

# The Sabbath Sentinel

March–April 2015



**When People Pray  
Good things happen**

**BSA — The Bible Sabbath Association**

Jesus said, "the Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath."

**The Sabbath Sentinel March-April 2015 March-April 2015**  
**Volume 65, No. 2 Issue 571**

**FEATURES**

- 3 Editorial "What is the Royal Law?"  
4 "What to Hold tightly and to Hold Lightly"  
by Kenneth Westby  
5 "Ephraim, A Deceitful Bow, Bent on Backsliding?" by Daniel Botkin  
7 Sabbath Keepers Pledge  
8 "What Does the Word "ABBA" Really Mean?"  
by R. Herbert  
10 "The Rise of Islam"  
by John Klassek  
11 "The Modern Day Pharisees"  
by Terrell Perkins  
13 "The Power of Effective Communication"  
by Kelly McDonald  
14 "It's About People"  
by Bryan Knowles  
22 "Why Did Jesus Spit?"  
by Lenny Cacchio

**DEPARTMENTS**

- 17 "Serpents and Symbols" by Donald Mansell  
22 "The Church in the World"  
23 Advertisements

**Our Cover: (When People Pray)**

**Fotalia: When good people pray, good things happen**

*The Sabbath Sentinel* is published bimonthly by The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604. Copyright © 2013, by the Bible Sabbath Association. Printed in the U.S.A. All rights reserved. Reproduction in any form without written permission is prohibited. Nonprofit bulk rate postage paid at San Dimas, California.

**Editor:** Kenneth Ryland, [tss\\_editor@mac.com](mailto:tss_editor@mac.com).

**Associate Editors:** Julia Benson & Shirley Nickels

**BSA's Board of Directors for 2012-2016:**

**President:** Calvin Burrell, [calvin.burrell@cog7.org](mailto:calvin.burrell@cog7.org)

**First Vice President:** Kenneth Ryland

**Second Vice President:** Eric Moore

**Third Vice President:** Bill Lussenheide

**Secretary:** Lenny Cacchio

**Treasurer:** Bryan Burrell

**Office Manager—Battle Ground, WA, Office:** Shirley Nickels

**Directors at Large:** Marsha Basner, Dusti Howell, Tom Justus, Bryant Buck, David Guerrero, June Narber

**Subscriptions:** Call toll-free (888) 687-5191 or write to: The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604 or contact us at the office nearest you (see international addresses below). *The Sabbath Sentinel* is sent free of charge to all who request it in the U.S.. If you live outside of the U.S., please send us a donation of \$25 (US) to cover overseas postage. Voluntary contributions to the Bible Sabbath Association make publication of *The Sabbath Sentinel* possible.

**Donations** are gratefully accepted and are tax deductible in the United States. Those who choose to voluntarily support this international work to promote the Sabbath and proclaim gospel of the kingdom of God are welcomed as contributors.

**Annual membership contributions:** individual membership is \$25; Family Membership \$30; Life Membership \$500. All memberships include an annual subscription to *The Sabbath Sentinel*. Make all checks, drafts and money orders payable to *The Bible Sabbath Association*. (Visa and MasterCard accepted).

**The Bible Sabbath Association** is dedicated to promote the seventh day Sabbath. As a nonsectarian association for Sabbath-observing Christians, BSA accepts members who acknowledge Jesus Christ (Yeshua the Messiah) as their Savior, believe the Bible to be the Word of the Eternal, and uphold the seventh-day Sabbath. BSA takes no official position on other theological issues, and publishes *The Sabbath Sentinel* as a forum to promote understanding and to share items of interest with Sabbath observing groups and individuals.

**Opinions expressed** in *The Sabbath Sentinel* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editorial Staff or of *The Bible Sabbath Association*.

**BSA Worldwide Web Site:** [www.biblesabbath.org](http://www.biblesabbath.org).

**Correspondence and manuscript submissions:** Address all inquiries to: Kenneth Ryland, c/o *The Sabbath Sentinel*, 802 N. W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604. Phone: (888) 687-5191, E-mail: [tss\\_editor@mac.com](mailto:tss_editor@mac.com).

**International addresses:**

**Australia:** Materials and magazine subscriptions available at [www.biblesabbath.com](http://www.biblesabbath.com).

**Sierra Leone:** The Bible Sabbath Association Sierra Leone, 326 Bai Bureh Road, Calabar, Town, P.O.BOX 289, Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Philippines:** Enrique M. Gabuyo, 398 Kinville Subdivision, Calamba Laguna 4027, Philippines, [cogemg007@yahoo.com](mailto:cogemg007@yahoo.com)

**Address Service Requested:** If moving, please update your address.

# What is the Royal Law

by *Kenneth Ryland*



James in his epistle talks about the "Law of Liberty." James states in James 2:8: "If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself,' you do well." "NKJV throughout."

James continues in vv. 10-13: "For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, He is guilty of all for who said, 'do not commit adultery,' also said, 'do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgement."

Mercy does triumph over judgment, every time. However, when God created the world, His instruction to Adam and Eve was very simple. "Obey the voice of the Lord and you will live, deny His instruction, and you will die." It was that simple in the beginning.

When we get to Abraham the Father of the Faithful, we see that "because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws." Abraham trusted God, and knew that God would take of him and Sarah. That is the bottom line in this discussion. I don't know whether it can be proved conclusively or not that Abraham that this refers specifically to the Ten Commandments, but it is likely that this is the case. Abraham obeyed God's laws. We know that much.

What about ourselves? Are we willing to obey God's laws the same way Abraham did? Let's look at what the book of Hebrews says about Abraham starting in verse 8 and ending in verse 12. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude—innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore."

We would all do well to copy the faith of Abraham.

Jeremiah 31:31-33 reads as follows "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

I need to emphasize that we are not talking about the ordinances that were added to the law at a later date or certain statutes that were also added. We are talking about the Royal Law contained in the Ten Commandments.

It is clear that Jesus, our Redeemer, was designated from the beginning of time to redeem mankind.

"All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

What is the Royal law? It is the Ten Commandments plus "love your neighbor as yourself." The Royal law should govern our lives. God thought the Royal law would bring health and happiness to people, and that is one of God's goals. This sets us apart from other religions. Our religion is "God centered," not self-centered.

The law of liberty frees us from the bonds of sin and locks us into righteous behavior. It gives us both peace and contentment. Remember that Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, One jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the all till all is fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).



# What to Hold Lightly; What to Hold Tightly



Our lives are filled with our things and also our hopes and dreams. On some we have a tight grip, others we hold loosely if at all. How we hold on to the things and hopes of life largely determine the direction our lives take. Sadly, many people, maybe most people, live inverted lives, holding the wrong things tightly while holding the most important things lightly, if holding them at all.

*by Kenneth Westby*

An ambitious farmer was having one bumper crop after another. Things were good and he was prospering beyond that of other farmers. He needed to expand his operation, to farm more land, to build new and bigger barns for his land's bountiful production. He was already counting his money and looking to a well-provided and secure future, an early retirement and years of ease eating, drinking and making merry.

Then, out of the blue, he heard the most shocking news of his life: God said,

"You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?"

One can imagine a heart attack, a terrible accident, or a deadly assault by robbers. Suddenly, all his cherished accumulations from a life of hard work taken from him in a minute. He held tightly what he should have been holding but lightly.

Does this story seem familiar? It should. Jesus told it in parabolic form two thousand years ago (read the parable in Luke 12:13-21).

## **The Rich Fool**

Jesus had been teaching a crowd of listeners when one presumptuous fellow interrupted and requested Jesus help him convince his brother to divide the inheritance with him. Jesus saw the greedy spirit behind the request and said the request was not in the scope of his divine mission, he was no arbiter in quarrels over inheritances. But this display of covetousness prompted Jesus to give a dramatic parable ringing with crystal clarity for how a life should or should not be lived.

At the end of his telling, Jesus summarized the reality of the ultimate outcome of life. You will die and take nothing with you. This, of course, is true for everyone. Yet how you lived life is taken into account by God. He ends the story of the Rich Fool with these words:

"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God."

"How it will be"? If it is all about your selfish pursuits and things, you would be wise to understand from the start that you will soon lose it all. That being reality, do not hold tightly what is destined to be taken away by death. It is futile. Save the tight grip for what will not be taken away at death.

For the record, Jesus was not suggesting that this prosperous farmer got his wealth by illegal means or that there was anything wrong with material things or in being rich; it was the place possessions occupied in the priorities of life that mattered. The "millionaires of Genesis" were lavishly prospered by God. Abraham and the patriarchs knew God was the source of their blessings and praised Him for their bounty. They held tightly, faithfully, and obediently to the promises of God knowing that everything else would soon enough drop from their hand.

The Rich man, whom Jesus tagged with a very hard name, a "fool," did not acknowledge God's part in his prosperity. David wrote that one who affirms there is no God deserves to be labeled a fool (Psalms 14:1). This passage can be understood as the fool saying, "No God for me." Modern fools may check the "Do you believe in

---

*Continued on Page 18*

## Ephraim, A Deceitful Bow, Bent to Backsliding

By Daniel Botkin, Ph.D.

*“They return, but not to the Most High: they are like a deceitful bow.” Hosea 7:16*

*“And My people are bent to backsliding from Me: though they called them to the Most High, none at all would exalt Him.” Hosea 11:7*



How can people “return” — i.e., “turn” or “repent” (יָשׁוּבָה *yashuvu*) but “not to the Most High”? Ephraim was indeed turning about in some sense, but they were not turning their hearts *upward* toward the Most High. This can be seen even more clearly in the Hebrew text, where the single word translated “the Most High” is simply *al* (עַל), “upward” or “height” or “above” — as in *el al* (לְעַל), “to the height(s)” or “upwards,” like the name of the Israeli airline El Al.

The phrase *el al* also appears in Hosea 11:7. After God says His people are “bent to backsliding,” Hosea says “though they called them to the Most High [*el al*], none at all would exalt Him.”

People who merely turn about and go a different direction, without also turning their hearts upward toward the Most High, are like a deceitful bow. If you have ever shot an arrow with a bow, you know that the bow must be bent. The bow also must be strong enough to stand the strain, and it must not be warped. If it is warped, it is a deceitful bow. It is deceitful because it will not send the arrow in the direction you expect it to go. The arrow will appear to be lined up with the target, but after it is released, it will veer off at an angle and miss the target, because the bow is warped.

Some modern-day Ephraimites are like a deceitful bow. They are bent, but in their hearts they are still bent to backsliding. They have “returned” to God’s Torah. They have turned around and started following the Biblical calendar, Biblical dietary laws, and other Biblical commandments which most Christians ignore. They have returned, but not *el al*, not to the Most High, because they have not turned their hearts upward. They have turned about horizontally but not vertically, and their hearts are still cold. Their pride and their arrogance and their scorn and disdain for their Christian brothers who have not yet seen the importance and the value of God’s Torah testifies that they have not turned their hearts upward. “And the pride of Israel testifieth to his face: and they do not return to Yahweh their God, nor seek Him for all this” (Hosea 7:10).

I am not minimizing the importance of keeping the Biblical sabbaths and dietary laws. Anyone who is familiar with my teachings knows that I urge God’s people to obey these commandments. I am not

minimizing the importance of these things. I am just pointing out that it is possible to return to these things without returning to the Most High, just as Ephraim of old did.

To those Ephraimites who do not turn their hearts *el al*, upward, God says, “Woe unto them! for they have fled from Me. Destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against Me: though I have redeemed them, yet they have spoken lies against Me” (Hosea 7:13).

Have any Sabbath-keeping, Feast-keeping, porkless Ephraimites of today spoken lies against the Lord? If so, Woe unto them! Destruction unto them! If God does not have your heart as well as your calendar and your diet, He hates your observance of these things. How do I know this? Because He says so in Isaiah: “...the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts My soul hateth: they are a trouble unto Me; I am weary to bear them” (Isaiah 1:13f).

The Lord is the One who gave us the commandments concerning sabbaths, new moons, and feasts, so He obviously wants us to keep these commandments. He wants us to keep these commandments, *but not without turning our hearts upward toward Him*. Those who point people only to cold obedience without also pointing people upward toward their loving heavenly Father are deceitful bows.

A deceitful bow can appear to be strong and straight and true. It can be sanded and painted and polished and embellished with beautiful decorations. It can look like a fine and powerful bow. But if it sends arrows in the wrong direction, it is a deceitful bow.

Some Messianic teachers and leaders are exactly like that. They appear to be strong and straight and true. They have a professionally polished appearance and they are decked out in beautiful, holy-looking attire. That’s all wonderful. But if their disciples and followers veer off on tangents and miss the target — the two greatest commandments, to love the Lord and to love your neighbor — then these teachers are warped, deceitful bows.

I do not want to be a deceitful bow that sends people off on tangents that divert them away from the weightier matters of the law. The lighter matters of the law are important too, and should not be neglected. Yeshua said “these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23). This is the reason I sometimes teach on neglected commandments which are not included in the weightier matters of the law.

All of God’s commandments are important, but they are not all equally important. I try to give the most attention to the things that are the most important to the Lord, without neglecting the lighter matters of the law.

How do we know which commandments are weighty (very important) and which are lighter (less important)? That’s a study in itself, but one way is by looking to see if God prescribed a penalty to be administered by the authorities if someone broke the commandment. If God prescribed the death penalty, it’s safe to conclude that that commandment is quite weighty. If God did not prescribe a specific penalty, then perhaps that would indicate that that commandment is of lesser importance — although that does not mean it’s safe to disobey that commandment; it just means that any negative results that come from disobedience will be administered by God’s chastisement, not by any human court.

Another way to judge the relative importance of a commandment is by looking to see how much attention that commandment receives in the Holy Scriptures. If a commandment is repeated many times in the Bible, and/or if lengthy, detailed instructions are given telling how to obey it, that would be an indication that the Lord is probably very serious about that particular commandment.

These are the reasons I consider the Sabbath to be a weighty matter, and not one of the lighter commandments. God prescribed the death penalty for those who broke the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is mentioned over a hundred times in the Bible. The Sabbath commandment is one of the Ten Commandments, and even though it is only one-tenth of the Ten Commandments, its instructions take up about one-third of the entire text of the Ten Commandments.

If Christians universally kept the seventh day holy, I would not have to harp on it, just as I do not have to harp on the commandment “Thou shalt not steal” because Christians universally agree on the validity of that commandment. I want to focus the most on things that matter the most — the weighty commandments, and commandments which are neglected.

Beware of deceitful bows. Beware of teachers who send you off pursuing tangents and who take your eyes off the target. Paul’s instruction to Timothy shows that there were apparently some deceitful bows sending people astray in those days:

“Now the end [the goal, the target] of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned, from which some having swerved [veered off course] have turned aside [gone off on a tangent] unto vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm” (1 Timothy 1:5-7; comments in brackets are mine).

We can avoid being sent off on a spiritual “wild goose chase” by avoiding deceitful bows. Don’t let yourself be taken into the quiver of a warped, deceitful teacher who will send you off on a tangent. The phrase *el al* also appears in Hosea 11:7. After God says His people are “bent to backsliding,” Hosea says “though they called them to the Most High [*el al*], none at all would exalt Him.”

---

*Reprinted from “Gates of Eden,” 11-12 2014, p. 25. “Gates of Eden” is a bimonthly newsletter produced by Gates of Eden, a messianic Jewish ministry. Write to Gates of Eden, P.O. Box 2257, East Peoria, IL 61611-0257. Gates of Eden is on the Internet at [www.gatesofeden.org](http://www.gatesofeden.org).*

Psalm 133 New King James Version (NKJV)

Blessed Unity of the People of God

## A Song of Ascents. Of David.

# Psalm 133

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is

For brethren to dwell together in unity!

**2** It is like the precious oil upon the head,

Running down on the beard,

The beard of Aaron,

Running down on the edge of his garments.

**3** It is like the dew of Hermon,

Descending upon the mountains of Zion;

For there the Lord commanded the blessing—

Life forevermore.

## Sabbath-Keepers Pledge

As a follower of Jesus Christ...

\*I pledge to give my first love and loyalty to the true God who reveals Himself best in Jesus. As Savior of men and Lord of the Sabbath, Christ does for me what no one else and no day of the week can do.

\*I pledge to be clear about salvation's source by confessing that my sins are forgiven and eternal life is promised me only by the grace of God through faith in Christ—not because I am a Sabbath-keeper.

\*I pledge to admit and agree that God's people may be in many religious organizations or in none of them. No longer will I judge people's faith based on the church group they do or don't belong to.

\*I pledge to emphasize that the seventh-day Sabbath is more than a law to be obeyed; it is also a unique gift of God to be enjoyed and celebrated with great benefit by all who receive it in faith.

\*I pledge to remember that the primary need of people is to know God's love and grace in the gospel, and that their need to know and observe His Sabbath is secondary to their need for Christ.

\*I pledge to recognize Sabbath-keeping Christians as a valued and respected family within God's household of faith, and to use what opportunities I have to encourage and support this diverse family.

\*I pledge to love my neighbors, my fellow-Christians, and my fellow Sabbath-keepers as myself, according to the second great commandment of the Lord.

(Composed by Calvin Burrell, this pledge was first published in *The Sabbath Sentinel* magazine of the non-denominational Bible Sabbath Association: [www.biblesabbath.org](http://www.biblesabbath.org)  
Not copyrighted, it may be freely reproduced without permission.)

## What Does the Word “ABBA” Really Mean?

***Most of us have heard that the Aramaic word “abba” used by Jesus and recorded in the New Testament is an intimate diminutive somewhat equivalent to “Dad” or “Daddy” in English. But is this really the meaning of “abba”? The answer is not just a matter of biblical linguistic trivia, but something that can affect our attitude toward our heavenly Father.***

***By R. Herbert***

Many readers of the Bible have heard and accepted that the word “abba,” as used by Jesus in addressing God, means something like the English word “Daddy.” Many presume that this is an established fact of biblical scholarship, but this is not the case.

The idea was actually first put forward by the German theologian Joachim Jeremias (1900-1979), who suggested that the Aramaic word “abba” likely originated from children’s “babble” and that it was used as a diminutive form of “father” by children. The connection between “abba” and “daddy” was then popularized by others in countless sermons and religious articles to the point that it is now widely accepted by much of Christianity.

But let’s take a closer look. First, we should realize that in Semitic languages the normal word for father is some form of Ab(-). For example, in ancient Akkadian father was abu, and today “father” is Ab (or Av), Aba or Abba in most Semitic languages. In modern Hebrew “abba” has become commonly used to mean “daddy,” so the connection between Abba and “daddy” seems to be reinforced by this.

But Jeremias’ suggestion that abba meant “daddy” in New Testament times was not accepted by most biblical scholars who responded to the idea, and especially by those who were actually experts in Aramaic. The idea was strongly critiqued by German scholar Georg Schelbert in an 1981 essay and then later in a book entitled *ABBA Vater* in 2011. Schelbert stated flatly that Jeremias’ interpretation is in “error” and “unwarranted.” Numerous other biblical scholars have also rejected the idea as speculative and without grounds, including Professor Geza Vermes, and noted scholar James Barr, who wrote an article actually titled “Abba Isn’t Daddy”(*Journal of Theological Studies* 39, no. 1 [1988]: 28-47) in which he showed that the connection between the biblical era use of abba and “daddy” had no evidence to support it.

Even back in the 1970s, after Aramaic specialists and other scholars first rejected the idea, Jeremias backpedaled considerably on his original position, but it was already too late to get the suggested connection “back in the box,” as the supposed meaning had spread worldwide among Christians.

If we think about it, the Bible itself shows us that abba does not mean Daddy. The word abba only occurs three times in the New Testament: once in the story of Christ’s prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36) and twice in the writings of Paul (Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6). In all three cases the Aramaic word *abba* is followed by the Greek word for father — *patros* — in order to translate it for those who did not know Aramaic. Notice, for example, Mark 14:36 — “‘Abba, Father,’ he said, ‘everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.’” Here, as in the other instances, we find the Aramaic word *abba* followed immediately by the Greek definite article and the word *patros* — literally “the father.” But Greek has specific words that could have been used for “daddy” if that had been intended — words such as “*papas*,” which is a true diminutive, is mainly used by children rather than adults and does mean “daddy.” But the New Testament writers did not translate abba with a Greek diminutive — rather they translated it with *patros*, the standard word for father — and we can only believe that the New Testament writers knew what they were saying.

Furthermore, there were actually diminutives of abba in Aramaic — such as “baba,” “babbi,” “abbi,” etc., that could have been used if Christ and Paul had wanted to stress the idea of “daddy.”

So, if there is no proof that abba means “daddy” in the New Testament, and several indications it does not, what does the word mean? The biblical texts themselves clearly show us that



the word meant “father,” but what was the particular “flavor” or nuance of the word in Aramaic usage? There are a number of clues.

First, Schelbert, Barr, and others scholars have successfully shown that the term abba was used by adults as well as young children, and there is no indication of it meaning “daddy” in the earlier Middle Aramaic sources. Second, Paul’s use of the word abba in Galatians 3:22-4:7 suggests that the word actually “asserts not childlike relation to God, but the privileged status of the adult son ... and heir” (Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Abba and ‘Father’: Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 111, No. 4 [1992], pp. 615-616).

The usage of the word was certainly respectful. In most Semitic cultures it was/is polite to refer to a man by his fatherhood, so that Ab(-) has the function of an honorific. In the early centuries of the Christian era, abba was used by Jews in this manner as a title of honor when addressing rabbis and learned scholars and it may be found used in that manner in the Babylonian *Talmud* (Berakhot 16b). The title also was used by early Christian clergy, and the English words “abbey” and “abbot” are both derived from it.

Finally, although the aspect of respect is clear, there was also an element of intimacy in the usage of abba. Its use was primarily in a family context (R. Bauckham, *Jesus*. Oxford University Press [2011], p. 65). According to *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament* (commentary on Galatians 4:6), the *Gemara* (the rabbinical commentary on the Mishna) states that slaves were forbidden to use this term in addressing the master of the house because it had an intimate aspect. Although this Jewish source is relatively late in date, there is no reason to doubt that it reflects accurate traditions.

So, the evidence we have indicates that the meaning underlying the usage of abba was not that of an intimate diminutive, but more a term of intimate respect. That seems to have been the usage underlying Paul’s comments on the matured heir (Galatians 4:1-7) and it was certainly present in Judaism and early Christianity. We should also remember that although Jesus is not recorded as having used the term abba elsewhere in his prayers throughout the gospels, that is not to say, as some have, that he was “revealing to his disciples a new and intimate diminutive manner of addressing the Father in his final moments with them.” There is no biblical indication of this speculation and it overlooks the careful instruction the disciples usually needed and that Jesus constantly gave in introducing and explaining new

concepts to them (as we see clearly, for example, in his instructions on prayer and regarding aspects of the Lord’s Supper). What Mark does show is that Jesus’ use of abba was simply part of *his* prayer in his most difficult hour, and it seems clear that his usage of the word in that pre-crucifixion prayer was one of a particularly respectful intimacy in addressing his Father in those extreme circumstances. Certainly, his use of the word in that instance made such an impression on the disciples that they carefully recorded it with the translation that most closely fit the meaning of the word — “Father.”

What difference does all this make? Simply that the idea abba means “daddy” or “dad” has taken on such a life of its own and has been so influential in recent Christianity that it has undeniably colored many people’s understanding of the range of legitimate forms of our address to our heavenly Father. Perhaps it has sometimes made that address more casual than it should be. The present writer has seen instances where religious writers have even “translated” the term as “Hi, Dad!” Abba is a functional vocative form used in addressing others, but there is nothing in the word of God or in history to substantiate such an extreme informality in the use of the word. Rather, it would seem to be simultaneously an intimate term and a term of great respect. Perhaps “Dear Father!” — the exclamation showing the intense nature of both the intimate and respectful aspects of the word — would be an appropriate translation.

Realizing that abba doesn’t really mean daddy or dad in its biblical context doesn’t change the nature of God as a loving Father who is happy to accept us and treat us as a father treats a small child on occasions when that kind of love is appropriate. It doesn’t change our ability to use the word in addressing our heavenly Father intimately. But it might help us to keep our relationship with Him in better perspective if we understand that abba connotes the privileged intimate relationship we have with a Father worthy of our total respect. And one thing is for sure: Abba most certainly does not mean “Hi, Dad!”

---

R. Herbert, Ph.D., was trained in the languages and cultures of the biblical world and the ancient Near East. He writes for a number of Christian publications and for his websites: [www.TacticalChristianity.org](http://www.TacticalChristianity.org)

S. and [www.LivingWithFaith.org](http://www.LivingWithFaith.org). You can follow them on twitter at @tacticalbelief and @livingbelief.

## The Rise of Islam

There's no disputing it. Islam is on the rise. And the face we're seeing, but trying not to believe, is an ugly one. One written in anger and in blood, in ominous moon and black flags, slavery and conquest.

So why now? What has held the forces of Islam in check — since four centuries ago, when they had advanced beyond the gates of Vienna and were beaten back — that their desire to conquer the world with their own brand of government, religion and ethics is finally gaining momentum?

It's a good question, and one that probably has its roots in the strength and ethics of our formerly Christian-rooted societies. Our grandparents grew up in a West that was distinctly flavoured by the Bible. "Love thy neighbour" was an undisputed truism. But today, are we not, more proud of our "secular society" than of our heritage? And therein lies the heart of the issue.

Have we not lost our moral compass, evidenced by the social issues that are on the agenda today? For example, our grandparents would shudder to know how we're bent on embracing homosexual marriage. They would weep over the shocking abortion statistics. And they would groan that we teach our children "evolutionary" garbage while conspicuously abandoning any reference to God and faith values.

So, where are we headed? In a year's time from now, how will we see 2015? More bloodshed? Heightened terror alerts? Stronger Islamic aggression, near and far? Will our military efforts to stop Islamic extremism and expansion fail? Will indecisive foreign policy, in hindsight, have been grossly inadequate?

Democracy has the potential to collapse, the signs of which are already apparent in Europe, where large immigrant families (of Islamic origins) are outnumbering generally low western birth rates. So given enough time, Sharia law quite easily could be democratically voted in. And should that happen, Islam's rise to world domination would be unstoppable.

Imagine seeing a strong and capable military leader emerge, and with him a powerful and charismatic religious imam — some call him the Mahdi. It's not hard then to imagine the widespread and "legal" beheading of innocents — whose only sin is to deny the validity of Mohammed.

With eyes on the comparatively small state of Israel eventually becoming militarily overrun by its larger neighbours; when the missiles and rockets are let loose, it might be hard not to think that what is called Armageddon is upon us.

The irony is that we can't say we weren't warned.

Did you know that the Bible (the same book our grandparents read) warns about just that kind of scenario, a time of world domination by a ruthless and brutal world leader edged on by his "religious" counterpart? A time of intense solar activity leading to global warming? That a third of mankind is brutally killed? And, did you know that unless divine intervention occurred (that's what Jesus taught), humanity would utterly destroy itself?

Jesus spoke about a coming conflagration on earth that has never happened before, nor He said will ever happen again. Jesus stated that He is coming again — this time on a rescue mission and this time claiming Kingship.

Of course, the incumbent leaders won't go without a battle. Can you imagine that day?

Most people today hardly think about Jesus, let alone His coming. Do you? Do you believe that our only hope in this age, in any age for that matter, is the saving work of Jesus Christ?

It was Christian ethics and morality that has held Islam in check now for almost 1300 years (just read the annals of history). And it is Christ who will bring Islam to an end — there is no other way, for secularism is already falling prey to its terrible power.

*Written by John Klassek*

# Modern Day Pharisees

by Terrell Perkins



We know from the New Testament something about the society and culture during the time that Christ walked the earth. We are introduced in the scriptures to two main Jewish sects that were influential during Christ's time, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees and the Sadducees differed in many of their teachings. They differed in what they considered Biblical law...the Sadducees believed only the written law in the Torah while the Pharisees believed their tradition of oral laws carried just as much weight. The Sadducees believed in strict judgments under the law while the Pharisees allowed for more mercy. The Pharisees believed in an afterlife, the Sadducees did not. They argued about the Hebrew calendar and on and on. The Sadducees primarily controlled the civil government of Judah while the Pharisees were the dominant force in the religion of the people.

Though we know from historical records that there were other sects of Judaism we know a good deal more about the Pharisees than we do other Jewish sects of the time. The Pharisees were the dominant sect of Judaism at the time but the reason the scriptures tell us so much about them goes beyond simple history. God made sure that we had a clear picture of the Pharisees in His revealed word for the edification of His church. We have that picture as a warning to us...

A part of what Christ did in His ministry was to point out where the Judaism of His time had gotten off track from the faith God revealed to the patriarchs. It is worth note that Christ rarely addressed specific doctrines or which sect taught the correct interpretation of a specific doctrine. Christ was much more concerned about the attitude of people towards serving God than He was specific teachings.

The Pharisees of Christ's time are condemned over and over in the New Testament, not as much for their teachings as for their attitudes. His primary criticism was of the Pharisaical attitudes that were prevalent in their approach towards obeying God.

God ensured we have the New Testament as a historical record of Christ coming to earth and walking among us as one of us. But its teachings go well beyond simply giving us a historical record. Gods' revealed word exists for the edification of His church. It contains instructions in righteousness and in the proper attitudes one should cultivate in approaching God. Not everyone who calls on God's name does so in the proper spirit. It can be argued that the main criticism Christ had of the Pharisees was in the spirit with which they approached the worship of God.

The admonitions the modern church can glean from Christ's condemnation of the Pharisees is two-fold. First, there is a movement in modern Christianity for some members to seek their Hebrew roots. This is a good thing in that it causes Christians to examine and revive the teachings and practices of the early church which was mainly made up of Jews. This is the restoration of the faith once delivered. The danger lies in Christians adopting many aspects of modern Judaism as the faith once delivered. Judaism is not the religion of the Israelites. It is an historical fact that Rabbinical Judaism, which became Modern Judaism, has its origins in the Pharisaical movement. That movement began after the Babylonian captivity. The Judaism of Christ's time had gotten off track from the faith once delivered. Modern Judaism has continued on the same path. While there is much to be said of a people who have studied Gods law for centuries, a Christian must pay heed to Christ's admonitions about how Judaism had deviated from God's intent.

The second, and much more pervasive, aspect of Pharisaic thinking is in the attitudes of individuals and, in some cases, in entire churches. It is shame, but a truth, that Pharisaical attitudes are alive and well in the church today. We have all heard ministers behind the pulpit who have those attitudes. We have all sat next to someone in church who maintains a Pharisaical attitude.

The Pharisaical attitude is a way of approaching the worship of God. The scriptures address that attitude for our edification because it is alive and well in our time. The warnings in the scriptures against such thinking are for us.

So what are the hallmarks of a Pharisaical attitude? **Legalism, Spiritual Myopathy, Dogmatism, Separatism/Exclusivity, Being Judgmental, Self-righteousness, a Sanctimonious attitude, Public Piety, putting tradition on the same level or higher than Gods law, and Hypocrisy...only giving God lip service.**

Perhaps the Pharisaical attitude that is best known is being overly legalistic. The Pharisees, and their offshoots in Modern Rabbinical Judaism, are known for their focus on the minutest details of legalism. Because they considered their oral law (later to become Talmudic) on the same level with the written law of the Torah they emphasized those laws. It was those traditions that Christ condemned because Pharisaical adherence to them often violated the spirit of the written law of God. Many modern Christians condemn Sabbath keepers as legalistic 'Judaizers' partially because they don't understand Christ and, especially, the Apostle Paul were addressing two bodies of law...the righteous, written law of God and the oral laws of the Pharisees.

Even those who only recognize the written law of God can be overly legalistic however. One can become so focused on the correct 'do's and don'ts' that one can lose sight of the intent or spirit of the law. That's a ditch that many Pharisees and many Modern Christians have fallen into. While what we do matters to God it is obedience that comes from our hearts that He values the most. The simple truth that escapes many Jews and Christians is that one can have all the correct doctrine and be doing all the correct things and still be wrong.

Closely related to legalism is the Pharisaical focus on the minutia. That is to say there is a kind of spiritual myopia in the pharisaical approach to God's law. Sometimes in our quest to find Gods will we tend to overlook the most obvious lessons. We can easily spend our energies parsing the meanings of Greek or Hebrew words when the lessons are much more obvious. We may believe we are "rightly dividing the Word of Truth" only to find that we are getting caught up in the minutia and missing the Big Picture. While it is a good thing to study God's word, that in itself is not righteousness. Believing and living God's word is righteousness.

Careful Bible study "can" make us dogmatic. Membership in some organizations can often make us dogmatic. The Pharisees had both forms. Dogmatism may be defined as holding one's opinion as fact. Being dogmatic can make us dismiss other points of view out of hand. This was the case with the Pharisees and it is too often the case with Modern Christians. We must remember that there was a time when we didn't believe what we do now. Chances are good that one may have believed something in the past only to have come to a different understanding later. Every human being who has ever thought "I have all the answers — truth." has been wrong. To "grow in grace and knowledge" means that we must allow room to grow and change. No human being has all the truth. The scriptures themselves demonstrate how God has revealed His truths to mankind over time. Abraham didn't believe the same things as the Apostles but all of them had the truth.

Being dogmatic can also make us exclusivists. We humans can get caught up in the pettiest arguments and we can let the minutest differences divide us. It is no wonder some people, like the writer Jonathan Swift, see theological arguments as just plain silly. (Witness the war between the Lilliputians...one side broke their eggs from the end...the other side broke their eggs from the middle!) Swift was making a commentary on the nature of human beings to let the silliest differences divide us. It's Pharisaical to think like: "We are the one true group (church) that God is working with. We are the chosen and God is only concerned with us." There are people in every nation that God is working with. Like many us have learned in the last few years, the Body of Christ is a spiritual organism, it is not a physical organization. Our concern shouldn't be who else God is working with...our concern should only be how God is working with us.

God directed the physical nation of Israel to be separate from other nations. Israelites were not to do the things that people in other nations did. In a similar way

Spiritual Israel, the Body of Christ, is to be separate from the world. We have to live in the world but we are not to be a part of it. That doesn't mean we aren't to interact with other people. We have to interact with others to be a light to the world. We are called to live by a higher standard to be that light. That doesn't mean we should be exclusivists however. It's a human tendency, when we separate ourselves from others, to begin to believe that we are somehow better than others. Being called by God the Father to be a Christian in no way means we are better than anyone else...what it means is that we have a greater responsibility to live up to a higher standard. Parents don't love their oldest children more but they do expect better behavior out of them.

Groups that separate themselves from the rest of their human family tend to believe that they are better than other human beings. This is in stark contrast to our savior. He frequently associated with the worst sinners when He really was better than anyone else who has ever lived. Separatists believe they are called to understand truths that have not yet been given to others so it becomes easy to feel 'superior'. When one feels superior it becomes easy to sit in judgment on others. The Pharisees took this to such an extreme that they felt entitled to kill those they judged as heretical, hence their persecution of early Christians. Christ is very clear on this...we are not to sit in judgment on others. We are to focus on our spiritual growth and allow others to do the same. The scriptures stand as judgment enough against us all.

This judgmental attitude is closely related to Self-Righteousness. The Self-Righteous think they have all that's necessary. They have arrived and have nothing more to do. The Pharisees made Self-Righteousness an art form! Since they were 'doing' all that was required they thought themselves the top of the heap. (God may have thought the same of them...but the heap He had in mind was quite a bit different!)

In a world as dark as ours is becoming it's too easy for Christians to become self-righteous just by trying to be better people. Some even think that church membership or attending services regularly is all they need to do. This is an especially dangerous spiritual condition. When we think we have arrived and there is nothing more that need be done it leaves no motivation to grow spiritually. This is a kind of idolatry and it is a counterfeit spirituality. The trouble with a counterfeit is that it makes us think we have all that's needed. If someone owes you twenty dollars and they pay you with a counterfeit bill you think you've been paid...until you take it to the bank!

It's Pharisaical when we think like: "Thank God that I'm not like: (fill in the blank)..." Our concern is not what God is doing with someone else...it should only be with what He is doing with us. Christ admonished Christians to mind the beams in their own eyes...not the motes in the eyes of others. We don't judge ourselves by comparing ourselves to others...we judge ourselves by comparing ourselves to God's word. We should all think we have a

---

*Continued on Page 15*

# The Power of Effective Communication

“Now the whole earth had one language and one speech.” Genesis 11:1 (NKJV)

by Kelly McDonald



Communication between humans can be complicated. In fact, much of human conflict originates with the inability to properly communicate our thoughts and feelings. This affects the relationship between husband and wife, children and parents, believer and believer, believer and unbeliever, minister and lay member, brother and sister, worker and manager, and so on. We know what we mean when we say something, but does the other person interpret our message the way that we intended for it to be received? At the same time, do we communicate our words in an effective way where the other person can properly understand?

The task of communicating in person is easier because you have inflection in your voice and non-verbal communication such as facial expressions and hand movements. In a world that is becoming increasingly impersonal with texts, facebook, and emails, effective communication is a lost art. It can be harder to properly express your thoughts and feelings.

In the study of language, you learn that there are two basic ways to explain the meaning of a word: denotation and connotation. Denotation is the literal meaning or definition. For instance, the word ‘dough’ in the English language refers a “thick, malleable mixture of flour and liquid, used for baking into bread or pastry” (Webster’s dictionary). Connotation is the feeling or idea associated with a word. This is often based on a person’s experience or background. Some people use “dough” as slang for money. In some regions of America, the use of the term “dough” as slang or a connotation for money would not be understood. The disparity between denotation and connotation makes the task of communication even harder.

In Genesis 11:1, the Bible tells us “Now the whole earth had one **language** and one **speech**.” At this time, the entire world not only had the same language, but they had a similar culture (speech). People understood each other better. The words spoken by one person were completely understood by others. This allowed for a high degree of cooperation. A few verses later, we learn that humans decided to gather and build a city with a tower that reached up to Heaven (verse 4). Then the Lord said, “Indeed the people **are one** and **they all have one language**, and this is what they begin to do; **now nothing that they**

**propose to do will be withheld from them**” (verse 6). It was at this point that God confounded language and speech. He confounded not just the words humans use (denotation), but the way we would perceive the use of words (connotation).

It is amazing to think that people could get together and be in such agreement to the point where the God of the Universe would say, “...now nothing that they purpose to do will be withheld from them”. What if we could communicate clearly today? Would not human relations worldwide be better off? What could the Body of Christ accomplish if we effectively communicated with one another?

In Acts 2:1, the Bible informs us that “...when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with **one accord in one place**” (KJV). Later, we read, “All the believers were **one in heart and mind**...” (Acts 4:32a, NIV). In Acts 2, the Lord was uniting mankind together again through the Holy Spirit. There was spiritual communication on this day that went forth to unite people. The Holy Spirit allows us to communicate spiritual truths to others. This is communication not understood or controlled by the natural mind. It is only understood spiritually. Consider the great miracles that happened in Acts. The gospel went forth with speed and efficiency. They had effective communication that united them, which came through God’s Spirit. This requires humility on our part.

As in Genesis 11, all things are now possible, but not through human effort (Mark 10:27). It now comes through unity in Jesus Christ. Paul said, “Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to **be like-minded** toward one another, **according to Christ Jesus**, that you may with **one mind and one mouth** glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5–6). In these verses, we see the emphasis on like-mindedness and effective communication through Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 1:10, Paul wrote, “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you **agree with one another in what you say** and that there be no divisions among you, but that you **be perfectly united in mind and thought**.” The church at Corinth was a church completely divided. Personal agendas

*Continued on Page 17*





## It's About PEOPLE!

by *Brian Knowles*

More than thirty-five years ago, a friend of mine made an astute observation about some paintings I'd done: "There's no life in them Brian - no animals, no people — nobody doing anything." He was right. Most of them were fairly well crafted landscapes and seascapes devoid of life. They reminded me of the original "On the Beach" movie with its lifeless "after The Bomb" scenarios.

There's a profound life lesson in this: Life is about people and what they are doing.

To illustrate, suppose you went to a theater, in which the stage was beautifully decorated and furnished. You sat there, staring at the set, but nothing happened on the stage. Life is not only people, but people doing things; people living. The stage of life was meant to be the "set" upon which the human drama unfolds.

To the best of our knowledge, there is no life on any other planet. This gorgeous blue orb is the sole incubator for the children of God. The Creator has given us everything we need to achieve his purposes for each human life, whether long or short. He has given each of us a lifespan. We inhabit bodies that are "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:14). He has given us instructions to regulate human behavior and keep it within acceptable norms. God alone is the supreme moral authority. He defines right and wrong.

To "sin" is to miss the mark of the divine standard in anything. The price for sinning is death (Romans 6:23) and all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23). Therefore, in our natural state, we are all on God's "death row."

God didn't create us for destruction. He has made a way, through Christ, by which we can avoid the death penalty for our sins. As Peter said, "He is longsuffering toward us, not desiring that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9b).

### **The Divine Stage**

Now we begin to see what is happening on the divine stage. People are born, they grow to

adulthood, they live, they sin, they repent and in many cases God saves them from the penalty of their sins.

The whole process can be quite dramatic and messy. The global stage is full of idolatries, murders, adulteries, slanders and numerous other sins. Various "drama queens" parade across life's stage throwing their hissy fits. People yell at each other, chase each other, accuse each other and terrorize each other. Politicians and dictators pose, posture and pontificate as they wield all the power they can accumulate. When they decide to embark on wars of conquest, human beings created in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27) lose all value except as cannon fodder. Power often corrupts and those who have it often all too frequently become brutish and barbarous, murdering, torturing, maiming and oppressing those who have the misfortune to fall in their path. The writer of Ecclesiastes commented on this ugly phenomenon:

"So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun. And behold the tears of the oppressed ones, and they had no comforter. And on the side of those who oppressed them there was power, but they had no comforter." (Ecclesiastes 4:1).

### **It's not all bad**

Good things happen on the stage of life too. God is at work saving, healing, rescuing and protecting. The Kingdom of God is manifested in the lives of those who are willing to receive it. In ancient times, God had a loyal and faithful remnant: "Yet I have left seven thousand in Israel for me, all who have not bowed the knees to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him." (1 Kings 19:18).

God has good people today who are ministering to the poor and the broken — both in this country and in the developing world. Just this morning I was in McDonald's getting my "senior coffee" and I overheard a man say he was part of an organization that hunts for homeless vets and takes care of them. A young lady who worked there piped up that she did a similar type of humanitarian work for vets.

It is a scandal that young men and women who have laid their lives on the line fighting the world's monsters have to live in such shameful conditions when they come home. Fortunately some are reaching out to them.

On the stage of life there are do-gooders and evil doers. The former are represented by light, the latter by darkness. When evil prevails, the stage goes dark. When good dominates, the whole scene brightens up. Light and darkness alternate on the stage of life. When Jesus appeared on the scene, light came into the world (John 3:19). "But," wrote John, "men loved darkness rather than light because their works were evil," (same verse).

The world is a magnificent "set" upon which The Director — God — works out his script for mankind. God assigns roles. "...so that the living may know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it whomever He will, and sets up over it the basest of men," (Daniel 4:17, see also 4:25, 4:32 & 5:18, 19).

There's a lot of improvisation on the divine stage too: "...time and chance happens to them all," (Ecclesiastes 9:11).

What does this mean for the unfolding drama? Simply this: "For man does not know his time; as the fishes that are taken in an evil net and as the birds that are caught in a snare; so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them," (Ecclesiastes 9:11b-12).

Our roles on life's stage may be cut abruptly short, without notice. In light of this, what then should we do? "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might; for there is no work, nor plan, nor knowledge or wisdom, in the grave where you go," (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

## Acts of God

When we see, or experience, earthquakes, tornadoes, volcanos, tsunamis, hurricanes and the like, we call them "acts of God." We don't really know when one of them will hit. Millions of people can suddenly be wiped out. Their role on life's stage is abruptly terminated.

When we ask why, there are no satisfactory answers. Uncles, aunts, sons, daughters, parents, friends are suddenly gone. No amount of prayers, vigils or shrines will bring them back

While we live, we should enjoy the blessings God has graciously bestowed upon us (Ecclesiastes 9:7-9). We should "fear God and keep his commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

Life is about what we do on the stage of life — how we relate to other people created in God's image. God is at once the Script Writer and the Director of the divine drama that is playing out on life's stage. So long as we live, we are a part of it. No one is an island. We are connected to each other. The fact that we are members of society implies social responsibility. Our lives are not our own to do with as we please. Our conduct affects others as theirs affects us.

There's an ancient parable that perfectly illustrates this truth: "It is like a company of men on board a ship. One of them took a drill and began to bore a hole under him. The other passengers said to him, 'What are you doing?' He replied, 'What is that to you? Am I not making the whole under my seat?' They retorted. 'But the water will enter and drown us all!'" (Everyman's Talmud, by Abraham Cohen, p. 184).

This is true globally as well as locally. The failure of a nuclear plant in one country can affect the health of people in other countries. Smog, insecticide residues and diseases can drift from one locale to another.

When we do anything, we should ask ourselves, "How will this affect others?" As we move around on life's stage, others have to shift positions to accommodate our movements. I knew a man who habitually came late for meetings. When he entered the scene, it meant stopping the meeting, reviewing the status of things, and starting all over again. This of course made our latecomer the focus of the meeting.

To summarize. Life is about man and animals doing things on life's stage. That stage was designed by God to accommodate the human race created in His image. God is at once the Script-writer and the Director of the human drama. Each of us comes onstage to play out a brief role. When we enter the set, we are free to ignore the Director's script or adhere closely to it. We have free moral agency.

At the time of Judgment, God will assess our performance. While we have the chance, we would do well to keep in mind the old saying, "Remember three things and you will not go astray: A hearing ear, a seeing eye, and all your deeds written in a book."

---

*Brian Knowles is a professional artist and writer and is a former magazine editor. Brian is an avid student of the Bible and a frequent contributor to the Association for Christian Development website ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)).*

long way to go...because we all do. Other people deserve our compassion...not our condemnation.

The Pharisees liked to make a public show of their piety. They didn't want to actually be decent, upstanding, pious people so much as they wanted to appear to be to others. The Pharisees wanted to appear to be righteous to others more than they actually wanted to be righteous before God. This one is simple: when public appearance becomes more important to us than our walk with God... we are on path to hell. (Think "Politician" here!)

This brings us to the Pharisaical tendency to put their own traditions on a par with or above God's law. In a way this brings us full circle back to legalism. The Pharisees believed their own oral laws and traditions were equal with the revealed, written law of God. Traditions aren't necessarily bad but in the case of the Pharisees, many of their traditions were contrary to the spirit of God's instructions. They were in no way equal to God's law. They put an undue burden on the people. Christ often found Himself in direct confrontation with Pharisaical traditions. He always condemned them. The apostle Paul addressed the burden that these laws laid on the people in his epistles. When one doesn't understand that Paul was addressing TWO bodies of law, the written and the oral, one can easily become confused by some of Paul's writings.

When Paul said the law was a burden too hard to bear he was referring to the oral law the Pharisees considered on the same par with God's revealed law written in the Torah. The original intent of the oral law may have been good. For example, one of the reasons Israel had been carried off into captivity by the Assyrians centuries before and Judah had been in captivity in Babylon was because of the failure of the people to observe God's Sabbaths. The Rabbi's wanted to put so many restrictions around the Sabbath that the people wouldn't come close to defiling it again. Their intent was a good one. Human nature being what it is, however, the original intent became lost and all that remained was the rote, obligatory observance of minute rules and regulations that were enforced by men who wanted power over other men more than a sincere walk with their Creator. That is contrary to the spirit of God's law. From the beginning what God has wanted of man is a humble heart willingly obedient to Him. Endless rules and regulations are easier for most human beings to observe than to honestly humble themselves to God.

What the Pharisees were guilty of was practicing the empty ceremony of religion instead of the true transformation of their hearts that would bring forth real spiritual growth. They made hypocrisy a way of life. They valued the glory and honor of men over that of God. The scriptures recorded their attitudes and practices as a lesson and a warning to us.

For the Christian the qualities that define true spiritual growth are the fruits of the spirit: Peace, love, joy, patience, kindness, mercy etc. Those qualities are far more difficult to develop than observing the endless rules and regulations religious people often define them-

selves by. Too many well-meaning people create such rules and regulations to set themselves apart from others. In that way they can convince themselves they are somehow more worthy of God's love. Such people are missing the point of Christ's gospel.

There are correct practices and there are correct attitudes. The Old Testament is primarily about the former. The New Testament is primarily about the latter. Both are essential. Christ was clearly more concerned with the correct attitudes but we must remember that He came to a people who knew God's law. They knew how they were supposed to live. Those who were receptive to Christ's message undoubtedly felt that something was missing in their faith. Without understanding the historical and cultural context of Christ's ministry it becomes too easy to misunderstand what He taught. Doing the right thing without the right attitude is Pharisaical. Having the right attitude without doing the right thing is aimless.

Unfortunately many Modern Christians think it's only what one believes that matters. That's the ditch on the other side of the road from Pharisaical thinking. Love without the law is lost. But even God's revealed law without love is empty.

---

*Terrell Perkins graduated from Ambassador College in 1981, and has been a Sabbath keeper for about 35 years. Terrell lives in Capitan, New Mexico, and works as an artist-blacksmith hand forging metal sculptures and architectural hardware and furniture. Terrell has been a freelance writer for over 20 years.*



quenched the Spirit of God from allowing effective communication. The problem in this particular church goes back to Genesis 11. This church had an issue with the exaltation of self — trying to build a tower that reached up to Heaven.

This is where conflict arises in the church. There is the tendency to use human reason all the time. So often we use human reason to look at spiritual things. Unfortunately, this can lead to “explaining away” the things of God instead of defending the things of God. This can cause us to miss the mark and miss the Maker. The key is that we must learn to properly communicate with each other and with God through His Spirit. Our prayer time, worship, and study of God’s Word help us in this endeavor. Human motives must be put aside.

Today, the internet allows a free-flow of natural knowledge and communication. The Holy Spirit of God and humility among believers should create a super-highway for spiritual knowledge and wisdom to be conveyed to the entire Body of Christ. In the church of Corinth, their carnal, natural understanding was hindering this from flowing. They put up a roadblock on God’s super-highway.

Can we come together? Can we put aside differences (which are small) and communicate spiritual truths using spiritual words? (1 Corinthians 2:13) I believe it is possible. God desires to see the unity of Acts. With this unity will come miraculous events from God.

One of my insurance clients once said, “What I am saying is not what you are hearing. What I am hearing is not what you are saying.” I had to think long and hard about that statement, but I understood his point: we need effective communication. When we work with people, we should make a genuine effort to put ourselves in their shoes to understand what they mean when they speak. We should spend time trying to communicate ourselves properly. When it comes to the things of God, we must learn to communicate in humility through the Spirit of God. This will be a crucial step that unlocks the unity and miracles of the book of Acts. The goal is not to come together and build up towards Heaven as in Genesis 11, but to come together and humble ourselves so that the Kingdom of Heaven comes down as in the book of Acts.

---

*Kelly McDonald, Jr. is an ordained Evangelist at Hungry Hearts Ministries in Jackson, Tennessee. Kelly has authored seven books and two booklets. He is the editor for the ministry’s magazine, Pursuit. He received his bachelor’s degree summa cum laude from Lambuth University with a double major in Political Science and Sociology and a minor in Legal Studies. Kelly has been preaching since 2007, and is available to speak at other churches upon request.*

## **SERPENTS AND SYMBOLS**

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up John 3:14.

Snakes, also called serpents, can be dangerous, and consequently most people refuse to have anything to do with them.

When my parents were missionaries in Brazil we lived in a house that had a large back yard. Beyond our property lay a heavily wooded tract where we children were forbidden to go. One day as we stood by the fence that separated the properties, watching a man clearing some undergrowth, we saw him make a sudden thrust with his hoe-like instrument. We wondered why, but not for long. Soon he reached down and came up with a beautifully colored coral snake some 30 centimeters long. Its body was colored successively black, yellow, and red. The man noticed our curiosity and hung the dead snake on our fence, telling us that its bite was deadly. Little did we realize how deadly was the coral snake that the man had dispatched so nonchalantly. Only later did I learn that the venom of coral snakes attacks the blood corpuscles and the walls of the blood vessels, causing internal hemorrhaging and death within a very short time. Up to the present time science has found no specific antivenin for coral snakebite.

When we children called my father to see the dead snake he told us about an incident that one of our church members had recently witnessed on a pier in Bahia harbor. A string of stevedores were loading green bananas onto a ship. Suddenly one of the men dropped his bunch of bananas, looked at one of his fingers, whipped out a machete, and, quicker than it takes to tell it, lopped off the tip of the finger. Moments later the other men killed a coral snake hidden among the bananas.

Have you ever wondered why God used a brazen serpent to bring healing to those snakebitten Israelites who looked at it? Doubtless it was because the serpent represented the Messiah, as our verse indicates. But have you ever wondered why Christ would use a serpent, a symbol of sin, to represent Himself?

The Bible gives us the answer. Christ was “made ... to be sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21). Peter puts it this way: “He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24, R.S.V.). Just how this could be done is a mystery, but we accept it by faith.

We may never be able to explain this transaction, but if we accept it, by faith, it means eternal life. In a similar way, a snakebitten Israelite might not be able to explain how a look at a brazen serpent saved his life, but the fact remains that it did.

---

*Donald Mansell, New Every Morning, page 352. Review & Herald Publishing Ass’n. 1981.*

*Westby: "What to hold Tightly" cont. from page 4.*

God" box "yes" for they might believe that God may exist and don't consider themselves atheists. Yet they practice a practical atheism by giving no place for God in their lives. They don't want God's moral governance in their lives, don't want God's law defining good and evil for them, and certainly don't want God messing with their business, lusts, and pleasures. Neither are they of a mind to thank God for the good things they possess and enjoy in life. They earned it and take full credit. Who needs God?

Did this farmer thank God for bringing seasonal rain to water his crops? Did he suppose that little seeds became fruitful plants by accident? Did he acknowledge God as the giver of life and the giver of every good and of every perfect gift? Did he see himself as a steward of God's good earth that he neither made nor could truly "own." Did he see the divine hand of God anywhere in the origin of his prosperity? Apparently, his prosperity was just all about him and his smarts and his hard work as he whistled to himself, "no God for me."

In Herbert Lockyer's fine commentary on this parable he observes,

"A life lived without God is a God-less life. It may be a life full of "many things" but if it is minus God it is an empty life."

The rich man in Jesus' parable was a fool because he set his heart upon his increasing riches instead of Yahweh who gave him the ability to produce wealth and provided the earth from which his riches came. He was a fool for he inverted reality. He was rich (selfish) toward himself, and as Jesus said, "not rich toward God."

### **It Isn't Just Wealth**

Some might say, well I'm not rich so this parable isn't for me. Riches, per se, were not the farmer's problem. There is nothing evil about riches. Oh, that we were all rich and prosperous! The farmer's folly was his over attachment to riches, which is covetousness, which is the problem. Covetousness is a common manifestation of the lusts of the flesh. It can be directed toward acquiring things which it is assumed will make one happy, secure, and admired. Covetousness can be directed toward a quest for power, fame, trophies, control, and it is assumed that these achievements will exalt one's ego, garner admiration and the "worship" of others. Lustful coveting can be directed to sex and various pleasures be they drugs, perversions, violence, or whatever thrills titillate and help one escape with sensual fantasies. It is assumed that such coveting will satisfy and pleasure some inner cravings and provide escape from the realities of one's empty life. A quick look at daily pathology of media glitterati, the Hollywood types, and power chasing politicians should tell us their road is a dead end.

All these forms of covetousness—wealth, power, prestige, sex, perversion—fail to fill an empty life with purpose and meaning. And lacking purpose and meaning happiness is but a mirage to be hoped for just over the next sand dune.

### **Being Mortal**

Jamie Colby is hosting a new show on the Fox Business Channel called "Strange Inheritances." Each episode features the heirs to a strange inheritance bequeathed to them by a relative who had amassed a life of gathering some very unusual things from huge bug collections, to hundreds of alligators, to field after field of rusty old cars, collections of various sorts. The program is a very interesting study in human nature and the human condition. She ends each program with the words, "Just remember, you can't take it with you."

No matter if your things have great worth or just great worth to only you, you will let them go. Knowing that, don't weld them to your heart. Know that all your worldly passions, all your lusts, licit or illicit, will be forfeited sooner than we think. The old line, "there are no luggage racks on the hearse" should temper our attachments. God's wise advice would tell us to hold them lightly for they must slip out of our hands and there is nothing we can do to prevent that reality.

Speaking of being mortal, Atul Gawande has written a fine book by that title, *Being Mortal*<sup>2</sup>. It is a New York Times bestseller written by a practicing surgeon who lamented how modern medicine has mishandled the giving of end of life care. My wife, JoAn, is a project manager for a company that provides physicians and physician services to many hospitals around the nation. Her boss, a physician and founder of the company, gave her a copy of the book as he did many of his company leaders. JoAn has been reading it to me.

The author recommends dealing truthfully with terminal patients rather than offering an array of endless treatments knowing that they won't really change the reality of impending death but instead will likely make the patient sicker in his or her last days of life. Better to face reality and use the closing moments of life to do what is most important, rather than suffer nausea and discomfort from yet another treatment that will not appreciably, if at all, forestall the inevitable. What he found was that patients used those final days, weeks, or months to bond with loved ones and savor the good memories of life. Many said of those times that they were the most wonderful and fulfilling moments of their lives.

Looking back on life, none regretted not spending more time in the office, not seeking more pleasures, not making more money or becoming famous. With all worldly things slipping out of their hands what they cherished most were the relationships with family and dearest friends. This would be their greatest loss in death. Is



there a lesson for us as to priorities in life? Gawande doesn't dwell on matters of faith and God, but that has an effect on how people accept death.

I've held the hands of many dying and will soon join them. I attest that the greatest comfort for the dying is, besides a loving family at bedside, confidently knowing that one is holding tightly the powerful hand of his Creator.

The psalmist graphically summarizes the Rich Fool's dilemma, and that of millions like him who in their heart think they can have it all, believing everything will continue as it is.

"Those who trust in their wealth and boast of their great riches...all can see that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their wealth to others."

Rather than seeking to discover and abide in the divine purpose of life, we humans find it easier to chase after pleasures and things which soon disappear. We let them dominate our life, eat up our passion, leaving little room for becoming "rich toward God." Before Jesus introduced the parable of the Rich Fool he warned the crowd before him:

"Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

Of what then should a man's life consist? Certainly not the variety of lust and greed that we are advised to guard against. Anything that captures your central motivation for living at the expense of seeking God and his eternal kingdom, will in the end disappoint and leave you empty-handed and without a future. Material things and the lawful pleasures of life are not evil, but if they dominate our lives and replace our Creator's purpose in our lives, they end up being destructive. We must leave the world as empty-handed as we entered it...unless, we are holding tightly to the hand of God.

### **A Tight Grip on Eternity**

There is a place to store up eternal treasures and Jesus says it is not in barns or banks.

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

Granted, this is an oft quoted scripture by preachers hoping to shake a few more dollars out of the purses and wallets of parishioners and into the offering plate. Forget that for I doubt Jesus' point is so narrow. He says we can lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Heaven is a common euphemism for God, not necessar-

ily a location (the Kingdom of Heaven (in Matthew) is the Kingdom of God in Mark, Luke, and John, etc.) We can accumulate treasures that are eternal because they are in the hand of God.

Jesus said our heart follows these treasures to the very presence of God. Can we then conclude that God wants our heart to be with him? What might these treasure be that we can store up? Somehow they are attached to our heart—our passion for living, our goal in life, our loving God with all our body, soul, and spirit. Further, our heart for God will manifest good works in how we love and serve others.

All God ultimately wants for us, his sons and daughters, is to be our God and Father and for us to be his children conformed in free will into his righteous image. This is the universal covenant stated dozens of times in both the Old and New Testaments.<sup>6</sup> The opening scenes of Genesis picture a temple garden with God dwelling with his son and daughter—archetypes for all humanity. That was the ultimate relationship God wanted with his people. History since has shown the gap between God and man that must yet be bridged for mankind to dwell in peace with his Maker. Jesus' life showed how that gap can be closed and he is now in his Father's presence in heavenly Eden. The closing scenes of the Bible's last book reveals that in the near future the gap will have been bridged and redeemed mankind will eternally dwell with his Creator and rule the limitless cosmos.

"Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."<sup>7</sup>

Man was made mortal from the clay or "dust" of the earth. He was never intended to live forever in his earthly body. The so-called "fall" did not doom him to death for he was by his very creation made of perishable stuff. He was going to die anyway, but the antidote to death was the Tree of Life in the temple garden. It stood as the symbol of eternal life beyond this mortal body. Adam and Eve made a bad decision to go for what seemed to offer them the most benefit in the here and now. They grabbed tightly the wrong fruit and never reached for the Tree of Life. They in effect self-exiled themselves from the holy garden rendering the Tree of Life beyond their reach. Yet, they knew it was ultimately what God wanted for them.

Many individuals mentioned in the OT did seek God and eternal life. These faithful from Abel to Abraham to David and the prophets, and many others not mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven, are now "sleeping," waiting, with Christians, the resurrection to life, to receiving new and eternal bodies.

## **Holding Tightly—Is a Two-Way Arrangement**

In the same “Sermon on the Mount” where he discussed treasures in heaven, Jesus gave his disciples the plain priorities that should guide all to eternal life and into the presence God. He explained that our Father in heaven was fully aware of our needs and would see that they were provided—food, clothing, shelter—just as he provided for the birds in the air which he also made (see Matthew 6:25-32). The Father knows the difference between our needs and wants; his goodness does not stop with just the bare needs to stave off starvation or freezing without shelter. It has been my experience, as well as God’s history in caring for his faithful ones, that he also gives us a generous array of our wants—happily so, not reluctantly. Jesus proclaimed that he is a loving Father.

The capstone thirty-third verse in Jesus’ sermon discussing life and its priorities is this:

“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things [needs and appropriate wants] will be given to you as well.”

This spells out what we are to hold tightly, what we must seek with all our being. The kingdom is not a piece of land or a fluffy cloud in heaven; it is the Reign of God. We are to seek God and his righteousness. This second object, his righteousness, is often read without mental registration of what Jesus is really proclaiming. Jesus is plainly saying that we are to seek to know God and to take on his righteous character. Paul said we can be conformed to the image of God by the renewing of our mind which means new goals, priorities, and motivation.

Earlier in his sermon Jesus put this same capstone Matthew 6:33 in other words: “Be perfect [holy, righteous], therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect [holy, righteous]” (Matthew 5:48).

For an example of how this can be accomplished we need look no further than to Jesus himself who fully took on the heavenly Father’s nature and righteousness. Paul declares that all those God calls must be conformed to the likeness of his Son, who bears the Father’s righteous image.

Being “rich toward God” means seeking to become like him in mind, character, love, good works, and in the beautiful spectrum of God’s righteousness. But how difficult is it to seek God? Let God explain:

“I know the plans I have for you,” declares Yahweh, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will pray to me and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you....”

If God could speak so kindly to ancient Israelites inviting them to seek him, how much more compelling is his

invitation to you and me who follow his Son, Messiah Jesus!

Jesus says “seek,” and hold tightly with all your heart the Kingdom of God, the hope that beats strong within you. If we reach out to God to grab his hand with an iron grip, how will he respond?

Moses, who interacted with Yahweh probably more than any OT character, said this:

“Yahweh your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”<sup>11</sup>

The NT writer of Hebrews quoted Moses but put the words in God’s mouth:

“God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’”

## **How Tight is Your Grip?**

God will hold you tightly but you must hold him tightly. It is a mutual bond. God will never forsake you and he asks us to never forsake him. He will seek the best for us and by his tender spirit mold us into the image of his Son. He asks us to seek his loving rule in our lives. He asks us to yield to his wisdom and walk in the path of his teachings, his Torah. This is the way to seek him and his righteousness.

When Jesus got out of bed in the morning his first thoughts were of how he might please his heavenly Father that day. He was holding tightly the things of God.

“I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me and has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”<sup>13</sup>

Profound! Jesus also said, “By myself I can do nothing. I judge only what I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.”<sup>14</sup> Can you understand what he is saying? Is he not doing just what he asks us to do; to seek God and his righteousness as our number one passion in life?

Hold lightly those things that will be lost anyway. Don’t invest your precious first passion in what will eventually melt into oblivion.

Hold tightly the gift of eternal life and the sure promises and rewards of God. Set your heart to be “rich toward God” and love him as Jesus did. Jesus said,

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”<sup>15</sup>

This is what we hold tightly.

---

*Ken Westby is a board member emeritus of the BSA, and founder and director of the Association for Christian Development and the Virtual Church ([www.godward.org](http://www.godward.org)).*

# The Church in the World

*By Mark Ellis*

Raised in a strict Buddhist family in Chanthaburi, about three hours east of Bangkok, her parents didn't understand when she became a born again Christian.

"My parents brought me to the temple, but I never felt connected to those things," says Blue Erika Ployamporn. "They prayed in a language I didn't understand."

An unusual thing happened to her as a young teen. "When I was 13 brushing my teeth God called me," Blue recalls. Her mother had been ill, and she told Blue she would have to take care of her brother and sister if she died.

She began to weep because she realized she didn't know where her mother would go after she died. "I didn't know how to see her again," she says. "They said there is the next life, but you can't choose where you go. I felt so hopeless."

Where will I go when I die? she wondered. Will I remember myself after I die? Will I remember my name is Blue?

Shortly after that experience, she moved to Bangkok, where she attended school and lived with her cousin. One day a Christian neighbor knocked on her door.

"Hello. How are you?... Do you know Jesus?" the woman asked.

"Who is Jesus?" Blue replied. She had never heard the name of Jesus.

"Do you want to know Him?" the woman inquired.

"Yes...who is he?"

The woman told Blue about the life of Jesus, how he demonstrated he was God in human flesh by performing many miracles, how he died on the cross for oursins, was raised bodily from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high.

The truth penetrated Blue's heart and the Spirit imparted saving faith. "It made sense," she realized. "At that time I accepted Him and I believed right away."

In the ensuing weeks, Blue began to read the Bible and attend church. She became part of a cell group. "I began to love Him (Jesus)," she says.

But she soon faced spiritual warfare within her own home. "My parents found out I became a Christian and they were concerned," she recounts. As they observed the changes in their daughter — attending church or other meetings three times a week, questions arose.

"How can a 14-year-old girl be so crazy about religion?" they asked. "Why is she praying so much?" They While Blue had a successful career as a model, a TV host, and as part of a TV series, her heart was empty. "It was a very hard

life," she says. At 22 she reached the bottom, as hopelessness and despair overwhelmed her. "I tried suicide by taking 20 pills. I wanted to sleep for a long time."

Mercifully, the suicide attempt was unsuccessful. When she woke up in the hospital in Bangkok, her parents were standing by the side of her bed weeping.

After her parents left she began to pray. "Lord, this is not the life I want. Bring me back to you."

After her release from the hospital, she drove by Tai Church, located on a busy street near the university, and felt God pulling her toward that church. Then a friend who had become a Christian in California invited her to the same church.

"God heard my prayers," she says. "Seven years ago I came back to Him and started my life again." Two years later she invited her parents to church, they believed, and began to follow Jesus.

Blue and her husband currently devote their time to a company she started that sells nutritional supplements and she is very active as one of the worship leaders at Tai Church.





# Why Did Jesus Spit?

By Lenny Cacchio

Jesus healed the sick. Sometimes he would pray for them. Sometimes he would heal them with words. Sometimes he would lay hands on them. He even, at least one time, healed from afar.

And there were three times when he healed with his saliva. (Mark 7:31–33, Mark 8:22–23, John 9:11). Why did Jesus use such an odd medical procedure?

## Why did Jesus spit?

We get a hint of the answer from the context of the three accounts of such healings we find in the Gospels. We'll examine specifically the blind man in John 9 because there we get a hint of the context behind the practice.

The immediate context of this healing is a discussion (argument?) in John 8 between Jesus and the religious leaders about who exactly Jesus was. The leaders accused him of demonic possession, of being a Samaritan, and of being of illegitimate birth.

Several times during this exchange Jesus subtly uses two words ("I am") when referring to himself ("I am the light of the world." "I am from above," "I am not of this world," "I am he," "Now I am here," "You will realize that I am he"), and in due time he is not so subtle ("Before Abraham was, I am").

These words raised the hackles of his listeners because it is an echo of how God describes himself from the burning bush, where Moses was told the name of God: "I AM WHO I AM", and "I AM has sent me to you". (Exodus 3:13–14)

By the end of Jesus' "discussion" with the religious leaders, they knew exactly what Jesus was implying about his identity, and they attempted to stone him to death for such blasphemy (John 8:59).

Jesus escapes their wrath and immediately encounters the blind man whom he heals with a paste made from dirt and his saliva.

So why did Jesus spit on the ground and put mud in the man's eyes?

The answer might be understood in terms of the religious leaders own tradition. This act of Jesus was to reinforce his argument that everything he had said about himself was true.

Quoting from the Talmud, which represents the religious traditions and teachings of the rabbis of the day: "There is a tradition that the spittle of the firstborn of a father is healing, but that of the firstborn of a mother is not healing." (Bava Batra 126b)

Let's see how this fits the context, particularly in the previous chapter of John 8. Jesus repeatedly refers to his Father (verses 16, 17, 19, 29, 38, 42, 49). The religious leaders, who knew a bit of Jesus' history, couldn't resist reminding Jesus of their suspicions around the circumstances of his birth ("We are not born of fornication. We have one father — God. Verse 41), thereby insinuating that his birth was illegitimate.

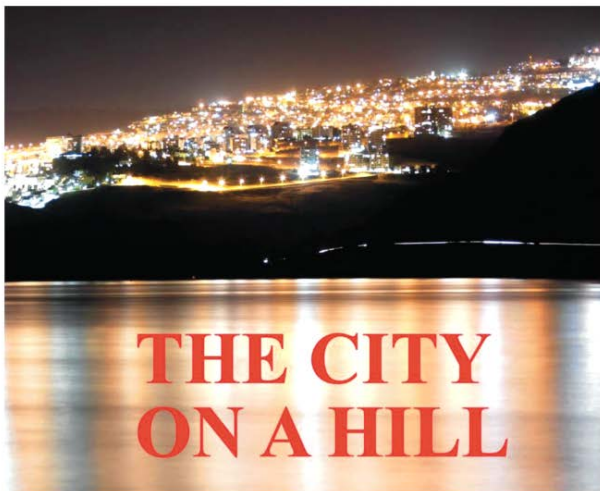
When Jesus healed the blind man with mud mortared with saliva, he was (beg your pardon) spitting in the eye of his enemies. In effect he was saying, "I am who I say I am. I am the firstborn son of my Father, whom you claim to know, when in fact you are sons of the devil.

This event illustrates not only the lesson Jesus was trying to teach, but it also reveals how an understanding of the religious and cultural milieu of the day can enrich your understanding of the Book.

It also answers that beginning question, "Why did Jesus spit?"

—Lenny Cacchio

You can catch all of Lenny's latest commentaries on <http://morningcompanion.blogspot.com> and on the BSA Web site at <http://www.biblesabbath.org/>. Lenny is a member of the BSA board of directors.



## LESSONS FROM THE PARABLES OF JESUS

By R. Herbert

Our new e-Book is available **FREE** in three formats – PDF/Kindle/ePub – from the "Downloads" page at:

[www.livingwithfaith.org](http://www.livingwithfaith.org)

Nondenominational, non-commercial





### **A website for kids**

We want our children to enjoy the Sabbath day, yet to learn appropriate activities acceptable to our Father, which can be challenging.

Yahweh's Assembly in Messiah, Rocheport, Missouri, has a children's website which has been designed for this exact purpose. We have tried to make it eye-appealing for children and periodically change the background to keep it that way.

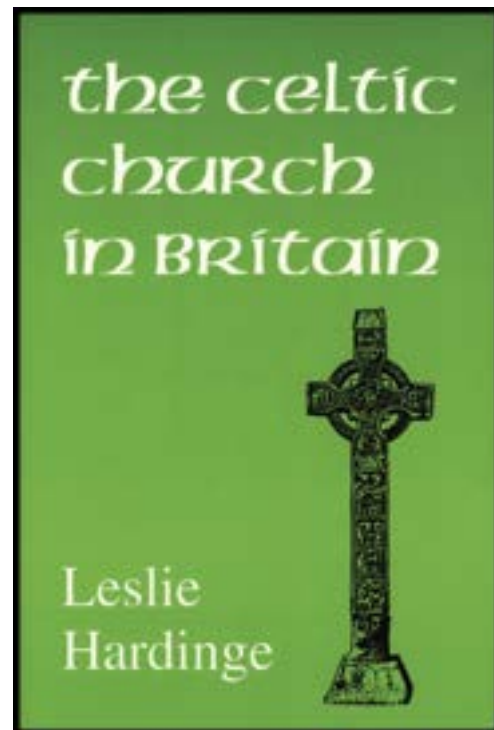
There are lessons on all Yahweh's Feast Days which are available within a month or so of the special time under "Feast Days."

You will see, under "Bible Books," that we are putting actual books of the Bible online in a format easy for children to read with activities scattered throughout each segment. At the end of each chapter, there is an interactive quiz for them to take—no records kept.

[www.yahwehschildren.org](http://www.yahwehschildren.org)  
[www.yaim.org](http://www.yaim.org)

**Get your copy of her book,  
*The House of Yahweh*  
*My Side of the Story.***

**Send \$12.95 to  
Kay Hawkins,  
P.O. Box 921,  
Abilene, TX 79604**



### **Advertise in The Sabbath Sentinel**

**Classified ads** (20% discount for second time, 30% thereafter) are available at the rate of \$1.00 per word (including each word and each group of numbers in the address; telephone numbers count as one word) for each issue in which the ad is published.

**Display ads** are available at \$150 per quarter page for each issue the ad is published. Where possible your camera-ready copy will be utilized, or we will design your display ad for you. Send copy for all ads and payment to The Bible Sabbath Association, 802 N.W. 21Ave., Battle Ground, WA, USA.

**Discounts:** Advertise in the TSS Classified Ads section for more than one issue and receive discounts: \$1.00 per word 1<sup>st</sup> issue, 20% off for 2<sup>nd</sup> issue, and 30% off for subsequent times.

Ad copy without payment will not be accepted for publication. Deadline is two months prior to publication (i.e. if you want your ad to appear in the September/October issue we must receive it before July). BSA reserves the right to reject or edit any ad copy. Publication does not necessarily imply endorsement by the *Bible Sabbath Association* or *The Sabbath Sentinel*.



# *The Sabbath Sentinel*

*A Bi-monthly Publication of*

*The Bible Sabbath Association*

*802 N.W. 21<sup>st</sup> Ave., Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA*

*Return Service Requested*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
SAN DIMAS, CA  
PERMIT NO. 410

## **CoG7 History Book**

*The Journey: A History of the Church of God (Seventh Day)*, by Elder Robert Coulter, is still available for purchase. At 500+ pages and in hard cover, the book's cover price is \$29.95 + postage.

Order by e-mail ([bap.orders@cog7.org](mailto:bap.orders@cog7.org)), online bookstore ([cog7.org](http://cog7.org)), or mail: P.O. Box 33677, Denver, CO 80233.

