

# *The Sabbath Sentinel*

Jan-Feb  
2023

## *The Quartodeciman Controversy*

**BSA—The Bible Sabbath Association**



Jesus said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men..."

*Coelitus o regni me fac consistere portu,  
Neu cadat a venti vi superata ratis.*

# The Sabbath Sentinel January/February, 2023

Volume 77, No. 1, Issue 618

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# *An Urgent Call to Prayer!*

Prayer for our nation and leaders is important at all times. The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy in 1Ti 2:1-2 as an example to all of us *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty.”*

However, never has our nation needed God to intercede for His people more than it is needed today. Evil men, who naturally gravitate toward positions of power in order to hide or escape prosecution for their crimes, have infested both the federal government and our state governments. This is not to say that all of our public servants are evil but to say that a sufficient number of them are evil as is evidenced by the state of our nation.

For instance, it has long been known, since the days of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has been used as a tool of oppression against those who are considered enemies of the current regime. It is well known that under President Obama the IRS was used to prevent approval of applications for tax-exempt status for those groups that considered it their patriotic duty to oppose the socialistic tendencies of Obama. Joe Biden and the Democrats are doing the same, with nearly 80,000 extra agents to be sent out to “eat out our substance.” Anyone with a business who has ever had to endure IRS audits knows what a huge expenditure in time, energy and finances those audits are. The American people are now faced with the prospect of more of these bureaucrats sent out to extort, or at least extract, more funds to finance programs that are not within the authority of the federal government.

The Founding Fathers included within the Constitution for the united States of America (1787), in Art. 1, Sec. 9, prohibition of any direct taxation of the Citizens except in direct proportion to a census. What evil men did was to redefine the money we received in exchange for something else valuable, our time and energy, into something called income, and then taxed it. It took three tries to make that evil taxing system stick, but once the 16th Amendment passed that tax stuck.

However, there’s no way that the tax is directly proportional as determined by the census. Instead, to get the vote of the People to authorize this tax, it was touted as a way to get the wealthy to pay for the exercise of the power of our federal government.

According to articles by CNBC, in 2020 only 61% of households paid any taxes at all, and in 2021, only 57% of households paid any tax. Evil people in authority in the federal government have created an “end run” around the intent of our Founding Fathers in order to create a powerful central government through the generation of taxes not envisioned by the Constitution and its creators—and to pay for legislation that is far beyond the Constitutional authority granted by the People.

But, lest the reader think that this is an attack on taxes only, let us consider the other evil things done by those in power in our governments. Our evil servants created the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) with authority to seek secret warrants. This was supposed to be directed toward enemies of our country. Instead, the FISA courts have been used as yet another tool of oppression against the people of our country. The Department of Justice persecutes people like Donald Trump and other conservatives attempting to slow the progressive agenda of driving our country to ruin. Meanwhile, progressive democrats like Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden, whose crimes are obvious, go unprosecuted by a corrupt Department of Justice. These evils are designed to discourage the People and drive them away from the throttles of power, leaving them to the evil ones—and that is exactly where our nation is today.

That isn’t the end of the evil being done. These evil men created the Federal Reserve (Fed) and turned over the authority to coin/print money to that entity. This has resulted in debauching of our money such that it is worth about 4% of what it was worth in 1800—and only 13% of what it was in 1970 before Richard Nixon took us off the gold standard, aided and abetted by evil men and women in Congress. This is exactly what was done to destroy the Roman Empire which can be read about in the book [The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire](#) by Edward Gib-

bon. Evil men whose heart is set on destroying the sanctuary created for the people of God are close to accomplishing their goal. They want the People to abandon hope and the protection of our Constitution in favor of all-powerful federal oligarchy. Satan would love nothing more than to destroy the protections afforded to those who obey God by keeping His Sabbaths, and evil men have been steadily working toward that end, virtually since before the ink was even dry on our Constitution.

We now see, exposed to the world, how the Democrats, law enforcement at the federal level, progressively owned news outlets and the Biden campaign, all conspired together to keep the criminal acts of the Bidens from being exposed. Our federal government is completely corrupted and that corruption is being used to influence social media to keep the People from the truth. We are seeing that abundantly exposed with Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, and release of internal memos and emails showing the criminal, Constitution-violating, actions of our corrupt Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Justice, and even the federal courts—all done in concert with the Biden campaign and its willing accomplices, the main-stream news media.

There is no doubt that we need to have God intervene in the affairs of our nation. But, we need to make it known to God through our prayers how we feel about this great evil that is being done. Solomon was inspired to preserve this bit of wisdom for us: Proverbs 29:2 *When the righteous thrive, the people rejoice; when the wicked rule, the people groan.* We are just beginning to see the burden of a corrupt, out of control federal government. We elect servants in this country, but they have perverted their positions into ones of power and rulership rather than acting as servants dedicated to the concepts of the Bible and the Constitution.

Solomon further warned us in Ecclesiastes 8:11, *Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.* How are these evil people in the federal government able to get away with this? Because those charged with prosecuting federal crimes refuse to prosecute their partners in crime. They have contempt for the law, including the Law of the Land, our Constitution. Contempt for the law breeds contempt for the law in those who observe the original contempt. Is it any wonder we see rioting, looting, burning, theft and other crimes escalating radically? The example they see is that our servants in public office have contempt for the law;

why should they feel any differently?

We should not think that this is anything that was not to be expected. In prophecies concerning the end times, such as in Jeremiah, God warns us of what would become of the nation which abandons the keeping of the precepts that God established, which the Founding Fathers accepted and upon which they ratified the Constitution.

We read in Jer. 2:13, *For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.* There is no doubt that we are forsaking God nationally because if we were not we would not suffer these evil people to remain in office election after election. Without the blessing of God's Living Waters, and certainly with only broken vessels to contain what little of those Living Waters is available, we are a doomed nation. What remains, without a national revival and repentance, is the conclusion of that prophecy found in Jer 2:37, *Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.* When you go out with your hands on your head it is as a prisoner.

We are warned to NOT trust in lying words, yet we do that every election cycle, allowing the corrupted political parties to put forth one criminal after another whose heart is set upon filling their bellies at the expense of the American people. Read about this in Jeremiah, Chapter 7. We are given the path out of this madness beginning in Jer 7:5: *For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; If ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.*

Verse 8 seems to mock us by saying that we won't listen, nationally. Instead we are told in Jer 7:9 *Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not.* And worse, that we would drag that filth before God saying that He liberated us so that we could continue in these paths. Indeed, ministers regularly tell their congregations that God's Laws were nailed to the Cross and we don't have to worry about them any more.

But, God will not put up with this evil forever. He gives us the example beginning in Jer 7:14 where He says that

He will do to us as He did to Shiloh.

We all know that the prophet Eli had not taught his children well and had not kept an eye on what they were doing, which was perverting the Way of God by stealing from God and engaging in illicit sexual practices with women who came to the temple. As a result, God wiped out Shiloh after the Ark was taken, killing as a result Hophni and Phinehas, and causing Eli to fall and break his neck, then die. For the purpose of this discussion, it is important to take note that the evil ones were killed and the area destroyed.

But, it is not too late to petition God to grant us repentance. We read in 2Chronicles 7:14 *If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.* This means that if we will repent and seek God's will in our lives nationally then God will hear us, forgive us, and heal our nation.

James, the brother of Jesus, tells us in Jas 5:16 *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.* Our prayers for our nation could be the only thing that prevents God from allowing the curses of destruction and national captivity to take place. Those are curses this nation richly deserves with its corruption and promotion of the murder of our babies. But, we can still repent as a nation, and come to a revival of our love and obedience to the precepts established by God in His Word.

But, if not, we are told in 1Corinthians 7:14 *For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.* We and our mates and children will be set aside for God's holy purpose.

It is time to cry aloud and spare not, to tell God's people their sins, because the destruction warned by God is not far in the future if this nation does not repent. We need to be praying that God will grant us national repentance because nobody wants to see what God warned would happen actually come to pass.



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# The Quartodeciman Controversy (Part 1)

*Kelly McDonald, Jr.*

Why do most Christians today observe a celebration called Easter when it is not found in the Bible? Also, how come most Christians today do not celebrate Passover when it is found in the Bible? The answer to these questions takes us back many centuries to the early days of Christian history. This subject had a great influence on the seventh-day Sabbath.

In the New Testament, we learn that Jesus kept Passover (also called Pascha) on the 14th of Nisan. He taught the disciples to commemorate His suffering and death on this day (Luke 22:14-17; Matthew 26:26-28). This instruction was followed by the early disciples (see Acts 20:6, I Cor. 5:6-8, I Cor. 11:17-32 for some examples). Remembering the death of Jesus on Passover was of major importance to early Christians.

In the second century, a shift occurred. Seven factors converged which transformed Christian attitudes on this subject: the death of the Apostles; persecution; anti-Semitism; the destruction of Jerusalem in 135 AD; heresy; syncretism; and allegorizing Scripture. Of these developments, the destruction of Jerusalem was mentioned by other ancient writers as an important marker on this subject. Epiphanius was the bishop of Salamis in the mid to late fourth century. He wrote the following about this subject:

“For they choose to celebrate the Passover with the Jews...And indeed, < it is true > that this used to be the church’s custom...each is found writing to the other and quarreling, and down to our own day. This has been the situation ever since was thrown into disorder after the time of the circumcised bishops...” (Panarion, 70.9.1-2, 9, Translated by Frank Williams).

Epiphanius remarked that the removal of the Jewish people from Jerusalem was a significant beginning point in Christians moving away from Passover. Why might this be? In the book of Acts, we learn that Jerusalem was the headquarters of Christianity (Acts 1:4-8, 11:1-2, 11:19-22, 11:26-27, 12:24-25, 13:13, 15:2, 16:4, and Gal. 2:1-2). When the Jewish bishops, who traced their lineage to the first Apostles, were removed, it caused confusion as to Christian practice. Eusebius attested that these bishops held the knowledge of Christ in purity, but the ones after them did not (Church History, 4.5.2). Passover was the first

practice impacted.

The dispute concerning when and how to keep Passover was called the Quartodeciman Controversy (Quartodeciman means ‘fourteenths’). In ancient times, there were three main phases to it. The first one, which I label ‘The Controversy Begins’ has four main episodes which all occur in the first century. In this article, we will review them.

## Polycarp Visits Rome

The first major episode in the controversy occurred in about 155 AD. At this time, the Bishop of Rome, Anicetus, refused to celebrate Passover. This news greatly disturbed Polycarp who was the disciple of the Apostle John and appointed by him and other Apostles to be the Bishop of Smyrna. He continued to hold to the example of Jesus and the early disciples in observing Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan.

Polycarp traveled to Rome to convince Anicetus to continue with the Scriptural reckoning for Passover. Eusebius, a fourth century chronicler, tells us about this event:

“At this time, while Anicetus was at the head of the church of Rome, Irenaeus relates that Polycarp, who was still alive, was at Rome, and that he had a conference with Anicetus on a question concerning the day of the paschal feast...” (Eusebius, Church History, 4.14.1-7).

“And when the blessed Polycarp was at Rome in the time of Anicetus, and they disagreed a little about certain other things, they immediately made peace with one another, not caring to quarrel over the matter. For neither could Anicetus persuade Polycarp not to observe what he had always observed with John the disciple of our Lord, and the other apostles with whom he had associated; neither could Polycarp persuade Anicetus to observe it, as he said that he ought to follow the customs of the presbyters that had preceded him...” (ibid, 5.24.16-17; emphasis mine).

Essentially, the issue between Polycarp and Anticetus came to a standstill. Polycarp could not convince Anticetus to celebrate Passover the proper way as he received it from the first Apostles, and Anticetus could not convince Polycarp to change. Anticetus followed the traditions of men whereas Polycarp followed the

example of Jesus.

Polycarp had greater standing to maintain his view than did the bishop of Rome. He was taught by the first Apostles. On the other hand, Anicetus was the 10th or 11th bishop of Rome from the time of the first disciples. During the tenure of Anicetus, heretical teachings were rampant.

Irenaeus, who was a hearer of Polycarp, attested that the tenure of Anicetus was a prosperous time for heretical teachers. In fact, this was a second reason that Polycarp went to Rome (Against Heresies, 3.3.4, 3.4.3). He confronted their false doctrines and turned many back to the faith! Anicetus' Paschal views were influenced by these gnostic views. We will review these false teachers in some future articles.

God preserved Polycarp, who was taught by the disciple who leaned on the Lord's chest during Passover, to stand up for truth in that time. Only God could have known about this issue before it occurred and prepared a witness for the dispute. Anicetus' decision would bring about a controversy that would last for centuries to come.

### **The Dispute in Laodicea**

About a decade after this event, another dispute about Pascha arose in the province of Asia. The chronicler Eusebius described the situation:

“In those days also Melito, bishop of the parish in Sardis, and Apollinarius, bishop of Hierapolis, enjoyed great distinction... The following works of these writers have come to our knowledge. Of Melito, the two books On the Passover... In the books On the Passover he indicates the time at which he wrote, beginning with these words: “While Servilius Paulus (Sergius Paulus) was proconsul of Asia, at the time when Sagaris suffered martyrdom, there arose in Laodicea a great strife concerning the Passover, which fell according to rule in those days; and these were written...” (ibid, 4.26.1-4; emphasis mine).

Eusebius does not quote much from Melito's work. In a later episode of this controversy, Melito is listed among the Quartodeciman teachers. It appears that the nature of the conflict in Asia concerning Pascha was serious. This episode introduced a new paradigm where Christian leaders composed literature to defend or clarify their view on Pascha. For instance, Melito composed two works on the subject (one of which was republished in the mid-nineteenth century). It was followed by others such as Clement of Alexandria.

Another church leader from this time mentioned by Eusebius was Claudius Apollinarius. He served as the bishop of Hierapolis, a city close to Laodicea, between 160-180 AD. He also composed a work On Pascha. Claudius thought that Jesus died on the four-

teenth of Nisan and used the gospels (plural) to support this view. He refuted the arguments of those who thought Jesus died on the fifteenth of Nisan.

In this episode, we learn that believers developed different views about the chronology of events at the end of Jesus life. Due to the limited amount of material, it is not clear how or if these differing views affected their Paschal practice.

### **Controversy in Rome**

Eleutherus was the bishop of Rome from 174-189 AD. During his tenure, Quartodeciman Christians worked to convince others in Rome to return to the example of Jesus and observe Passover. Among the leaders of this movement was a man named Blastus.

In Pseudo-Tertullian we learn: “In addition to all these, there is likewise Blastus, who would latently introduce Judaism. For he says the Passover is not to be kept otherwise than according to the law of Moses, on the fourteenth of the month...” (Against all Heresies, 8)

Immigration from east to west was very common in the ancient world. The Quartodeciman Christians who immigrated and settled near Rome likely maintained their native practice. Blastus and others could have fallen in this category. According to Eusebius, he had a significant following (Church History, 5.15.1, 5.20.1).

To our knowledge, Blastus only differed from Rome in the Quartodeciman practice. His movement must have been influential because the well-known bishop Irenaeus wrote a letter to counter his efforts. We do not possess much information about this episode in the controversy.

### **Victor and Polycrates**

Not long after these events, the fourth episode of the Quartodeciman Controversy occurred. In the 190s AD, a disagreement occurred between Polycrates, the bishop of Ephesus, and Victor, the bishop of Rome.

Eusebius wrote: “A question of no small importance arose at that time. For the parishes of all Asia, as from an older tradition, held that the fourteenth day of the moon, on which day the Jews were commanded to sacrifice the lamb, should be observed as the feast of the Saviour's Passover...” (ibid, 5.23.1; emphasis mine).

All the parishes of Asia maintained the practice passed on to them from John. This means the previous episode in Laodicea did not disrupt the region as a Quartodeciman stronghold. Eusebius, a pro-Roman Church writer, admitted that the Asian practice was older than the practice of Rome. And it certainly was not just a tradition, but truth rooted in Scripture and the example of Jesus. Polycrates wrote a letter to Vic-

tor to defend his practice of Passover; it was preserved by Eusebius and an excerpt is located below:

“We observe the exact day; neither adding, nor taking away. For in Asia also great lights have fallen asleep, which shall rise again on the day of the Lord’s coming... All these observed the fourteenth day of the passover according to the Gospel, deviating in no respect, but following the rule of faith... And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven. I, therefore, brethren, who have lived sixty-five years in the Lord, and have met with the brethren throughout the world, and have gone through every Holy Scripture, am not affrighted by terrifying words. For those greater than I have said ‘We ought to obey God rather than man’ [Acts 5:29] ... I could mention the bishops who were present, whom I summoned at your desire; whose names, should I write them, would constitute a great multitude. And they, beholding my littleness, gave their consent to the letter, knowing that I did not bear my gray hairs in vain, but had always governed my life by the Lord Jesus” (ibid, 5.24.1-8; emphasis mine).

Polycrates cited that he and his relatives also celebrated the day of removing leaven (a reference to removing leaven before the feast of unleavened bread). Those that celebrated Passover on the 14th of Nisan had tremendous support – Polycrates said that ‘a great multitude’ supported him.

The Bishop of Rome, Victor, would have none of this! He tried to excommunicate the Eastern churches. This move was an attempt to separate the two groups from each other. Other Christian bishops did not approve of Victor’s actions. They sent letters to rebuke him for this move. It was likely viewed as a power grab or an attempt to denigrate the churches of the East (ibid, 5.24.9-10).

The bishop of Lyons, Irenaeus, also disagreed with Victor. He sent a scathing letter to Victor where he listed the previous Roman bishops who did not keep Passover. He wrote: “Among these were the presbyters before Soter, who presided over the church which you now rule. We mean Anicetus, and Pius, and Hyginus, and Telesphorus, and Xystus. They neither observed it themselves, nor did they permit those after them to do so...” (ibid, 5.24.14-15; emphasis mine).

The list of these bishops did not date to the time of the early Apostles, but instead to a man named Xystus (also called Sixtus). He was one of the Roman bishops during the reign of the Roman Emperor Hadrian. As reviewed earlier, this was the time when confusion about Passover started.

In the writings on this subject, none of the bishops of Rome appealed to Peter or Paul as a reason to abstain from keeping Passover. And they could not use their writings or example. Peter kept Passover with Jesus.



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proclaiming the Love of God  
and of His Son, continues to  
seek the Godly goal of recon-  
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Paul instructed the Corinthians to observe it (I Cor. 5:6-8). Therefore, the practice of Rome at that time was not even Apostolic in its claim.

In part one of this article, we have reviewed the major events from the beginning stages of the Quartodeciman Controversy. The Roman Church was influenced by outside teachers, such as Gnostics, and they adopted an alternative practice concerning Pascha. Their fight to maintain this new belief was an uphill battle. They were routinely contested by Christians both near and far who held to the Biblical practice. Christians in the East tended to stick with the Quartodeciman practice.

We will continue this discussion in the next edition of The Sabbath Sentinel magazine!

To read about this subject in even more depth, download our free book "The Quartodeciman Controversy" from [www.sabbathsentinel.org](http://www.sabbathsentinel.org) (Free Resources Page).

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# THE BIBLE AND NUCLEAR WAR IN THE END TIMES

Tommy Willis

Just this year, some military experts are telling us that we are in danger of having a nuclear war. Admiral Charles Richard was one of those; he said there is a “real possibility of nuclear war with Russia and China.” Others have been voicing their concern. Plague and economic collapse have been on our minds with the Coronavirus; but the global pandemic that has killed more Americans than the deadly Spanish Flu of 1918, will be the least of our problems if nuclear war breaks out.

We should not be surprised about our military leaders telling us of this danger of nuclear war. Part of the problem is that we have heard it so long now, that it doesn’t shock us anymore. I remember in the early 60’s when people were building bunkers because the Cuban missile crises had many concerned. Both India and Pakistan have nuclear weapons; and experts say just a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan would place the entire planet in jeopardy! They came close to war once before in 2019.

Many try to discredit the Bible in this modern society; but certain prophecies have a chilling way of staying relevant. What many call “The Coming Apocalypse,” some Bible students feel are prophecies containing predictions that sound like nuclear war. Will society collapse?

I could go on with the military leaders voicing their concerns; but with this short paper, I would like to focus on what often happens to the mind when one thinks of nuclear war.

When we relate to nuclear war, we get down to the “nitty gritty” of it all. It relates to Paul’s words in 2 Cor 1:8-19: *“We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.”* NIV

Here Paul tells us that the trials were so bad that they realized there was nothing they could do to save themselves—and this was good, because then they learned to place all their troubles in God’s hands.

Therefore, we don’t need to have a “nuclear catastrophe” to have us see this. By using it as a guideline, it helps the mind get down to some of our most basic problems of life, one of which is that we are all going to die soon. It’s a mindset the Bible tells us about, that our life is just like a mist that is soon gone.

*“We blossom like a flower and then wither. Like a passing shadow, we quickly disappear.”* (Job 14:2) NLT.

*“Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.”* (James 4:14) NIV.

We make our plans, but don’t even know what tomorrow will bring as the above Scripture says.

As Christians, we need to keep in mind the above Scriptures with Paul telling us how severe trials helped them draw closer to God—to rely on Him and not ourselves. If God allows it to come upon us, then He sees we need it. This will help us not become offended at the suffering that God allows to come our way. The Bible tells us that even Jesus learned obedience by what He suffered.

*“Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him”* (Heb 5:8-9) NIV.

When I read the above scripture, it tugs at my heart. I think of Jesus struggle in the garden of gethsemane. This word means “oil press” or pressed out oil.

Here we see our savior in agony. He never sinned, but He did have the struggle with his flesh. He said not my will but Yours—showing the last bit of self will was pressed out of Him, he was pressed so badly that he sweated blood! He was made perfect for us by suffering!

After He left the garden—it was in this perfect state he was crucified for us—so that we can now have that perfect life in us to overcome with!

Our beloved Elder Brother wanted to work it out some other way—and asked God to be relieved of His torment. This reminds me of Paul crying out three times to be relieved of his thorn; but he had to learn to suffer—just like our Savior did.

O how God has used these examples of Paul with his thorn with the physical ailments to help me with my health problems. I have had ailments since I was 19 years old and now I’m 71. God is probably keeping me alive; I never thought I would live this long. I thank God for these biblical lessons. God has taught me from these ailments, and I would never trade a healthy body for what I have learned. God has used them to help me see more of Christ!

He learned obedience by the suffering in the garden also. Christ had the last bit of self will pressed out of Him, and He became the perfect will of God. In this perfect state he was impaled for us!



# THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE

# & THE TREE OF LIFE

*Daniel Botkin*

## TWO TREES

God planted a garden eastward in Eden. In this garden were various kinds of trees, but two specific trees were singled out from all the others: *“the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil”* (Gen. 2:9).

God told Adam not to eat from the tree of knowledge and warned him that eating from this tree would cause him to die. Adam and Eve ate from this tree and died. Had they eaten from the tree of life instead of the tree of knowledge, they would have lived forever and would still be alive today.

## AN ALLEGORY

The story of these two trees is a true story. It records events as they really happened. However, the story of these two trees is meant to teach us more than just a history lesson that explains where humans came from and how sin and death came upon the human race. Without denying the literal, historical truth of the story, we can view the story of these two trees as an allegory, just as Paul viewed the story of Hagar and Sarah as an allegory of two covenants, two mountains, and two Jerusalems, without denying the literal, historical truth of the story of Hagar and Sarah. (See Galatians 4:22-26.)

Fruit trees produce fruit “after their kind.” If you plant an apple tree, that tree will produce apples, not apricots. If you plant a peach tree, that tree will produce peaches, not pears. If you plant a walnut tree, that tree will produce walnuts, not watermelons. If you plant a Christmas tree, that tree will produce pinecones, not presents. (Sorry, Christmas celebrators!)

Because every tree produces and provides after its own kind, we can say that the tree of life provides life, and the tree of knowledge provides knowledge. Adam and Eve had a choice: to eat from the tree of life, or from the tree of knowledge. Every day we each have that same choice. Which tree are you feeding on, spiritually speaking? The tree of life or the tree of knowledge?

## WHAT’S WRONG WITH KNOWLEDGE?

What’s wrong with knowledge? Knowledge is good, isn’t it? The Book of Proverbs praises knowledge. It says “fools hate knowledge” and urges us to “cry after knowledge” and says that “knowledge is pleasant to the soul.” It sounds like knowledge is a good thing, not a bad thing.

Knowledge of things that are true and right is good, but only when that knowledge is accompanied by wisdom, love, and humility. Without wisdom, love, and humility, *“knowledge puffeth up”* (1 Cor. 8:1). It inflates your ego and turns you into a proud, arrogant “Mr. (or Ms.) Know-it-all.” If you want to see some disgusting demonstrations of this, just look at some of the theological debates on Facebook. You will see Messianic Mr. Know-it-alls and Ms. Know-it-alls all over the internet. (Thanks, Al Gore!)

## QUESTIONS

The subject of Adam and Eve and good and evil raises several questions. Before the Temptation and Fall, were Adam and Eve good, or evil, or neither? Some people say neither. But Genesis 1:31 says that at the end of the six days of creation, *“God saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good.”*

Every thing that God had made included Adam and Eve. Therefore in some sense Adam and Eve were very good. They were very good as creatures created by God, but were they good in a moral sense? If they were good in a moral sense, it seems unlikely that they would have sinned. On the other hand, if we say that sinning is proof that a person is evil, then we end up saying that God created two evil people, which would contradict Genesis 1:31, which says that every thing God created was “very good.”

Another question is whether or not Adam and Eve understood the concepts of good and evil before they sinned. We know that they had some sort of idea about the concept of “good,” because before she sinned, *“the woman saw that the tree [of knowledge] was good for food”* (Gen. 3:6). Therefore before the Fall, Adam and Eve had some kind of understanding of “good.” But did they understand the concept of evil? Did they realize that obeying God is good and

right, and that disobeying God is evil and wrong?

If we think of the knowledge of good and evil as nothing more than knowing about the concept of right versus wrong, i.e., knowing that obedience is good and right, while disobedience is evil and wrong, this raises another question: Why wouldn't God want them to know this? If God wanted obedience, why wouldn't He want them to understand the knowledge of good and evil? Why wouldn't He want them to understand that obedience is good and disobedience is evil?

I believe the answer to that question lies in the realization that the Tempter was offering them something far more sinister than merely an understanding of the concept of good and evil.

#### **THE REAL TEMPTATION: TO BE LIKE ELOHIM**

The Tempter told Eve “*ye shall be as gods [elohim], knowing good and evil.*” Just understanding the concept of good and evil does not make us like God. The only way the knowledge of good and evil can make us like God is if we decide for ourselves which things are good and which things are evil.

This is what the Tempter urged them to do, and this is what he still urges people to do. He urges people to decide for themselves, based on their own personal preferences and desires and wishful thinking, which ideas and actions are “good” and which ideas and actions are “evil.” People who decide for themselves what is good and what is evil, instead of letting God declare which things are good and which things are evil, are usurping God's authority and being a god unto themselves. They are following in the footsteps of Lucifer, who initiated his rebellion when he said, “*I will be like the most High*” (Isa. 14:14).

#### **EATING FROM THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE**

Eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is deciding for yourself which ideas and actions are good and which ideas and actions are evil, and ignoring or defying what God has said in His Word about those ideas and actions.

Unfortunately, it is not just unbelievers who do this. Many Bible believers also do it. How many times have you heard Bible believing Christians respond to Bible commandments with statements like the following:

“I don't feel convicted by the Spirit to do that.”

“That doesn't seem important to me, so it's probably not important to God.”

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“Most Christians don’t do that now, so God must not expect us to do it anymore.”

“I don’t understand why God would say to not do certain things. I see no logical reason why God would give those commands. I’ll obey the commandments that make sense to me, but I’m not going to obey commandments that don’t seem logical to me.”

That is the carnal man, the natural man talking. *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor. 2:14).

The natural man views the world through his five natural senses. He bases his conclusions on those things he can see, or hear, or touch, or taste, or smell. The natural man thinks with a carnal mind. Why is it wrong to think with a carnal mind? *“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Rom. 8:7).

Here is something for antinomian (anti-Torah) Christians to ponder. If the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, then we can conclude that the spiritual mind will be subject to the law of God. We are not “under the law” (i.e., not under the condemnation of the law), but if you think you are not subject to the law of God, then you are thinking with a carnal mind.

Thinking with a carnal mind and deciding for yourself what is good and what is evil is eating from the tree of knowledge, and it will lead to death, *“for to be carnally minded is death”* (Rom. 8:6a). Thinking with a spiritual mind and letting God declare what is good and what is evil, and submitting to His authority, is eating from the tree of life, and will lead to life and peace, because *“to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:6b).

Those who decide for themselves what is good and what is evil are usurping God’s authority. God is the One who has the authority to declare what is good and what is evil, what is right and what is wrong.

It does not matter if you personally “don’t feel convicted by the Spirit to do that.” It does not matter if you personally “don’t think it seems important.” It does not matter if “most Christians don’t do that now.” It does not matter if you personally “don’t see any logical reason for that commandment.”

Adam and Eve could have said, “I see no logical reason

why God would plant that tree of knowledge here, a tree that is ‘good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desired to make one wise,’ and then tell us to not eat from it. Why would God put such a tree here and tell us not to eat from it? It makes no sense.”

The carnal mind *“is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Rom. 8:7b). As long as you think with a carnal mind, you can never be subject to the law of God. But if you start thinking with a spiritual mind, you will be subject to the law of God and enjoy the life and peace which that subjection brings, because *“to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:6b).

When you think about the law of God, the Torah, which mind are you thinking with? The carnal mind or the spiritual mind? The answer to that question will reveal whether you are eating from the tree of life or from the tree of knowledge.

### **COMMANDMENTS OF THE LAW: MORAL, CIVIL, & CEREMONIAL?**

When Christians talk about the commandments of God in the Torah, they often say something like the following:

“The commandments of the law are in three categories: moral, civil, and ceremonial. God still expects us to obey the moral laws of the Old Testament, but not the civil and ceremonial laws.”

To the natural, carnal mind, that might make sense. But if it were true, who gets to decide which God-given commandments are moral and binding, and which commandments are civil or ceremonial and not binding? Who has the authority to make that decision, and on what basis do they make their decision? What exactly makes a law “ceremonial”? Some Christians think the dietary laws were ceremonial, but abstaining from pork and shellfish does not involve any sort of ceremony. All you do is quit eating that stuff, without performing a ceremony. Many other commandments that Christians call “ceremonial” do not involve any sort of ceremony. The word “ceremonial” is not even anywhere in the entire Bible, at least not in the KJV.

This oft-repeated claim that God’s commandments are categorized as moral, civil, and ceremonial is a claim that is made without any Biblical proof. The Bible nowhere categorizes the commandments of the Torah this way. However, the Bible does categorize the commandments into three distinct groups, but they are not moral, civil, and ceremonial. I wrote about this in the very first issue of Gates of

Eden, way back in 1995. I do not want to reprint the entire article here, but I will briefly summarize it and add a bit more information. You can read the entire article at [gatesofeden.online](http://gatesofeden.online) in the teachings archives in GOE 1-1, May 1995.

TORAH:

### MISHPATIM, EDOT, & CHUKIM

The Torah itself lists three separate categories of commandments. The threefold categorization is in Deuteronomy 4:44f:

*“And this is the law [torah] which Moses set before the children of Israel. These are the testimonies [edot], and the statutes [chukim], and the judgments [mishpatim], which Moses spake unto the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt.”*

We see in this passage three types of commandments: mishpatim, the plural of mishpat (“judgment”); edot, the plural of ed (“testimony”); chukim, the plural of chok (“statute”). The differences between these three types of commandments are not based on morality, civics, or ceremonies. The differences are based on the reasons each of these three kinds of commandments were given.

#### MISHPATIM

The mishpatim are commandments such as the prohibition of things like murder, rape, robbery, etc. The mishpatim are called “judgments” in English, because anyone with good judgment can see that the reason for these commandments is obvious. People with good judgment do not scratch their heads and wonder why God forbids things like murder, rape, robbery, etc. God does not need to explain the reason for these commandments, because the reason is obvious.

#### EDOT

For some commandments, the reason is not obvious, but the reason is stated. These commandments are called edot, “testimonies,” because they testify of something. For example:

The reason to keep the Sabbath on the seventh day, and not on some other day, is not obvious, but it is explained. *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy... the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God...”*

Why the seventh day? *“For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the*

*sabbath day, and hallowed it”* (Ex. 20:8-11).

The Sabbath command is one of the edot/“testimonies.” The reason to honor the seventh day, and not some other day, is not obvious, but it is explained. The Sabbath gives a weekly testimony that man and the universe did not come into existence by evolution. God is the One who created man and the universe.

The annual feasts of Leviticus 23 likewise testify of God’s acts in history, both past and future. The spring feasts testify that Messiah came, and the fall feasts testify that He will come again.

The commandment to wear fringes with a strand of blue is also one of the edot. The reason is not obvious, but it is stated: *“that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a-whoring”* (Num. 15:39).

#### CHUKIM

The chukim, the “statutes,” are commandments for which the reason is neither obvious nor stated. These are commandments that God gives for reasons known only to Him. He gives these commandments with no explanation of why. The natural man sees no obvious reason for these commands, so they seem illogical or even foolish to him.

Do not eat pork, or shellfish, or a kid cooked in its mother’s milk. “Why not?” the natural man asks. “What’s wrong with that? Why would God care if we eat those things?”

Do not worship God by using methods borrowed from heathen idol worship. “Why not?” the natural man asks. “The heathens have some pretty cool traditions that we can Christianize and use to glorify God.”

Do not wear a garment made of wool and linen woven together. A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

“Why not?” the natural man says. “So what if I get a thrill from wearing women’s underwear? I’m not hurting anyone. Nobody even sees it.”

“Yes, why not?” asks the natural woman. “If I want to wear pants like a man, what’s wrong with that?”

Because people see no obvious reason for the chukim, and because God does not reveal the reason, these are the commandments that get the most resistance from people who

think with their carnal mind. They do not see why it matters to God, because they are thinking with their carnal mind, and the carnal mind *“is not subject to the law of God”* (Rom. 8:7), and *“the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Cor. 2:14).

### “LEGALISM!”

Some Christians confuse obedience with legalism. Obedience is not legalism. Obedience is showing our love for God, as it is written, *“For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous”* (1 John. 5:3).

When I hear accusations of legalism, I point out that the words legalism, legalist, and legalistic are not even in the Bible, at least not in the KJV. According to my Webster’s Dictionary, the oldest known use of these three words was around 1864. In the long history of the English language, these words are fairly new additions to our language.

If I am accused by someone of being a legalist, I want to say, “If I am a legalist, what does that make you? An illegalist?”

When Paul wrote about good soldiers of Jesus Christ being rewarded (“crowned”) for their service, he said a man *“is not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Tim. 2:5). If you want to be rewarded for serving the Lord, you must serve Him within the boundaries of His laws.

### ALM: “ALL LAWS MATTER”

The chukim are often not the weightier matters of the law, but all God-given laws matter. Furthermore, our obedience to the chukim reveals how much we really trust God. When we obey commandments that seem illogical or even foolish to the natural man, we are showing that we trust God’s wisdom. We believe our Father knows what He is doing. He knows what is best for us, even if we do not know the reasons for certain commandments. He has a good reason for every commandment He gives, and He is not required to reveal that reason to us.

If you are resisting the chukim or any other commandments, you are eating from the tree of knowledge. You are deciding for yourself what is good and evil, what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and unacceptable. Stop eating from the tree of knowledge and start eating from the tree of life. Accept God’s authority in your life, even when you do not understand the reason for some of His commandments. Stop thinking with your natural mind, and start thinking with your spiritual mind, because *“to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Rom. 8:6). q



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# "THEIR GODS"

*DJ Wellington*

This phrase, "THEIR GODS," has struck me on numerous occasions when reading the Scriptures. It seems to indicate many "mighty ones," doesn't it—I mean just by the wording? We know it says in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6: *Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God [sic] but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us there is one God [sic], the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Master Yahushua Messiah, through whom are all things, and through whom we live.*

Without going into a lot of detail that would take away from the subject matter, this above verse confirms there is "only one true 'Elohim'" just like it says in Deuteronomy 4:35, confirmed by the Messiah in John 17:3. If you understand that there could be NO other mighty ones unless the Father created them and/or gave authority to them, all these verses harmonize. To believe otherwise, the Scriptures quoted seem confusing and/or contradictory.

So, when I did a search on this phrase, what an eye-opener it was! The phrase appears 32- 34 times (depending upon which version you are using) and is always negative! Now if you are using a "Sacred Name" version which puts the Hebrew word "elohim" instead of the translation, it will appear in roughly 102 verses and will include references to our Heavenly Father as well, so there will be positive and negative uses. I want to focus on the 32-34 times it is used in a negative sense.

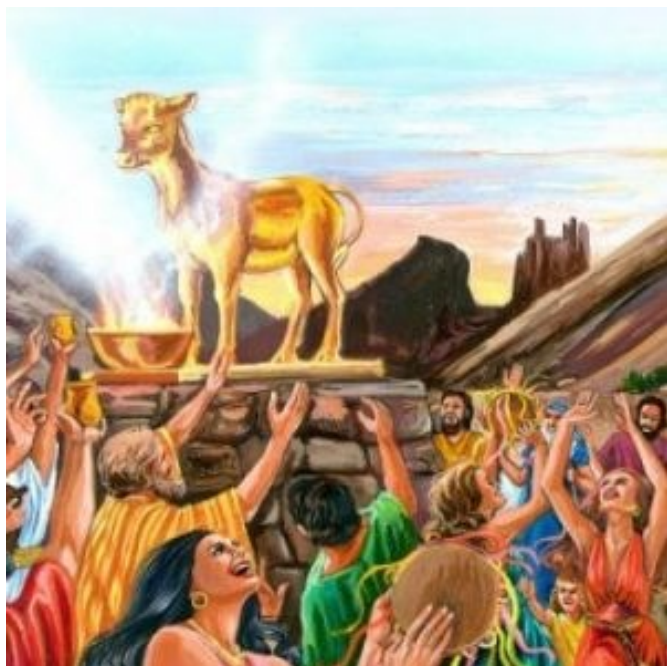
The word used in most of the verses is Strong's #430, "elohim," and refers to rulers, judges, divine ones and, perhaps, refers to anything we "make" as a divine one. For instance, Yahushua said in Luke

16:13 that, *You cannot serve Yahuweh and mammon [money].* If Messiah recognized folks were "serving" money/riches, would that not make it an "idol?" What or who else could mankind be "serving?" Think about this one. How about sons and daughters; putting their wants and desires above what the Scriptures say? If we put anything above our Heavenly Father, wouldn't that be an idol?

One of my personal difficulties with modern day social media is that so many become obsessed with it; checking it many times a day. What if they read their Bibles as often as they checked their social media accounts? Wow, what a difference it could make in their lives.

So, now, let's look at some of these verses pertaining to "their gods" as they appear in the New American Standard. Keep in mind more modern examples of "idols" as opposed to the carved images of wood or metal deities set up. For space considerations, many will just be cited for you to look up in your own Scriptures and they are in the order of appearance for simplicity.

Exodus 23:24. Exodus 23:32-33: *You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.*" NOTE: Read 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 about being unequally yoked? Exodus 34:15-16: *lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they play the harlot with their gods and make sacrifice to their gods, and one of them invites you and you eat of his sacrifice, and you take of his daughters for your sons, and his daughters play the harlot with their gods and make your sons play the harlot with their gods.* Numbers 25:2; 33:4. Deuteronomy 7:16; 7:25; 12:2-3. Deuteronomy 12:30-31: *take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to*



*follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise.' You shall not worship YAHUWEH your Elohim in that way; for every abomination to YAHUWEH which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.*

NOTE: Consider here the “holidays” that the world observes today which started in paganism, such as Ishtar and Saturnalia.... Deuteronomy 20:18; 32:37. Joshua 23:7: *and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them,* NOTE: Although we can avoid the mention of pagan deities in our worship, it is very difficult never to “make mention” of them considering even most of the days of the week are NAMED after pagan deities! Judges 2:3; 3:6; 2 Samuel 7:23. 1 Kings 11:2: from the nations of whom YAHUWEH had said to the children of Israel, "*You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.*" Solomon clung to these in love. NOTE: Have you noticed how this happens where one spouse ends up turning the other from truth? 1 Kings 11:8, 20:23. 2

Kings 19:18: *and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them.* NOTE: Much are the idols of today, right...”work of men’s hands?” 1 Chronicles 10:10; 14:12. Isaiah 37:19: *and have cast their gods into the fire; for they were not gods, but the work of men's hands—wood and stone. Therefore they destroyed them.* NOTE: It is worth repeating here.... Jeremiah 46:25. Daniel 11:8. Although the phrase “their gods” does not appear in the so-called new testament, there are three verses which do address the issue and they are: Acts 19:26: "*You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods.* NOTE: Imagine that! 1 Corinthians 8:5: *For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords,* Galatians 4:8: *However at that time, when you did not know YAHUWEH, you were slaves to those which by nature are no gods.* NOTE: You may recall this verse as being one NOT read to supposedly “prove” verse 10 which is referring to the set-apart days (Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Weeks, Feast of Tabernacles) when, in fact, it refers to the pagan days of worship which becomes clear when verse 8 is included.

What I’ve concluded from this “phrase study” is that there are, in fact, “gods many and lords many,” but they are not “the only true G-d/Elohim” just as Messiah said.

He gave authority to those who were referenced even as pagan deities—they could not be so without Yahuwah giving authority! In other words, they would never exist had He not made them. You may wonder, as I, “why would our Father create ‘pagan’ deities” but that would be another topic and one I don’t think we’ll truly know the answer to until Yahushua returns! And, perhaps, not even then. Perhaps not until Yahuwah’s kingdom comes to our earth with the “New Jerusalem” (Revelation 3:12, 21:2)!



# CONTRASTING KINGDOMS: LOVE NOT THE WORLD

*Susan Johnson*

Jesus preached about the Kingdom of Heaven (AKA the Kingdom of God) as we read in the gospel of Matthew 9:35 *“And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom...”* He spoke parables about the kingdom being like unto a mustard seed or like unto a hidden treasure. He informed the believers that they should not be anxious about what they needed to sustain their physical life, because the Father knows and provides. He said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

Entering the kingdom of God should be our primary concern. Entry into that kingdom is essential for the promise of eternal life that comes through Jesus Christ. Jesus taught that the entry into the eternal life (eternal rest, immortality) requires the practice of keeping God’s Ten Commandments, Matthew 19:17. This is God’s Way. He also added that there would be a cost to the discipleship of those who would be faithful to God’s Way. And there was also tangible reward for those who obeyed God as the higher authority over the opinions of mankind.

*“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that has left house or parents or brethren or wife or children for the kingdom of God’s sake, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come life everlasting.”* Luke 18:29 and 30.

Notice Jesus said, “in the age to come.” He did NOT say when you get to heaven. In fact, Jesus informs us that no one has ascended into heaven but Himself who came down from heaven, John 3:13. God’s throne, central command or supreme rule is in heaven. (Psalm 11:4). Psalm 73:25 indicates none of our relatives are in heaven. *“The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord’s: but the earth has He given to the children of men.”* Psalm 115:16. So, the “kingdom of heaven” is to be experienced

on earth. The kingdom of heaven is the government of God ruling in the hearts of those who seek to obey Him.

In Acts 14:22 we read about Paul’s ministry *“strengthening the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.”* When do we enter? Its a spiritual born again experience as Jesus explained to Nicodemus in John 3:5-8. *“...except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.”* It starts as a seed. *“The sower sows the word.”* The ground for the seed is the heart of the receiver. The thorns are the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches and lusts of other things that enter in and choke the word. Mark 4:11-20. Worldly cares are competing with faith in God’s kingdom.

The Lord contrasted the kingdom of God with the kingdoms of the world many times. *“For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?”* (Matthew 16:26). When the brothers of Jesus told him to show Himself to the world, Jesus answered them: *“The world cannot hate you; but me it hates because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil.”* In John 18:36 the Lord said, *“My kingdom is not of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from here.”*

Entering into the kingdom of God requires us to be separate from the kingdoms of the world.

*“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and will be a Father unto you...”* 2nd Corinthians 6:17-18. This is in reference to the idolatry of the unbelieving world as verses 14-16 explain. There can be no agreement, no UNITY between those pursuing the kingdom of God with those who serve the worldly systems.

Speaking of the world systems as “Babylon,” Revelation 18:4 says *“And I heard another voice from heaven saying, ‘Come out of her My people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached into heaven and God has remembered her iniquities.’”* God’s people must separate from the world’s lies, evil practices and delusions. Even the best governments that mankind designs are prone to corruption, but God’s government leads to eternal life. We must enter into the kingdom of God.

*“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passes away and the desires thereof: but he that does the will of God abides forever.”* 1st John 2:15-17.

Some of God’s people in past ages as well as our present time turn away from God’s authority, preferring the traditions of men, making void the ten commandment law of God. They seek unity with pagan compromised people who have rejected God’s commandments. And, they immerse themselves in the cultural activities of the world.

This is spiritual unfaithfulness and therefore they are labeled in Biblical passages as “adulterers and adulteresses.” James 4:4 states: *“Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”*

The concepts of unity and separation are key issues regarding which kingdom we are in. Unity with God comes by our obedience to God’s commandments. *“And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* (Romans 12:2).

Our Lord instructs us to be in the world but not of it in John 15:18-19. He says, *“If the world hate you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world the world would love his own, but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”*

These scriptures and others clearly point out the separation and animosity that exists between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world system. These kingdoms cannot merge together in unity. There is no agreement between them as we see in 2nd Corinthians 6: 14-17 *“...what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion has light with darkness...And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God...”*

In Hebrews 3:10 God expresses grief that the people err and go astray in their heart; *“...and they have not known My ways.”* And this is the obstacle that blocks their entrance into His Rest. Verse 12 says, *“But exhort one another daily while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.”*

Hebrews 4:11 repeats the message: *“Let us labor (be diligent) therefore to enter into that rest lest any man fall after the example of unbelief.”* People will try to do it their way to impress God with virtuous deeds. It’s not that the virtuous deeds are wrong in themselves, it is just that you cannot replace obedience with a show of virtue.

In Matthew 16:27 Jesus says, *“For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels: and then He shall reward every man according to his works.”* James 2:17 says, *“...faith without works is dead,”* and in verse 18 he says *“show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.”* Compare this with what Jesus says in Matthew 7:21-23: *“Not every one that says to me, ‘Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord have we not prophesied in thy name: and in thy name have cast out demons and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me you that work lawlessness (iniquity.)”*

An example of doing God’s works contrasted with working lawlessness would be the application of the 4th commandment. Remember, Jesus told us that our entry into eternal life depends upon keeping all ten commandments. The fourth commandment concerns the keeping of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath, the memorial of God’s

creation week. There are many who have accepted a counterfeit day or worldly replacements for what God established in the beginning. This is lawlessness. Other worldly religions make up their own “holy days” or some respect no days as set apart from the others in violation of God’s command. Those of this mindset cannot know the true God and they cannot enter into God’s kingdom unless they repent. And God’s people should not merge into the worldly traditions. Those that say they know God and do not keep His commandments are liars says 1st John 2:4. They actually are worshipping they know not what even if in the name of God.

Keeping the seventh day set apart from the activities of the rest of the six days is the commandment keeper’s responsibility. Jesus said that *“the sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath.”* It is designed as a relief from labor and temporal concerns.

Certainly the Lord recognized that there are times when we are faced with having to help out in a troubled situation (the ox in the ditch) and there are some activities that we do that are necessary care taking like leading an animal to get water. Feeding the family or taking care of children or the aged in the home would also be classified as doing good on the Sabbath but not if we make it an unnecessary chore. We have a day of preparation to provide for these things ahead of time. And not if its our paid employment, because that would be outside the kingdom of God in regard to 7th day Sabbaths.

*“In it (the Sabbath) you shall not do any work, you nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant ...nor your stranger that is within your gates; that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you. Deuteronomy 5:14.*

We are to arrest our weekly labors and chores, bring them to a close in the evening of the Sabbath in order to enjoy the blessings God intended for us. Keeping the 4th commandment sets us apart from the world systems in order to enter the kingdom of God. Genesis 2:1-3 tells us God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart from other purposes). It is a day of rejuvenation, healing, refreshment and expressions of thanksgiving and uni-

ty with God and His kingdom. It is a time to renew our understanding of His ways apart from the worldly ways. Therefore the 7th day is to be separated from distracting worldly amusements and pursuits.

The Sabbath rest separates God’s people from the world, and demonstrates faithfulness to God and rejection of many activities that the world holds in high esteem: buying, selling, auctions, festivals, fairs, sporting activities, political rallies, entertainment schedules and many other human events that do not observe God’s 4th commandment.

What about virtuous events such as a “March for Life,” or protest against war, or money raising for charitable causes frequently planned for Sabbath days? When there is a dilemma of choice between honoring God’s 4th commandment or attending operations on Sabbath days held in the name of charity or benefits for children, feeding the hungry, etc., this becomes a deliberate snare for God’s people. It is a trial of faith. Those who are faithful to God’s kingdom will have confidence in obeying God rather than giving in to emotional persuasions of other causes set up on Sabbath days. God’s law is not to be compromised by worldly events or pleasures or what appears to be a virtuous event that disregards God’s commandment on Sabbath days for rest from these concerns. Perhaps some of these concerns are more political and even globalist motivated—and probably more socially engineered than what appears, worldly. And when it comes to feeding the hungry or clothing the naked, yes, Christ instructs us to be compassionate when we are confronted with such legitimate needs even on a Sabbath, of course. We also know that impoverished people need to trust in God and turn to Him spiritually to provide for their own individual lives. God provides the ways and the means for his people. We are instructed to work to earn our daily bread; to be of some service to others that is worthy of a fair wage.

*“I have been young and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed (descendants) begging bread.” Psalm 37:25.*

What impoverished people really need is to repent from sin, turn to Christ as their savior and come out of the worldly systems and traditions of men.

They are in fear of men because they do not know GOD. Besides physical food, there must be a desire for spiritual food (right thinking), to be guided and encouraged in a life path God's way. Many do not want to know God. In these cases dependence upon charitable giving leads to worldliness (dependence upon humans, the state, corporate religion or anything unregenerate humans devise that becomes an idol in the mind). This is what leads to enslaving welfare and tax systems. God is the God "which brought you out of the house of bondage..." (True Liberty!). It is God who saves us and God who provides the opportunities for righteousness in work and rest for those who will obey his commandments: that includes "Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work..." in the 4th commandment. And it includes not coveting what belongs to others (instruction of the 10th commandment) and not stealing (8th commandment), so as not to become degraded as a slave. Any service in God's kingdom is uplifting and liberating, but slavery or dependency upon humanly devised idolatry (kingdoms of the world, new world order, etc) is degenerating. We can depend upon God's Word in the Bible as trustworthy. No matter what we must endure, we have His promise of uplifting reward for serving Him, upholding His commandments. "...but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." Mark 13:13

Isaiah 58:1—14, indicates that it is better for us to obey God than pursue friendship with the world, or try to achieve approval of men, social status or respect of persons (refer to Acts 10:34 and James 2:8 and 9). The reward of faithfulness to God's commandments is eternal life in God's kingdom. The world can only offer a brief illusion of glory that passes away. Sporting events or sales events or political causes that seem so important to attend on 7th day Sabbaths, or to have your child participate in, years later are forgotten and amount to nothing. The temporal things are illusions, but the commandment of God leads to eternal life. "Choose ye this day whom you shall serve..." Joshua 24:15



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# Letters to the Editor

I have enjoyed the article in the July/August issue of 'TSS' by Tommy Willis on 'war and peace' as this article was a good reminder for everyone. I believe that is what the Apostle Paul was telling us in 1 Corinthians 13 that the lack of love gives way to human nature.

When you think of all the splinter groups that were formed after 'Worldwide' was taken down the faithful are all still our brethren, friends and/or family with the same goal for the kingdom, even if they may see things a little differently to some degree.

Most of these groups that I know still have love, mercy and compassion for one another as we serve the same God the same way with few exceptions. People continue to visit one another's services from time to time and come together during feast times.

The identifying sign for me is baptized Sabbatarian's observing Passover and God's sanctioned Holy Days as that person is my brother or sister in Christ. Being perfect, no one is but Jesus the Christ, however we have the same goal in mind, Philippians 3:14 NKJ - 14 *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.* It is written in Matthew 7:18 NKJ - (Jesus said) 18 *A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.*

Thus far God has not raised up an evangelist who can reunite us under one roof so to speak and may not, so we have Christ the Good Shepherd to lead us with the written word to give all of us guidance. Suffice it is to say that is a very good leadership.

Quite a number of believers have learned justice, mercy and faith and have shown acceptance to other Christian groups; this is brotherly love.

Darl Arbogast

*Thank you for your insightful letter, Darl. It is indeed an encouraging sign that brethren are reaching across corporate boundaries, no longer being intimidated by a leadership that tries to carve up the Body but instead enjoying the*

*fellowship that those of our similar mindsets brings. As you know, this is one of the goals of the BSA, to bring a kind of unity in the Spirit, but not necessarily unity of doctrine or dogma. We all understand the scriptures a little differently but the good thing is that we pick up our bibles for individual understanding of what God is saying to us.*

*As to an evangelist to unite us, I don't see that happening and don't necessarily think that such would be a good idea. Such an evangelist would be a man like we are, subject to the same temptations and limitations. Perhaps we could come together to support the Two Witnesses once the time comes?*

Ed.

I agree with your concerns about the deterioration of our rights and the rough road before us. I believe that even if the government should make all of us criminals, we will still worship the one true God. I would suspect that we will find ourselves in home churches, meeting in groups of five and ten and still keeping the Sabbath.

Thanks for your time and effort. God Bless you and all your staff that makes the Sabbath Sentinel possible.

Art Sporleder

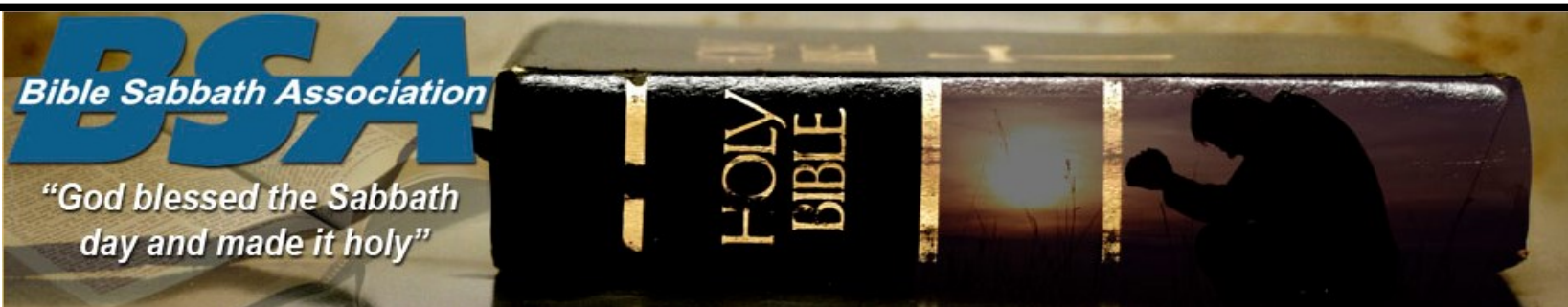
*Thank you for your kind words, Art! You probably know this already but there are a great many brethren already meeting in "house churches." As you state, this will probably become more the rule than the exception as we go along because Satan is not going to quit coming after the only lights in a dark world. We can look to the brethren in China to see our future if God does not intervene and grant this nation a repentant heart. I take great hope from God's example of the protection of Israel from the Pharaoh and fully expect that He will intervene to protect us similarly when the time comes. Sadly, for some of us, that protection will come in the form of courage in the face of martyrdom and rest in the sleep that awaits His calling.*

Ed.

# The Sabbath Sentinel

A Bi-monthly Publication of  
The Bible Sabbath Association  
PO Box 372, Stevens Point, WI 54481 USA  
Return Service Requested

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
US POSTAGE PAID  
SAN DIMAS, CA  
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