.’) ‘For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me’” (Luke 19:12-27).

Now that we can see that we must bear fruit, what kinds of fruit can we bear? Some kinds are well known and written about often; others we may not discuss as much as we should. We need to understand all of them to be an active part of the Eternal's work.

Praise to the Eternal

“Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name” (Heb 13:15). Singing songs, reciting poems, and offering prayers are things very pleasing to the Eternal. The largest book in the Bible is essentially a collection of praises to our Maker. When men such as David and Hezekiah were very near death, what did they promise the Eternal in exchange for their life? Did they promise to “be good?” To do great works in His name? No. They promised to sing Him praises if he redeemed their life (Ps 6:1-5, 30:8-10, 88:10-18, Isa 38:3,18-20).

While not all have musical skills, many do have skills that they are not using. Almost everyone can read the Psalms and praise God in personal prayer. Some have skills for writing that they should be using. While it should be **our** best effort that we give to the Eternal, there is no scripture that says we cannot praise the Eternal because another “does it better.” Even though there are many religions that make great shows of praising God while teaching little of his truth, that should not stop us from David-style, energy-filled praises. The scripture supports this (2Sam 6:12-22, Psalm 98, 148, etc.). We should encourage each other in these areas, rather than be “scale of 1 to 10” judges.

Personal Righteousness

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law” (Gal 5:22-23). This is a familiar scripture and rightly so. Everyone wants friends and neighbors that are like this. We should all strive **to have these fruits**. There are at least three other scriptures that plainly show that righteousness is a fruit to be desired (Phil 1:11, Heb 12:11, Jms 3:18). The thirteenth chapter of Corinthians leaves no doubt that we can have all kinds of other great works and if we do not have **love for our neighbor** (which is the fulfilling of the law—Rom 13:10, Gal 5:14), all of our other great works are nothing.

A study of each of the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5 would be quite valuable, but many other writers have written on this subject and this article will take more time with some of the less-studied areas.

Truth

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord” (Eph 5:8-10). This passage mentions three fruits. Goodness and righteousness were included in the previous section, but truth is something different. A person who is drawing near to the Eternal and obeying Him will begin to understand more truth.

“However, when He, the **Spirit of truth**, has come, He **will guide you into all truth**; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13). It is interesting that neither the scriptures nor the leadership are listed as the path to **all truth**, although certainly His word is Truth (John 17:17), and we are commanded to study the scriptures (2 Tim 2:15).

Proverbs 23:23 tells us to “Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding.” Since Bible translators have not always understood the truth in what they were translating, we sometimes need to try our best to find the meaning of the original writings. We learn what it means to “buy the truth”: multiple translations, concordances, word-books, histories, etc. Once we learn some truth, we should give it away to those who want it. Do not pester people that do not want to hear it (they may not be ready yet—John 16:12) or your “new truth” may be a mistake. On the opposite side, truth should not be a money-making proposition. If we have freely received of the Eternal, freely give (Mt 10:8).

Financial Support

Scriptures about this fruit include 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, Rom 12:8, 15:25-28 and 1 Corinthians 9:6-14. Most people who

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have been within a church organization for any length of time have heard more than enough about this type of fruit.

People are Fruit Too!

This title is not an insult to the human race, but a summary of the many places where people who learn the Truth are called the fruit of those that the Eternal works through to teach them. “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, **‘The harvest is truly great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. Go your way; behold I send you out as lambs among wolves’**” (Luke 10:1-3). John 4:35-38 records a different but similar story: the fields being “white and ready for harvest.”

Paul refers to those he has taught as “his fruit” in Romans 1:13: “Now I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that I often planned to come to you (but was hindered until now), that I might have some fruit among you also, just as among the other Gentiles.”

The parable of the sower appears to fit into this analogy (Matt 13:3-9, 18-23). Seeds are scattered in many places, but only those on good ground grow. “But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt 13:23). A good seed produces more seeds like itself. For a man whose fruit is to bring others to the truth, does not this mean that during his lifetime he should teach 30, 60 or 100 others? And for those that do not teach directly, should we not be a positive influence on 30, 60 or 100 others?

Who Bears the Fruit?

We are all responsible to bear fruit. Some fruits are individual, and some can be harvested as a group. “Personal righteousness” we must bear ourselves (though some organizations have tried to “enforce righteousness” with a myriad of enforced regulations). Most of the other fruits can be achieved on either a personal or a group basis. “But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go, work today in my vineyard.’ He answered and said, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, ‘I go, sir,’ but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said to Him, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him.” (Matt 21:28-32)

The Messiah was addressing, among others, the chief priests in the temple. If there was an equivalent to a “big church organization” at that time, it was them. They could trace their genealogy back to Aaron and show how the Eternal commanded them to be teachers of the people (Mal 2:7). By contrast, John the Baptist was an “independent upstart.” Though the son of a priest, he had simple taste in clothes and food, and he spoke not at the temple, but in the wilderness. He spoke against the established leadership (Mat 3:4-10). But who will enter the kingdom of God first, those that listened to the organization historically established by the Eternal (the priests, now corrupt), or those that listened to a preacher of the “way of righteousness”?

While large organizations too often lead people astray, do not think that small organizations or individual efforts automatically stay on track. The New Testament has plenty of stories of individuals and small groups that became lost on their own ideas and did not bear fruit (Matt 19:16-22, Luke 14:16-20, Luke 13:1-2, Acts 19:13-16). Read these stories if you have any doubt!

More than once, I have seen people discover that their organization was “wasting” more than half of the funds that came to it. They stopped attending and supporting it—planning to bear fruit themselves. When difficulties and trials came along, their efforts ceased altogether. Their first estate was better than their last. **It is better to be a part of a big organization that is 50% effective than to look directly to the Father for leadership but end up doing nothing.** We must never forget Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 3, quoted near the beginning of this article: “If **anyone’s work** which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” If your “work” is largely contributing to another organization, then you should find out if that organization is bearing fruit. If your work is as an individual or small group, you must stay close to the Eternal and be diligent to keep moving forward.

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh

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will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Gal 6:7-10).

He Is the Vine, We Are the Branches

We must always remember that all of the articles, exhortations and other diligent efforts we can muster will not produce good fruit unless it is done by the power of His spirit. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

If a branch is well-connected to the vine, it will naturally bear fruit. All the fruit needs is the light of Truth and room to grow, the vine provides everything else. A shaded branch that gets no light or a crowded branch with no room to bear fruit may have to be moved to a new location on the vine. A good husbandman (the Father) will often do this very thing. It may “hurt” the branch when it is cut off and the branch may bear little fruit that year—many of the resources of the branch are devoted to restrengthening its connection with the vine. But later, the branch is far more productive than it ever could have been in its former location.

The lesson we can learn from this analogy is to not resist the Husbandman if it is time for Him to “move our branch.” It may be in our best interests to begin serving in another capacity, with a different group of people, or in a different place. It is easy for us to be comfortable where we are and think that we must always be there. But if he moves us to a new place on the vine, then we should not long to be in the old location but settle into our new location, redirect our leaves to catch the sun, and take advantage of the new opportunity to bear fruit.

Other people may recognize that their branch is in a “tight place” and “ask” the husbandman to move them elsewhere. They are elated when they move to a new place on the vine. But once we have a new place, we need to be about the business of bearing fruit, not about the business of looking for yet another place.

There is no “perfect” place on the vine. Some places receive morning sun, others afternoon sun; some places have lots of wind, others do not; some are visible to the outside world, others are shielded. A branch may need to be moved more than once in its lifetime for it to keep bearing fruit, but a branch that moves every year (or more) is unlikely to bear any significant fruit.

If we are not in a place where we can grow and bear fruit, we need to ask the Husbandman to put us in a place where we can do it. Once there, we make sure we have a good connection with the vine. The fruit will come. We need not worry about other branches that appear to have more or less fruit—the Husbandman will tend to them. “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples” (John 15:8).

See Norman S. Edwards other articles at:

[Edwards, Norman S. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://www.church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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The Flat Earth Myth

(Copyright 08-23-2024) by Jonathan Sarfati (Powder Springs, Georgia)

For the last 200 years or so, many anti-Christians have resorted to a scurrilous lie (acting consistently with their worldview¹): that the early and medieval Christian Church taught that the earth is flat.²

One of the most prominent recent examples is probably the most powerful man in the world, the US President Barack

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Hussein Obama:

“Let me tell you something. If some of these folks [*sic*] were around when Columbus set sail—[laughter]—they must have been founding members of the Flat Earth Society [laughter]. They would not have believed that the world was round [applause]. We’ve heard these folks in the past.”³

Since President Obama also supports infanticide and gay ‘marriage’,⁴ which are clearly out of line with biblical teaching, should it be surprising that he would also repeat one of the commonest anti-Christian fables?

What did the early church really teach?

Historian Jeffrey Burton Russell (1934–) thoroughly debunked the flat earth myth over 20 years ago in his definitive study *Inventing the Flat Earth*.⁵

The famous evolutionist Stephen Jay Gould (1941–2002) favorably reviewed this masterpiece:

“There never was a period of ‘flat earth darkness’ among scholars (regardless of how the public at large may have conceptualized our planet both then and now). Greek knowledge of sphericity never faded, and all major medieval scholars accepted the earth’s roundness as an established fact of cosmology.”⁶

Russell showed that flat-earth belief was extremely *rare* in the Church. The flat earth’s two main proponents were obscure figures named Lactantius (c. 240 – c. 320) and Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th century; the last name means “voyager to India”). However, they were hugely outweighed by tens of thousands of Christian theologians, poets, artists, scientists, and rulers who unambiguously affirmed that the earth was round. Russell documents accounts supporting earth’s sphericity from numerous medieval church scholars such as friar Roger Bacon (1220–1292), inventor of spectacles; leading medieval scientists such as John Buridan (1301–1358) and Nicholas Oresme (1320–1382); the monk John of Sacrobosco (c. 1195–c. 1256) who wrote *Treatise on the Sphere*, and many more.

One of the best-known proponents of a globe-shaped earth was the early English monk, theologian and historian, the Venerable Bede (673–735), who popularized the common BC/AD dating system. Less well known was that he was also a leading astronomer of his day.⁷

In his book *On the Reckoning of Time (De temporum ratione)*, among other things he calculated the creation of the world to be in 3952 BC, showed how to calculate the date of Easter, and explicitly taught that the earth was round. From this, he showed why the length of days and nights changed with the seasons, and how tides were dragged by the moon. Bede was the first with this insight, while Galileo explained the tides wrongly centuries later.⁸

Here is what Bede said about the shape of the earth—*round “like a ball” not “like a shield”*:

“We call the earth a globe, not as if the shape of a sphere were expressed in the diversity of plains and mountains, but because, if all things are included in the outline, the earth’s circumference will represent the figure of a perfect globe. ... For truly it is an orb placed in the center of the universe; in its width it is like a circle, and not circular like a shield but rather like a ball, and it extends from its center with perfect roundness on all sides.”

And the leading church theologian and philosopher of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), wrote in his greatest work *Summa Theologica/Theologiae*:

“The physicist proves the earth to be round by one means, the astronomer by another: for the latter proves this by means of mathematics, e.g. by the shapes of eclipses, or something of the sort; while the former proves it by means of physics, e.g. by the movement of heavy bodies towards the center, and so forth.”⁹

As early as the 5th century, medieval European kings carried a symbol called the *globus cruciger*, Latin for ‘cross-bearing orb’, as a Christian symbol of royal power. The orb, usually a golden sphere, represented the earth—hang on, a sphere representing a flat earth—something’s wrong here ... oh that’s right, it was a spherical earth. It was topped by a cross to symbolize Christ’s lordship over the earth and held by the ruler to symbolize that he had been entrusted to rule his lands. In medieval portraits, the scale didn’t indicate physical size but *importance*, hence the large size of the cross.

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Indeed, there are many pictures portraying Christ Himself holding the orb, the classic *Salvator Mundi* (Saviour of the World) theme.

Why did people oppose Columbus?

The above demonstrate that Columbus (1451–1506) was never opposed by flat earthers, simply *because there were none to oppose him*, among either church or political leaders. So, what was the real issue?

Columbus was trying to reach India by sea, the ‘long way’ around the earth. But to do that, his ships had to carry enough provisions for the length of the journey. He had learned that the 9th-century Persian astronomer Alfraganus had estimated each degree of latitude spanned “56 $\frac{2}{3}$ miles”. But Columbus thought Alfraganus meant the Roman mile (1,480 m, 4,856 ft), whereas he was using the Arabic mile (1,830 m, 6,004 ft). Thus, Columbus thought that the earth’s circumference was only about $\frac{3}{4}$ of its actual length of about 40,000 km (25,000 miles). Columbus also greatly underestimated the distance between Japan and the Canary Islands as 3,000 Italian miles (3,700 km or 2,300 miles), whereas the distance by sea is more like 19,600 km (12,200 miles).

It was thus the *size* of the earth, not the shape, that was under dispute. His critics argued that ships of his day (1492) could not carry enough fresh water and food for such a huge journey. And they were right! Columbus was just lucky that an enormous continent was in the way. He knew nothing of previous Viking discoveries centuries earlier. And he still thought he had landed in the East Indies, the then-current name for the Indian subcontinent. The results of his mistake persist today, in the common name for the Native Americans— ‘Indians’, a translation of Columbus’ Spanish term ‘indios’.

Sailors

An example of the misinformation in the ‘education’ system comes from the 20th-century high-school history textbook *The American Pageant* by Thomas Bailey. Many of its editions claimed, “The superstitious sailors [of Columbus’ crew] ... grew increasingly mutinous ... because they were fearful of sailing over the edge of the world.”

However, sailors were well aware of the shape of the earth. One myth states that people realized that the earth was round because they saw ships slowly sinking below the horizon. But before telescopes, it was more likely the other way round: sailors returning to land saw high mountains before lowlands.

Also, sailors from the northern hemisphere crossed the equator well before Christ, and reported that in the South, the sun shone from the north. They also knew how to measure their latitude from the angle of the sun at noon, which works only with a spherical earth.

The rise of the Flat Earth lie

The above are the facts about Columbus. The much-parroted flat-earth myth about him comes not from history but from the tales of Washington Irving (1783–1859), *The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus* (1828). Irving was probably America’s first genuine best-selling writer, but he admitted that he was “apt to indulge in the imagination.” Flat-earth belief was certainly a figment of his imagination.

It was bad enough that this myth entered the public perception thanks to Irving’s wide readership. But it became worse when it acquired the veneer of scholarship, so it could be used as a club with which to bash Christianity.

The main propagandists for this cause were the notorious 19th century anti-Christian bigots John William Draper (1811–1882) and Andrew Dickson White (1832–1918). Draper, a fine chemist and photographer—first president of the American Chemical Society—but a lousy historian, wrote *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874) as a poorly informed polemic against the Church. White was a disgruntled ex-Episcopalian and the founder of Cornell University as the first explicitly secular university in the United States. He also published the two-volume work *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom* (1896).

Both authors relied heavily on the work of Cosmas, portraying his flat-earth teaching as typical rather than the almost forgotten, extreme minority view that it was. And they are the ones most responsible for the discredited ‘conflict thesis’ between Christianity and science, instead of the real history that the Christian world-view was responsible for science in the first place, while it was still-born in other places like ancient Greece and China.¹⁰

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Colin Archibald Russell (1928–2013), Emeritus Professor of History of Science and Technology at the Open University, writes:

“Draper takes such liberty with history, perpetuating legends as fact that he is rightly avoided today in serious historical study. The same is nearly as true of White, though his prominent apparatus of prolific footnotes may create a misleading impression of meticulous scholarship.”¹¹

Both J.B. Russell and Gould argue that Draper and White had an agenda to discredit Christians who opposed the then-new theories of Darwin as ‘flat earthers’. Nothing much has changed!

Flat earth leader is an evolutionist

Although hardly anyone in the Church has ever believed the flat earth myth, “Incredibly, some people still do,” wrote Natalie Wolchover in *Live Science* last year:

“The Flat Earth Society is an active organization currently led by a Virginian man named Daniel Shenton. Though Shenton believes in evolution and global warming, he and his hundreds, if not thousands, of followers worldwide also believe that the Earth is a disc that you can fall off of.”¹²

So next time an evolutionist calls you a ‘flat-earther’, point out that the leading flat-earther is one of his fellow evolutionists!

The ancient Greeks well before Christ, had realized that the earth is a globe by observing lunar eclipses. They realized that at such times, the earth was between the moon and the sun, and it always cast a circular shadow, regardless of the direction, which proves that it’s a globe. For example, the famous philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BC) said:

“Either then the earth is spherical, or it is at least naturally spherical. And it is right to call anything that which nature intends it to be, and which belongs to it, rather than which it is by constraint and contrary to nature. The evidence of the senses further corroborates this. How else would eclipses of the moon show segments shaped as we see them? As it is, the shapes which the moon itself each month shows are of every kind—straight, gibbous, and concave—but in eclipses the outline is always curved: and, since it is the interposition of the earth that makes the eclipse, the form of this line will be caused by the form of the earth’s surface, which is therefore spherical.”¹³

This lines up with the Bible: Isaiah 40:22 tells us that God “sits above the circle of the earth”. Indeed, the Hebrew word *khûg* (*khûg*) implies ball-shaped, just as Bede taught about 1,400 years after Isaiah.¹⁴

Summary

- Almost all the early and medieval church scholars who commented on the earth’s shape explicitly said it was round.
- Medieval European rulers used a golden sphere or orb called the *globus cruciger* to represent the earth under Christ’s rule.
- Columbus’s opponents never disputed the shape of the earth, but only its size—and they were right!
- The flat earth myth began with a fictional account of Columbus in the 19th century by Washington Irving. Then it was aggressively pushed in influential anti-Christian polemics by Draper and White.
- A final irony: the leading flat-earther today is an evolutionist.

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References and notes

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8. The Galileo affair is another anti-Christian myth of ‘religion v. Science’, although it was really science vs. science. See Sarfati, J., Galileo [Quadricentennial: Myth vs fact](#), *Creation* **31**(3):49–51; creation.com/galileo-quadricentennial. Return to text.
9. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, First Part of the Second Part, **Question 54**: The distinction of habits, Article 2, Reply to objection 2.

And almost right at the beginning of the *Summa*, in First Part, Q 1, article 1: Article 1. Whether, besides philosophy, any further doctrine is required? Reply to Objection 2 Thomas discussed methods of proving something. Here, he referred to the roundness of the earth as an example obvious to all: “Sciences are differentiated according to the various means through which knowledge is obtained. For the astronomer and the physicist both may prove the same conclusion: that the earth, for instance, is round: the astronomer by means of mathematics (i.e. abstracting from matter), but the physicist by means of matter itself. Hence there is no reason why those things which may be learned from philosophical science, so far as they can be known by natural reason, may not also be taught us by another science so far as they fall within revelation. Hence theology included in sacred doctrine differs in kind from that theology which is part of philosophy.”

In the original Latin, Thomas used *rotunda* for round. And in First Part, Question 67, Thomas made it clear that he knew the shape of the earth, because he also used the word hemisphere (Latin *hemisphaerium*), meaning half of a sphere: “Yet as soon as the sun is at the horizon, the whole hemisphere is illuminated from end to end. ... Secondly, as to place, for in one hemisphere there was light, in the other darkness. Thirdly, as to time; because there was light for one and darkness for another in the same hemisphere; and this is signified by the words, “He called the light day, and the darkness night.” Return to text.

10. Primary source documentation is available in my articles, [Why does science work at all?](#) *Creation* **31**(3):12–14, 2009; creation.com/whyscience; and, [The biblical roots of modern science](#), *Creation* **32**(4):32–36, 2010; creation.com/roots. Return to text.
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14. [Ed. note: Several atheopaths have attacked both Isaiah and Bede because the earth is not a perfect sphere, although even Bede understood that it has irregularities “similar to a potato” such as mountains and deep-sea

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trenches. But he realized that this tiny deviation from sphericity that it was reasonable to call the earth a sphere. Also, long after Bede, it was predicted then discovered that the earth is an oblate spheroid, i.e. flattened at the poles. In reality, 'sphere' is a very good approximation for the shape of the earth, not an error. Most astronomers today are OK with calling the earth a 'globe' or 'sphere', knowing full well that it's an approximation. So the same allowance should be made for the Bible. Actually, [Sir Isaac Newton](#), a [creationist](#), was the one who first predicted oblateness from the earth's rotation.

Simple arithmetic should demonstrate how vacuous and desperate this objection is. The earth's equatorial radius 6,378.1 km, while its polar radius 6,356.8 km. The deepest point in the ocean, Challenger Deep, is 10,916 m deep— <0.2% deviation from sphericity. Ever seen a potato, or even a rubber ball, this spherical? Also, the oblateness, given that the difference between polar and equatorial radii is only 21.3 km, is only 0.3% deviation from a sphere.

In most usages, there are *degrees* of perfection or accuracy. The earth is a perfect sphere down to about 0.3%, which is perfect enough for most people. Scale this down to the size of some playing balls: if a ball were 63.781 mm in one radius and 63.568 mm in a perpendicular radius, one could safely call its shape a 'globe' or 'sphere'. It would take a sharp eye indeed to notice that a ~6½-cm ball bulged a bit in the middle, by merely a fifth of a millimetre.] Return to text.

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What Restrains the Man of Sin?

(Copyright 08-28-2024) by Charles Whitaker (Charlotte, North Carolina)



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In II Thessalonians 2, the apostle Paul mentions a force that works at least temporarily to restrain the coming of the man of sin, or, as some translations more correctly say, the lawless man.¹ Many translations do a poor job on this passage, but I think J.B. Phillips’ *The New Testament in Modern English* has caught its essence.² II Thessalonians 2:5-7:

I expect you remember now how I talked about this when I was with you. You will probably also remember how I used to talk about a “restraining power” which would operate until the time should come for the emergence of this man [of sin]. Evil is already insidiously at work but its activities are restricted until what I have called the “restraining power” . . . is removed. When that happens the lawless man will be plainly seen—

While the apostle affirms that lawlessness was at work in his day—and, of course, still is in ours—Paul never explicitly tells us what is restraining this lawless person from coming to full power.^{3 4} Some commentators argue that it is human government that restrains him. Still others contend that it is God Himself, others the Holy Spirit, and yet others the church. Ultimately, none of those answers makes much sense.

Anything Goes!

However, Paul’s use of the adjective “lawless” in this passage suggests what that force is. To see that, we must connect this passage with Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but happy is he who keeps the law.”

Revelation—translated as “vision,” “prophecy,” or “guidance” in other versions—generally refers to communication, to information disclosed to another. God communicates to us through His Word, the Holy Scriptures. When feared and respected, God’s Word becomes a restraining force on unbridled carnality.

However, when lacking respect for His Word, people “run wild,” as many translations render that term “cast off restraint.”⁵ Another translation, *The Common English Bible*, says the people refusing to be instructed by God’s Word “get out of control.” Another, *The Contemporary English Version*, says that “law and order disappear.” Yet another, the *Catholic Jerusalem Bible*, says that people, lacking respect for the Word of God, “get out of hand,” and *The Pulpit Commentary* renders it as people “become ungovernable.”

All these terms well describe the condition of humanity today—especially in Israelite countries. Taking a cue from the Cole Porter song,⁶ we can term these nations “anything goes” societies. Anything goes!

Slip Sliding Away

In Proverbs 29:18, the second line notifies us that, conversely, those who are faithful to the law, that is, *torah*, the instruction of God in His Word, are blessed. As mentioned earlier, God’s Word is His revelation to us. It, and most notably the laws codified in it, works to restrain an individual and, collectively, a people from the excesses of rampant carnality. When respected and obeyed, God’s Word is a positive good in any culture.

Some readers have likely seen transcripts of the laws of America’s original thirteen colonies or cities within them, especially those of the northern colonies, where the Puritans dominated the culture after they founded their colony at Plymouth Rock in 1607. These early laws read like the book of Deuteronomy. Linguistically, this similarity makes sense, as these laws were written in the 1600s, in some cases just a few decades after the publication of the Authorized or King James Version (published in 1611). The English language did not change much in that short time.

More significantly, though, the *substance* of those laws largely mirrored the laws in God’s Word. Additionally, though to less of an extent, the same can be said of the American colonies of the south, like the one at Jamestown, founded in 1620.⁷ America’s European colonists, a few exceptions aside, of course, had respect for God’s Word, honoring it in many cases and contexts. While their doctrine was flawed, believing in the Trinity, an immortal soul, and so on, they were at least God-fearing and obeyed, as much as they understood, God’s revealed instructions.

Such was the general tenor of America in the 1600s. But, by the time the 1700s rolled around, the tone had begun to change. A hundred years later, Europeans were doing everything they could to erode that honor and respect the American colonists held for God’s Word. Enlightenment thought, a mutation of earlier humanism, infected the thinking of the American elite, most notably in the case of Thomas Jefferson—though there were others. American universities became secular institutions quite early, imitating European ones.

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By the time of America’s Revolutionary War, the Founding Fathers had become quite secularized compared to a century earlier. They created a secular state to govern the nation’s affairs, not a Christian one. Situations only got worse with the passage of time. Eventually, higher criticism, the German rationalist view that the Bible is just another human book, certainly *not* sacred, became the standard approach in many American seminaries. Humanists like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and later Henry James became cultural heroes and remain literary and philosophical lights to the elite.

It was only a matter of time before God’s law became disconnected from our jurisprudence—a change that manifested itself most obviously in banning displays of the Ten Commandments from our courthouses. The Bible became so unwelcome in our schools that the American people largely accepted its banning by atheist judges without a whimper. In the decades since then, churches have shrunk, and many sideline Christian thought as “far-right” or even “alt-right.” By their relative silence, Americans demonstrated—and continue to demonstrate—their waning respect for God’s Word.

Untethered From Standards

More broadly,⁸ physical Bibles are becoming harder to acquire around the world. For example, possessing Bibles is legal in China, with its billion or so people, and it is possible to buy them there—but certainly not easy. They cannot be purchased online in the so-called People’s Republic. Bibles are strictly taboo in North Korea. Acquiring them in most Muslim nations is difficult and impossible in others, such as Morocco or Libya. The nations outlawing the operations of the Gideons, a society that places Bibles in business waiting rooms and hotel rooms, are by far and away Muslim nations.⁹

Meanwhile, in Israelite nations, the assault on God’s Word continues unabated, usually in the name of the doctrines of “political correctness” or “inclusion.” For example, in Canada and Europe, it is against the law to preach certain Scriptures that offend sexual deviants. In such areas, policymakers consider God’s Word to be a form of hate speech. Laws or proposed laws that limit access to God’s Word or its preaching are today just waiting in the wings of statehouse after statehouse in this country, primarily in what are called “blue states.”¹⁰

God’s Word—when respected as such, of course—affords protection against lawlessness. People who respect God’s Word are tractable; that is, they are governable and resistant to falling for the populist expediency of demagogues. They may not be theological scholars, but they have a sense of what is right, good, and profitable for themselves and society.

As people lose sight of God’s Word as His revelation to them, they watch their nation becoming one less adherent to the rule of law. Instead, they find themselves ruled more by political opportunists in the name of expediency. In short, over time, they come to live in a nation whose laws and policies are relativistic rather than founded on immutable standards, the greatest of which are God’s laws.¹¹

Such a people—untethered from absolute standards—will become easy prey for the flattering lies of the man of sin. Considering evident trends in the suppression of God’s Word and the preaching of the truth it espouses, it is clear that the time when “the lawless man will be plainly seen” is not far off.

End Notes

1 General conflict and disorientation have been commonplace, as many believe “times are getting worse.” However, God does not act until a particular point, when the iniquity of a people is full (see Genesis 15:16). So, when we are wont to predict that the world will end tomorrow (“it just can’t get any worse”), we must make sure we understand that God is making the decisions. The Scriptures do not tell us exactly when the threshold of “full” iniquity is, but He always warns us through His prophets before He takes corrective action (Amos 3:7).

Generational disorientation or displacement has been around at least as long as the Industrial Revolution. It is part and parcel with rapid change. Whether such displacement takes place between the first two World Wars or at the cusp between the Second and a Third, where we stand today, its result is the same. Any perverse situation, any upside-down state of affairs where the very meanings of words and the fundamentals of traditions fall, ends the same: in instability. With that volatility comes uncertainty, insecurity, confusion, clouded vision, the inability to predict, and, in extreme cases, paralysis.

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Instability and the ability to make reasonably credible predictions are inversely related: The more volatile a situation, the less accurate will be most predictions made in its context. The more the instability, the less reliable are predictions, both short-term and long. So, business predictions—or those of any type—are not reliable in times characterized by significant and fast-moving social change.

Consider today, as we stand at the cusp of Jacob’s Trouble. Change comes at an ever-accelerating, breath-taking pace. Not long ago, the term “same-sex marriage” was not part of most Americans’ vocabulary. Just a few decades in the past, proposing that such “marital” arrangements would become normative would have been unthinkable, incredible. Yet, such arrangements are increasingly the norm, enshrined in law.

This same sort of change has appeared on any number of social fronts, such as the area of transgenderism and euthanasia, and others, we can guarantee, are in the wings. What today appears a fringe notion tomorrow becomes normal—legally and socially acceptable. This appears to be the case no matter how far-fetched, how seemingly implausible, the proposed change may be. No matter how far it may be from the morals, mores, and manners of the rank-and-file American, the proposals of the fanatic fringe become the new normal.

In this environment, the ability to reliably predict change flies out the window. It happens simply too fast and penetrates traditional norms too deeply. While meaningful historical precedents may exist, identifying them becomes a search for a needle in a haystack.

2 The *English Standard Version* [ESV] is typical in its mistranslation of this passage:

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

In verse 6, the restraining force is neuter in Greek: “what is restraining him,” not “who is restraining him.” It is not a person. Yet, in verse 7, the ESV translators and so many others abandon the neuter in favor of the masculine: “He who restrains it,” not “it which restrains it.” There is no grammatical reason for this change, as the pronoun “he” is neither explicitly nor implicitly stated in the Greek.

The Greek of verse 7 is quite difficult, and may be a good example of Pauline circumlocution, as the diction is cryptic and the syntax is elliptical. Paul is clearly going out of his way to avoid saying something—for some reason, he does not want to reveal explicitly the nature of the restraining force.

The Expanded Bible does a much better job:

Don’t you remember that when I was with you I told you that all this would happen? And now [so] you know what is stopping that Man of Evil . . . so he will appear [be revealed] at the right [the proper; his own] time. The secret power [or mystery] of evil [lawlessness; wickedness] is already working in the world [or at work], but there is one who is stopping that power [restraining it]. And he [or it] will continue to stop [restrain] it until he [or it] is taken out of the way . . .

In this passage, Paul deals with the interplay between revelation and concealment, a prevalent and important dichotomy in the Scriptures. He speaks of the mystery of lawlessness, which is the concealment part. It was working in Paul’s days, as well as our own, but its agenda remains more or less secret, hidden in the teachings of secret societies and powerful cabals. Today, lawlessness acts *sub rosa*. Yet in the same breath, Paul speaks of a time when lawlessness will be revealed, becoming virtually incarnate in the man of sin.

3 Some commentators contend that the restraining force is

1. **God Himself.** Honestly, this seems silly, for He cannot be taken out of the way. Men can only deny Him. He is not dead and never will be.
2. **God’s Spirit.** Again, impossible, for its indwelling is an act of God, who will never leave nor forsake us.

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3. **The true church.** Even the gates of the grave will not prevail against the Body of Christ.

4. **Human governments.** This idea does not satisfy either. Of course, man’s governments will fall, but it is Christ Himself who will conquer them at His return, long after the man of sin has come and gone.

4 The Greek word is *anomia* (*Strong’s #458*; literally “without law”). The *King James Version* translators render it as “iniquity” a dozen times, “transgression of the law” twice, and “unrighteousness” once. “Lawlessness” is also a viable translation.

5 *Christian Standard Bible, GOD’s WORD Translation, Holman Christian Standard Bible, Names of God Bible, New Living Translation, The Voice.*

6 Porter, in his 1934 song, “Anything Goes,” written for a Broadway play of the same name, reflects the cultural turbulence of his time. Here is a sampling of its lyrics:

In olden days, a glimpse of stocking
Was looked on as something shocking.
But now, heaven knows,
Anything goes.

Good authors too who once knew better words
Now only use four-letter words—
Writing prose,
Anything goes.

The next stanza addresses the level of toleration people displayed in the 1930s.

If driving fast cars you like,
If low bars you like,
If old hymns you like,
If bare limbs you like,
If Mae West you like,
Or me undressed you like,
Why, nobody will oppose . . .
Anything goes.

The world has gone mad today
And good’s bad today,
And black’s white today,
And day’s night today . . .

The lyrics are reminiscent of Isaiah 5:20, penned long before:

Woe to those who call evil good and good evil;
who put darkness for light, and light for darkness;
who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

The concept underlying these lyrics is the removal of an invisible, undefined restraining force that works to maintain the *status quo*, keep things the way they were. As this force flags, new attitudes, unexpected behaviors, and unwelcome norms arise, as in the case of writers who begin using four-letter words rather than “better” words. Things eventually whirl out of control as a culture becomes virtually characterized as a montage of societally acceptable behaviors, some people preferring “old hymns,” others nudity. In such a potpourri of tastes and values, with little or nothing to restrain, excesses become the rule, extremes become normal. We lament, “Anything goes.”

7 The colonies in the north were originally the domain of the Puritans. In the south, the people were more “king’s men,”

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Anglicans. Though historians tend to downplay it, the original colonies contained a vast religious cleavage that organized itself around a north-south axis. This difference later translated into economic and social differences, leading much later to civil war.

8 For a brief historical review, see "[Why Christians Were Denied Access to Their Bible for 1,000 Years.](#)"

9 See "[How Many Countries Worldwide Have a Ban on the Bible.](#)"

The Gideons International have a list of countries where they are not allowed to operate: Afghanistan, Algeria, China (People's Republic), Comoros, Djibouti, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Maldives, Mauritania, Morocco, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Yemen (at this writing).

However, for some of these countries, other groups exist: There are United Bible Societies chapters for Algeria, Iraq, Morocco, and China, and some presence in Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania and Somalia. The Catholic Bible Federation also operates in Iran. Not all of these efforts are entirely government approved.

10 See "[How Long Before the Bible Is Banned in America?](#)"

11 Briefly, such a nation is one where everyone does what is right in his own eyes. (Judges 21:25).

See Charles Whitaker's other articles at:

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

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The Falling Away

(Copyright 08-24-2024) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)

The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica in northern Greece regarding their fear that they had missed Christ's return. Here is his message:

"Now, brethren, concerning the **coming** of the Lord Jesus Christ and our **gathering together to Him**, we ask you, not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled [by thinking they had missed out on the resurrection], either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ [His return] had come.

"Let no one **deceive you by any means**; for that Day [of Christ's return] **will not come** unless the **falling away** comes **first**, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-3).

The term "falling away" used in the King James Bible and the NKJ comes from a Greek word "apostasia" from which the English word "apostasy" is derived. Some Bible translations render the word as "rebellion." It is translated in Acts 21:21 as "forsake" in the KJV and NKJ.

What will be this "rebellion," or "forsaking," or "falling away" that Paul warned about? Obviously, it will be a forsaking of the truth of God as found in the Bible. It is generally believed that it will be a falling away from the church or from doctrinal premises taught by Jesus and His apostles. For example, the changing to Sunday worship in place of the 7th day Sabbath or observing Easter in place of Passover.

These examples of a "falling away" have already taken place yet the "man of sin" has not yet appeared (other than

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possible forerunners). Paul's warning to the Thessalonians stated that this "man of sin" would exalt himself above God and want to be worshipped as God (2 Thessalonians 2:4). This future person is no doubt the same person described in Daniel as the "little horn" and "king of the North," and in the Book of Revelation as the "Beast." He is primarily referred to as the "Antichrist" by most prophecy writers.

This future "man of sin" will be more than a religious figure or church leader. He will also be the head of a government with powerful military forces. For sure, to have such military power will also require economic strength to finance any campaign or expansion of territory. As history has shown, economic hard times are sometimes the fertile ground for the rise of dictators who are first seen as "saviors" to a downtrodden populace.

Thus, a future "falling away" will have to be more than just a large segment of members leaving any particular Christian church organization or a doctrinal belief. This has been happening since the first century during the time of the apostles of Christ. Not only will this "falling away" described by Paul have a religious impact but especially a geopolitical impact affecting many nations which will precipitate the rise of the "man of sin."

This "falling away" described by Paul is already emerging. You have seen it on the news but may not have realized this is what the apostle Paul forecast centuries ago. You are certainly aware that the U.S. dollar is the world's reserve currency which gives the United States a dominant role in economic trade and political influence and control over other nations.

However, as you know, there is a growing trend among many nations to **move away** from U.S. economic and political dominance because of the **weaponization of the U.S. dollar**. Not only has America used its reserve currency status to punish other nations, such as, Russia or Iran, which act contrary to U.S. policy, but has also crammed down the throats of foreign nations their "woke" ideology.

In decades past, the United States acted as a **restraining** force in the world with its economic and military power. It was the U.S. which championed the defeat of Nazi Germany and provided necessary interventions to halt the spread of communism as promoted by the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

Unless Donald Trump is elected back to the White House this November, America's days of being a **Restrainer** will soon come to an end. The current U.S. Administration under Biden and Harris has been vigorously pursuing Obama's policies of **change** from **traditional values** like a rabid dog infected with madness. Dare we call it the "O Biden Administration"?

The apostle Paul also warned that once this "restrainer" was removed or taken out of the way, then the appearance of the "man of sin" would follow (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). There are those who believe that the "restrainer" is the praying followers of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Certainly, our prayers have power and can have impact upon conditions in the world. The Two Witnesses will also have power to act as a restrainer until the Beast kills them (Revelation 11:3, 6-7).

Those nations which are **turning away** from "O Biden's" policies are displeased with the Woke agenda being "preached" to them by U.S. Leftist leaders and corporations and similar policies among leading nations of the West. Nations with strong religious morals are offended when the U.S. imposes gay-rights issues upon them against their traditional values of marriage and family. Or when they are told that the burning of oil is destroying the earth and should limit their reliance on oil. They see the U.S. hypocrisy since oil is necessary for any nation to prosper and improve its citizens quality of life.

Paul also admonishes us to hold to the **traditions** that the Bible teaches (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Foremost of those Bible traditions, even among nations which do not reference the Bible, is that marriage is between a man and a woman and that there are only two genders, male and female.

But the "man of sin" will **change** laws to oppose God's laws (Daniel 7:25). He will also commit the ultimate sin of blasphemy by claiming that he is God and demand all to worship him. Paul mentioned that the "mystery of iniquity" was already at work in his day that would someday bring about this future "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:7). What was this "mystery of iniquity" that was already working 1900 years ago?

With the advent of Julius Caesar, Rome turned from being a republic to an empire when Caesar's adopted son, Octavian, declared himself as emperor in 31 BC. During the days of Paul, the Roman leaders were at times considered to be more

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than a mere man but also a god to be worshipped. The Roman Empire was the fourth beast depicted in Daniel seven, the empire of iron in Daniel two.

The Roman Empire is now gone but not forgotten and is still impacting our lives today. This empire "was and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into **perdition**" (Revelation 17:8). So, a version of the Roman Empire will arise in the near future and will be led by the "man of sin," who is also called the "son of **perdition**" (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

The "bottomless pit" is actually describing an oil well. The importance of oil in our modern world has been greatly downplayed by those promoting "green energy" as part of their "woke" (rhymes with joke) agenda to gain supreme control over sovereign nations. The need for energy will become of utmost priority to accomplish social and governmental control by "artificial intelligence" technology.

The revival of the Roman Empire, the fourth beast, will come about when Britain, Germany, and Russia join to form an economic and military alliance. The Roman Empire was divided into East and West. Germany inherited Roman west. Russia inherited the Roman east or Byzantine Empire. Moscow is known as the "Third Rome." Thus, this future alliance of these three nations (lion, leopard, bear) will be the "healing" of the deadly wound (Revelation 13:3).

Jonathan Cahn has explained how the Roman Empire is still affecting us today as only Jonathan can do with insightful understanding of prophetic scripture. For a deeper study on the fourth beast of Daniel seven, be sure to watch his short video linked below.

The second video by Sean Pruitt, President of Kingdom Exploration, discusses the growing need for oil and how America's woke agenda is causing a rift or "falling away" of foreign nations from the West's manipulation and control of oil. The fight for oil will probably be the key factor that causes the King of the North (Beast) to invade the Middle East, particularly Jerusalem to capture the "bottomless pit" for its oil.

I have linked two other videos which will provide helpful information on the decline of the U.S. dollar as the Reserve Currency and a future transition to a Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC). Zechariah five depicts a "flying scroll" which symbolizes this future digital currency. It will be "programmable" to control our spending. The Mark of the Beast which will come later will control our spending by controlling our thinking.

Why so many videos you wonder? This was prophesied to happen long ago. Go to Joel 2:28:

"And afterward, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will **prophesy**, your old men will dream **dreams**, your young men will see **videos**."

No? You don't agree? Visions are simply videos in your head rather than on a computer screen. Well, at least think about it.

Here are the video links:

Rome Linked to End-Times: <https://youtu.be/nD-9y0NAaEM?si=JtEKE1WGUPnfA6Gi>

Increasing Demand for Oil: https://youtu.be/9YKwUISV9HQ?si=l6i_byEq9U7HLs3W

Why Saudi Left the Dollar: https://youtu.be/_9mhmFG_qjc?si=3gGi8nxp6jd2eqQh

Losing Reserve Currency Status: <https://youtu.be/U2oYCXdG7EY?si=bUjYNEfwArWnNCIq>

See Dwight Fleming's other articles at:

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

A Bride Prepared (Chapter 2) (Copyright) by Warren Zehrung (Little Rock, Arkansas)

Chapter 2: Be So Doing *A Bride Prepared*

What must the Bride be "so doing" in order to make herself ready for the marriage of the Lamb? Please do not assume that, overall, the Church is on track. Christ's instruction to the end-time Church obviously indicates that the brethren are not ready to be presented in marriage to Christ – just the opposite. The Church is not living up to Christ's high calling, and they are blind to that fact – why else would He have such harsh criticism of our spiritual condition? "*You do **not even know that you are wretched, and miserable, poor, blind, and naked,***" – and that is God's appraisal of our spiritual condition (Revelation 3:17).

Church people are becoming less and less like Jesus Christ in their actions and thoughts – and because they *are blind*, most are not even aware of it. If the people of God were to be brought up before Christ today, many would be at risk of hearing the dreaded words, "*I never knew you.*" (Matthew 7:23) The sad fact is that the spiritual condition of God's Church is deteriorating rapidly.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are working together to bring us to salvation, but we have to respond to their overtures, and be fashioned in their image. "*We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God has ordained beforehand that **we should walk in them.***" (Ephesians 2:10) How do we do that?

What does Christ mean by those words – *be found so doing*? Doing what? What did He really have in mind for us to be "*doing*?" Aren't Church brethren doing things? Some are making tapes and DVDs for distribution; others are investigating issues such as the calendar, new moons, or prophecy; a number are reproducing Herbert W. Armstrong's materials; some brethren are busy publishing materials, or doing website maintenance; we find brethren involved in choir, hall setup or serving at potlucks. But these are *not* the actions that Christ meant when He said to be "*so doing*." Yes, those things are important – but much more is required of the Bride.

Seek the Spiritual

The *spiritual* is more important than the *physical*. Jesus taught Martha the difference in Luke 10 – and we are privy to His vital lesson. "*Jesus entered a village: and Martha welcomed Him into her home.*" Martha was a lot like those brethren who are very involved in all kinds of very necessary *physical* projects. "*Martha had a sister, Mary, who sat at Jesus' feet, and listened to His teachings.*"

"*But Martha was inundated by her projects, and said to Jesus, "Lord, don't you even care that my sister has left me to do all the serving – alone? Tell her to come and help me."* And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and upset about too many things. **But one thing is more important than anything else: and Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.**" Jesus made it clear that *spiritual* endeavors superseded the physical ones. It's not that the serving and setting up are unimportant; it is that the **spiritual things of God** are most important.

When we apply Christ's lesson that the *spiritual* nature of God, to which we must attain, surpasses the physical aspects of our lives, we begin to realize that a disproportionate emphasis on the physical comes short of Christ's expectation for us. The exceedingly more important development of our relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and our love and harmony with our brothers and sisters in Christ is what **must come first**. Our Spirit-motivated relationship with God is the basis for being like-minded with the brethren. That is what we must be *so doing*.

Why is the development of our spiritual lives of paramount importance? It is because Jesus Christ is going to take to Himself a *spiritual* Bride – not a physical organization. None of us is yet spiritual. We are still a very carnal people in that we refuse to be at peace with one another (1 Corinthians 3:4). We have been given the *obligation of reconciliation* with all brethren – and that we must be *so doing* (2 Corinthians 5:18-19).

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The Bride of Christ in Revelation 19:7 will not be a loose federation of divided brethren. The *Spirit* that is held in common by those comprising the "**Wife of Christ**" is the strongest bond that exists. Jesus is not going to return to an estranged people who will not have anything to do with each other. Our salvation depends on our love for God's entire spiritual community. "*We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.*" (1 John 3:14)

Let us not miss the importance of Jesus' lesson for us at this time. Some might wonder, "What more can I do – I have only so much strength, time and resources?" Precisely! But Jesus is not speaking of *physical* activities. He expects us to be doing the *spiritual*! It is high time we give priority to the spiritual aspects of our faith. Yes, church activities and projects are necessary, but they do not rise to the level of the spiritual relationship with God and brethren that Jesus was speaking about when He said, "*be found so doing?*"

Who do You Love?

Are we living up to our spiritual responsibility? Another way to ask that same question is this: What must the future wife of Christ be doing to make herself ready for the marriage of the Lamb? When Jesus returns: First, the Bride will have made herself ready to meet the Bridegroom, and secondly, the foolish virgins will not be prepared (Matthew 25:12). Let us be honest with ourselves – looking at the disheveled, disunified state of the Church today, we are certainly not ready. We must each personally be healing the breach that exists – the responsibility is ours.

Just before He died, Jesus Christ told the apostles to *love one another*. Most people would say that they love those in their group, and thus have fulfilled that Scripture. But can we agree that all those who have God's Holy Spirit are elect children of God, and that there are individuals in various groups who have God's Spirit? All the corporate groups would say that they uphold that principle. But they do not – not with a Godly love!

Various Church leaders have chosen a mistakenly narrow viewpoint when determining *who* to include in the "*love one another*" category. Those leaders subtly imply to the members of their congregations that they are better than other fellowships. As a result, some brethren tend to shun and look down on those brethren not in their organization. That is an arrogant attitude of self-exaltation that Jesus Christ condemns (James 2:1).

Everyone with the proper reverence for God's love and way of life will be discerning which brethren to include in their personal fellowship. It does not matter whether or not they are in a particular church organization. "*They that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.*" (Malachi 3:16)

How much time do we have left to get our act together? Jesus Christ is going to look each of us in the eye and ask, "When did you – not your hierarchy – reach out to your brother and sister in love and reconciliation?" (2 Corinthians 5:18) "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves.*" (Philippians 2:3)

See Warren Zehrung's other articles at:

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

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Donor Letter - August 24, 2024

(Copyright 08-24-2024) by William P. Goff (Myrtle Beach, South Carolina)

Greetings Brethren, Happy Sabbath.

Thanks to your continued support (and to those who went above and beyond) the orphans and widows are once again

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faring well. Sleeping with food in their bellies. I'm also happy to report that none have died since we posted that last "update". Your response brought our orphans and widows much relief,

We received a letter from Chebet (she's the widow from the Itongo congregation who recently lost eight year old orphan Clinton to starvation.) Clinton is now buried.

"Dear beloved donors and the entire brethren from abroad of Kenya Hands of Hope, in the Most High God Almighty. Greetings, and thanks to you through Christ Jesus our Lord, and our Almighty Father.

It is a kind of cleansing me in my tears in regards for your doing good lifting me and our orphans up from situation of lacking means of life, basic need starting from food that is essential nourishment. We thank you; I truly call you brethren. I'm 73 years and I never helped since widow until you brethren have been helping me. And not only me, but the orphans here so much.

Thanks, with appreciation for your wonderful support provision that has enabled us a lot and the entire kids from Itongo group that you have been supporting.

You have really touched all of us with your compassionate heart that gives account in the presence of God. You have wonderful deeds of mercy in action.

We are in prayers to God for your strength and to bless you for truly loving us.

In love, Chebet"

I also received some letters of thanks from the orphans at Sengera House. They have been home between semesters for three weeks, and now are headed back to School on Monday the 26th of August.



Sengera House Orphans.

The following letter of thanks is from Francis:

"Greetings my name is Francis Son Oketch I'm 16 years old I have been staying in sengera orphanage. I can remember

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the first time I came here life wasn't easy for me and my sister. We used to sleep without eating anything and even had no mattress or blanket and lacked Food. But we never stopped praying God to help us. That's when we went to church and meet the late Haron and we moved to sengeru house.

We truly thank you donors for the help that you are giving to us. We are eating well and going to school. Without forgetting we always thank God for everything because he's the provider. May God bless your families and grant you any wish that you ask him. You are such a blessing to us. Without forgetting let's get close to God because the kingdom of God is coming soon, we have to repent and be baptized and walk in the right direction.

Oh, I almost forgot to thank you also for fixing my broken ankle from accident on motor bike taxi. You donors treat us all of us orphans like we your very own children you sure do have the love of God in you. You are our parents we are your children.

Be blessed
Francis”



Francis.

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Orphans from the Getionko congregation also thank you.

Once again we thank you Brethren for continuing to assist our impoverished brethren, especially the widows and orphans, may our Almighty Father Bless you.

We now look forward to the upcoming fall Feasts that are rapidly approaching. And again, we ask you to please spread the word that we have brethren all around this world that are impoverished, and in need of our help. (Galatians 6:10) tells us to *“do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith”*.

And (1 John 3:17) tells us *“if anyone hath this world’s goods, and seeth our brother have need, and shutteth up our bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?”*

Let us continue to practice the pure religion of (James 1:27) and continue helping our orphans and widows in their afflictions, in their suffering. And most importantly too, let us be keeping ourselves unspotted from the world.

The Kingdom of God is approaching Brethren, its coming in our lifetime. We are living in that last generation that our Lord spoke of in (Matthew 24:32-35). If we don’t see it, let us anoint our eyes with the Laodicean Eye salve of (Revelation 3:18) so that we can see.

Our Lord comes quickly, and He’s looking to find a “glorious church, one without spot or wrinkle. Yes, Holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:27). He wants us pure brethren, and He wants us pure now. Don’t believe those who say it’s impossible while we are still in the flesh. Oh, of and by ourselves it is impossible. **But** we are not by ourselves **if** we have His Powerful Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

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Yes, if we have His Spirit in us, and this hope in us to be like Him, then let us purify ourselves. How pure? As pure as He is pure. (1 John 3:3). Yes, purify ourselves; we have the power to accomplish that. We have the power to overcome.

Bill Goff

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The Bride of Christ

(Copyright 08-29-2024) by Sue & Eddie Hyatt (Grapevine, Texas)

AN IMPORTANT TEACHING MOMENT

Perhaps, you, like many others, have heard teachings about the expression "Bride of Christ." This was brought afresh to our attention today, and I want to share a few thoughts that I hope will help you--should you need that help--in correctly interpreting this concept.

"Bride of Christ" is a METAPHOR—a literary tool, and it has been terribly misused and abused by those in the Church who are ignorant in the use of language. It is a metaphor.

Simply stated, a metaphor is a figure of speech that compares two different things that have one point in common.

In this case, the point in common is the issue of identification with." It is a metaphor used to describe an individual's or congregation's relationship with the Lord in terms of "identification with the Lord as opposed to identification with the prevailing, fallen culture. That is to say, even as a married woman is to "kephale" (Greek for "identify with"--not "submit to"--with her husband rather than with other men, according to Paul's teaching to the Ephesians and others in the Greco-Roman world), so every Christian is "to identify with" Jesus Christ.

EDDIE WRITES:

Sue has covered this very thoroughly, but I will add just a few of my own thoughts here.

- 1) Neither Jesus or Paul ever spoke of the "bride of Christ." If it was an "essential" truth or metaphor, I would think that they would have mentioned it at least once.
- 2) Apart from the Book of Revelation, the only place it is found in the NT is in John 3:29 where it is used by John the Baptist to describe his relationship with the Messiah (Jesus) who has just come on the scene, and why there is no sense of competition. He describes Jesus as the "Bridegroom" and himself as the "Friend of the Bridegroom," which would be similar to our "Best Man." He does not identify the "Bride" because his point is to explain his relationship with Jesus. Now that the "Bridegroom" has arrived, his role as the "Friend of the Bridegroom" is no longer of importance. For that reason, John said, "He must increase, and I must decrease."

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- 3) There are a number of metaphors that are used of the Church and each one is used to teach something unique. These include "body of Christ" (I Cor. 12:27) and "temple of God" (I Cor. 3:16) and "people of God," (I Peter 2:9) and "the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb.12:22).
- 4) Where "bride of Christ" or something synonymous is used in Revelation (21:2), it is used of the church in heaven in her glorified, redeemed state. To add to what Sue said in this regard, it is probably used to express God's passion and love for His people--like a bridegroom for his new bride--even willing to give His own life for her, which is used in Eph. 5:25 as the model for how husbands are to love their wives here in this life.
- 5) And remember, that even though "bride of Christ" is a feminine metaphor, it applies to both men and women. The Church as a whole is the bride of Christ.

See Sue Hyatt's other articles at:

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

See Eddie Hyatt's other articles at:

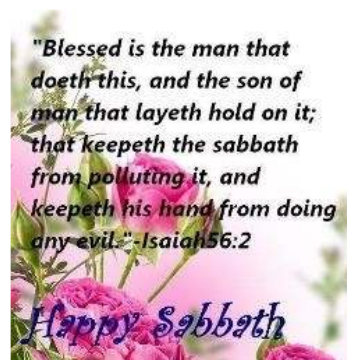
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Blessed Day of Rest

(Copyright 08-24-2024) by Gary C. Miller (Pocahontas, Arkansas)



MORE LASTING THAN THE UNIVERSE

The Seventh Day Sabbath is not just a religious issue. It is a natural law, like the law of gravity; an everlasting Law that will not, cannot fail. (Ex. 31:16) "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail." (Lk. 16:17)

SABBATH REQUIREMENTS

Death Penalty for Breaking it:

"...you are to observe the Sabbath...Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death... ..on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete Rest, Holy to Yahweh; whoever does any work on the Sabbath Day shall surely be put to death." (Ex. 31:14,15)

A SPEICAL DAY OF REST

"If because of the Sabbath, you turn your foot
From doing your own pleasure on My Holy Day,
And call the Sabbath a delight, the Holy Day of
Yahweh honorable,
And shall honor it, desisting from your own ways,
From seeking your own pleasure,
And speaking your own word," (Isa. 58:13; NAS)

THE REWARD FOR KEEPING IT HOLY

"Then you will take delight in Yahweh,
And I will make you ride on the heights of the Earth; ...
For the mouth of Yahweh has spoken."
(Isa. 58:14; NAS)

See Gary C. Miller's other articles at:

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

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The Deep State is the Body of Antichrist

(Copyright 08-27-2024) by James Lloyd (Medford, Oregon)



Bible Prophecy says "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19).

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God has poured out Prophecy of what has happened, and what is about to occur, as the attached humorous cartoon shows. For years, the Prophecy ministry *Christian Media* has found historical patterns in Scripture they refer to as *Sequential Recapitulation*, in which accounts are repeated in later generations, as though the world is following a Script. Using this system known as “doubling,” the ministry has issued many predictions which have been fulfilled.

See James Lloyd’s other articles at:

Lloyd, James – Church of God, Bismarck (church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

In regard to: The Bride of Christ

Article by Sue & Eddie Hyatt

Comments by Darwin Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Metaphor Verses Analogy

Maybe this can be one’s guide. Not sure which best fits Sue & Eddie Hyatt’s explanation. My personal opinion based on scripture, would be analogy best fits.

Using an on-line dictionary. This is what I found:

1. Metaphor:” a figure of speech in which an expression is used to refer to something that it does not literally denote in order to suggest a similarity”. (Example: The “land is flowing with milk and honey”; yet not literally milk and honey.) Exd. 3:8 And I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey; unto the place of the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites. This metaphor is suggesting a similarity between milk and honey as to richness of a land of plenty-resources, “a good land”. The children of Israel didn’t find the land flowing with literal milk and honey flowing down a river or creek. It was said to present a picture of the richness of resources of the land they were about to enter.
2. Analogy:” drawing a comparison in order to show a similarity in some respect. the operation of a computer presents an interesting analogy to the working of the brain the models show by analogy how matter is built up”.

The Church being a bride (wife) to her husband (Christ). As in a marriage of a man to a woman and vice versa. The two are very similar and by the way, literal.

With Old Testament Israel, God (Christ), was married to physical Israel (literally). **Jer 3:14** Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; **for I am married unto you:** and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion:

In their case God (Christ) divorced them because of their infidelity. **Jer 3:8** And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not but went and played the harlot also.

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That is a literal marriage as viewed by God and similar to a marriage of a man and a woman. The key is faithfulness in a relationship that Old Testament Israel promised to God but broke that they had agreed to with God. **Ex 19:8** And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.

As to Spiritual Israel (the church), Jesus is going to marry His bride (His Church which are called out ones) and because of their faithfulness, His wife will be given positions of authority in His ruling kingdom on this earth at His, Christ's return.

Re 21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

Re 19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

Re 1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him *be* glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Re 5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

All of that is similar to a marriage of a man and a woman and their faithfulness to each other, as Christ is faithful to his Spiritual bride-wife, His wife will forevermore be faithful to her Husband.

Therefore, analogy best fits “bride of Christ” (His wife) and is not a metaphor.

Letters

Letter from Obed Mambwe (August 22, 2024)

Free literature and free distribution

Thank you and we are in need of free literature, e.g. Bibles in our local languages for free distribution to those who cannot afford to purchase their own Bibles. Thank you and it's more encouraging to hear from you soon.

Answer: We do not collect money from other people, and we do not distribute bibles, or literature (except the email newsletter). I am printing this letter in case there are people reading this newsletter that distribute literature or bibles and would like to help you with your request. Laura

Letter from Curtis Dahlgren (August 24, 2024)

Thanks for publishing my Laugh-in column, and the link to other columns.

Letter from Obed Mambwe (August 30, 2024)

Thank you.

Holy Days 2024

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

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 23-29, 2024

Pentecost – June 12, 2024

Trumpets - October 3, 2024

Atonement – October 12, 2024

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

Last Great Day – October 24, 2024