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2018

The Sabbath Sentinel



Pure Religion-Wisdom Academy

BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association

"Pure religion and undefiled before God ... is ... to visit orphans and widows in their afflictions..."

The Sabbath Sentinel November-December 2018

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The Importance of Having God's Vision!

Scripture tells us that where there is no vision the people perish. In another translation it says that they "cast off restraint." Have we stopped to consider the importance of that statement?

The same proverb in its contrastive couplet states that the one who keeps the law is happy (Prov. 29:18). The indication is that one is happy when one keeps the law because it affords one the vision of what God is doing.

It is a sad fact of life that nearly everyone on earth has no clue as to what God is doing. Every Sunday, or even daily if they have the cable networks, they hear to just accept Jesus and you get to go to heaven. But, this is not the vision God has given to those who refuse to do evil.

What is the vision God has for us? The vision is God's plan for all of mankind. In the beginning, the Father told His Son who would one day be born of a virgin, to go out and create children for Him. Everything else since that moment has been done for the express purpose of doing what the Father asked—the creation of other children under the Elder Brother, First Born from the dead, Yeshua/Jesus the Christ.

In order to understand this vision God saw to it that the scriptures were assembled for us to study. It is not for all men to have that vision today. Jesus even alluded to this in Matt. 13:15. He stated unequivocally that He spoke in parables to prevent people from understanding. Why would He do that if God is desperately trying to get everyone saved? Without having the vision God gives to His people one can't understand this seeming paradox.

The fact is that God does have a vision that includes all of mankind including all of those who have never heard the only name by which they can be saved. God does love all of His potential children, but those children demonstrated through their parents

that given the freedom to choose, they invariably would choose the voice of their own carnal desires over the commands of God. Because of this attitude toward God, the lack of desire for loving obedience to Him, they cannot be allowed to understand what God is doing.

God wants children who will always choose to obey Him, but out of love and recognition that God alone knows what is best. Most of the world would rather just have a savior who only requires acknowledging the savior while continuing down the path of choosing their own rules. They claim to accept Jesus as savior but refuse to do the things that He commands, just like our parents in the Garden of Eden.

In the Garden, our parents were told that they could have everything, anything, that they wanted except one thing—the fruit of one tree. They decided for themselves that they knew better and took that one fruit, the only thing God withheld from them. Given the same choice today, nearly everyone descended from those first parents would do the same. But God's vision is much greater ours!

God recognized that man would possibly rebel when given free will and because of this He set Jesus up to be the Lamb to be slain for all sins in the very beginning. As a further example to mankind that given the choice they would not choose God, He set aside an entire progeny of a faithful man we know as Abraham. He promised them national greatness if they would just choose to obey Him. That promise was laid before Israel at Sinai and their response was that they would do all that they were told to do. They did not do it. Did they lie? Who knows? The fact is that they did not obey, and in particular, engaged in idolatry and Sabbath breaking. Eventually God cast them out as a divorced wife for their harlotry, whoring figuratively with false gods. Even though God promised to

make them great and put them above all other nations, which He did do anyway, they still rebelled, refusing to obey the simple commandments He pointed out to them at Sinai.

Therefore, God's vision for all of us is hidden from them. They are not allowed to see the truth because they will not choose to obey God out of love. This is in contrast to those of us who understand that we must live by *every* word that proceeds from the mouth of God, as Jesus said, and who recognize the love that God has for us as demonstrated by His willingness to allow His only Son to be tortured and killed to redeem His children.

Yes, every Sunday and Sabbath preacher says that we must accept the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. But, in acceptance of that sacrifice comes the conscious decision to love the Father enough to want to live by His every word—to want to obey Him out of love for Him because He first loved us.

How does God preclude people at large from understanding His vision for us? He does so by only giving His Spirit to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Without His Spirit we do not have access to understanding which, as we saw in Proverbs 29, is given to those who keep the Laws which are defined in scriptures as the Commandments of God.

Most choose to ignore the Commandment of God to keep His Sabbaths holy, just like our first parents chose to ignore the Commandment of God to refrain from the one fruit and choosing, instead, to make the decision for themselves as to what was right.

The vision of God, His process of creating children for Himself through the reconciliation process, is contained in the annual Sabbath Days which many in the Churches of God have been celebrating. This statement is not intended as an indictment of those of us who have not yet seen the importance of obedience to God in that aspect of His Word. Each of us should be fully persuaded of what God is expecting of us—but scripture, not our own understanding, needs to be the standard.

God is still allowing people to choose what is right

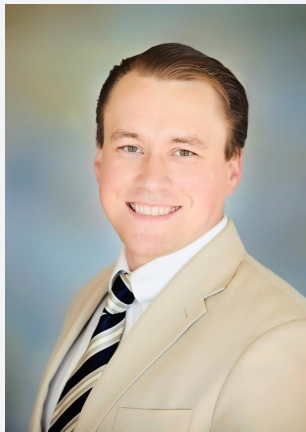
for themselves. But, God's vision as shown by the annual Sabbaths shows that a time is coming when people will not be given the choice to disobey—at least not without an official penalty that is pronounced in Jerusalem by the King. All of mankind, like those of us who are called now and given that vision, must come to the point where they will obey the King because they love Him and how He has fixed the earth from the nearly total life-killing disaster that happens just before the return of the Christ as King of Kings.

Is it "fair" that only a small minority of people would be allowed to understand God's vision for all of mankind? It is abundantly fair because our parents chose to follow the coaxing of the false snake god. It is abundantly fair because God demonstrated that even if He made us the most powerful nation on earth that we would still follow the lead of the false snake god. It is the epitome of fairness because those who love God and His way now choose to walk in His ways in the face of a world full of people who do not care what God has to say and who hate those who have determined to walk in God's Way out of love for Him and that Way.

God's vision was for the YHVH of the old testament, who created all things and became a Lamb to reconcile us, to create sons for His family. Eventually, all who have ever lived will be resurrected to physical life and be given the same admonition that YHVH God gave Israel at Sinai—choose life! The ultimate conclusion of God's great plan, as much of it as we can glean from the Words that He left for us, will be the mass conversion of all mankind while still giving them the chance to rebel by joining the evil armies at the very end. Sadly, some will still choose rebellion and death, and even with that the vision of God is to mercifully burn them up so that they will be ashes under the feet of the saints.

God's vision for all men is for them to enjoy eternal life as His sons, and as younger brothers to Jesus. What a glorious conclusion to all of the sadness we see today this will be!

—Dr. Royce Mitchell, Editor



The President's Corner

Seven Factors that Influenced the Sabbath in the Early Church

(Part 3)

Kelly McDonald

In two previous editions of *The Sabbath Sentinel*, we covered four of seven major factors that influenced the Sabbath in the early Church: the persecution of Christians, destruction of Jerusalem (twice), Quartodeciman controversy, and anti-Semitism. In the midst of these events, a fifth significant factor developed: syncretism. Syncretism is when someone takes practices from the Holy Bible and mixes them with practices from other religions. We will spend the entire article covering this subject.

As some early Christians sought to avoid practices that appeared Jewish, they began to embrace practices from other religions. Sunday worship was one of them. The first reliable instance of a person who professed to be a Christian but also worshiped on Sunday was Justin the Martyr. We discussed him some in the last edition of *The Sabbath Sentinel*. He was one of the writers who promoted anti-Semitic views, especially as a way to denigrate the Sabbath. In his work *Apology*, which was written to the Roman Emperor Antoninus Pius (approx. 151 AD), he stated:

"...But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for

your consideration" (*Apology*, chapter 67).

Keep in mind that Justin does not call Sunday the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, a holy day or even a day of rest. His claim that all Christians assembled on Sunday also contradicts other primary sources (such as accounts of the Nazarenes, who were keeping the Sabbath from Jesus into the 300s AD). It is important to note that the pagan Romans viewed the Biblical Sabbath, which they called the day of Saturn, as an unlucky day (Tibullus, 1:3,17-18; Propertius 4:1,81-86). Justin was very careful to call Saturday "the Day of Saturn" for his audience. Furthermore, he was careful to signify it was the day Jesus was dead in the tomb.

In the original text, which was written in Greek, Justin used the Greek phrase "day of helios" to refer to Sunday (Of the names of the Days of the Week, New Series, 9, vol. LXXXIX. London, A.D. Ines and Co. 1895, p 571). This terminology was familiar to the pagans of his day. Helios was the sun god. In Greek mythology, he gave light to mankind (Smith's Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities: Helios). The sun was worshipped early on by the Romans (Marcus Varro, *On the Latin Language*, 5:74). Once again, one cannot help but wonder if Justin was using these terms to cater to his Roman audience.

Among the works of Justin was a dialogue he had with a Jewish man named Trypho. In this work, he stated that the sun was given as an object of worship. "God formerly gave the sun as an object of worship..." (*Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 121). In chapter 10 of this same work, Justin confessed

that he did not keep any Sabbaths. Trypho replied with agreement that Justin observed no day as the Sabbath, no festivals, and no commandments.

Another writer of the time period was Clement of Alexandria (late 100s AD). In his writings, we find the first reference to Sunday being called the Lord's Day. His justification for this view comes from Plato and the number eight (ibid, 5, 14). Plato was a heathen philosopher. Why would anyone use his writings to justify any Christian practice? As the Old Testament was being devalued as the sole background source to the New Testament, these Gnostic writers had to find some other source that they could utilize as a derivative of Christian practice. Philosophy was one belief system used to fill this void.

The theology of Clement was sometimes confusing and not always consistent. He called Sunday the "Lord's Day", which has no scriptural evidence. He was an avowed gnostic and also claimed that the true gnostic does not honor specific days (ibid, 6:15, 7:7). Among his other questionable statements, he proposed that philosophy was given to guide the Greeks towards righteousness (ibid, 1:5). He believed that we should pray with our faces towards the east to face the rising sun (ibid, 7:7). In a similar fashion to Justin, he

believed that the sun was created as an object of worship. "And he gave the sun, and the moon, and the stars to be worshipped..." (ibid, 6:14).

A final writer that contributes to our understanding of this subject is Tertullian. He was a Christian writer who lived in Carthage in the late 190s/early 200s AD. He was an avowed enemy of Marcionites, but he still advocated Sunday worship. We have some of his quotes below.

"Others with a greater show of reason take us for worshippers of the sun... This suspicion took its rise from hence, because it was observed that Christians prayed with their faces towards the east [towards the sun] but if we, like them [the pagans], celebrate Sunday as a festival and day of rejoicing, it is for a reason vastly distant from that of worshipping the sun; for we solemnize the day after Saturday in contradistinction to those who call this day their Sabbath, and devote it to ease and eating, deviating from the old Jewish customs, which they are now very ignorant of" (Apology, Chapter 16, [Reeves' 1716 translation, pp 221-222]; emphasis mine throughout).

Tertullian admitted that the Sunday celebration was "like them" – meaning the pagans of his time. He also acknowledged that there were Christians that still called Saturday the Sabbath.

"Others, with greater regard to good manners, it

BSA President's Speaking Schedule

The Bible Sabbath Association's President, Kelly McDonald, will be appearing at several locations in November and December.

Tentative November Schedule

Nov. 3 – Athens, GA
Nov. 10 – Corinth, MS and Jackson, TN
Nov. 17 – Murfreesboro, TN
Nov. 24 – Cleveland, TN

Tentative December Schedule

Dec. 1 – Athens, GA
Dec. 8 – Murfreesboro, TN
Dec. 15 – Murfreesboro, TN
Dec. 22 – Cleveland, TN
Dec. 29 – OPEN

TIME is the Ally of Deceit

Richard Rives

Many aspects of Traditional Christianity cannot be found in the Bible. They can however be traced directly to the worship of pagan gods which predate Christianity by centuries. How is it that precepts that have nothing to do with Christ and everything to do with pagan sun worship have found their way into our churches? History reveals that there is one very good answer.

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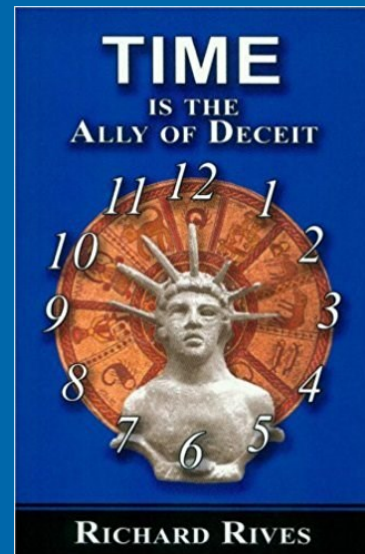
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must be confessed, suppose that the sun is the god of the Christians, because it is a well-known fact that we pray towards the east or because we make Sunday a day of festivity. What then? Do you do less than this?...It is you [the pagans], at all events, who have even admitted the sun into the calendar of the week; and you have selected its day, in preference to the preceding day...For the Jewish feasts are the Sabbath and "the Purification"...all which institutions and practices are of course foreign from your [pagan] gods" (Against the Nations, 1:13).

In his work, Against the Nations (also called To the Nations), Tertullian addressed pagan worshippers. Once again, he admitted that some Christians of his time made Sunday a festivity in the same way as the pagans. He then confessed that the practices of the Sabbath and festivals by the Jewish people are foreign to other gods. They are holy celebrations not shared by other religions. He had to defend the syncretism he practiced.

Tertullian was the first Christian source (to my knowledge) to defend Christianity against accusation of sun worship. In the New Testament, Christians never had to shield themselves against such allegations. Syncretism caused this to change – confusion was being portrayed to the outside world. Tertullian also confessed that Sunday worship was a tradition with no Scriptural authority (De Corona, chapters 3 and 4).

As we read these primary source accounts, we can see that syncretism had a huge influence on the Sabbath in early Christianity. Some wanted to retain pagan practices, such as adoration of the sun and its rising, and still uphold Christian principles. We are not to pray to the sun or adore its rising (see Deut. 4:19, Ezekiel 8:14-17). This mixing remains to our day. We will finish this series in the next edition of The Sabbath Sentinel by discussing allegorizing Scripture and the Rome Church's relationship to Roman Emperors.

Michael Suned

The Seventh Pillar of Wisdom — “Action”

A Chinese tourist in New York was shocked when he noticed a homeless Chinese man who was reading something which most common people don't—the stock market analysis section of the Wall Street Journal. In a short time this curious tourist found out that the thick-eyeglass-wearing, homeless, Chinese man had a Master's Degree in Finance and Doctoral Degree in Accounting. This odd discovery spread like wild fire all around the world. It has been passed on from person to person, shared as interesting, if unimaginable, news in classrooms, at parties, and elsewhere. Some passed the story on for entertain-

ment, joking that someone who has a higher degree than they have had come to so little.

Whatever the reason was for sharing, everyone had the same reaction as when the tourist had accidentally discovered the homeless man. The story ended without knowing what had happened and what would happen to that homeless man. But most didn't know the real reason why the highly educated, successful person, who was able to make it to the U.S., had ended up suffering homelessness. From the stand point of people who believe that it is “easier to go to the moon than to America,” and the perspective of the homeless man being a person who had made to the “Beautiful Country” where he was having such a tragic life, it was something they couldn't understand. (People wondered, and still are wondering, when they come to the problems in their own lives.) What we always need is an answer, possibly a Scapegoat named “maybe,” or “if only.” It has been the unfortunate culture of our society that many individuals or organizations have been criticized unfairly, just like the homeless man.

So what was the problem with that fellow who seemingly possessed higher intellectual skills (knowledge) than others yet was living a life which is below the people, from a status standpoint, who apparently have a lot lower intellectual level? Notice that Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and others who are considered to be very successful people by the rest of the world don't have higher educational degrees than some of their workers. Successful people are high school graduates and college drop outs as well as college graduates. It is true that, because they are much more successful than the people who have achieved higher degrees, people categorize them into special groups and believe those people were born under special circumstances, a “silver spoon in their mouths,” that others can't access to make it to an equivalent level of achievement. I would say this is an excuse, and untrue. Why do I say that?

I have seen more than a few employers for whom I have worked that only had a high school degree or a GED. One is a general manager in one of the top Toyota Dealerships. He started as an Assistant in the service department right after his high school graduation. Another that I know is the owner of one of the biggest home wiring companies in Texas. He directly told me that he only has



a high school degree. There are millionaires who are migrating from China to the US without the benefit of college degrees. There are some CEOs for local million dollar companies who do not have college educations, much less degrees. My list can go on and on. I believe each of us knows a few successful business people around them who have only high school diplomas or less. Based on my work in three countries and on my life experience, listening to many share the stories of their successes, I have come to the conclusion that there is no educational degree required to be a financial success. Yes, you must have a good head on your shoulders, and understand that an educational degree is knowledge but is not the only knowledge.

We have adopted the concept of equating the level of one's educational degree to his level of success. There are many levels of success such as financial, physical and spiritual. Modern society's professionals make a certain income as their recommended starting salary. Money is the most common subject we deal with daily and to some degree, it is a scale for success. Often the other two more important parts of life's aspects are neglected due to the chasing of money. Colleges often advertise the success you will enjoy if you only graduate from their school. Of course, this is done to bring students, and hence profit, to the organization. The concept that a higher degree equates to a higher level of success is deeply rooted in our brain, constantly blurring our sights, confusing us. That's why we are constantly having a seventh pillar problem.

We don't connect that the work that has to be done must be coupled with an action. Instead we got into classroom teaching as an answer. Classroom education absolutely works better with marketing, but life and business are not only about marketing. It is not enough for the schools to just teach principles, knowledge and philosophies; they must also teach action. For many reasons, the concept of Action is consistently neglected during education. Also, Action is a very personal exercise. An individual's deep connection to the many human elements of life hardly compares to the use of humanly invented devices except through the fruits of their use, which comparison might take decades or centuries.

Some of the best examples for understanding why action is one of the seven pillars are politicians. It is commonly recognized by everyone that politicians are generally considered to be liars. The reason that people hate politicians is that in the majority of the cases politicians are not only unable to fulfill their promises after they were elect-

ed, but that they never intended to fulfill those promises. Alternatively, people figured out later that the promises were made on purpose motivated by the politicians' desire to achieve their own selfish goals. The ability to execute is the power that transforms labor and finishes any work. The result is often considered to be "achieved" when the action is completed. People elect politicians seeking to have a better life. A candidate must convince people that only he or she is qualified to do the task in order to be elected. People then trust that elected candidate and when the expected result doesn't occur, disappointment sets in and judgment follows close on the heels of that disappointment. When this happens an attitude of negativity will be focused on that politician. The politician's inept actions usually stir up people's negative emotional responses.

Another good example of result not following effort is graduating from vocational training schools. When an organization graduates its newly educated students, especially in the trades, one finds that there is quite a difference between what one has learned in the school or training than the knowledge that is required in real work. Sometimes the knowledge, task and procedural guidelines taught in the classroom are ideally right, but practically not useful.

An emotional reaction is automatic when we try to measure an action. The Conditional Double Standard arises when an emotional condition is involved. We can see these two elements by following the facts. There are several well-known and successful entrepreneurs who have publically admitted that they didn't know how to start up their own business after they had received two business-related degrees from famous and respectable institutes of higher education. People might believe that those individuals didn't study well in school. However the statistics shows that the percentage of graduates from prestigious colleges becoming successful in their fields is far less than the number that people would expect. In most cases, people inherently use their double standards or biases in favor of a college education to make their decision as to education. Humans are very accustomed to using their conditional double standards towards educational organizations as well as individual politicians. The use of the double standards are similar to the belief that killing people with cannons is considered just but with a pistol the killing is evil. It is called a capital crime when a person kills another person, but called "justice" when many people follow orders to kill or hurt another group of people.

We often find out that famous and successful people, among those who are the most highly educated individuals, are often bested by an unknown individual. A champion of checkers loses a game to an ordinary guy. A famous preacher's "knowledge" was exposed by a new member of that church. A well-respected scientist is embarrassed by a local pastor for their philosophy wherein he denied the existence of God. We can single out one situation after another which has caused people to wonder how it is that the uneducated can best the highly educated. Action speaks louder than words, and people can see that through the fruits. In the end what is seen are excuses for the failures, and complaints against those who don't act.

Action is the generator of visible fruit that proves that a shared concept or theory was correct. Through the results, or fruits, whatever we wish to call them, we will be able to measure and confirm whether what has been known or discovered was true or not. Action uniquely stands at the end individually associated with all other six pillars and acts as testing device to them. Without Action, we cannot know whether a person is a liar or just a talker. With Action we will be able to see the truth about qualifications and based on the previous actions, which we call experience or history, we can decide if we can trust that person for an intended assignment.

Words are intangible, but Action is solid. One can build a spacecraft in a second with lips, but with hands it takes years. Even now we still don't understand how exactly sperm knows to travel its long journey to reach an egg. We sometimes still believe ourselves to be wiser than others when we engage in discussion with them. Separating our limited understanding from controversial issues in order to avoid unnecessary confusion is of much more benefit to us. Therefore, let us avoid the pre-formed human being and become more focused on the present form. Our present form of life, whether a success or failure, is trained to be what it is. Most of the failures we go through daily are not even learned failures. The world is ready to embrace as successful those who are successful at any time and any place. However, people are not fulfilling their potential for success in life simply because of their lack of action. We know that many people who live in the U.S. became homeless or went broke during the recession of 2008. However, more than a few people became millionaires during that time. While most of us were worrying or frozen into inaction, those who had a successful 2008 just acted. One success that I know is a person who owns a business that recycles electronic devices in Los Angeles, California, to export to China. He

made his American Dream come true in 2008 without having a Green Card or startup funds.

Yes, the number of people who made it to that level of achievement is far less than the number of people who failed in 2008, but did it need to be like that? Some people and businesses make good profit in peaceful times but are not able to go through the hardship of economic downturn. This is not considered to be good business and doesn't mean that the previously successful who became failures had obtained true wisdom. With that being said, all suffering organizations, including businesses, religious organizations, political parties, etc., are demonstrating their life threatening problems which are related with Action, or inaction, as demonstrated through their negative gains.

Our "pre-form" was launched early on in our lives. It causes us to reach the point of connecting facts for conclusion but also continuing to develop the method or habits of inaction throughout our lives. We engage in Action by moving our body parts purposefully, each moment, toward our goals. Action has parts that are both visible and invisible wherein we are transformed into a unique and individually "characterized" person. Each one of us makes trillions of decisions throughout our life-long journeys. When we carefully examine all the decisions we have made in our lives, after having a full knowledge of what those decisions were, we come to the shocking fact that many people have influenced us to make decisions based on emotions. We feel bad when we fall into the trap wherein people took advantage of our habit of making emotional decisions. Having now discussed Action, it is our destiny to embrace the result of our Actions. Our actions have continually brought a result, even when we don't want to accept that result. In order to achieve life-long wisdom, building your ability to take the most effective and correct Action is required at each decision you make. It is an axiom of truth for life that without Action nothing will happen and with wrong Action we will pretty much always end up with an unsatisfactory result. Action is uniquely connected with each and every other pillar of Wisdom at all times. Action as a pillar of Wisdom can cause us to reach the highest levels of wisdom in our lifetimes, and to create the successful life we want, both in detailed ways and in unique ways, thereby causing us to develop an even stronger seventh pillar.

“Mbuya Mono”

Linda Benton

These words have been on my mind the last couple of weeks as I studied and selected scriptures about giving thanks and thankfulness for the November scripture writing program published in our October newsletter. Mbuya Mono (m-bia-mono) means thank you in the Bantu language, Ekegusii, spoken in the Kisii district in Western Kenya. I had the opportunity to visit Ogembo, Kenya in the Kisii district this past January and heard and spoke these words often as I visited the Faithful Children's Center Orphanage and Wisdom Academy School there. The spirit of thankfulness was everywhere. They have little and give thanks abundantly for the little they have. Here is their story:

The Child of God Rescue Story

Mardy Cobb

In the summer of 2007 I received an email from somewhere in Kenya, asking for help. I thought that it was probably a scam. This email asked for help with two small congregations. It turns out they had been with a Church of God (COG) offshoot for only a short time when tribal conflicts led to a division. They said they were very young in the faith. It sounded sincere and I began a series of questions, calls, emails, follow-ups, and whatever 3rd party verifications I could find. It took a long time, but, about a year after contact, I had done all that could be done from the USA, and everything appeared sincere and legitimate.

I discussed this group's request with my wife, with the congregation, and asked everyone to pray about it. Eventually, I came to believe that I had to visit this small group to determine the truth or falsehood

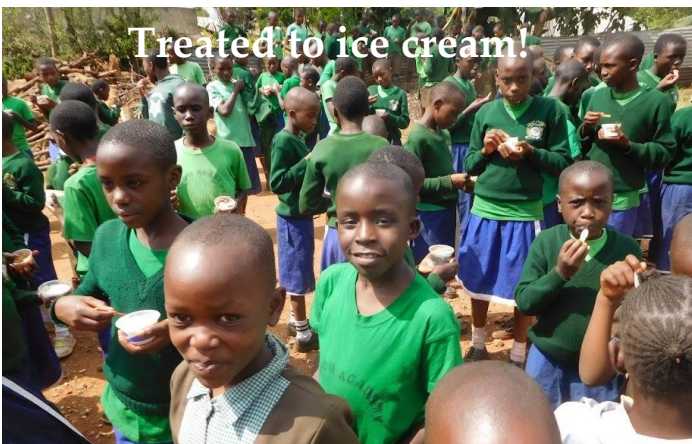
of their status and frankly, I suspected it would be proven a fraud.

My purpose in going to Africa was to help with the Gospel and the small church. Shortly after my arrival in Kenya in 2008 I met Richard Mogendi, their leader, and was introduced to 27 orphans that were being cared for by the brethren in that church. Some of the children were orphans because of political strife and tribal fighting in the last election. Others were orphans due to parents falling ill and dying and such. I was reminded of James 1:27 - *“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”* It was at this moment that the concept of Child of God Rescue was born.

I visited every house where the orphans were being kept. I met the people and saw where the children lived and slept. I came away with the following conclusions:

- These people are my brothers and sisters in the faith.
- These orphans are legitimate.
- We need to do more than just feed them — we need to give them a chance at life.

I called the leaders there together. I wanted to make things very clear — my church is very small. We are not one of the corporate COGs, and we do not have members from the rich and famous segment of soci-





Receiving new blankets

ety. I explained that if they expected significant financial aid, they were coming to the wrong church. I put an empty trash can in front of them. I asked everyone to look into the trash can. They all did. Then I explained this is exactly how much money we have. "So," I asked, "are you sure that you don't want to go to another bigger church with more money?" They said, "No, we want to work with you."

Back home we began to make plans for helping the orphans. It took a lot of work—I had a lot of help from talented people. We launched a non-profit organization, CoG Rescue (not a church), with the sole aim of helping orphan children. We launched a website; made promotional material; and adopted the well-known moto: "If you give a man a fish, he'll be hungry tomorrow. If you teach a man to fish, he will eat the rest of his life." We also started making plans to build an orphanage, a school, and a guest house, for which we had zero funds. I committed to make every effort to return to Africa every two years.

My next visit was in the first quarter of 2010. During this visit I went with a prosperous and benevolent couple that wanted to help us with our orphans. I had never met them and had done nothing to bring about the connection. They funded the construction of our Faithful Children's Center Orphanage, and helped start construction of our school.

My third visit was 2010 during the third quarter.

My son, Ben, came with me and it was quite an adventure for him, and truly a blessing for me. During that visit, we got to see the launch of our school, Wisdom Academy.

Originally it was a small school designed to teach only our 27 orphans. Unfortunately, the Kenyan Ministry of Education (KEM) approached us shortly after the launch, to tell us what we were doing was not allowed. If we were going to open a primary school, Kenyan law requires there to be not less than 11 grades, not less than 60 students, and not less than 13 teachers. In Kenya, Primary school has 3 grades before 1st grade— Baby, Nursery, and PreUnity—then there are grades 1-8. They learn English and Swahili and all schools are required to teach from the Christian Bible.

By my next visit in August of 2013, we had been able to purchase adjoining land and build additional buildings to accommodate the classroom specifications required by the KEM. Our school, Wisdom Academy, was fully operational with certified teachers.



Prepping a meal of stewed bananas

The question at that time was how to find the additional students. Should we charge for our school? That would make sense to help fund the operating costs. We prayed about it and chose to only allow the children who could not afford to go to public school, the opportunity to come to Wisdom Academy. We set up a process to interview the guardians of every student to ensure that they are truly a destitute family. Our orphans, destitute children, and children of our staff attend Wisdom Academy. There are about 240 students there right now.

In 2014, we began serving lunch to the children at Wisdom Academy. This was a significant blessing to the orphans and school. It is hard to appreciate what a wonderful blessing this is when we live in America. For many of these children this is best meal of the day, for some, it is the only meal of the day. They eat a vegetarian diet supplemented very rarely by beef or chicken.

I am sometimes asked where do the orphans come from? They are all either missing one or both parents and are all in destitute circumstances. Here is an example.

Angel: Richard Mogendi, manager of the orphanage, and principal of the school was visiting a man who owned some property by the river. During this visit they heard a child screaming and began to search for the child. Soon they found a little girl across the river holding on to a branch, and screaming for her life. She was about 2 or 3 years old. They retrieved the child and Richard went looking for her mother, a young teenage girl who decided she did not want her baby, so she had thrown her in the river. Richard obtained the necessary signatures to place her in our orphanage legally. We named her Angel because as they first saw her, it was impossible that a baby could hold to a branch and keep herself from going under the water. Therefore they surmised that an angel must have been holding her up.

Of course we have orphans from a wide variety of circumstances. Many arrive from far less dramatic stories, but all of them are in destitute circumstances.

In July 2018 I visited our orphanage and school

again. We are still working hard every day for the orphans and the school children. Above all we trust in God, and pray that God will send brothers and sisters of faith, and compassion, to become a part of the work we are doing in His Name.

In addition, we have immediate needs to cover our current operational costs which have increased substantially because the Kenyan government has doubled teacher's salaries, and to facilitate a way for our children graduating from 8th grade to be able to attend local High Schools which charge annual fees. Our ultimate long-term plan is to build a farm large enough and successful enough to fund the school and orphanage from its production. We are also looking to dig a deep drilled well that would allow us to have water year round, and possibly even sell water.

We are also working to improve our outreach through our Mbuya Mono (m-bia-mono) program, a youth outreach program that teaches thankfulness. The Mbuya Mono Outreach Program is about sharing the lessons of the students at Wisdom Academy with students here in America. The students in Kenya have a deep appreciation for all the many blessings in their life such as getting to attend school and having a meal to eat. A meager life by American standards, but one filled with positivity and gratitude. The outreach in America has reached hundreds of students across the United States and is still growing.

Wisdom Academy future graduates!



For more information about this ministry please contact us online at: <https://www.facebook.com/CoGRescue>, and www.cogrescue.org or email Mardy Cobb, mardyc@cogrescue.org.

Chocolate Covered Peanut Butter Balls Sabbath Rest, and Deuteronomy

Carl Greene

The Dessert. Chocolate-covered peanut butter balls must be one of the greatest desserts ever. The combination of a thin, sweet chocolate coating with a creamy peanut butter center makes a taste combination that is simply fantastic. Granted, most people believe chocolate is wonderfully fulfilling on its own. Yet, it would be a horrible shame if someone were to pop a peanut butter ball into his mouth, consume the chocolatey coating of goodness, and then spit out the peanut butter core. Who would commit such an atrocity? Even though the chocolate is fantastic, it is so much better with the peanut butter center—consumed as it was intended to be.

Sabbath Rest. Is it possible that I treat Sabbath like a half-consumed peanut butter ball? Let's say that I enjoy Sabbath a great deal. I thrive in the blessing of working for six days, and then enjoy a day of rest. I am further blessed in corporate worship that I celebrate on the seventh day. These truly are great blessings—on par with the goodness of chocolate dripping from my chin. But, what if I am consuming the chocolate of Sabbath, believing that I am satisfied with a wonderful delight, but never tasting the peanut butter? Sabbath is more than attending worship on the seventh day and resting from work—that is the chocolatey coating around the core. There is yet more to enjoy, the peanut butter core, or the essence of the Sabbath. If we allow ourselves to be satisfied with only chocolate, we experience a blessing, but far short of what might have been.

Deuteronomy. I wish that I could demonstrate that Moses really, really liked peanut butter balls—alas, probably not. I do think that Moses recorded God's intention for Sabbath that follows the illustration of the peanut butter ball—a wonderful coating and a fulfilling core. In Deuteronomy 5:12-14:

12 *“Observe the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God.*

On it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter or your male servant or your female servant, or your ox or your donkey or any of your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates, that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. (ESV).

God offers a wonderful blessing in this passage. First, people who were once enslaved and working all the time now enjoy the tremendous blessing of physical rest. Second, they are still offered the blessing of fulfilling work six days of the week, but it is kept from becoming an idol through weekly rest. Third, the Israelites are given the opportunity to bless the people around them with weekly rest. What a glorious picture! The Israelites have been removed from the pressure cooker of stress in Egypt and have been welcomed into a sustainable life pattern of rest that keeps God first and is celebrated in community. Glorious chocolate I say! Yet, that is the coating: there is so much more at the center of the Sabbath:

“15 You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day.” — Deuteronomy 5:15, ESV

There is a peanut butter core that cannot be missed! The core is to remember. They were once slaves. God loves them and delivered them. They are called to celebrate. This is an action: remember and celebrate. The chocolatey goodness is to rest and avoid work. The peanut butter core is to remember and celebrate. Specifically, they are being called to remember and celebrate salvation.

Me. I fear that as a Seventh Day Baptist, I can become far too satisfied with the chocolate coating. The seventh day and worship in community are key components of Sabbath celebration—they are wonderful and certainly key components of Sabbath rest. Yet, I am prone to miss the peanut butter core. I can be enticed to smugly believe that attending worship and a Bible Study on the seventh day is the



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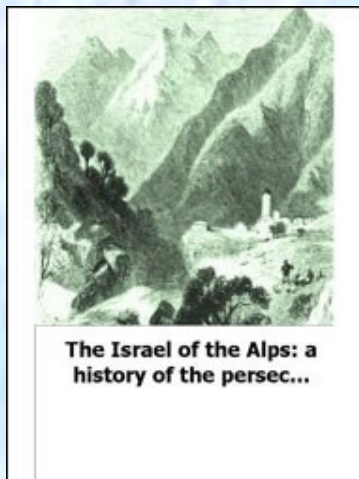
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fullness of Sabbath rest. If that is the case, I am missing a key ingredient of Sabbath.

I am called to remember. Sabbath rest should cause me to remember my salvation story. I need to pause and remember how God has been at work drawing me into relationship with Him. I am called to celebrate the people God has placed in my life to help shape and mold me into who God has created me to be. I am called to repentance and forgiveness to remove any barriers that are distancing me



from my Savior. My Sabbath remembering should also lead me to action—to share my story of salvation with the people around me. Remembering takes time—active time of engaging in prayer, reflecting on my story, and sharing the hope of salvation with others.

Practical. I want to continue to eat my Sabbath chocolate... but get a whole lot more peanut butter with it. Two practical areas I will invite you to join me in. First, consistent and enthusiastic participation in worship. If I am going to celebrate my salvation in community, I should be there—but that is not enough. I need to be actively engaged, on the edge of my seat into it. Second, I need to practice Sabbath rest throughout the day. How do I simply spend time with my Father on Sabbath? How do I rest in His presence on Sabbath? If you and I do not have a good answer to that—we are missing the peanut butter.

Carl Greene is a PhD student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, a husband, and dad. He is especially passionate about communicating the Gospel through increasingly healthy churches.

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PRAYING FOR ANSWERS - PART I

Bryant Buck

In Luke 18:1 (NIV) we read these words: *“Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.”* Similarly, in I Thessalonians 5:17 (NIV) the apostle Paul exhorts us: *“Pray continually.”* Now it is impossible for us as human beings who think about many things to consciously pray all the time. However, it is not impossible for us to be in an attitude of prayer all the time. When we are in an attitude of prayer, we are always looking to Yahweh for answers even if we are not consciously praying continually.

Let us note at the beginning of this study that Jesus not only exhorts us to “always pray”, but also to “not give up.” (Luke 18:1) We give up on a prayer when we stop praying the prayer before God answers it. Although the answer to our prayer may seem very far away, God could be getting ready to answer it the next day. So if a prayer is worth praying, it is also worth not giving up.

The Bible itself tells us the primary reasons that we don't get answers to some of our prayers. In James 4:2-3 (NIV) we read as follows: *“You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”* In these two verses the apostle James gives us two reasons why some of our prayers don't get answered. First, *“You do not have, because you do not ask God.”* The number one reason that some prayers don't get answered is that people don't pray the prayers in the first place. To put it simply, if you don't ask, there is no way that the prayer you never prayed will be answered. The devil tells you, “That prayer is too insignificant to pray” or “You don't have enough faith to pray that” or “God is too busy to bother with that.” If you agree with the devil, then you never pray your prayer and, in consequence, never get it answered.

Second, *“When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives.”* The Bible is clear that if you pray with wrong motives, Yahweh will not answer your prayers. For example, some people are always praying for a new house or a new car or a lot of money. It is not wrong to pray for a new house or a new car if you really need a new house or a new car. However, too often the motives in these prayers are that we can keep up with our friends or neighbors or that we can just have life easier. When our prayers are entirely focused on what we want rather than what we need or what Yahweh wants for us, God refuses to answer our wrongly motivated prayers. I add that if we pray for a lot of money, we almost always have wrong motives in such prayers.

In Psalm 66:18 (NAS) we find a third reason why some of our prayers go unanswered: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.”* To put this another way, if I have sin in my heart, even my rightly motivated prayers will not be answered. For example, if the intention of my heart is to commit adultery with a coworker, Yahweh will not listen to my prayer for my brother to get saved. If my brother is not a Christian, then he needs to repent and get saved; so it is right for me to pray that he repents and accepts Jesus as his Lord and Savior. Yet the Almighty will not answer my prayer for my brother until I first repent of my intention to commit adultery (or my actual adultery) with my coworker. (Yahweh may hear the prayer of another Christian who is praying for my brother to be saved, but He won't hear my prayer until I confess my sin.) When we entertain sin in our hearts, the prayer that Yahweh wants us to pray is the prayer of repentance from our sin.

So what can we do to get more answers to our prayers? Once we have prayed our prayers, eliminated wrong motives from our prayers, and gotten iniquity out of our hearts, does Yahweh shed any light in His Word on what we can do to increase His answers to our prayers? Actually the Bible reveals

Did you know...?

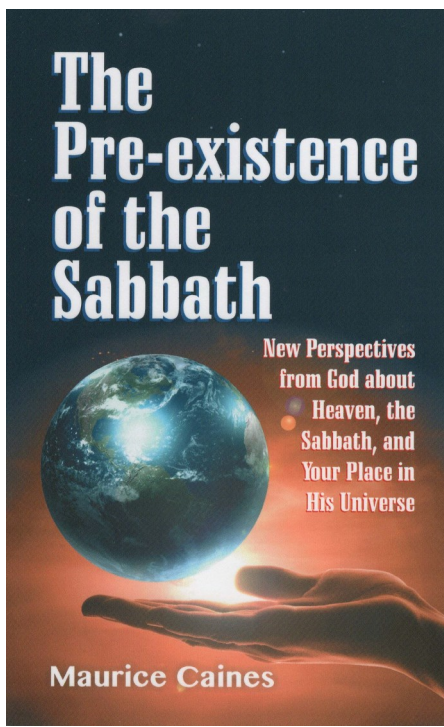
three things that we can do to receive more answers to our prayers from God. First, we need to pray according to God's will to get more answers from God. Second, we need to pray in faith to get more answers from God. And third, we need to put our hearts into our prayers to get more answers from God. The remainder of this study will be devoted to praying according to God's will. The following study will be devoted to praying in faith and putting our hearts into our prayers.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him." (I John 5:14-15 NIV) "If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us." Praying according to Yahweh's will gets answers. So how do we know Yahweh's will? Yahweh reveals His will to us through His Word – the Bible. This is one reason why we need to read the Bible on a regular basis – so that we will have a good idea of what God's will is.

"The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance." (II Peter 3:9 NAS) In this verse we see that it is not Yahweh's will for any to perish; plus we see that it is His will for all to come to repentance. So it is always God's will to pray for sinners to be saved. In consequence, it is always God's will for us to pray for people who have not yet repented of their sins and received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If you have relatives or friends who haven't accepted Christ (or whom you are not sure have accepted Christ), it is always God's will to pray for their salvation. Yahweh is not willing that any should perish; neither should we be willing for any to be lost in their sins. So it is always Yahweh's will to pray for the salvation of others.

In Psalm 122:6 (NAS) we read these words: *"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: may they prosper who love you."* It is always God's will for us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and the nation of Israel. The fact that the church of Jesus Christ is the Lord's body in the earth today doesn't mean that the Jews are no longer His people. The fact that Muslim countries and many of

that you can aid the BSA effort to promote the Sabbath and a Spirit of brother-hood among all who keep God's Sabbath by becoming a BRIDGE BUILDER or a PILLAR with the BSA? Besides the monthly or annual membership dues which you can find inside the front cover, you can also help with various functions designed to help bring a fellowship of brethren across denominational lines. Some of the opportunities are: Advise and/or consult with the BSA Board of Directors; visiting and interacting with other Sabbatarian fellowships; speaking on behalf of the BSA; Promotion and/or distribution of BSA materials and services; and assisting with this magazine, the BSA Facebook page, Twitter and other social media on projects defined by the Board of Directors.



The Pre-existence of the Sabbath

By Maurice Caines

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Whatever your views on the Sabbath, this little book will intrigue and inspire you and make you think in new ways about the day God set apart and sanctified. Caines presents new perspectives from God about heaven, the Sabbath, and your place in His universe that he found while studying the Word of God. Looking at the nature of the Sabbath through Caines' eyes might just change the way you view God's gift of His holy day.

the rest of the nations of this world are against Israel does not mean that we should be. The Bible is clear: it is always Yahweh's will to pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness." (I Timothy 2:1-2 NIV) It is always God's will to pray for those in authority – our president, our senators and congressmen, our supreme court justices, our governor, our mayor, etc. And what should we pray for those in authority? Pray that they govern in such manner that we can lead peaceful and quiet lives while freely pursuing our Christian faith. Moreover, pray for their salvation since it is always Yahweh's will to pray for anyone's salvation.

Consider the word "intercession" in I Timothy 2:1-2. Intercession is prayer for people other than ourselves. In Romans 8:34 we learn that Christ is always interceding for us. If we really want to be like Jesus, then we need to intercede for other people. It is God's will that we pray for people other than ourselves. Of course, we cannot pray intelligently for people whom we don't know at all. But think of all the people whom you do know.

The odds are that you aren't praying for all of them.

You don't have to pray for all of them, but you can ask God to give you the burden of His heart for some of them.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41 KJV) It is always God's will that we pray to stay out of temptation. Why wait until you are already in a temptation to pray? Waiting until you are already in a temptation to pray only increases the chance that you will give into the temptation and sin. Take preventive action like the Bible recommends: Pray to stay out of the temptation in the first place. Why wait until the house is on fire to call the fire department? Why not put out the fire when it is only a burning match ember on the floor?

However, if you do commit some known sin, what should you pray then? *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (I John 1:9 KJV) When you sin, Yahweh's will is that you confess your sin and ask Him for His forgiveness. To put this another way, when you sin, it is always God's will for you to pray a prayer in which you honestly admit your sin and ask Him to forgive you for your sin. Once you have confessed your sin, you are again ready to pray the other things that are always God's will.

The Anti-Imagery Folks:

A Step Beyond Iconoclasm

Daniel Botkin

Someone who opposes the veneration of religious images is called an iconoclast. There are some people who go a step further than this and oppose the making of any images whatsoever, even non-religious images for non-religious purposes in non-religious buildings. I do not know if a word exists to describe such people or not. I just call them the anti-imagery folks. Their opposition to images is based on their understanding of the Biblical commandment in Exodus: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in the heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth" (Exodus 20:4).

The anti-imagery folks believe that this Bible verse is a blanket condemnation of all images, regardless of the image-maker's reasons for making the image. The anti-imagery folks believe that making or possessing any image is a direct violation of one of the Ten Commandments.

Every now and then I meet one of these people. They live under a continual cloud of guilt because they cannot totally purge their lives of all images. There are pictures on the money they spend. Most of the food and household products they buy have images on the packaging. One woman recently told me that she felt guilty about having a driver's license because it has her photo on it. To relieve her guilt, she reminds herself that she is not the one who produced the image. A man that I know ended his moral struggle over his driver's license by convincing himself that his driver's license really belongs to "the state" instead of to him, so he doesn't really "own" it. This same man's wife is depressed because they cannot have any photos of their recently-born first grandchild, who lives some distance away. This doting grandmother has great difficulty finding baby clothes or toys to buy for

their granddaughter, because nearly all baby merchandise has images on it. Unless this couple changes their theological outlook, they will never be able to give their granddaughter any dolls or stuffed animals or children's books with pictures.

I do not mock the anti-imagery folks, I pity them. Their aberrant view of the Biblical prohibition against images causes them to live in a constant state of condemnation. They suffer from a neurotic paranoia of anything with images on it.

I am a visual artist and I am also a man who believes in obeying the Ten Commandments. So, how do I reconcile the making of images with Exodus 20:4, a commandment that forbids the making of images? In theological circles there is an oft-repeated maxim that states, "A text without a context is a pretext." A look at the context of the prohibition against images shows that Exodus 20:4 is only half of the Second Commandment. The very next sentence speaks about not bowing down and worshipping the images in question. So in its proper context and in its entirety, the prohibition against images is limited to only those images which are made for the express purpose of idol worship.

This is really the only feasible way to understand the Second Commandment, because several other Bible passages describe God condoning, and in some cases even commanding, the making of images. The Tabernacle and Temple were filled with imagery: cherubim, bells, pomegranates, oxen, trees, flowers, etc. According to the Bible, all this imagery was commanded by the same God who gave the Ten Commandments.

Images were found outside the places of worship, too. Moses was commanded to make a brass serpent in the wilderness. Ezekiel was commanded to engrave a picture of Jerusalem on a tile in Babylon. King Solomon had twelve carved lions on the six steps leading up to his throne. If God condemned all

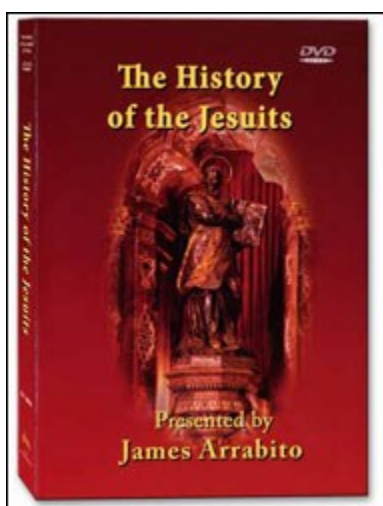
image-making at Mount Sinai, and afterward commanded His people to make images, then God is fickle at best and schizophrenic at worst. I prefer to understand the Second Commandment in a way that harmonizes with all the positive references to images. This view does not make God look like a Schizophrenic Supreme Being.

Charles McCollough, an artist and theologian, shared some interesting insights a few years ago in the magazine ARTS (The Arts in Religion and Theological Studies). Like most people involved in both the visual arts and theology, McCollough has had his share of encounters with the anti-imagery folks. McCollough points out that the most important commandment, according to the Bible, is to love God with all the heart, soul, and mind. McCollough then reminds us that the right hemisphere of the brain is where the visual/spatial functions of the mind occur. Loving God with all the mind requires using the right side of the brain as well as the left. McCollough writes: "By avoiding images and subordinating art, we have left the right hemisphere of the mind dormant, focusing almost exclusively on reading, writing, and speaking words -- all functions of the left hemisphere of the mind."

Images can be abused and misused for evil purposes, but so can words, McCollough tells us. Putting together materials to make a visual statement is no more intrinsically wrong or right than putting together words to make a verbal statement. It is the content and the purpose of the statement that make it right or wrong or neutral, not whether the statement is visual or verbal. McCollough points out that only one of the Ten Commandments warns against abusing images, but two of the Ten Commandments warn against abusing words. ("Thou shalt not bear false witness" and "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.").

Images can be misused, of course. Even good images can be turned into unhealthy obsessions. The brass serpent that Moses made had to be destroyed centuries later, because the people began bowing down before it and burning incense to it. They turned an instrument of God into an idol. I have told my anti-imagery friends that I will destroy my paintings when people start bowing down and burning incense to them. Until that happens, I intend to go on painting.

Daniel Botkin's artwork can be seen at www.danielbotkin.com.

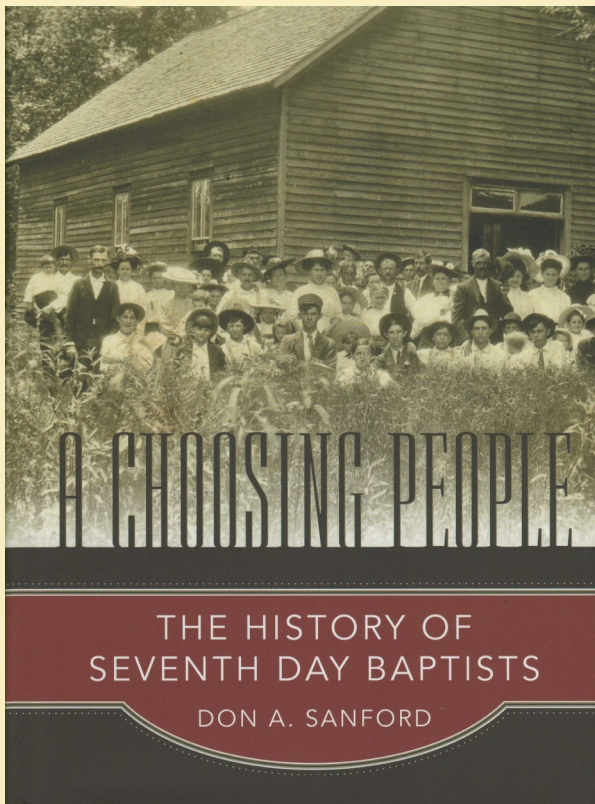


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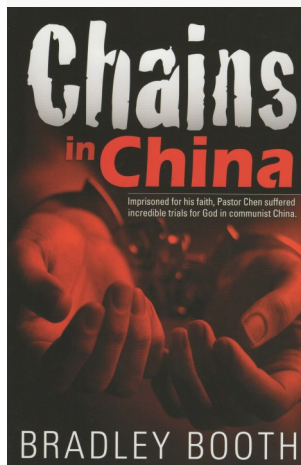
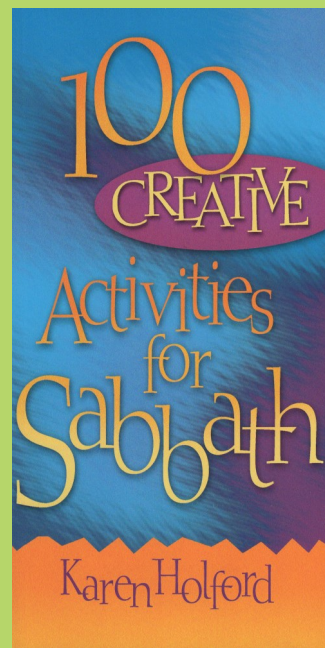
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Letters to the Editor

In sharing our convictions we are being open and intimate with others. Often there is disagreement. Our Lord did not command us to agree. Our Lord did not command us to disagree. Our Lord did not command us to convince others to believe what we believe. Our Lord commanded us to love one another even while we disagree. Love is a noun demonstrated as a verb.

D. Ankney

These things are all true, Mr. Ankney! But, let's not lose sight of the scriptural admonition to be ready to give an answer of the hope within us.

1Pe 3:15 "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

We should note that giving an answer pre-supposes a question as Peter tells us. But, notice the further admonition that any answer we give should be done in meekness and fear. Why fear? Jesus words ring out that in offending the young ones it would be better to have a millstone hung around our necks and to be cast into the ocean! Our words ought to be seasoned with esteeming others better than ourselves, and seasoned with love as you so accurately state!

Thank you for your letter and your article "To The Unknown God." Since it was not sent in digital form I'm not sure when I can put it in our magazine.

—Ed.

I have just finished your July-August issue. Wow! ... I found especially intriguing the article "The Mystery of the 144,000."

The theory of one year equaling 1,000 years has been proposed in a few booklets and articles I have read. If it is that simple, and we use the Jewish calendar dating from Adam to the present year of 5778 then 222 years remain to Yeshua's return ... the year 2240 C.E. I really don't believe it is that simple.

D. Rodgers

Thanks for your hand-written letter. It was too long to retype for the LTE section but I wanted to give the flavor of your well-written letter and address one point, the day for a year principle.

*Yes, if we could rely on that as a hard and fast rule beyond which God would not stray, you could calculate the return of Yeshua. But, consider this if you will: **Rom 9:28 "For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness: because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth."** Paul's somewhat cryptic remark seems to indicate that even if we thought we could calculate the return that we should be aware that He could, and probably will, cut it short. Beyond that, we know that Yeshua told the disciples in no uncertain terms that the time of His return could not be known by men.*

Instead, we need to be tending to the needful things, the things God expects His Children to be doing.

—Ed.

I am an inmate at this compound, seventy five years of age. ... I hope, as my family also, for a sincere consideration for a geriatric release. ... Please pray for us mutually. ... May you all receive my thanks for your distribution of your magazine.

J. Crider

Thank you for your lovely letter, Mr. Crider. We are honored that so many are helped by the words of this magazine. Our goal is to provide an insight to all sects of commandment-keepers so that we can see that we have far more in common than we have differences, and in publishing articles from various members of different groups we seek to break down the barriers that Satan wishes to erect between brethren.

I wanted to be sure to get part of your LTE in here because you specifically asked for prayer. We all know that the "effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "Availeth" there means "has force." We at BSA want to be sure that as many as possible of the brethren are made aware of your request for God's intervention!

—Ed.

Please keep your letters coming. It is by your feedback that we can know that we are truly serving you with this ministry!

My Love/Hate Relationship

Lenny Cacchio

I am in a love/hate relationship. I love the King James Version of the Bible. I love the cadence of language and the ease of memorization that such cadence provides. I love its impact on the history and culture of the English-speaking world. Scholarly works and study helps such as concordances are most often keyed to the King James Version. Of all the English translations I have used, I find myself always gravitating back to the King James Version. It is my main study Bible.

But the translation aggravates me time and again. I can get around the “thee’s” and “thou’s” and the archaic usage of certain words (“convict” instead of “convince” and “by and by” instead of “immediately”), but some egregious mistranslations completely aggravate me.

One such passage is Ephesians 4:11-12. In the King James it reads: “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”

The passage as translated implies that one function of the offices of the church is “for the work of the ministry”. Put differently, the offices are to help the ministry do their jobs. While that might not be a heretical translation, it does not conform to the intent of the Greek. Here is verse 12 as translated in the New King James Version: “... for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” The New International Version: “... to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”

The King James, by translating as it does, obscures the role of church leadership in equipping all of God’s people for the work of ministry (or more accurately, “works of service”). This is more than an aca-

ademic point. It gets to the heart of the role of the church and its leadership. Ephesians 4 as translated by the King James Version could lead one to believe that it’s the job of the professional ministry to do the work of the church. Properly translated, the verse implies that the leadership’s job is to train the rest of us to do works of service. It makes us all responsible and not just the chosen few. It implies that we all have a calling, a vocation as it were (see Ephesians 4:1 for context).

This correct understanding has turned much of Christianity into a more participative venture. Even traditionally hierarchical organizations have come to understand this. The New American Bible, the official translation of the Roman Catholic Church in America translates verse 12 as follows: “...to equip the holy ones for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ.” This is accompanied by the footnote, “The ministerial leaders in v. 11 are to equip the whole people of God for their work of ministry.”

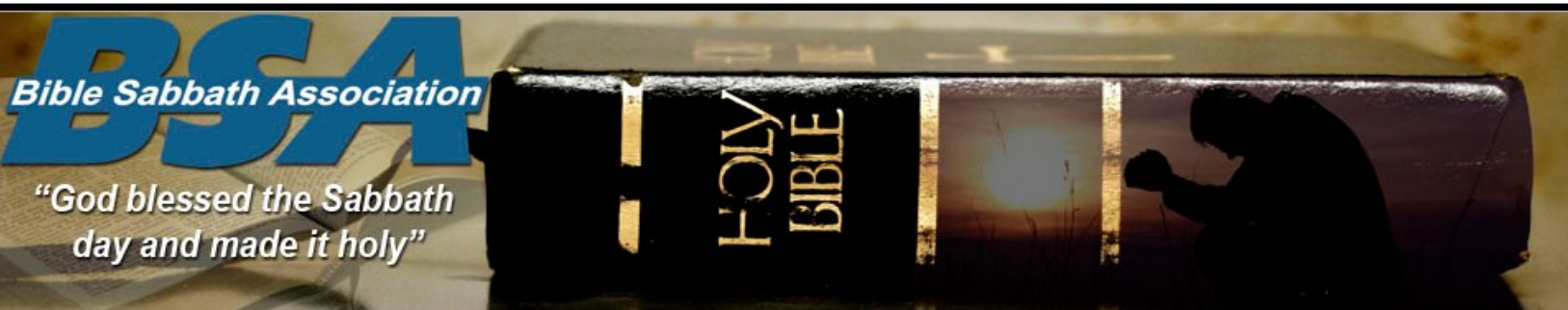
Christianity is not a spectator sport. We all have a role in spreading the Gospel, and we all need to be equipped to fulfill that role. It is gratifying to see so many coming to understand that. Hopefully, some day we can all be equipped in some manner for works of service.



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