

ROAD BUMPS
ON THE
KING'S
HIGHWAY

HOLLIS VAUGHN

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As the movie finished, the credits scrolled down the screen for what seemed like an eternity. I see everything from wardrobe designer and hairdresser to stunt-men. It is no different in writing a book. I must first and foremost give honor to God our Father, Who inspired and enabled the writing of each word, from the Alpha to the Omega. That elusive word which I sought seemed to have deserted my vocabulary, the Spirit finally revealed from behind some hidden shroud.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize a host of men and women who have, over the years, woven their special blend of color and strength into this coat of many colors. Standing behind the man or woman who writes the book is a hidden host of people who never intended to be a part of any writing. I vividly recall that aging missionary in Toronto; and the equally aging translator in Bogota who had a special way becoming synchronous with my preaching and we seemed to flow as a unit; and then there was that military doctor in Germany. Each touched my life in a unique way. Each brought, to the darkness of my existence, an enduring element of strength and significant change of direction. Also, there are my sons and daughters in Christ, who over the years have kept me in prayer and searching for the Lord's answer to their questions in their journey on this King's Highway. As much as we hate change, I have earnestly entreated God to change or eradicate every vestige of my stubborn carnality.

Without the labors and encouragement of my precious wife, Y'Vonne, this book would have been a disarray of jigsaw pieces

strewn across the pages. Assembled, it hopefully creates a beautiful picture. Disbanded, it is as pieces of rope thrown to a drowning man—rope, but nevertheless, useless. There were entire chapters of this book completely deleted because she brought to my attention the fact that, perhaps, they were inappropriate for this time. The Holy Spirit has used her to sometimes stop me from a slurry of rash statements.

INTRODUCTION

As we approach the on-ramp, we notice a strange sign which in bold, red letters warns us “Rough Read Ahead.” We silently chuckle to ourselves and think; someone doesn’t know how to spell. However, it is not miss-spelled at all; it is a warning that what follows possibly will not set well with your everyday theology. It is to call your attention to some unobserved obstacles in the road. Road bumps are designed for one thing, to make you slow down and give close attention to your surroundings. You could just as easily say, “Slow Down for Detours” or “Caution Signs not Clearly Marked.” These are all common occurrences along this King’s Highway. I know people who never actually read books, only scan over the surface and pick up the general trend of thought. They then often attempt to do the same thing with the Bible. Well, you can do that or try to read it as a novel; but, you will never get anything deeper than surface truths.

God called me not to the lost and dying world, but called and sent me to the church. Each of us has our own special calling, wherein we should labor. That does not mean we will not glean other “grain” along the way. Jesus initially commanded His disciples, “...*Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” (Matt. 10:5, 6) He later said, when speaking to the Canaanite woman who was seeking help for her demon-possessed daughter, “...*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*” (Matt. 15:24) This sounds absolutely racist. However, it does not mean the rest of the world will spend eternity in hell. It

simply means, as in all harvests, there is a time to reap. The wise preacher records these words, "*There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven.*" (Eccl. 3:1) For example, you will not reap squash the same month you reap wheat or pecans. Each requires a different amount of sunlight. Although Jesus was sent to the Jews first, along the way He poured life out of His person into the needy. Although the disciples were initially forbidden to minister to the Samaritan nation, it was the first place Phillip went to preach the gospel after Pentecost.

I have wept, pleaded and thrown up my hands in despair through the years, as I plodded along the King's Highway with my wheelbarrow and shovel trying to eliminate the road bumps which if removed would make the journey smoother for whoever followed. I glance back and see a few who have followed, not many; but those few are worth the toil.

Before I even begin, I find myself in a dilemma involving the way Jesus taught. He was always saying so much more than what he apparently said. I look at the many times the Lord has spoken to me; and it has been almost without exception, in short, one sentence statements or questions. Five or six word sentences seem to be His favorite. Through the years those short declarations have spoken volumes of truth to me. I can heartily agree with those officers who came to arrest Jesus but returned empty-handed; "*...Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.*" (Jn. 7:46) He purposely spoke in an ambiguous, unclear manner in order that the casual seeker would not understand. I am struck with the conflicting testimony of Him wanting to hide the truth and me wanting to reveal all the truth I know concerning certain Scriptures. He did reveal the truth to His followers; and I am comforted by that because I am writing to the church, not the world.

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ROAD BUMP NO. 1

BACK TO BASICS

There's a familiar saying, "It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that." Regardless of the type of work one does, once you understand the basics thoroughly everything else falls more easily into place. We simply follow a sequence of events to the desired results. What appears to be the most difficult task appears simple to the man who knows the basics. The same is true of understanding much of the Bible. First, when you become knowledgeable of the cryptic language then much more will fall into place. However, we must always take into consideration the revelation of the Spirit.

Most students fail a subject because they never received a thorough understanding and never got a good grasp of the basics. Either the foundation was erroneously laid or they never understood how to build on the existing groundwork. This includes every facet of learning from reading, writing, and math to physics, chemistry, and art. Very often the flaw lies not with the teacher but with the student who has a learning disability or has not the discipline to pay attention. Usually it's the latter. They, through lack of attention, have become sidetracked by nonessentials. The apostle Paul was very careful about the blueprint which he systematically outlined. *"And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man's foundation."* (Rom. 15:20) *"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it."* (1 Cor. 3:10) I have watched

preachers take another man's "foundation" and what should have been a beautiful edifice when finished appeared as a hovel in the slums. Jesus laid the foundation. He was the corner-stone as well as the cap-stone. Men have played carelessly with the blueprint. When giving the blueprint of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, Moses was warned by God, saying, "...See to it that you make it all [exactly] according to the copy (the model,) which was shown to you on the mountain." (Heb. 8:5 AMP) Why? "[But these offer service merely as] a pattern and as a foreshadowing of [what has its true existence and reality in] the heavenly sanctuary..." (Heb. 8:5 AMP) The foundation must be correct.

Somewhere around the 1850s, a young lad sat in a Sunday School class listening to the teacher attempt to enlighten his young pupils concerning the story of King David and his initial entanglement with Bathsheba. The young lad heard the teacher read, "*Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.*" (2 Sam. 11:2) Seeing all the steep-peaked houses as he looked out of the window, the boy innocently asked the question, "How could David walk around on the roof of his house?" The teacher replied in a rather virtuous tone, "Don't argue with the Scriptures boy." The teacher in the next cubicle had heard the question and answer. He shook his head in dismay. "The correct answer should have been; with God all things are possible," he thought to himself. Of course, they both were wrong. The houses of David's time and place all had flat roofs. The gabled, steep-pitched roofs were for shedding an abundance of water and snow. In Jerusalem, where David lived they had neither an abundance of rain nor snow. Jerusalem and Tel Aviv as well as the other little villages in Israel still have few, if any, gabled houses; likewise, New Mexico and Arizona have their share of flat-roofed houses. Much of Scripture is misinterpreted or misapplied simply because we do not understand the culture or geography of that time and place.

Supposing you were suddenly stranded on some forsaken island and you met a man or a people who neither spoke nor understood one word of your language, how would you converse with them? You would draw pictures and then attempt to put words to those pictures. Many of you have been in places where, on the stone walls of caves or cliffs, there had been discovered crude drawings of elephants, bison, antelope and people. They attempted to paint with pictures a message or an event. "Discovery was made of pictographs in Arizona indicating the brilliant supernova of July 4, 1054, was observed and recorded by prehistoric American Indians." (Science News Letter) Although God left His story in many places at various times, there have been exceptionally few people who have ever known His language.

The language of ancient Egypt had been a riddle to scholars for many hundreds of years. The Rosetta stone solved the mystery. A French officer of Napoleon's engineering corps discovered it in 1799. He found the stone half buried in mud near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile River. The stone was a treasure-trove of hieroglyphics inscribed in the languages of Greek, Demotic (the popular language of Egypt at that time) and the ancient language of the Egyptians. It opened the door to understanding the hieroglyphics of many other messages hitherto unknown.

We must have keys to understanding the Scriptures. The language of God and Jesus was and is a language filled with cryptic (coded) messages. At the beginning of WW11, the United States had already broken the code of the Japanese military. It revealed to us the secrets we needed to wage a successful campaign. There is no Rosetta stone or code book for the Bible. God holds these truths in His own power. However, *"And we are setting these truths forth in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the (Holy) Spirit, combining and interpreting spiritual truths with spiritual language [to those who possess the (Holy) Spirit].* (1 Cor. 2:13 AMP) God will reveal these truths to the diligent seeker. *"It*

is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” (Pro. 25:2)

I have used the following illustration many times in the past. Suppose, even with our present-day technology, there was no way to correct a space ship in flight that had been launched from earth toward an object in space of only one light year's distance. Let us assume there had been a miscalculation in the flight pattern of only one degree. I can promise you; by the time the space ship had traveled the necessary distance in an elapsed time of 25,000 years, the target would be missed by thousands of miles. Today, in San Francisco, there is a difference of about 14 degrees between magnetic north and true north. Why? Magnetic north is slowly moving toward Russia each year. In 1946, when I served in the military, there was only a difference of 6 degrees. These differences must be factored in if we expect to reach our desired destination. If after our spiritual beginning the path we chose has been the slightest degree off-target and truth has not been factored in, we will be found wandering along some tributary away from the mainstream of the River of Life. This is one of the reasons there are so many sects and denominations. Most have begun their journey a degree or so off.

If I should preach to a small group of one hundred people, the odds are—five people will hear spiritually correctly. The rest will receive a distorted message or spiritually hear only parts of it. Jesus hid the truth from the multitudes and revealed it to a very few. This brought perplexity to the disciples. “... *Why do You speak to them in parables?*” they asked. (Matt. 13:10) His answer was a shock to their theology. “... *To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.*” (Matt. 13:11) So much for respecter of persons and equal footing. I now repeat this for the umpteenth time. Parables are to hide the truth, not make it simpler.

Jesus hid the truth from the lost and revealed it to His disciples. We do the opposite. We take the lost (unsaved) by the hand and lead them down the “Roman Road.” At this juncture of their lives, most do not even “believe” in God; and we’re attempting to open the Scriptures to them, without the benefit of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Impossible! “...*Truly, truly, I say unto you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (Jn. 3:3) If they do believe and accept the Lord into their lives—we immediately give them a Bible without any thought of explaining to them that the Scriptures are not the ultimate end but a guide, roadmap, to God. Knowing Him is through the Holy Spirit. We explain Scriptures in great detail to the lost, making them as simple as possible, and yet all the while leaving those same Scriptures deep and complicated to His followers. Why would He hide the truth from the lost? Why would you not give a toddler a sharp knife? They’re unskilled in the use of the knife. Likewise, the sinner is unskilled in the use of the sword of the Spirit. If a child’s only companions are other children, they will all eventually think of themselves as mature adults. The predictable outcome will be “play-like” games. Parables are designed to hide the truth from the “casual Christian.”

ROAD BUMP NO. 2

GOD'S COLORFUL LANGUAGE

Jesus was the express (exact) image of the Father (Heb. 1:3). It was not as if He looked like God (God is Spirit), but that their natures and expressions were identical. *"All these things spake Jesus unto the multitudes in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them."* (Matt. 13:34 KJV) Father God must have set the pattern for our Lord to follow. God spoke in this same colorful language throughout the Scriptures; and yet, we insist on interpreting them in a literal sense. This has caused untold confusion, friction, and division in the body of Christ. The complete accounts of the creation and of the Garden episode in Genesis were given to Moses while on the "Holy Mountain." It was spoken to him in parabolic language. Now to most Christians that sounds like blasphemy. Why would anyone be offended by this remark? The Tabernacle in the Wilderness contained an allegory which pointed to something much greater. The Prophet Nathan's parable to King David concerning the poor man's ewe lamb spoke with greater force than anything else the prophet could have said. David was furious with that miserly scoundrel who had taken the poor man's lamb. Nathan then looked David in the eye and said, *"...Thou art the man..."* (2 Sam. 12:7 KJV) Israel is often compared to a vine (Ps. 80:8-16) and also a vineyard (Isa. 5:1, 7). There are countless parables in the Old Testament that men have preached as literal which has left a litter-strewn path of confusion in their wake. To correctly interpret them as parables often earns one the title of "heretic."

God does not want the world stealing some of His secrets and using them in some diabolic manner. Some would say, "Oh, if the

world only had the secrets of God, they would make this a much better place.” No! They would not. Everything the carnal man touches, he spoils. Everything of the fleshly world is conducted from the basis of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. That tree is used because of selfishness; and in return, it produces selfishness. There are certain truths we withhold from our young children. Why? For them to understand certain truths leads them into dangerous territories. That’s one of the reasons the internet can be so dangerous. Underage children are learning truths too mature, too graphic, for them to handle. They may possess the capability but certainly not the judgment. The world protests, “If they’re old enough to ask, they’re old enough to know.” That is about as foolish as you can get.

One Christmas, my five-year old daughter asked this question of me, “Daddy, what’s a virgin?” Before answering her, I asked, “Why do you want to know?” It seems they had been singing about the Virgin Mary, and she simply didn’t know what the word meant. Would it have been right for me to go into all the intimate details of sex in answering her question? I think not. I realize this book will be read primarily by those who embrace the Lord as Savior and many of those will not understand parts of it.

As a youngster living in South Texas, I was attracted to those old pirate movies where there was involved a map to a hidden treasure. The treasure was usually a large bronze chest containing unbelievable riches. I walked the dry stream beds of the desert plains of my surroundings, ever alert to any glimpse of a bronze chest which may be protruding from the sandy bed. I never found any, but one local man did find a gold bar as he rode his horse along one of these wadis. That even sharpened my search and further stirred my imagination and excitement. I was unaware back then God had a hidden treasure, even with a map supplied. No one taught me that it pleased God to hide the truth from the nonchalant and indifferent and revealed it to the diligent seeker. Let us give special heed to the map He has provided—the Bible.

ROAD BUMP NO. 3

HIDDEN TREASURES OF THE GARDEN

While dining with a well known author one evening, he made the following remark to me: “I am not a very original person. I’m a composite of a host of other men and women.” The statement immediately knocked him off the pedestal on which I had placed him. I pondered his remark for a long time before the truth really hit home. We are all a mosaic of the input of numerous people, our parents, friends, teachers, movies, television personalities, books, etc. We have unconsciously incorporated sayings, mannerisms and, of course, beliefs into our own personality; and they have become us—and we, them. There is an extreme danger that we will embrace religion instead of having a regeneration of our spiritual DNA. We lay hold of an idea rather than a Person. A. W. Tozer calls this an inferential knowledge of God. They know Him by evidence, but not personally. We then tend to mirror a religious attitude rather than the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. I realized also, I too am not very original. I will simply voice things others may find too divisive or it’s not a hill on which they wish to be crucified. I said this to say, there may be things in this writing you possibly have heard before and find I do not give credit to the original author. It’s because I am not quoting directly or because I may not even remember when or where I heard it. Remember, I’m only a fragment of the progressive mosaic.

The Garden of Eden was meant to show man living in the presence of God before there was sin to foul the atmosphere. This was the original Paradise from which Adam was expelled and to

which we will eventually return. That, if I understand correctly, is not a geographic location, but a spiritual realm. We will return very different creatures than Adam and Eve because they were creatures of absolute innocence. Now innocence is a beautiful thing; however, it is very dangerous. In that realm, Adam knew nothing about death—therefore, he knew nothing about life. He had absolutely no frame of reference from which to function. Innocence will lead us into a deadly maze of wandering. Innocent babies fall out of windows, burn themselves, pull kettles of boiling water over on themselves, cut themselves, stick objects into electrical outlets, pull strange dogs' ears, and will put any and everything into their mouths. The list is endless. It's not because they're senseless but because they're innocent. This was Adam and Eve in the primeval Garden of God. I pray you will receive this for what it really is. The story of the Garden of Eden is the greatest parable in the Bible. You will not find the remains of this garden anywhere in Iraq, where it was supposedly located. If I am wrong, what happened to the angels who guarded the entrance and when did it cease to exist? This is a picture story of man living in total freedom in God's presence. This is also why God could not permit us to remain in that surrounding. He did not want us to remain as innocent babes. Jesus said to Simon the Pharisee, *"For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little."* (Lu. 7:47) We need a sense of where He brought us from to really appreciate the cost of our redemption.

The fifteenth chapter of the gospel of Luke contains a parable within a parable. I am speaking of the younger son who wanted his inheritance immediately, but then squandered it on riotous living. After he had spent all he had, he found himself at life's lowest ebb, feeding swine. He was so hungry he would have eaten the pods which he fed to the pigs, but no man gave anything to him. Now that is precisely where man finds himself today. There is an insatiable hunger within him. The world passes him a menu

filled with every conceivable indulgence; and yet, he hungers. Ever since man was ejected from the Garden, he has roamed the earth, like the people of Nod (Nod means—wandering), searching for something to satisfy his hunger. This parable gives to us the perfect picture of Adam. God had intended to elevate him to a place of prominence in due time. He impatiently wanted his inheritance before its time. An heir receives his inheritance, normally, upon the death of the testator. Adam was trying to rush the death of his Father. The very thing he desired, he was denied. Not only was he denied, but he was cast out to become a stranger to the family.

There were really three trees in the Garden of Eden: (1) the tree of life, (2) the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and (3) all the trees in the Garden. Let us bring our attention away from a mystical garden in a far-away land in the distant past closer to reality. You see, not only do we dwell in a garden but we are the garden. From another allegorical writing comes this beautiful analogy: “*A garden locked is my sister, my bride, a rock garden locked, a spring sealed up.*” (S. of S. 4:12) All these trees dwell in our land—our bodies. These three trees dwell in our garden—our person. They correspond to the three compartments of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness or Solomon’s Temple—the outer court, the holy place, and the holy of holies. The Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles are also exact types of the tabernacle and temple. The outer court is that area where most Christians dwell. Passover—the cross—Calvary is where most Christians homestead. We want to go our own way, do our own thing, make our own decisions, and lean on our own understanding. These will result in death. You may think or have thought all those people participating in the outer court rituals, etc., were born again. We must get into our understanding the meaning of life and death from God’s perspective and the difference in being saved and born again.

Life is feeding from the source of Life daily. “*Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread*

out of heaven to eat.' Jesus therefore said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven...I am the bread of life;...' (Jn. 6:31-35) I'm sure you recall, it was required that the manna be gathered early each day before the sun had become hot or it would spoil in the heat of the day. It could not be stored or it would develop worms. This manna was a type of the true bread—Jesus Christ. Could one preach a message about Jesus Christ and it still be “wormy”? Can that message which was fresh yesterday, life-giving and powerful now be stagnant, murky, and even poisonous? I've heard a few wormy messages preached, and I must confess I've preached more than a few. Failing to drink from the Stream of Life and gather fresh Manna will leave you reaching into your backpack and finding something so stale it's hardly fit for animals. Download it from your computer if you choose. Flip back through your file of thumb-worn pages or serve up a plate of last year's excitement if that is your preference and then wonder why the flock is so weak and emaciated. Life is living in His presence—death is attempting to live apart from His presence. Death will not be immediately apparent. In Adam's case, he was still with the Lord and the Lord even made them garments to cover their nakedness after the death sentence was pronounced; but the virus of death had already begun to do its work. When Adam was expelled from the Garden, death then ruled in his being. He was now little more than an animal.

ROAD BUMP NO. 4

THE OTHER TREES

In spiritual language, some trees are representative of men. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of an exceptional tree that filled the earth. Its foliage was beautiful, it reached to the sky and its fruit was abundant. He saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descend from heaven and shout out a command, “...*chop down the tree and cut off its branches, strip off its foliage and scatter its fruit;...*” (Dan. 4:14) He sought an interpretation of the dream from Daniel. Daniel was reluctant to give the interpretation; but on the insistence of the king said, “*The tree you saw...it is you...*” (Dan. 4:20-27) “*And all the trees of the field will know that I am the Lord; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish...*” (Ez. 17:24) Ezekiel warned the Pharaoh of Egypt’s and of Assyria’s fates: “*The cedars in God’s garden could not match it; the cypresses could not compare with its boughs, and the plane trees could not match its branches. No tree in God’s garden could compare with it in its beauty. I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, and all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.*” (Ez. 31:8, 9) Here Ezekiel was speaking of a nation. Jesus spoke of the Jewish nation, a collective people, when He said, “...*Behold, for three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree without finding any. Cut it down! Why does it even use up the ground?*” (Lu. 13:7)

The “other trees” in the garden were considered a grove. The two trees in the midst of the garden were not part of the grove of trees. It is recorded, “...*God...breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.*” (Gen. 2:7) The three kinds

of trees in the Garden of Eden represent three life sources that grow in our garden. Two of the trees, the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, were set in the very midst of the garden. The other trees were a grove of which the two in the midst were not a part.

It has been said, God lives in a three-room house. In simple terms, the house is composed of body, soul and spirit. In the beginning, Adam was made a living soul—in other words, he lived in the soul realm. One thing to keep in mind is that his soul had not yet become contaminated. His soul ruled. That soul throughout Scripture is feminine. Remember, this is before Eve (soul) had been taken out of man—she still existed in total equality and harmony with the spirit, which is always masculine. After the separation, the soul dwelt in a certain degree of independence from the spirit. The soul has long been recognized as the mind—not the brain—but the mind. The mind is as a computer's software. It's the program that directs the operation.

When Satan began his assault in the Garden, he began with the soul—the mind. When he tempts you or me, he will not begin with the spirit—he will start in the realm of reasoning. After persuading the mind of the rewards of godhood to be easily obtained, the soul (not Satan) then entices the spirit to join her in partaking of this forbidden fruit. Now they are both polluted. The carnal man is the results of two contaminated partners choosing man's will over God's will. Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, "...not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. 26:39) This was an acknowledgement of His awareness of where the danger lurked. The two trees in the midst of the garden are none other than the Spirit of God (the tree of life) and the contaminated soul (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil) that dwell within man. The path you take is yours to choose.

The unspeakable danger of living in the soul realm is it puts us in the same situation as was Adam—a lively soul with a spirit

not yet made alive by the joining of His Spirit. This, I fear, is where the majority of the modern church exists—being led by the reasoning and intellect of man. We have chosen committees and boards to act in proxy for us.

The soul of man is often referred to as the mind. “*Let (allow, permit) this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil. 2:5 KJV) Jesus had the mind, or soul, of God. When Eve sinned, the mind—the soul became contaminated. When Adam joined her in sin, they all were now contaminated, spirit, soul, and body. It was now an unholy mixture of impure man standing in opposition to God—he was now antichrist. Originally, Adam was pure; the intent of his thoughts was also pure. That all changed with the fall. “*...the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*” (Gen. 6:5) The Hebrew word *leb*, for heart, is also used repeatedly for mind or soul.

We are taught that this was literal fruit of which Adam and Eve partook. Some even go so far as to suggest the forbidden fruit was sex, which they accidentally discovered. I do not hesitate to affirm; both are wrong. We do not know how long Adam and Eve lived from the fruit of the fertile soul before partaking of the forbidden fruit. Keep in mind, these are not literal trees. Those “trees” live inside of us, as represented by Adam and Eve. Those trees were the spirit and soul of Adam before they were contaminated. It now has become a corrupted house, which must die.

However, when the Holy Spirit moves into this body and makes it the temple of the Lord, some drastic changes are on the horizon. This temple needs a lot of renovating after the Spirit takes up residence—some more than others. A complete alteration of lifestyle must occur if we are to become Spirit led. We are not merely refurbished or renovated but are now new creatures. If we allow the mind of God to inhabit our being, as did Jesus, then our renewed mind and renewed spirit will take control of

our bodies, which they are designed to do. As husband and wife now working as one, they will begin to tend our garden and bring about the necessary changes to make us saints.

ROAD BUMP NO. 5

THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

If we had spiritual eyes to see, we would see the skull and crossbones all over this tree. If you wish to burn this book so be it, but please save this portion. It could save your life. I'm not speaking of natural life but life everlasting. We watched with wonder the raging wildfire of the women's liberation movement. There arose an army of women who seemed to have only recently discovered that they were persons of value. Some of it turned into a mob of women who disdained men—period. They declared the only good use of man was a sperm bank. Through Satan's coaching, an intriguing door opened to Eve; and she discovered she was more than an insignificant nobody. She could be a god. She discovered she was a self. You see, this tree is independence from God. Who needs Him? Who needs His constant intrusion into our lives? Who needs His meddling? Of course, we don't use those phrases; but we express the same message in our daily lives. Sure, I want His love and protection; but you know the old saying, "God helps those who help themselves." It was this venture of independence that exposed us to the infection of death. I heard one man put it this way—"Instead of walking on the highway, most people would rather walk in the ditch." It is the road alongside the road. Why would anyone choose a rough and irregular ditch over a smooth highway? They do not want to be in subjection to anyone; and in the ditch, there are a lot of things of interest to the carnal man.

Because of this tree, the Lord was deposed as king and self was enthroned as ruler of our lives. Self seized the throne with

all its entourage and ruled as a tyrant. This entourage of warriors included pride, greed, anger, strife, jealousy, factions, envy, idolatry, etc. These warriors are armed and will fight to the death to preserve the throne of self. The first of the Ten Commandments is, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before Me.*" (Ex. 20:3 KJV) The second is like unto the first, "*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*" (Ex. 20:4 KJV) God said, "*Let Us make man in Our image...*" (Gen. 1:26) Man says, "Let us make God in our image." The God of the Garden hardly resembles the god men serve today. He is tall, dark and handsome, with long flowing locks and fits more comfortably in a Cadillac than on a donkey. He is a thoroughly modern figure, involved in politics and Wall Street.

Listen closely to Paul as he instructs the church at Corinth. "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations (imagination, reasonings) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*" (2 Cor. 10:3-5) He is saying these reasonings and imaginations are raised up against the knowledge of Christ—they are the fortresses to be destroyed. Notice—it is the thoughts that must be taken captive. It is the soul—the mind that is the errant one. She is determined to be a god unto herself. Be ever so careful or she will lure the spirit into sin and servitude with her. You know I'm not speaking of the natural wife. I'm speaking of these trees that dwell within our own being.

Is there anyone who believes the modern denominations are structured according to God's plan? How many times in the Bible have you ever read where the sheep elected their shepherd? When we are without a shepherd, we will choose four good sheep and send them to some other flock and see if we can entice

their shepherd to come to our flock. Whatever happened to prayer? Whatever happened to fasting? “Oh! You must be living in a dream world. That went out with the Model-A coupe. The modern church could not function with that horse and buggy method,” it is maintained. Revivals are held with no changed lives. There is no conviction of the Holy Spirit present. How can we come to Christ except the Father draws us unto Himself? How can there be sorrow for sin except the Holy Spirit convicts? “But I don’t want to feel sorrow for my sins. I want to feel good about myself.” Then you can find a host of religious clubs that will make available to you one of their counselors, who will help you shake your feeling of guilt and need.

Moses assumed when he slew the Egyptian, who was abusing a fellow Israelite, his brethren would understand he was going to lead them out of bondage. Neither he nor they understood that neither was yet ready for deliverance. Forty years later when God saw he was ready, Moses did not think he was. Besides, he was eighty years of age. Perfect! He now had no confidence in himself. Self-confidence, self-assurance, selfishness, self-centeredness, self-expression, self-righteous, self-defense, self-drive, self-esteem, self-image, self-interest, self-love, self-satisfaction, self-absorption, self-importance, self-sufficiency and self-will were those areas within him that God had been dealing with over the past forty years. These are a few of the centers of self Eve discovered as a god of this world when she surrendered to the lies of Satan. You must understand; the tree of the knowledge of good and evil pertains to nothing more than self. The world system and most of the religious systems live and move and have their being in this realm of self. That luxurious tree stands in the midst of our garden adjacent to the tree of life. They stand in stark contrast. One is evergreen and the other is deciduous. One tree’s roots go deep into the Fountain of Life; the other will habitually lose its beauty and allurements. You choose either life or death from these two trees each and every day.

Forty is the number of testing and teaching. Jesus was tested forty days and nights. It rained forty days and nights in Noah's day. Israel spent forty years in the wilderness. Moses spent forty years in the land of Midian, allowing self to be put to death until one day he is known as the meekest man in the entire world. Self was no longer a stone of stumbling to him.

ROAD BUMP NO. 6

THE TREE OF LIFE

This tree has offered its fruit to man since the beginning, for it is none other than the Lord, Himself. In Genesis we find the tree of life stands in the midst of the Garden. God stands in the midst of His creation offering life to whosoever will partake. This tree is introduced to us in the first portion of Genesis. At the very conclusion of the Scriptures, it appears again, standing yet in Paradise but without the presence of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “...*And on either side of the river (of life) was the tree of life...and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” (Rev. 22:2) The tree of the knowledge of good and evil has now fulfilled its purpose in our lives. We have fought the last battle of temptation and are now dwelling in a realm of victory and peace.

I pose a question that puzzled me for years. Why is there yet a need for healing of the nations in Revelation, which the leaves of the tree of life provide? In Genesis 1:1, the Scriptures introduce us with, “*In the beginning...*” This word could just as easily have been translated “In the beginnings” for there were many things developing at the same time. If this is true, then everything will not be wrapped up simultaneously; and there will be many endings. The harvests of the fields are not finished at Passover but continue through Pentecost until the ending of Tabernacles, which is called the Feast of Harvest. Actually, the Feast of Tabernacles is not the only Feast of Harvest. Passover and Pentecost are also pointing to a reaping of the harvests at different times of the year. We will touch on this later.

The Pharisees had just berated Jesus because His disciples had eaten with unwashed hands. Jesus wisely revealed the foolishness of their accusations as He explained how the spiritual man functions. *"...Do you not see that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.)* And He was saying, *"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries...sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.' All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."* (Mark 7:18-23) When Jesus speaks of the heart, He is referring to the midst, the core of the person. Evil proceeds not from some outward source but from within the man. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil stands in the midst of the person, alongside the tree of life, in God's garden within the man. Notice particularly Jesus' words: fornication, adultery, theft and murder are all clearly present and judged before there is a physical occurrence. *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery'; but I say to you, that every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart."* (Matt. 5:27, 28) Notice where the sin has already occurred—in his heart. These two trees stand, as they always have, in the midst of the garden—in the heart of man.

Let us go back to our introduction to the trees. Trees can represent men. The tree of life is a person. It is more than a concept—more than a religious denomination. It is a person—the Lord Jesus Christ. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil is also a person. No! It is not Satan—it is us. It is self who always stands in opposition to God. Self is antichrist. Don't look for a ten-horned beast to hold you down and give you a tattoo on your hand or forehead. Look for a self leaving its indelible will and imprint on your mind and the works of your hands. We are our own worst enemy.

King David, while walking on his rooftop, looked over and saw a stunning young woman bathing. We are not told whether Bathsheba was also on her rooftop or whether she was spotted through a window. We do know it was evening and David had risen from his bed. You are all familiar with the resulting story of how David took her, committed adultery with her and then had her husband slain. The prophet Nathan was sent by the Lord to rebuke David for this heinous crime. When Nathan was finished recounting David's sin, he declared, "...*the sword shall never depart from your house...*" (2 Sam. 12:10) David never tried to shift the blame to someone else or even blame God as did Adam, but said; "...*I have sinned against the Lord...*" (2 Sam. 12:13) He recognized, what most of us do not, his sin was not primarily against Uriah or Bathsheba but against God Himself. In partaking of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by choosing to please self, we are an affront to God. We are saying, in effect, "I am more qualified to rule than you, Lord." God is offended and wounded that we would choose self over Him.

The Soul and the Spirit

The soul is the spirit's wife—the spirit's helpmate—one compatible with him. The spirit is designed to rule over the soul; but because it is diseased and corrupted from the fall, it really doesn't know how to lead. The soul is so violated by evil imaginations and ambitions that it stays confused most of the time. It dedicates little time to the body unless it becomes ill. The soul (mind) is normally very foolish, wanting only to please self. Those things causing the body to feel good or feed carnal pride are its goals and desires. This is why people become addicted to sex, drugs, food and a host of other sensual pleasures. To this drifting child, consequences are of little importance. So soul and spirit are like two little children lost and wandering in the dangers and darkness of a tangled forest. One day the soul leads; the next, the spirit

takes charge. They romp through sunny glades like young fawns then hover in fear when darkness overtakes them. Before the fall, they were equal and ruled over all things together.

Let us keep in mind; Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden represent the spirit and soul of man. Although they live in the same house, they are separate entities in every sense of the word and live in some degree of enmity and competition. The soul is that reasoning, intellect, will, and emotion of man. The soul is always feminine. The spirit is the residence of God and is always masculine. These events in the Garden are our first introduction to a husband and his wife. The soul is the wife of the spirit. At this point, when we were introduced to them, neither had partaken of the tree of life nor of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They are innocent babes knowing neither good nor evil. Notice, there is no record of God ever having spoken to Eve until after she had sinned; and then His first words were a curse. God normally converses with our spirit, for God is Spirit. He habitually converses with that of like nature.

“So also it is written, ‘The first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual.” (1 Cor. 15:45, 46) The second “became” is not in the original. Adam became—not immediately, but over time—a living soul. Jesus was born a living Spirit. He was the tree of life—He did not become the tree of life. For Adam to have been a life-giving spirit, he would had to have eaten from the tree of life. After Adam sinned, he was a spirit alive to the soul world, not to the God-life.

When Satan began to court Eve, where was Adam? Was he aware of what was occurring? I'm sure he knew what was going on but did not comprehend the seriousness of the situation; he was innocent. It seems the spirit was born mute. After she partook of the forbidden fruit, the soul (Eve, the mind) became alive—not to the things of God, but to the things of the world.

The spirit does not really come alive unto the things of God until it feeds from the tree of life. Here then, in a sense, is Adam (spirit) at the mercy of Eve (soul). The spirit has been captivated by the intellect. She sells them both out.

We do not know how long this open but secretive courtship of Eve lasted, much more than fifteen minutes, I'm sure. Keep in mind, this is an allegory. The handsome, persuasive and smooth talking Satan did not force or openly coerce Eve at all. He led her through the thought process. He appealed to her feminine nature. He showed her, through a lie, what she could become. It's still the same today. "Oh! You ought to be in the movies," the charlatan will enthuse. What woman would not like to hear this? "You're so beautiful, so alluring. In the right hands, there is no limit to how far you could go." He can appeal to their beauty and promising ability, and the trap is set. Adam may watch and listen but, because he is not the reasoning intellect, will probably not understand what is happening. If there has been no joining of the Spirit of God with man's spirit, then man's spirit is very much a husband who is helplessly led around by the nose at the mercy of the soul. She makes all the decisions for they now follow their own will in everything—and she is the will.

"Wives, (souls) be subject to your own husbands (spirits), as to the Lord. For the husband (spirit) is head of the wife (soul), as Christ also is the head of the church..." (Eph. 5:22, 23) Read also verses twenty-four through thirty-one. *"This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church."* (Eph. 5:32) If the spirit of man has not been joined to the Spirit of Christ, he is totally inadequate to be head over his wife. It is only after this joining he can properly take his place as head of the house for then Christ will rule through him.

Husbands, for the most part, simply do not understand the feminine mind. That little housewife may watch those very suggestive TV soaps and read those very explicit novels, and the

husband will shrug it off as harmless pastime. Don't kid yourself. It is not an innocuous pastime. It is dangerous. It is venomous. It is lethal. One day there will come a knock at the door, and standing there will be a very handsome, suave salesman. He may be selling more than the apparent merchandise. This is certainly not confined to the housewife, for this is speaking of the whole person of the man. The feminine part—the soul (intellect, emotion, will and reason) is this feminine part of man. The spirit is the masculine side of man. The man is just as easily ensnared into the realm of pornography and strip clubs. The reasoning part of man says, "I need a little diversion. It's harmless." It's about as harmless as rat poison. Spiritually, it will kill you. Where is the spirit in all of this? He is a mute onlooker unless you have been born of the Spirit of God—the tree of life. Even if he has eaten of the tree of life, he can still be deluded into thinking pornography is harmless. And then some sweet little thing begins to tell you how she would love to improve you—your wife doesn't understand you, and you could be in the movies. Almost without warning, you have crossed the line. You see, this is none other than that old dragon that was in the Garden of Eden, leading Eve down that same primrose path.

Permit me here to enlarge on a most controversial Scripture that has been a bone of contention, not easily understood. *"But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet."* (1 Tim. 2:12) How do we reconcile this verse with? *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Gal. 3:28) Since it was Eve who was deceived—and we're not speaking of the sex, but of the nature of the soul—Paul is reinforcing the type set forth by God Himself. The soul (mind) operates from her own nature, which are reason, intellect and emotion. We must keep in mind; both men and women have these diverse natures operating within them. However, as a rule, the woman will function more comfortably from the area of

emotion, rather than the stance of the spirit. These are not iron-clad laws. God warns us—Paul warns us; we are not to allow our soul (female) to lead our life but our spirit (male), for your mind (soul) will deceive you. We have all made decisions when from deep inside of us there was a little area of resistance. Later we discovered; the decision was wrong. That was the soul leading the spirit, but was deceived.

If the spirit is a dead entity, how does man or woman ever come to God? Assuredly, the soul does not want God. She doesn't think she needs God in her life. She has grown quite self-sufficient. The Women's Movement came to this same conclusion concerning men. For the most part, the nation—world—has reached the same conclusion concerning God. Man doesn't want God meddling in his life. However, God is always the initiator in the love affair between man and God. "...and the Spirit of God was moving (brooding, incubating) over the surface of the waters." (Gen. 1:2) From this moving—brooding—life sprang forth. This water in your earth is your spirit. God begins (without your will or permission) to move across the surface of your water—your spirit—and one day conviction sets in and you cry out to God. It was not a mental (soulish) decision on your part. It was spiritual. "And He, when He comes, will convict the world (our world) concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment." (Jn. 16:8) He came in, uninvited, and convicted your world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

Your spirit at this time went counter to your reasoning and intellect. However, intellect will accompany you down the aisle and assist you in joining the local club—it will not encourage you in any relationship with Christ. I realize there are instances when conviction is but a rare ingredient even in this procedure, but it's not the spiritual norm. Is it any wonder we see more clubs and fewer houses of worship? The soul does not like to worship, as does the spirit.

ROAD BUMP NO. 7

THE ANGELS AT EDEN'S GATE

“... ‘Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever’—therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim, and the flaming sword which turned every direction, to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Gen. 3:22-24) He forcibly ejected Adam from the garden. He divorced him. This wording is in the same connotation as when Moses sent Zipporah his wife away, after the confrontation with her over the circumcision of their sons. (Ex. 4:25; 18:2)

It is no accident the Tabernacle in the Wilderness and the temples all faced east as did the Garden of Eden. They're all indicative of the same thing—our approach to God. If this was a literal garden, no fences were ever mentioned and there was only one gate at the eastern approach. Jesus is the one door to the tree of life. He is the door to the sheepfold.

Cherubim are those symbolic creatures, which covered the mercy seat over the Ark of the Covenant and are found numerous times in the Scriptures, appearing predominately as messengers. They are recognized as the second highest ranking order of angels. They appear in Ezekiel as four creatures with four different faces. We shall deal with these later.

Seraphim are the first order of angels and are called the burning ones. These seem to be in God's attendance everywhere He

appears. These angels at the Garden's gate are not, I repeat, not to direct us to God, but rather to keep us from God; for God is that tree of life which is protected from unholy intruders. There is one door to Him—Jesus Christ, and He had not yet appeared on the scene. It seems each time the Mighty One appears, He is surrounded by an entourage of burning ones.

While shepherding sheep one day in the desert, Moses is suddenly attracted to a bush that is engulfed in flames but is not consumed. I've read so many commentaries which explained that in the scorching desert there were many bushes that would simply burst into flames. Moses had probably seen these. He was attracted to this one because it was not consumed. As he neared, a voice suddenly commanded him, *"...Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground."* (Ex. 3:5) Here is God, His presence announced by the burning ones—His holy entourage.

It was in the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out from the land of Egypt that *"...Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain...Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked violently."* (Ex. 19:3, 18) *"...you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire to very heart of the heavens..."* (Deut. 4:11) This fire is God's clothing of angels.

"Now Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took their respective firepans, and after putting fire in them, placed incense on it and offered strange fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. And fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord." (Lev. 10:1, 2) This fire, which burst upon them, was none other than the seraphim which surrounded the Lord Almighty.

The children of Israel, in their desert wanderings, were accompanied by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

Both these pillars were the same entourage of God. This same pillar of cloud is again in the book of Revelation. *"Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him..."* (Rev. 1:7) *"And I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head, and a sharp sickle in His hand."* (Rev.14:14) This cloud, again, are those attendants of the Lord.

The prophet, Elijah, met with Baal's prophets on Mount Carmel and presented this challenge: *"...you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, He is God..."* (1 Kings 18:24) God has always been known as a God of fire, whether in this incident or when the tongues of fire alit on the people in the Upper Room on the day of Pentecost. He appears in fire; He tries by fire; and He clothes Himself in fire.

We know there are different orders of angels, one of which is warring angels; and another order is those messenger angels. Gabriel is a messenger angel. Michael is a warring angel. A messenger from God was sent to Daniel in response to his prayer. *"...a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees... Then he said to me, 'Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia was withstanding me for twenty-one days; then behold, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, for I had been left there with the kings of Persia.'" (Dan. 10:10-13)*

I am disturbed by the present day obsession with angels. Paul was also warning the people of Colossi about these dangerous phenomena. *"Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly*

mind.” (Col. 2:18) I have heard some of the most outrageous fantasies concerning angels anyone could have possibly imagined. Hollywood would be proud to call them their own. Nevertheless, angels serve a valuable function to the children of God. They are primarily messengers sent forth to deliver a word of utmost importance. They also serve in the deliverance of God’s children. Look at Peter’s deliverance from prison. He was scheduled to die at daybreak at the end of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but the angel brought miraculous deliverance. What encouragement it must have been to Paul as a prisoner aboard the storm-tossed ship when an angel of the Lord appeared to him. “...*I urge you to keep up your courage, for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’*” (Acts 27:22-24) How about the angel’s word to Cornelius? What joy that must have brought! These were all words of comfort and direction. However, to depend on angels for our direction is, I believe, a grievous error. The Holy Spirit has been given to us in order to lead us into all truth. “*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.*” (Jn. 14:26) “*But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...*” (Jn. 16:13) Angels often, however, give us protection from the enemy’s assault when we are unaware of their presence. “*But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet’? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?*” (Heb. 1:13, 14)

ROAD BUMP NO. 8

THE THREE ON GOLGOTHA

Through all those years since Adam's expulsion from the Garden, man had been denied the glorious fellowship of the Father—the tree of life. Angels had kept him away. God would, at times, take on the appearance of a human, but there was never that open fellowship. Then behold—the incarnation! God became a man (Emanuel) and dwelled among us. Let me now borrow from the thoughts of Preston Eby. I won't quote him exactly, but I will attempt to put his words as the central theme.

After Adam's expulsion, man lived his life with self as his center. His entire life was lived with self as number one. Jesus came into this world as one who was eccentric—off-centered. He lived His entire life as one who was an oddity. He was unlike any of those surrounding Him. Those who went to arrest Jesus returned with these words, "...*Never did a man speak the way this man speaks.*" (Jn. 7:46) Accusations were hurled at Him continually because He lived, spoke and saw things differently than did those around Him. "*The multitude answered, 'You have a demon! Who seeks to kill You?'*" (Jn. 7:20) "*The Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?'*" (Jn. 8:48) As if it were not enough, the Pharisees and all the religious community thought He was somewhat demented, He was met with this same attitude by His own kinsmen: "*And when His own people heard of this, they went out to take custody of Him; for they were saying, 'He has lost His senses.'*" (Mk. 3:21)

He was off-centered, for the world's center was self as it still remains today. It would be great if it was only the world in this

condition, but I fear most of the church community has the imprint of that same center. If you walk as did Jesus—selfless and spiritual, you will gain the reputation as being so heavenly minded you're no earthly good. However, it's only those with a heavenly mind who can be of any earthly good. Jesus ministered to the multitudes, but He chose only twelve men with whom He invited to have intimate fellowship and one of them was a devil. The gate to Paradise still stood impenetrable to man. Some thirty-three years after His entrance into this self-centered world, because of His offensiveness to the religious leadership, He now hung beaten, bleeding, and dying on a cursed cross. He didn't fit the world's mold—He was off-centered. It is no different today. If you speak with an unfamiliar voice or oppose the typical doctrine, you also will be crucified. Oh! It will not be literal, but you will have earned the "left foot of fellowship."

On that day, atop that craggy hill called the Place of the Skull, three men were hung together, all crucified for "sins" against the world of self. Look at these men closely. These are representative men of those same three who were in the Garden of Eden: (1) God looked at Adam and Eve as one person; (2) Jesus represented the God of the Garden; (3) and then there was the serpent.

"And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads, and saying, 'Ha! You who were going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' In the same way the chief priests along with the scribes were also mocking Him among themselves and saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save Himself. Let this Christ, the King of Israel, now come down from the cross, so that we may see and believe!' And those who were crucified with Him were casting the same insult at Him." (Mk. 15:29-32) John records even the soldiers mocked Him.

One of the malefactors who had initially mocked Him suddenly had his eyes opened to see who this truly was hanging next

to him. *“And he was saying, ‘Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!’ And He said to him, ‘Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.’”* (Lu. 23:42, 43) Who was this man? He was a representative of the Adam of old. He was you and me hanging there on that cross. Paul asserts, *“I have been crucified with Christ...”* (Gal. 2:20) Again: *“knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with...”* (Rom. 6:6) *“Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.”* (Rom. 6:8)

Notice, in every instance the word is with Christ, not in Christ. I can find nowhere in Scripture where we died in Him but rather with Him. For thousands of years, Adam had been attempting to re-enter the Paradise of God. It had been guarded by angels and the flaming sword. They challenged any person who dared to approach God. You see, Jesus was the door—the way—and that way, that door, was yet not opened. However, on Calvary, that door was again opened wide at the moment of Jesus’ death; and the angels and the flaming sword were relieved of their duties. That thief—Adam was received back into fellowship with the Father. Jesus re-remembered him.

ROAD BUMP NO. 9

THE SERPENT IN THE GARDEN

Let us now look at the other thief. This man represents the Lserpent in the Garden. He completes the scenario from Eden. *“And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, ‘If Thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.’”* (Lu. 23:39 KJV) Does this not sound familiar? On the Mount of Temptation, Satan uses almost the same wording. *“And the devil said unto him, ‘If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.’”* (Lu. 4:3 KJV) And again, *“And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, ‘If Thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence.’”* (Lu. 4:9 KJV) This malefactor is none other than that serpent of old we first met in the Garden. It is written, *“And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.”* (Lu. 4:13) Looking upon the suffering Christ, Satan thought this to be the opportune time. No man could endure the abuse Jesus had been subjected to and still have the strength to resist the temptation to prove that He was the Son of God. This would be the perfect opportunity. Satan was wrong. That day Satan’s power was broken and his hold upon man was loosed.

He railed on Jesus, mocking Him saying, *“If you are the Christ, then save yourself and us likewise.”* Sound familiar? *“If you are the Christ, turn these stones into bread.”* Satan seems to always preface his remarks with a little question of veracity—*if*. He rarely comes with an open denial. He is no different when on the cross—*“If thou be the Christ.”* He is no different today. He attacks in the realm of reason. He approached Eve (soul, mind,

and reasoning) with the same argument. “...*hath God said...?*” (Gen. 3:1 KJV) Human reasoning can be a dreadful enemy. It is of that soulish realm which will cause us to embrace that tree of the knowledge of good and evil rather than the tree of life. “*We are destroying speculations (reasonings, imaginations) and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*” (2 Cor. 10:5) This thief, who is Satan, is also crucified with Jesus, as is Adam. If we indeed consider ourselves dead, then Satan is also dead. He has no more power over us. “*Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ.*” (Rom. 6:11) The words rang in the ears of Satan down through the ages, “...*He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.*” (Gen. 3:15) He knew quite well to be bruised on the head was infinitely worse than being bruised on the heel; consequently, he had to keep this Man (this seed of the woman) from the cross. Out of his bag of deceptions, surely there was one that would work. He began with Herod as he stirred up within him a spirit of fear. He heard there was a new king born in the land. Killing all the babies would undoubtedly take care of this upstart. He hadn't counted on an obedient Joseph, who had taken his family to Egypt. From this time, we hear nothing of Satan for about twenty-eight years; but it still does not mean he wasn't plotting.

Strangely, the Holy Spirit of the Father led (drove) Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. But do not the Scriptures say, God does not tempt any man—true, but He will lead us into that place where the temptations of Satan will expose what is in us. After Jesus had fasted forty days and nights and His body was weak, who should suddenly appear but that old serpent, Satan himself. Again he tries to deter Jesus from the path of the cross. “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become bread,” said the tempter. Prove yourself to me. “You have already fasted forty days and nights, there is no need to prolong the hunger.” Jesus said, in effect, “There is more to life than bread.

Some people live to eat; others eat to live. I live by the word of My Father.” We’re all familiar with the temptations Satan used against Jesus on the Mount of Temptation, but there’s an interesting little phrase only Luke records. “*And when the devil had finished every temptation, he departed from Him until an opportune time.*” (Lu. 4:13) Satan is always looking for an opportune time in your life and mine—a time when we are weak from hunger or sickness or just spiritually spent. Sad to say, he doesn’t have long to wait for most of us.

In Matthew’s gospel, Peter had just made that glorious declaration, “*...Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” (Matt. 16:16) Perhaps, one or two of the others also knew this; but Peter, quick of action, was the first to answer. Jesus then warned His disciples to tell no one He was the Christ. He then began to show them how He must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things from the chief priests and scribes, be killed, and raised on the third day. It was here that Satan, using Peter as his mouthpiece, began to rebuke Jesus for even talking about death. Jesus knew Peter was not speaking on his own, so He spoke directly to the source. “*... Get behind Me Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me...*” (Matt. 16:23) Through one of Jesus’ chosen ones, Satan had again tried to deter Him from the cross. Peter had said, “Have mercy on yourself.” Jesus had said, “*...If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*” (Lu. 9:23) Jesus was teaching them that everyone had a cross to bear which would one day take his life just as surely as it would take the life of their Master.

The next episode is the most graphic scene of violence against another person one could imagine. Through the sham trial of Jesus, and the horrifying scourging with the cat-o-nine-tails, to the yanking out of His beard, to the battering of His face by the Roman soldiers, and finally the crown of thorns and the robe of mockery—Jesus set His face like a flint toward the cross even as Satan was whispering in His ear, “Give it up.” Satan thought no

man would endure this degree of punishment if he had an escape route. Jesus could have called twelve legions of angels for help. He refused to do so and finally the crucifixion “mercifully” comes.

He hangs stark naked—His head no higher than eight feet off the ground. He hangs in shame with soldiers’ spittle yet dripping from His beard and open wounds. He has been beaten until He is unrecognizable. He had bled until there was barely any blood left in His body. This is that “more opportune time” Satan had looked for. A voice comes from one of the malefactors, “...*Are you not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!*” (Lu. 23:39) It seems to have come from the man but Jesus knew it really came from Satan. It was his last futile attempt to keep Him from pouring out the last drop of that “precious blood.” Satan had failed. He had failed to keep Him from the cross. Now, he had failed to keep Him from dying that we might be delivered out of his prison house.

While speaking with a young lady recently, we were discussing the sorrow of losing a loved one in death. She offered the statement, “It’s almost like a divorce.” I responded with, “Yes, but many times a divorce is worse than a death. A death is final; but in a divorce, there is not only the loss but the unrelenting feeling of rejection that is involved and oft-times the disgrace/embarassment of infidelity. This remains with you for life, haunting you, accusing you and throwing up into your face all the supposed or imagined inadequacies. Because you keep running into the accuser who reinforces the accusations, the wounds just go deeper.” Now this was exactly where Jesus was on that dreadful day as He hung suspended between heaven and earth. The one He had come to save, His wife, His unfaithful lover, had rejected Him—scorned Him—and conspired with killers to do away with Him. As He hung there, I’m sure the pain from those wounds was as much or even more than the horrible wounds that lacerated His body. He had often wept over His wife. That straying wife must return to her husband if His wounds are to be completely healed, for they are buried deep within. This wife is the church.

All of us live with the accuser, who daily brings up humiliating accusations; however, we must remember Satan did the same things to Jesus. The modern church has attempted to escape the accusations of the world by actually becoming more like the world. We have made everything from witnessing about Jesus to water baptism more palatable to the world. I've baptized numerous people in streams and lakes. People driving by would honk their horns in ridicule; but that's what baptism is all about—an open witness to the world. Do you think the world loves the church any more for all her attempts to conform? Certainly not! The world does not even want the mention of God or Jesus anywhere reminding them of the atrocities they have done to Him. Take Him out of our government, our schools, and our beliefs and hide Him completely so they are never reminded of the awfulness of that day on Golgotha. Hollywood and some of its writers have conspired to make Jesus look like a deranged imposter, involved in an adulterous affair with Mary Magdalene. If you can't disprove one's witness—ridicule them. This is precisely what politicians do today. You can expect this exact behavior from the world, your friends, your family and most of the church if you attempt to embrace your cross. The cross, to the world, is a laughable absurdity.

I must now borrow words taken from Andrew Jukes, written almost one hundred and fifty years ago:

Alas! not a few, like Noah, have misused that which was given to 'make us forget our poverty,' to make themselves drunken withal, and so to expose their shame. The truth of Christ's sufferings for us, carnally received, used as a reprieve to the flesh, has come back as a curse to those who have so regarded it; for, 'the grace of God being turned into lasciviousness,' those who profess to be satisfied with it, do but 'eat and drink their own damnation.' Nor can the preciousness of the gift hinder its becoming a

curse. To how many, through Antinomian views, has the truth of Christ's blood been intoxication?

Antinomian means: We have an abundance of grace, so it matters not how much I may sin, my sins are covered in His grace—i.e., my interpretation. Some deny the necessity of moral laws since grace is poured out freely upon us; and instead of striving to eradicate the sin in their lives, they simply take the easy way out. It is like the diabetic who will not watch his or her diet, but instead just takes another shot of insulin. There are severe consequences to this kind of behavior.

I have a difficult time imagining Jesus fighting and resisting the ones who nailed Him to the cross. It seems He went quietly with no resistance. *"...like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth."* (Isa. 53:7) He had already won the battle of the cross in the Garden of Gethsemane when sweat fell as great drops of blood (or life). We have avoided Gethsemane as much as we've shunned the cross. Either of them is too painful to dwell upon and according to the modern church's principles, unnecessary. Most resolutions of life are brought to conclusion in the mind, whether it is to give up smoking, make a bold military move, or be a dedicated Christian. If the decision has been reached in our Gethsemane, we will have few problems carrying it through when the time comes.

A man who stayed with me on a number of occasions gave this illustration in one of his sermons one evening: "During one incident in our community, for the sake of a teaching illustration, we decided to slaughter, at one event, both a lamb and a pig. We first slaughtered the lamb. As the weeping priest slit the throat of the lamb, not a sound was heard. We all watched in tearful wonder as the last drop of blood fell from the silent lamb. It died as peacefully as it had lived. The same priest later slit the throat of the kicking squealing pig as two men held it captive. The

squealing and kicking continued until the last drop of blood fell and it died, still struggling. Later as we ate the prepared lamb at the Passover feast, we marveled at how differently the two victims had died.” That old nature dies in us as resistant and antagonistic as the dying of that pig.

ROAD BUMP NO. 10

JESUS' CROSS VS. OUR CROSS

Over the years I have watched, what appeared to me to be, an unhealthy attachment to the cross of Christ. To understand what I am saying, we must go back to the brazen serpent which was made and lifted up by Moses in the wilderness. As you recall, it was made because Israel, having become impatient because of their journey, rebelled and complained against Moses and the manna they had to eat. God, not Satan, sent poisonous serpents among them to strike them and many died as a result. It was also God who had that serpent of old waiting on the doorstep when Adam and Eve were placed in the Garden. We, more often than not, put all the blame on Satan when he has only been one of God's means of correction. Hell is one of God's means of correction, yet we blame Satan for it all.

The brazen serpent was nailed to the pole as an answer to their sin. *"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a standard; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he shall live'."* (Num. 21:8) This did not mean if they just glanced at it they would live, but only if they looked at it until faith arose in their heart. Now look carefully at the following verse of Scripture: *"...let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance—unnecessary weight—and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us, looking away [from all that will distract] to Jesus..."* (Heb. 12:1, 2 AMP)

Those passersby were not healed of their sins nor cured of their venomous infections by merely glancing at Jesus hanging on the tree. That occurred when, like the one thief, they saw Him as the answer to their problems. We have used the cross as an amulet, a charm or talisman. We hang it on the walls of our churches and homes, emblazon it with jewels and dangle it from our ears, and use it as a hex against our enemies. Israel did that with the brazen serpent. Seven hundred and fifty years after the brazen serpent was nailed to the stake, Israel was still carrying it around on a pole, burning incense, and worshipping it. The young king Hezekiah was horrified with Israel's idolatry. *"He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah (a wooden symbol of a female deity). He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan."* (2 Kings 18:4) Notice this bronze serpent that had at one time brought deliverance to Israel is now equated with idols.

We have done precisely what the Israelites did with that which was used to bring deliverance. We have made it an idol of worship. Instead of worshipping exclusively what was accomplished by His crucifixion, we have incorporated the cross into our hymns of praise every Lord's Day. We embrace His cross, all the while shunning our cross intricately designed for our growth and maturity.

I often see beautiful little fireplaces with flickering flames playing on perfectly laid logs. I can almost feel the warmth emanating from those "burning logs." On closer examination, I discover that everything is false—a clever imitation. The logs are a close copy of the real. The fire is a red light shining on strips of tissue paper being fanned by a gentle breeze from a small fan. I am drawn to the alluring exhibit. It looks so real. I can embrace a fire like that. It doesn't cause me any sweat, toil or pain. That's why I can so easily embrace Jesus' cross—not that it's fake—but it is someone else's cross, not mine. It causes me no discomfort. He

endured the pain and suffering. It cost me nothing. Let me repeat a verse of Scripture already quoted. "*knowing this, that our old self (Adam) was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.*" (Rom. 6:6, 7) Now let us walk softly as we tread on holy ground. **Our body of sin was not done away with by the crucifixion of Jesus but by our crucifixion.**

There is a word not used much in our everyday conversation, and that word is *propitiation*. To my knowledge, the word is used only three times in the Bible; and it has to do with atonement. The mercy seat was referred to as the propitiatory covering. When our astronauts were first traveling to space, I was surprised to hear NASA refer to the heat shield (their protective shield for re-entry) as the propitiatory shield. In other words—Jesus took the heat for us. Did Jesus' crucifixion eliminate sin in me? No! He was a sacrifice—atonement—but in no way was my ability to sin eliminated. Sin, as taught by Jesus, arises from within and defiles the man. (Mark 7:21-23) Only by our own crucifixion on our own cross is the body of sin eradicated in our lives. "*For he who has died is freed from sin.*" (Rom. 6:7) His crucifixion dealt with acts of sin, but our crucifixion deals with the nature of sin. Some people wonder why they are tormented by the temptations of sin, even though they have been born again and have committed their lives to Jesus. It is because we are trying to embrace His cross rather than our cross. We sing of how we love the old rugged cross. Sure, I can love His cross because it is distant and remote. Because He suffered, I don't have to suffer. So goes the perverted greasy-grace gospel of today.

The carnal man is a master escape artist. Houdini had nothing on us. We can escape our hardships and trials by simply distorting a few passages of Scripture. Misinterpretation is a grand tool. I want to be so admired that I'll be called back again to minister. I want to stay in the best motels and eat the best foods. I don't want to be hot or cold but comfortable. The question is

where is the core of your life? If you had only one hour to talk to a person, what would you talk about? For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Whatever your core being is will dominate your conversation. Supposing you were ill with some fatal disease and the doctor says, with sad expression, "It is certain, you have only six hours to live." What would your conversation consist of—golf, fishing, vacation or favorite recipes? I doubt it. I'm quite sure it would be of those things of eternal nature. This is where the one thief found himself. "Remember me." That was the most important thing he could think of. Consider this. The malefactor suffered the same cruel death as did Jesus, and that thief is us.

Let us consider a portion of Scripture most of us know at least in part. Paul, in this passage, is recounting what it cost him to know the Lord—not just to be saved, but to know Him. This is lengthy but necessary in order that we may get the full picture and not a remnant, which could be misleading. *"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."* (Phil. 3:7-11) There are some words and phrases I have underlined which are important. Notice! The first two are past tense—not something Paul was facing but something he had already walked through in order that he may know Christ. The last word "from" is not the general resurrection of the dead, but the resurrection from among those dead people walking around pretending to be alive.

Let us look at verse ten, which has been so badly misrepresented. “...*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection...*” Yeah! That’s what I want—the power. There was a lot of ‘loss’ that preceded the power. “...*and the fellowship of His suffering...*” No! I don’t want any suffering, just the power. “...*being conformed to His death...*” Don’t talk to me about death. Just preach about life. Talk about power. Don’t talk to me about dying with Him. I thought all this dying stuff was already accomplished when Jesus died. Listen, my friend; He is our pattern. He showed us how to live and how to die. This is the crux of the whole problem. We can love His cross, it killed Him; but how are we going to love something that is going to kill us? The true gospel message has been skewed in order to escape the suffering. When you see that gentle saint who radiates the peace of God, you have no idea what their cross has had to accomplish in their life.

We sing of how we love the “Old Rugged Cross.” Well, I for one do not love that old cross—I hate it. I hate that hideous, monstrous instrument that killed the One I love with such a torturous death. In the natural, how could I love cancer if it had taken my only son? If I had witnessed months of torture, as it slowly strangled the last residue of life from him, would I confess to love it? No! I would hate it. I hate my cross even more. That is the reason it is so hard to embrace. I dearly love what Jesus did on His cross. I have witnessed a few people whose cross had accomplished what nothing else could ever have done. I have watched through the years as little by little they were transformed into the image of Christ. They were beautiful.

Oh! The lengths we will go to evade the cross that is ours to bear. “...*If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.*” (Lu. 9:23) This seems unmistakable as to its meaning, and it is recorded more than once in the New Testament. We simply cannot be His disciple except we bear our cross daily. We can take His cross because He has already borne the pain, sorrow, and ridicule of it. I really don’t have to share in it.

It's my cross that is the problem. It's an ever-present reality, killing me by degrees—agonizingly slow and painful. I can make His cross beautiful, adorn it with jewels, even put wheels on it, pull it around the countryside and never be subject to the death of my cross. I'm not belittling the motives of these precious people who do so. I am saying, it is my cross which I must bear if I am to participate in His death and if I am to be "...*made conformable unto His death.*" (Phil. 3:10 KJV) I simply cannot enter Paradise except through death. I'm not speaking of natural death. His cross will not kill me. It killed Him to bring redemption to all mankind, but it will not kill me. I must spiritually follow those same bloody footprints He left, walking that same painful path to death. As someone summed up so concisely, "It's not fun to die." Did Jesus love His cross? Listen closely as He prays, "...*My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as Thou wilt.*" (Matt. 26:39)

If we try to evade our cross, we attempt even more to spare our children their cross. Would not Mary have loved to have been able to spare Jesus the pain and suffering? I'm sure she would have as soon not heard those words from Simeon, "*and a sword will pierce even your own soul...*" (Lu. 2:35) We simply do not want that sort of prophecy.

The carnal man will resist the cross until his last drop of blood is exhausted. We will fight for our rights to the screaming end. Now friends, our cross should drive us to our Gethsemane. It is there that the battle is resolved. Neither your preacher nor priest can do it for you. No one can sit in proxy for us. Only your desire to do the will of the Father will drive you to your Gethsemane, where the battle is either won or lost. His cross may look beautiful and enticing; but I promise you, your cross will never hold any allurement to you. It will always be repugnant, ugly, and hideous. Only by God's grace can you embrace it.

How successful has Satan been with you? He will treat you exactly as he treated Jesus. To escape him, we usually take the

first exit ramp. It is for this reason we embrace the “lovely cross of Jesus.” It’s not our cross. We don’t have to die on it. This modern Christianity that gives us ample access to both worlds is not what the disciples taught nor what Jesus lived. With the exception of John, they all gave their lives for the sake of the gospel. The cross did its intended work in them. In the early days of Pentecostalism, worshippers were showered with rotten eggs, vegetables, and mockery. Dancing in the Spirit was ridiculed as something out of the Dark Continent; now it is choreographed and resembles something from a Hollywood screen set. David danced before the Ark of the Covenant. Did he rehearse it? I doubt it. Christianity is not a rehearsed performance but experienced by drinking from the fountainhead of life.

Jacob was a spoiled mama’s boy. Rebekah even devised the scheme to rob Esau of his blessing. God had to get Jacob away from mama to accomplish in his life what He desired. Rebekah never saw him again. Christian character is formed through hardship. Herein lays the insidious scheme behind the “bleeding hearts” of our national government. They want to spare you any hardship—to rob you of character and in doing so will abandon the precious gold yet embedded in the unyielding rock. Now God has a determination to form us into the image of Himself. We can only avoid His pressure chambers so long. Believe me; He will devise one you will find impossible to avoid. There is the smell of Adam that emanates from most preachers. That strutting, prancing, swaggering spectacle of the dancing dead is a stench in the nostrils of God. Crucifixion and death is the only way to free them from that phony carnival and lead them into real life.

ROAD BUMP NO. 11

THE RIVER OF LIFE

Let us look with patience and a teachable spirit at the next phase of the Garden of Eden. *“Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided and became four rivers.”* (Gen. 2:10) Let me give you a brief explanation of the four rivers. Ezekiel explains that he was among the exiles in Babylon when he was given a vision. In this vision, he saw a great storm coming from the north. North, in prophecy, indicates judgment. There was a great cloud with fire flashing forth continually and a bright light around it and within it was something like glowing metal in the midst of the fire. This has to be the Lord with His entourage of angels of fire. In the midst of this fire were figures resembling four living beings. *“..And this was their appearance: they had human form. Each of them had four faces and four wings.”* (Ez. 1:5, 6) *“As for the form of their faces, each had the face of a man, all four had the face of a lion on the right and the face of a bull on the left, and all four had the face of an eagle.”* (Ez. 1:10)

Examine these same representations in the book of Revelation. *“And before the throne there was, as it were, a sea of glass like crystal; and in the center and around the throne, four living creatures full of eyes in front and behind. And the first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle.”* (Rev. 4:6, 7) These are the four faces of Christ or the four-square appearance of His church. Notice! Both these visions are of the same thing with the four creatures having the identical representations; although, there are approximately 700 years

separating them. As the children of Israel encamped around the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, Jewish tradition teaches that Reuben's standard was the man, Judah's was the lion, Ephraim's was the ox, and Dan's was the eagle.

If you and three other persons should see the same event or structure from four different angles, the majority of times each will give a different description of the same picture. These are the four gospels and their seemingly different views of the same man, Christ Jesus. Matthew had been a Jewish publican, a Roman tax collector, who approached Jesus as a Jew awaiting the establishment of the kingdom of heaven. He views the life of Jesus as One who has come to establish an earthly kingdom with different heads of state and a law set up on the precepts of the rabbis and Pharisees. This was the face of the lion depicting the lion of the tribe of Judah. *"...behold, the Lion that is from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has overcome so as to open the book and its seven seals."* (Rev. 5:5)

Next is the book of Mark. You are aware that the book of Mark is the young man John Mark scribing the dictations from the memory of Peter. *"...they also had John (Mark) as their helper (minister)."* (Acts 13:5) John Mark is familiar with the role of ministering or serving. Unlike many ministers of today, who wear a robe of royalty and stand in the most prominent places, Mark was a true servant; consequently, he wrote from that perspective. This book represents the calf or oxen of the four living creatures. This is an animal that will spend its life as a servant and afterwards will be offered up in sacrifice to the Lord. This is the Christ of Isaiah 53. This is not the Christ of Psalms 110, for this passage sees Christ as powerful and ruling. This is the problem when people do not see the other faces. They must all interlock to form one Christ.

The book of Luke falls right into place as the picture of the man. Luke, the only gentile writer of the entire Scriptures,

a Greek proselyte to Judaism, and a physician (Col. 4:14), sees the humanity of this Jesus. He writes from the point of human sympathy—as the son of man, who can have compassion on the ignorant. “...*He took not on Him the nature of angels; but He took on Him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*” (Heb. 2:16, 17 KJV) Luke gives the clearest account of the birth of John the Baptist as well as the birth of Jesus and those details surrounding His birth. He wrote the gospel of Luke, not as one who witnessed it but as one who had gathered the information from those who had witnessed it. The book of Luke and the book of Acts were written about the same time and both were written to the same man, Theophilus.

The gospel of John, to my thinking, is the most profound of any book of the New Testament, excluding perhaps the book of Revelation which John also authored. This is the eagle soaring high in the heavens, seeing things no one else sees, as he is caught up on the winds of the Spirit. I’ve often thought of his beginning, as the son of thunder along with his brother James, and where he finished his ministry. He refers to himself as “that one whom Jesus loved.” (Jn. 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20) The wise man remarks, “*There are three things which are too wonderful for me, four which I do not understand: the way of an eagle in the sky, the way of a serpent on a rock, the way of a ship in the middle of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid.*” (Pro. 30:18, 19) Again, all four are allegorical reflections of the person of our Lord.

How differently He must appear to saints, angels, or to the New Zealand savage. How differently He must have appeared to Peter contrasted to John. The new-born infant sees mom and dad in a totally different light than their neighbors see them. Those sheep of Laban’s, when feeding and watering at Jacob’s trough, became what Jacob desired of them. If we continue to feed at the trough of a servant, we will reproduce servants; but if we feed at

the trough of an eagle, we will reproduce eagles. We will reproduce the image of the one we behold in the mirror. *“But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.”* (2 Cor. 3:18) We will behold Him as *“...a root out of parched ground...”* (Isa. 53:2), or we can see Him as *“...Outstanding among ten thousand.”* (S. of S. 5:10) It depends on where we feed and water.

We better comprehend Paul's writings because we're more at home with his arguments. They appeal somewhat more to the intellect. Some of John's writings seem to be simple testimonies more suitable for the infant in Christ. We hand the new-born Christian a small booklet of John's gospel; although, it is one of the most profound writings in Scripture. It has been viewed from seemingly unreachable heights. It appears to be a simple testimony; however, it is a source of unspeakable riches. We will have ten to one more comments on Paul's writing than on John's—not because the latter is more difficult, but we are more at ease where intellect seems more active than spirit. If we could only see, with the eagle's eye, what John was seeing; but it is not as easily grasped as is the message of the kingdom.

The Jews asked for a sign rather than ask for the veil to be removed. If it is a question of sensual things—sense will furnish the proof. To feel as a man, you must be a man; to feel and see as God, you must possess the Spirit of God. *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.”* (1 Cor. 2:11) It becomes clearer why Jesus insisted, *“...unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”* (Jn. 3:3)

Rivers are the means of carrying melted snow and rainwater to the seas, thus preventing flooding; but most of all, rivers are designed to water the land for the growth of vegetation. Much of our most productive farmlands would be a barren waste were it

not for the irrigation borrowed from the rivers. Notice the purpose of the river in the Scripture we've been observing. It was to water the Garden of Eden. Now let me ask you an improbable question. Would the tree of life need watering? The tree of life represents the Lord God Almighty. The river is the Holy Spirit. *"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified."* (Jn. 7:38, 39) Here, Jesus equates the "flowing river from within" with the Holy Spirit. This river is not flowing to the tree of life but from it.

Turn with me to a beautiful passage from the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel. This is part of a vision the Lord had given Ezekiel. *"Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east..."* (Ez. 47:1) There was a man with a measuring line in his hand, who led Ezekiel a thousand cubits through water that was ankle deep. He led him another thousand and the water was to the knees. He led him yet another thousand and the waters reached to the loins. Yet another thousand cubits he led him and the waters were over his head—waters to swim in. These waters were coming out of the temple of Ezekiel's vision. *"Then he said to me, 'These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; (desert) then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of the sea become fresh.'"* (Ez. 47: 8) This river is the flowing of the Holy Spirit to the barren places of the earth and to the sea (representing peoples of the earth), and the sea became fresh. Look at verse seven, *"Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there were very many trees on the one side and on the other."* These trees represent a flourishing people being nourished by the life-giving stream. To my understanding, the gospels become increasingly deeper in the things of the Spirit as you progress from Matthew to John.

The fourth river we see is the river John, the revelator, saw at the very end of his writings. *“And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb, in the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”* (Rev. 22:1, 2)

As we consider these four rivers, we realize they all represent the river of life—the Holy Spirit. They are all the same river. We also know Eden is paradise and the Holy City of Revelation twenty-two was also paradise; consequently, the Holy City (the Lamb's bride) of Revelation and the Garden of Eden are different pictures of the same setting, i.e., man dwelling at one in the Kingdom of God without the presence of evil. Eden is the dwelling place of God.

The fourteenth chapter of John's gospel is one of the most misunderstood chapters in Scripture. This is the chapter where the church gets the idea that Jesus is going to prepare a mansion for each of us, just over the hilltop next door to Jesus. It will be situated right by the river of life where we can dangle our feet into its clear waters. We will have eternity to spend there with nothing to do but relax. How much relaxing can one do? King James Version of Scripture states: *“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.”* (Jn.14:2, 3 KJV) Permit me to give you a free translation of the same two verses. *“In My Father's household there are many rooms, or abodes; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a suitable, compatible realm for you. Now if I go to make ready this realm of fellowship, I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I now dwell you, in My relationship with the Father, may later dwell.”*

Jesus dwelt under an open heaven. He was ever in fellowship with the Father. Since Adam's expulsion from Eden (Paradise), angels of fire along with the flaming sword had guarded the one entrance back into Paradise. This Eden—Paradise, is not a physical place but rather a realm of the Spirit. This was Nicodemus' problem. Jesus said you cannot even see the kingdom of God unless you are born again. Now hear me carefully; any carnal man, saved or unsaved, would be able to see heaven and the kingdom that has been highlighted for us in the past if it is a physical mansion in a physical heaven. The kingdom of God is where God rules as king. That's Paradise. Paradise had been closed to man until one day on Golgotha's hill Jesus spoke to that one dying thief and said, "...*Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.*" (Lu. 23:43) What was He saying? "I will take you with Me to a mystical heaven of harps and wings." No! He was saying, today I will reopen the way into Paradise. I will remove the barrier of the angels and the flaming sword. You can go with Me into God's presence. This was His promise to His disciples when He said, "...*that where I am (now) there you may be also.*" (Jn.14:3) That same Greek word *mone* wrongly translated mansion in John 14:2 KJV, is correctly translated in verse 23 to mean abode. "...*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode (mone) with him.*" (Jn. 14:23) He did not go as a heavenly carpenter to build you a physical palace over there. He went to eliminate every barrier between you and God so you may approach Him with boldness, Heb. 10:19 KJV, knowing the price for your redemption has been paid.

ROAD BUMP NO. 12

SAVED VS. BORN AGAIN

A dear friend of mine asked a question of me one day. “What’s wrong with our church? Where is the life?” I responded with an answer that I know shocked him. “Probably ninety-nine percent of them have not been born again.” “I’m quite sure most of them have been saved and baptized,” he countered. “That was not my answer. I said they had not been born again.”

As I contemplate life, when a woman conceives in the womb life has begun. It remains, from the embryo through the fetal stage, a living person in the first stages of life. It cannot see, neither can it hear nor understand what is happening around it. It is kicking, moving its arms, some say smiling and waiting for the next stage or level of development. This corresponds precisely to that of a person who has embraced Jesus as their Savior. This was the difficulty where Nicodemus found himself. Jesus said, “...*unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” (Jn. 3:3) You’re precisely as that fetus in the womb until you experience the birth from above. You cannot see, hear, nor understand although life is flowing through your veins. Let us consider the case of Nicodemus, “...*for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*” (Jn. 7:39) I can say with confidence—until the day of Pentecost not one person had ever been born again—not Abraham, not Moses nor Elijah. Not one person had partaken of the tree of life. Jesus said, “...*I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.*” (Jn. 14:6) Since the life is in the blood, all life was shut up in Jesus until His crucifixion; “*But the Scripture (Law) has shut up (imprisoned) all men*

under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.” (Gal. 3:22) God said, “...Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...” (Gen.1:26) Do you actually believe when you were saved you were then in the image and likeness of God? Was that embryonic drop in the image and likeness of its father? No! Both take time and environment.

This has been another road bump causing havoc in the church plus robbing God's people of their rightful place in the kingdom of God. You must believe Nicodemus was a believer or he would not have risked so much to come to Jesus. Not only had he come seeking Jesus, but he defended Jesus before the Pharisees. *“Our Law does not judge a man, unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it? (Jn. 7:51) Again, “And Nicodemus came also, who had first come to Him by night; bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds weight. And so they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen wrappings with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews.” (Jn. 19:39, 40) Nicodemus came with Joseph of Arimathea, who was a secret disciple, bringing with them costly spices to embalm the body of Jesus. This very act would have made them publicly known to the Pharisees.*

Let us go to a very familiar portion of Scripture used repeatedly by most evangelists. *“Now it came about that the poor man died and he was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue; for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this...there is a great chasm (gulf) fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us’” (Lu. 16:22-26) That's*

a lot of Scripture and not in its entirety, but I need to emphasize this “fixed gulf.” Between the carnal mind and the spiritual mind is a chasm so wide and deep neither can cross to the other side. Regardless of how knowledgeable the spiritual man may be, he cannot explain the things of God so a sinner can fully understand them. That gulf is too wide—that chasm too deep. Some will argue with me on that; but, I insist—unless the Holy Spirit convicts the sinner concerning sin, righteousness and judgment, your words are wasted.

On the other hand, an educated man believes he can understand anything, if only it is taught properly. That is precisely what Nicodemus thought. That is why Jesus did not waste time attempting to explain. Jesus knew, except this learned man was born again, even His words would be wasted. The church has made a grievous error in putting men into places of authority simply because they were educated. *“But a natural man (carnal man) does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.”* (1 Cor. 2:14) Here is that impassable gulf that is fixed between them.

Can a person be saved, conceived of the Father and yet not be able to see nor hear the things of the Lord? The answer has to be yes. Before a child is born, it is very much a human being but is excluded from the mainstream of life. So complete is that exclusion many contend it is not yet a person. However, after the first seven weeks, an ultrasound can detect movement in the little one. This is not meant to be a thesis on pro-life, but distinguishing the difference of being saved and born again. After that baby is born, one would think it is still in the same condition as before, but now learning has begun. Breath has now entered its lungs. It can see and hear. So how many years will it take for that little one to fit comfortably into society? That depends on a lot of things—genetics, a nurturing environment and food. Some youngsters fit in quite well by age twenty-one or twenty-five; for others, they

are still children at fifty years of age. Some never fit in and end up in institutions or prisons. Even after a baby is born, it does not guarantee they will hear and see. That is exactly what happens in the spiritual realm. One is not born from above full grown. They can hear but must be taught how to hear spiritually. Now they can associate with others in the spiritual society; but, they must be taught how they relate with others.

How long does it take to become a beautiful, functioning part of the body of Christ? Who knows? Start with genetics. Toss in environment. Are they eating fast-food or cafeteria style or do they have faithful shepherds who will feed them more than a Sunday morning buffet? How do they eat? Most people sit indifferently while someone else spoon-feeds them. They have yet to learn how to help themselves. My heart breaks when I meet people who tell me, "I've been saved fifty years" but still they carry a bottle and wear diapers. I do not know how old the Hebrew church was at the time of the author's epistle to them; however, I do know he was tremendously disappointed in their growth. "... *you have come to need milk and not solid food. For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*" (Heb. 5:12, 13) The Greek word for "babe" is *nepios*, or "without speech." This indicates the earliest steps in Christian growth.

"He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.' But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified." (Jn. 7:38, 39) "And gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me'." (Acts 1:4) "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you, and will be

in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (Jn. 14:16-18)

How often did the disciples hear Jesus say something but they really didn't hear? How many times had He told them of his impending crucifixion and the resurrection; yet, not one of them heard? When Mary told them the tomb was empty—no one believed her. The Holy Spirit opens our dulled understanding to truth. *“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth...”* (Jn. 16:13)

The letter to the Corinthians, which we have quoted partially, bears looking at again. *“For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised* (examined). (1 Cor. 2:11-14) Reading this passage carefully will prove to you the most learned man on the planet, if an unbeliever, cannot—not perhaps, not probably, but cannot understand anything from God; however, some obscure, uneducated little nobody can grasp the deepest secrets if he or she is attuned to the Spirit of God.

When Adam was divorced from God and was forcibly ejected from the Garden of Eden, he was literally cast into outer darkness. Outer darkness is the most remote from light. As you know, truth is light; darkness is the absence of truth. He was in a place where there was no illumination of truth. He found himself little higher than the animals he worked with. He was in a place of no return unless he was born again. He must be regenerated or “genetically re-engineered” and that could not happen until Jesus died and rose from the tomb.

I would like to quote A. W. Tozer and his profound words of wisdom:

...The whole transaction of religious conversion has been made mechanical and spiritless...Everything is made to center upon the initial act of 'accepting' Christ (a term, incidentally, which is not found in the Bible) and we are not expected thereafter to crave any further revelation of God to our souls... (The Pursuit of God)

ROAD BUMP NO. 13

HELL

As I sat one day across from a lady whose attitude was very assertive, demanding to know what my belief of hell was, her husband (himself a college professor in a Christian university) wrote something on a piece of paper and slid it over to me. On the paper was written, "Heaven is to be in the presence of God. Hell is to be excluded from His presence." I could not have said it better; but at that particular luncheon, I had neither the time nor inclination to try to elaborate on this. I was reminded of a word the Lord had whispered to me a few mornings earlier: "There are those who will come to you for help who do not really want help."

Allow me to articulate as best I can what I believe about hell. Let me first say, I do believe there is a hell. It is real; it is filled with pain and torment; but it is not reserved only for the "eternally lost." I believe the modern day church's approach to hell forms the error warping most of the other misconceptions of our relationship to God. The word hell is translated from the Greek word *hades* and the Hebrew word *sheol*. Both words simply mean the place of the departed, or the nether world. Neither word has anything to do with literal fire. The lake of fire was used to refer to a place called Gehenna, which was the place where refuse was burned outside the gates of Jerusalem. It burned to some degree both day and night. Hell, a place of correction, is that realm where all sorts of pain, unease, torment and pressure are brought to bear upon the imperfect one in order to bring about change in his or her person. The concept of fire is used because, in our minds, it causes the most severe pain.

To draw a picture of pain is physically impossible, but we can draw a picture, a pictograph, of a man in fire and thereby depict pain by the expression on his face. This is what God in His cryptic language imparts to us in Scripture. Jesus relates a parable of the rich man and Lazarus. In this parable, the rich man died and in hell (hades) he lifted up his eyes. Remember, this does not imply he was in literal flames. However, he was in indescribable pain and torment. Travel with me to some of the third world countries, to the back alleys and slums of our cities, or even to the spacious homes of some of the wealthy, and there you will encounter pain and torment that is indescribable—some visible, others invisible. You will see no flames of literal fire; but if you could see deep into their bosoms, you would see a raging inferno. The rich man wanted just one drop of water from the tip of Lazarus' finger to ease his suffering; while all about us, there are those who are trying to cool their parched tongues with another sip of scotch or another fix of cocaine, or another boat or automobile. Probably, unknown to them, there is that insatiable thirst for God within them that demands to be quenched. Now you tell me that is not hell. Now, you attempt to convince me that gnawing unrest or disease in your body is not hell! But, you see, the hell in this life or in the hereafter is designed to bring us to God.

I listened as ex-President George W. Bush defined his feelings while flying over the ruins of the twin towers. He said, "It was like flying over hell." As many of you remember that terrible wreckage and carnage, we would tend to say the same thing. However, I believe one can be living in the lap of luxury and still be in torment from the flames of hell. You see, one cannot paint a picture of hell. Many have tried but fallen short, for they are attempting to paint a picture of a place rather than a condition and circumstance. No one can paint a picture of outer darkness; but, they are both very real and filled to overflowing with people crying in torment.

If you're entangled in a denominational web, you could say, "Well, a person can be changed in this life but never in the

afterlife.” *“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation (preached) to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark...”* (1 Pet. 3:18-20) This is a very difficult passage for many, but only because they are attempting to reconcile their denominational beliefs with what is clearly and simply recorded in Scripture. The main argument I hear is, “Why did Jesus just pick out those people who were unbelievers in Noah’s day and not the rest of the lost?” I can only answer this question with a question. Why did Jesus heal only one man at the pool of Bethesda out of that entire multitude who waited for the moving of the water? *“Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, withered.”* (Jn. 5:2, 3) These all watched with curiosity as Jesus healed that one who had been there thirty-eight years in his sickness. When he was made whole, you just know the rest began to implore the Lord to heal them also. However, He did not! He walked away without healing another one of them. As far as I know, He never went back. Why did he not heal all who were blind, or deaf or infirm? I do not know. I am only persuaded *“...He has done all things well...”* (Mark 7:37)

I know Jesus went by the spirit into the prison-house (hell, sheol, Hades, the nether world); and He preached the gospel of deliverance to those who, as yet, had no redeemer. I do not know how many accepted that message—perhaps all—maybe few. We do know many rose with Him at His resurrection. That prison of hell held a host of people, sinners and the innocent alike. Jesus Himself went to hell after He died. *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”* (Ps.16:10 KJV) *“For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol;*

neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit." May I repeat; hell is any place that is separated from the Father.

When Adam was expelled from the Garden of Eden, he was cast into outer darkness, or farthest from the light—a place of alienation. Darkness is that place separate from the light of the Father. *"but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 8:12) Are the sons of the kingdom lost for eternity? I think not. *"The Son of man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."* (Matt. 13:41, 42) Read also Matthew 13:50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30. As you read these, you may become confused unless you are convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt God loves us beyond desertion, regardless of our mistakes and shortcomings. You will also begin to see hell as more than a penal institution, but rather a place (realm) of correction and restitution. What father would want to see his child locked up and abused forever; but, if possible, would spend every ounce of energy, money, and education to rehabilitate him? The correction may be long and expensive; but spiritually, the price for us has already been paid, and that not in vain. God certainly doesn't operate on our time schedule.

Travel with me to Haiti, Colombia, Mexico or some other third world country. Don't stay in the cities but take a bus out into the countryside back into the slums of the bustling cities of Port au Prince, Bogota or Mexico City. Now tell me—did you observe a little bit of hell in that mixture? If we have eyes to see, we will observe a hell on earth in many people and many places. Do you think the Lord would have us do go into hell and preach the good tidings to those hungry souls?

ROAD BUMP NO. 14

HEAVEN—THE HOLY CITY

I must insert this parenthesis of “Heaven—the Holy City” in this study of the Garden of Eden in order to make the flow understandable. The Holy City is one of the most misunderstood allegories in the whole of the Bible. It is found almost exclusively in the book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse—the unveiling. The book of Revelation must be likened to the veil of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness, which hung between the holy place and the holy of holies. Both conceals and reveals. For the greater majority of people, they both conceal.

Let us consider briefly this place called Paradise. It is mentioned in only three places in the Scriptures. It will be profitable for us to look at each one of these references. Hanging on the cross, Jesus promises the dying thief, “... *Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.*” (Lu. 23:43) The second reference is of Paul and his great revelation. “*And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*” (2 Cor. 12:3, 4) Then there’s the last reference which goes like this, “*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.*” (Rev. 2:7) Anywhere you reference Paradise, it will refer you back to the Garden of Eden—this realm of unbroken, unlimited relationship with the Father. This is where Jesus took the dying thief. This is where Paul was translated and where the overcomer is promised

access to the tree of life. Keep these Scriptures fresh in your mind for we will come back to them.

Very early in my Christian life, way back there in my spiritual infancy, I had the same warped view of heaven and hell as most Christians embrace today. I thought of heaven as that golden city with streets of gold and a crystal clear river running through it, in which I could dangle my feet. It never once entered my mind that perhaps God had rescued me from the clutches of Satan to prepare me for a greater work, even in the afterlife. I never thought I might become weary of bouncing around from one cloud to another throughout eternity. Just how much diversity can one find in a cloud anyway? However, before I began to contemplate some of these things, we never tired of singing of that place we were going someday. It was all just over the hilltop—some day in the future. These things finally began to exasperate my feeble mind, and I began to examine why we were being forced to endure this “boot-camp.” Were we really being molded into hardened soldiers only to sit around for billions of years doing nothing? Perhaps, God had something very important awaiting us that the churches, at least the ones I knew, had withheld from us. Look at the modern churches and most are still locked into that mode of thinking and teaching.

Here again, we viewed the Garden of Eden as heaven in its totality, instead of an innocent man dwelling at one with God in His kingdom. Remember! Adam was to keep the garden. He was to protect it and cultivate it; but in his innocence, he knew not how. Would it be wise to set a baby Christian over one of God's flocks? Obviously, we all know the answer to that. *“Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad (child) and whose princes feast in the morning.”* (Eccl. 10:16) This is speaking of the untrained, untried and unfaithful person who (perhaps in ignorance) is installed in places of responsibility. I have noticed science gives a wide area of interpretation to those pictographs found on cave walls; all the while, the Christian community rarely gives room except to one interpretation of the Garden of Eden—theirs.

The wisest man of the old covenant speaks these words, which we would do well to hear. *“It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”* (Prov. 25:2) Much to the chagrin of many foolish children of God, they think He makes everything simple and understandable to His children. They know not that God writes His deepest secrets in a coded, cryptographic language that must be deciphered or interpreted to make sense. Most of the Bible and all of Revelation are written this way. It is not a book one can read like a newspaper or novel.

So let us approach this next recording differently. There are two cities spoken of at length in the book of Revelation. One is called the great city and the other is called the holy city. The first recording of the great city is found in the eleventh chapter of the book. *“And their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified.”* (Rev. 11:8) We know Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem, so Sodom and Egypt are mystical names for an adulterous and idolatrous Jerusalem. The great city is another name for Babylon (Rev. 18:21), which depicts the adulterous church system of our present world.

The holy city is openly disclosed in the twenty-first chapter of Revelation. Pay very close attention to the wording. *“And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.”* (Rev. 21:2) *“And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, ‘Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.”* (Rev. 21:9, 10) There can be no doubt that the Bride of Christ and the New Jerusalem are one and the same. Remember! This is figurative language. The revelator spends the remainder of chapter twenty-one painting a very descriptive word picture of the true church—a church that has been made pure and holy by the dealings of

the Lord. *“And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”* (Rev. 21:14) It is laid out four-square. Notice particularly this verse which reads, *“And the material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass.”* (Rev. 21:18) We all know the street is pure gold; but do we know the entire city is pure gold? This gold speaks of the divine nature of God. We must understand this gold is not that yellow metal men have searched for, fought over, and died for the entire world over while digging through muck and mire and in dark caves for a few precious ounces of that hypnotic power. *“And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; each one of the gates was a single pearl...”* (Rev. 21:21) As you know, pearls are formed by an irritant the oyster cannot expel from its house. It must learn to live with it. The easiest way to live with it is to cover the nuisance with nacre, i.e., mother-of-pearl. This is part of its own life that has been poured out to cover this wound or irritation.

This is a graphic picture teaching us that we will find it impossible to enter that holy city without enduring a certain degree of suffering and pain. Each gate will offer its own unique pain and frustration. Pearls, in the natural, are formed layer upon layer, like an onion. Our lives are built in layers as we are transformed from glory to glory. (2 Cor. 3:18) The battle is not won in a single great onslaught, but little by little, layer upon layer and precept upon precept. *“...I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.”* (Rev. 21:22) That is the city the church sings about, one to which we are going to and in which we will live in a mansion someday ‘just over the hilltop’. They have missed the truth completely. We enter that city (the church) through one of the gates, each one different than another, yet belonging to the same family. If God has called me through one gate, don’t try to force me through another one. God’s chosen gate is the gate that will offer His special variety of exasperation designed to deal with certain blemishes (sin) in my

character. That imperfection is an enemy in my land. It is a flaw in the potter's clay that must be dealt with. The same key does not fit all the gates. Gold depicts the divinity of our Lord. Notice! Not only is the street (our walk) pure and divine, but the entire city (the complete body of Christ) is pure gold. The house where we live (the body in which we exist) is Godly. You will not find any brass in this city as you did in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness. Brass speaks of judgment and that is all in the past. You will not find any silver as you did in the Tabernacle. Silver speaks of redemption, which has already been taken care of. All you see is gold and precious stones.

The church has taught, erroneously, for years that this city is heaven; it is a place where we will go. We have difficulty in seeing heaven as being anything but a refurbished earth. Because the church has attempted to literalize all the Scriptures, we have been left entangled in this web of unreasonable, unsolvable equations. If hell means more than scorching and burning fires where one sizzles and fries for eternity, then heaven must also mean more than a physical street of gold, a river of clear water where we can dangle our feet, or a cloud upon which we can sit playing a harp, for which we have no talent nor desire. As we have attempted to point out, Eden depicts man as he was intended to be in the spirit, fellowshiping with the Father.

It is no accident that man is a triune being. A horse or a cow has a body and a soul but not a spirit. Throughout the Bible, animals are referred to as souls. When we are born again, the Spirit of the Lord comes and joins with our spirit in order to rule from that throne. A horse or a cow is not a spirit being with a body; they are a soul with a body. God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul—not a life-giving Spirit. *“So also it is written, ‘the first man, Adam, became a living soul.’ The last Adam became (was) a life-giving spirit.”* (1 Cor. 15:45) Without the Spirit of God in our being, we are little more than an animal.

How many times have we all stood and prayed the “Lord’s Prayer”? How many times have we heard it sung? *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matt. 6:10) The computer is bringing to my attention *Thy kingdom come* is a fragment of a sentence, and it can’t see that kingdom simply means His government—the Kings domain. It has been programmed by some man who can’t see this as a request from our heart for God to come into our spirit and begin His rule. The church also, as a rule, thinks we are requesting Jesus to hurry back to earth. He’s already in the earth. We’re actually asking Him to come into our being and take charge of our lives. *“...the kingdom of God is within you.”* (Luke 17:21 KJV) Permit me to use a very simple illustration. When a person is born into the kingdom of God, that person is born a little babe. He or she will begin to grow and be influenced by their environment. If their teachers and pastors are off the mark, then they will grow up with a formula always printing out the wrong answer. If the kingdom of God is out there in our future, we will forever be struggling to enter into it. However, if we realize it is within us, then we will be praying, “Father, may Thy kingdom expand its domain until my entire being is totally ruled by You.”

Military personnel are trained to kill people and break things. When Jesus enters our lives as King, He does essentially the same thing. *“Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”* (Matt. 10:34) Here the Prince of Peace is declaring in no uncertain terms that He did not come to bring peace—not an olive branch—but a sword. That, in itself, appears to be an irreconcilable interpretation. What is He at war with? He is at war with every carnal “Canaanite” in our “land.” Consider carefully the following passage. *“... Yet once more I will shake not only the earth, but also the heaven. And this expression, ‘Yet once more’ denotes the removing of those things which can be shaken, as of created things, in order that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.”* (Heb. 12:26, 27)

Consider His process: First—when we ask God to bring His kingdom into our lives, we are asking Him to shake everything in our lives that is of this carnal nature. He will not erect His kingdom on the foundation of another structure. Everything of the spirit of darkness must face the instrument of His demolition. Do you then wonder why you started having problems after you were born again? If you listen carefully, you can almost hear the sounds of the heavenly wrecking crew. Oh! But that's not what I was taught. I know what you were taught, but I want to bring you to reality. The heaven He's preparing for us and we for it is a heaven in the spirit—not a Disney World playground. That is why Adam could not be allowed to eat of the tree of life after he had partaken of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “...lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever.” (Gen. 3:22) This man, who was a living soul, was not created to live forever as is the man of the Spirit. When the Lord comes into our lives, He begins to disrupt things—which have served as anchors in our lives—stabilizing, but earthly.

Secondly—when God begins to operate in a church, He shakes the entire mixture until the chaff rises to the top. Then He causes the wind to come and blow away the chaff. “*And His winnowing fork is in His hand to clean out His threshing floor, and to gather the wheat into His barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*” (Lu. 3:17) The fire is applied to the ore to extract the gold. It is not for the sake of the ore at all. The fire is put to the chaff to burn it out of our lives. The chaff in the church is not speaking particularly of ungodly people—it is speaking of ungodly carnality in each of our lives. Ananias and Sapphira are an excellent example of the shaking of the church.

Thirdly—when a nation drifts just so far from Him, He will again shake that nation so hard the chaff (the ungodly character, loose living, rebelliousness, adultery, thefts, etc.) will be brought to the surface and exposed for what it is. Then He will burn it with unquenchable fire. “*Blessed is the nation whose God is the*

Lord..." (Ps. 33:12) I dare say there is no nation on earth today whose god is the Lord. There are those who make the assertion, but their lives are a screaming disclaimer.

The more the Lord makes war on the evil inhabitants in our land, the closer we move into that spiritual realm called heaven. We will not suddenly be raptured from a life of Sunday morning Christianity and brought to that city of gold. This is a process that cannot be bypassed. In the lessons of harvests, which the Lord teaches, beginning in Leviticus—Passover is first, Pentecost is second, and Tabernacles, third. All have to do with harvests. It is a simple picture of how some fruit, fields or plants require more sun than do others. The squash, English peas, tomatoes and early potatoes are some of the first to ripen and be harvested. Next are the corn, okra, cotton and wheat. These require a great deal more sun to ripen. Last of all are the nuts, winter wheat, grapes and apples. The harvesting is crucial. As you can see, some of the produce requires twice as much time as others. The hot days and warm nights are a fundamental necessity to their ripening process. Christians are similar to these crops.

These picture stories are not incorporated to fill the liturgy of their worship. This is to teach us how His saints are harvested at different times of the seasons. I think all would agree Jesus was and is the pattern Son. *"...as He is, so also are we in this world."* (1 Jn. 4:17) We are to emulate His pattern of how He lived His life as a man. Many have asked the question, "What shall we do throughout eternity?" I certainly don't know about all eternity, but I do know of part of eternity.

Jesus had hardly begun His priestly ministry in the earth when His life was cut short. As a sacrifice for you and me, He was offered up by the priests of His day on that very day of Passover when the Passover lamb was being offered. Oh! I realize the Roman soldiers crucified Him, but it was at the insistence of the priests of the temple. *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the*

just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.” (1 Pet. 3:18-20) “... When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men. (Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?...)” (Eph. 4:8-10)

I have made mention of how I believe hell is a place of correction. Since Christ is our pattern and He went into hell and preached to those in prison, would we not follow His pattern in like manner? He is preparing a host of priests (us) to descend into the belly of hell and preach the good tidings to those unfortunate prisoners. Forget sitting on a cloud playing your harp. That is as farfetched as the mid-eastern zealot who gives his life as a martyr so he can have seventy-two virgins as his wives in the hereafter.

ROAD BUMP NO. 15

WORSHIP MUST BE IN THE SPIRIT

As Jesus left Judea, He found himself very thirsty after passing through Galilee; and in the territory of Samaria, He seemed to have had an appointment at a certain well located in that area. As he sat there beside the well, a Samaritan woman came to draw water. Some incredibly enlightening truths are opened to us as we read the dialog between these two people. However, there is only one on which I wish to dwell. The woman was trying to pin Him down as to where they were to worship. *“Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. God is spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’”* (Jn. 4:21, 24)

For those who believe Jesus will someday set up His throne in Jerusalem, where the entire world will come and bow down, these Scriptures must present some impassable barriers. Jesus said, you will not worship in Jerusalem any longer; but since God is Spirit, you must worship Him in spirit and truth. Just how does one actually worship in spirit? How do we get past the pattern of worship that has been mistakenly charted out for us as “the way” by our forefathers? How does the church enter into worship? I can’t speak for your church, but I can speak for most. The choir will file in, or fall in, or gather. A prayer may be said and then we all turn to an announced page in the song book and begin to sing a time-worn song of praise; or to be more modern, we sing from words projected on a screen. After receiving the morning tithes and offerings, the minister will step behind the pulpit and present his morning thoughts.

Let us approach this from God's perspective and how He, more often than not, operates. In the twenty-fourth chapter of Exodus, God called to Moses and said, "...*Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction. And the glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud.*" (Ex. 24:12, 16) Notice carefully, God called Moses to meet with Him on the mountain; and yet, He kept Moses waiting six full days before He ever spoke to Moses.

We must get a view of God's calendar into our spirit if we are to appreciate God. God does not operate in our time frame. "*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*" (2 Pet. 3:8) This will give you a ratio of about 365,000 to 1, not counting leap year. Also, keep in mind Moses was a chosen son of God that was kept waiting, even after being summoned by the Almighty.

Ezekiel, who had been carried away captive into Babylon, was a priest of the Most High God. God is faithful to place His priests in the areas where they are most needed. In Babylon, he is sent as a representative of God to the exiles, his brethren, who were also in that alien land. He goes as God. "*Then I came to the exiles who lived beside the river Chebar at Tel-abib, and I sat there seven days where they were living, causing consternation among them.*" (Ez. 3:15) His week-long silence gave them cause for concern. You must believe me. God will not answer you in your time frame.

I preached in a Cuban church some years ago in the city of Miami. A young Cuban nationalist was relating to me how life was under Castro. "You had to apply to some government office for everything you did or needed. We would stand all day in line and just before we reached the window, they would close the

window and display a sign which said “*mañana*.” We always had such a great laugh when that happened.” I was shocked. I could not imagine someone laughing at that sort of inconsideration and inconvenience. “What else could we do? Becoming angry would not have solved our problem,” he explained.

The American people have little or no concept of what it is to wait for anything. We’ve been so ingrained with the push-button mentality that if we lose power in our homes, within ten minutes we’re on the phone with the utility company demanding to know how long we’ll have to be inconvenienced. This mentality bleeds over into our religious life, and we unconsciously carry this mind-set into our relationship with God.

There was a movie some years back called “The Ugly American” depicting what many who travel abroad witness every day. Many Americans, not all, are terribly demanding, thoughtless, rude, arrogant, and presumptuous. They act as if they’re better than everyone around them. I see this picture enlarged and projected on the television sets repeatedly by those men and women, who are supposedly representing God to the world, preening, posing and prancing before the cameras. It is nauseating to me—how must it appear to our Father? There is a word which is very descriptive which fits much of our worship; it is called “pretentious.” It means showy, conceited, hollow or for appearance sake. As part of the Sermon on the Mount are found these words, “*And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men...*” (Matt. 6:5) The carnal man loves to be religious. He loves the attention and the act of being pious. He loves the attention and applause which are so deadly; therefore, he literally pushes into those positions to receive praise which only belongs to God Almighty. Flesh makes a show of religion to be seen of men. Humility finds a place to slip away and hide from view as flesh is on display.

I walk into the foyer of a church on Sunday morning and am immediately handed a bulletin, which is really a confession of our lack of knowledge of The Holy One. On this little pamphlet is the “order of service.” It informs people what will happen and when it will happen. Some even have the songs printed that we will sing. It saves time. Remember! We’re operating on a time schedule. The hymnal has become outdated. We’re allotting God a time between greeting each other, singing, a short prayer time and the message when He is free to do whatever He wishes to do in our midst; however, Lord, you have until twelve o’clock—after that, we’re out-of-here. Can we not see the arrogance of even that little printed sheet? Oh! I know all the reasons, which are given for the usage of a bulletin, as I was a part of that for years. Folks, we have that little bulletin in our own daily lives. We have “God’s Little Acre” in our lives that we keep moving for our own convenience.

I have touched previously upon the husband and wife. Permit me to enlarge on it briefly. The soul—the wife is commanded to be in subjection to her husband—the spirit. We are commanded to live our lives with the spirit in control. Both spirit and soul dwell within each of us. They dwelt within Adam in the Garden. Before the fall, they were in such unity neither was the head. After the fall, Eve, the soul, was made subject unto her husband Adam, the spirit. How many of you have had difficulty falling asleep because your mind kept racing through a long list of things, from the urgent to the foolish. Our mind (will, intellect, emotion) usually rules our lives—not our spirit, as was intended. Most have not the remotest idea of what it means to follow the spirit. If we are going to follow the voice of our Shepherd, we must learn His voice for He is Spirit; and He speaks in a spiritual language—low volume.

Picture Moses as he makes his way to the top of Mount Sinai; he has just left at least two and a half million people who are proven rebels. There are more problems than he ever could have imagined. In Egypt only one Hebrew misunderstood him;

here, it has been multiplied a million times over. If he had exhibited Charlton Heston's beautiful head of hair, he would have probably pulled most of it out. Now he is going to meet God. Remember! God is Spirit. Satan deals mostly with the soul. God deals with the spirit. How does God move Moses from the realm of the soul to the realm of the spirit? He makes him wait. How did Ezekiel perfectly represent God before that crowd of stiff-necked rebels? (Ez. 3:15) God made him wait a week before a word was ever spoken.

How will you enter that sanctuary of worship, after having dressed the little ones or fretted over the upcoming business week, and still be able to hear God? *"Be still, and know that I am God..."* (Ps. 46:10 KJV) The NAS words it this way, *"Cease striving and know that I am God..."* Herein lays the answer. We must get quiet and still. I hate that homecoming atmosphere that takes place in the foyer and then overflows into the sanctuary every Sunday morning. I would rather walk into a sanctuary as quiet as a tomb with people sitting in pews or kneeling at altars, getting their souls hushed. Let the homecoming occur after the service.

I love the quiet, undisturbed hours of early morning. My mind and body present rational argument with me every morning that it's foolish to arise so early and deprive myself of needed rest. You are well aware that the soul can be very persuasive; and then let the carnal body team up with her, and you'll have a continuing battle. It is little wonder our Lord called few men into ministry who were encumbered with the cares of the city. David was a shepherd. Amos was a shepherd and a gatherer of figs. Moses was a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian. John the Baptist was a man of the wilderness. God sought men who knew how to dwell in solitude. I know men who cannot bear being alone or away from the hustle-bustle of city life. They're most comfortable surrounded by people. Few of them know how to truly relate to God. There are rare exceptions.

After his conversion, Paul stated, “...*I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus.*” (Gal. 1:16, 17) How long he stayed in Arabia (desert) we do not know, but his last letter to the church in Corinth is rather revealing. “*I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.*” (2 Cor. 12:2-4) I personally believe it was at the same time he was in Arabia, alone with God, this miracle occurred. Here is, very likely, where he received his revelation which makes up the bulk of all his writings to the churches.

If God has called you for a certain work, you can make no better preparation than to go away into a quiet place and spend a couple of weeks alone in quiet meditation. Get your soul still before the Lord. If you have been blessed by driving long-haul rigs cross-country as your means of employment, you have the perfect environment. Don't mess it up by playing CDs or audio tapes.

I must here go back to the Garden of Eden to retrieve some thoughts that have possibly been overlooked. Man, as he is now, is a triune being made up of spirit, soul, and body. In the beginning, soul and spirit were one entity and I believe without a visible body. In that condition, they had unlimited power and authority. They were in perfect harmony in every detail—spirit was not the head, nor was soul—they were one. “*Then the Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’ And the man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for* (corresponding to) *him.*” (Gen. 2:18, 20) The cattle God brought to Adam to name

all had souls but they had not the Spirit of God. They were unlike Adam. They were not a suitable companion.

I believe it was with the fall of man (Adam and Eve) that they were given a visible body. They suddenly saw themselves unclothed and were ashamed; so then they tried to cover their nakedness with ridiculous attire—leaves. They actually felt naked in their inner man, but tried to clothe the outward body in a futile attempt to camouflage the real problem. Now soul, spirit, and body are separate entities. The human body is only the house in which the soul and spirit live; but, they are never quite in harmony. When they were one, they had all power and authority and could keep every intruder out of the Garden. Now that they are divided and working as separate entities, they are entirely without the authority to keep trespassers out; consequently, our bodies—garden—are constantly under siege by every imaginable illness and infirmity.

Hear me clearly! The soul is not the enemy. Your spirit is not complete without the soul—nor can it be. The soul is not to be dominated as a slave serving some tyrant. She (the soul) is to be coaxed into submission. That is the object behind the waiting. It takes time for the soul to find rest. *“Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.”* (Matt. 11:28, 29) It seems the soul needs rest; but, the spirit is ever full of life. This is why I ask people, “How old do you think you are—not how old do you feel?” In our spirit, we always feel young. The soul must be led to rest by the spirit. It’s like a mother’s lullaby. Although these (soul, spirit) are both in our garden, the husband (spirit) must be sensitive to the needed rest for his wife (soul). She will rarely recognize the necessity.

Jesus was the only man since Adam’s creation where the soul and the spirit were in perfect harmony. This is why He could say,

“...All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.” (Matt. 28:18) Any man whose soul and spirit have been brought into harmony under God will find unlimited power. That is also why there is so little power of the heavens displayed upon the earth. Man, as a whole, lives his life under the direction and leadership of the soul, while the spirit is either asleep or lies in quiet abeyance. The soul has little authority when dealing with the spirit world, and most maladies are the result of a spiritual invasion of evil forces. Look at how often Jesus called deafness, blindness, epilepsy and other illnesses demons—those wicked impostors who have invaded our garden with the sole purpose of doing harm or destroying God's temple. If I can bring my mind and spirit into total agreement, I will walk in perfect health as I keep my garden free from thorns, tares and underbrush.

The church has, almost from the beginning, functioned under the Aaronic order; and we have, since those early years, banned women from the majority of ministry—except playing piano or teaching the small children's Sunday School class. Each person, male or female, is a triune being having as their garden a spirit, soul, and body. The only difference is the size, sex, and shape of our house. Part of Paul's revelation was, “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*” (Gal. 3:28) By allowing only men to minister, are we not yet following the pattern set by the old Levitical priesthood? We have relegated the female garden to a less honorable position than is the male garden. Unless the soul and the spirit can function as one, there will be little power displayed in the church. “...*he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father.*” (Jn. 14:12) There have never been any greater works than those done by Jesus. So I must believe this promise is still before us.

The church age is well nigh ended. The sun is setting on that order and has begun to reveal a whole new age called the

Melchizedek order, an order that reigns in peace and righteousness. I do not believe the Aaronic order was ever intended to continue past the advent of Jesus Christ. There occurred, at the baptism of Jesus, a change of priesthood. *“For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also.”* (Heb. 7:12) That priesthood changed; but, the pillars of the church in Jerusalem still clung to much of the oracles of the law. Therefore, the order of Melchizedek is yet to be fully implemented.

I cannot help but believe Aaron’s sons loved the Lord. They, along with their father, were ordained by Moses and were given strict guidelines of how their order of worship was to be carried out. Nadab and Abihu, I believe more from thoughtlessness than rebellion, offered “strange fire” unto the Lord. (Lev.10) Fire came out from the presence of the Lord and killed both of these priests of God. Moses explained this action of the Lord, *“...so as to make a distinction between the holy and the profane, and between the unclean and the clean.”* (Lev. 10:10) We haven’t the slightest concept as to the difference between the holy and the profane, the clean and the unclean.

Someone said, “Aren’t you glad God doesn’t operate that way today?” I tell you, God still operates the same way. May I remind you of how Ananias and his wife Sapphira were slain by the Holy Spirit (Acts 5) because of what we would consider a small infraction of the code of behavior? That would have never happened in Herod’s temple. Why? There was no Ark—no presence of God. If the majesty of God was as powerfully present in our churches today—we would see an incredibly different church.

ROAD BUMP NO. 16

IS TITHING SCRIPTURAL FOR US?

Abram was born in the land of the Chaldeans, or Babylon, and was a direct descendent of Shem, the son of Noah. Contrary to popular teaching, it was Abram's father, Terah, who began his journey toward Canaan and took his family with him, but settled in Haren. There obviously was no spiritual calling on Terah's life. He just wanted to go to Canaan. After Terah died, God spoke to Abram who was at that time seventy-five years of age. This is the first recorded word of God to Abram.

After Abraham had become quite wealthy, he received notice his nephew had been taken captive along with the city of Sodom and four other kings of that valley. He gathered his servants to him and formed a very small army of three hundred and eighteen loyal men, with which he pursued the marauding kings and freed the five kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim and Zoar. As he returned from the deliverance of the five kings and the liberation of their captives, he was met by this enigmatic character called Melchizedek who seems to have appeared out of nowhere and served Abraham bread and wine. This man is the type of the One who would later serve His brothers bread and wine at the last supper. Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth of all the spoils of war. Notice! Just a thought, Abraham obviously set the pattern for tithing. He paid tithing, not of his entire possessions, but of the spoils of war.

Room does not permit copying the seventh chapter of Hebrews in its entirety; but, it will profit the reader immensely to devote a great sum of time to this portion of Scripture. *“For this*

Melchizedek, (Zadok, just or righteous) king of Salem, priest of the Most High God...to whom also Abraham apportioned a tenth part of all the spoils, was first of all, by the translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is king of peace.” (Heb. 7:1, 2) Most expositors suggest he was likely a priest of God in Jerusalem. This city was not called Jerusalem at the time of Melchizedek's meeting with Abraham, but Jebus. (Judg. 19:10) I believe this appearance is probably a theophany, the same person Abraham prayed to while beseeching mercy for the city of Sodom. (Gen.18:17-33)

Let us now venture onto thin ice. God's army is vastly different than the army of the United States. At this present time, the army of the United States is strictly voluntary. God's army is made up of those He has conscripted. He accepts no volunteers. There are a host of preachers standing behind pulpits throughout the land who were not called to be preachers; however, they volunteered, went to Bible school and were trained to be preachers by other men. Listen to the word of the Lord! *“I did not send these prophets, but they ran. I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. But if they had stood in My council, then they would have announced My words to My people, and would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds.”* (Jer. 23:21, 22) These ones who run without a call and without a word from God are the same ones we read of in Matthew's gospel. *“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And I then will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’”* (Matt. 7:22, 23)

When Absalom attempted to seize the kingdom from his father David, he was killed by Joab, his close kin. *“Then Joab said to the Cushite, ‘Go, tell the king what you have seen.’ So the Cushite bowed to Joab and ran. Now Ahimaaz the son of Zadok said once more to Joab, ‘But whatever happens, please let me also run after the Cushite.’ And Joab said, ‘Why would you run, my son, since you*

will have no reward for going? ‘But whatever happens’, he said, ‘I will run’...” (2 Sam. 18:21-23) You know the story; he did run, but without a message. The king was neither impressed nor pleased with his performance. How shall we give an account even after having preached, but not having given a fresh word from the Lord? The reward is not for the laborer, but for the obedient.

A sinner cannot come to the Lord anytime he or she chooses. That person’s time is chosen by the Lord. *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain...”* (Jn. 15:16) The vine does not choose the husbandman. The vineyard does not choose the field. The sheep do not choose the shepherd. The sinner must be chosen of God and given to the Lord. *“No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.”* (Jn. 6:44)

Under the Law, the Levites received no inheritance as did the other tribes of Israel. Their inheritance was the Lord plus the tithes the other tribes brought to the Tabernacle in the Wilderness or to the temple. The tithes were to be shared by all the Levites, not just the one who was high priest for that period of time. The tithes were brought to the storehouse and were not exhausted by only one family. Since the Levites had no earthly inheritance, this was God’s way of providing for those called and set apart for the priestly duties to His people. No one from any of the other tribes could volunteer to be a priest. Only the Levites could enjoy the “social security” system God had provided for them.

The true pastor can only shepherd effectively no more than approximately a dozen families. That’s the number Jesus had. Oh! He ministered to thousands, but He pastored twelve families. The shepherd led his flock out by day to where there were green pastures and still waters. He played soothing music to calm their restless nature. He protected them from wild beasts and the little ones from the birds of prey. Each evening he brought them to the

sheepfold and examined each one individually for sores, welts, bruises or parasites. During the time of those “examinations,” he was talking to the sheep to calm them and make his voice familiar to them. When he was sure they were all accounted for, he laid down in the opening, becoming the only door in or out of the sheepfold. It was not a one-day-a-week job. The true shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep. The hireling works for money. If the wolf comes, the hireling flees. The true shepherd is not always looking for a larger church. In today’s society, the bottom line is oftentimes money—tithes; rather than, where does the Lord want me?

Many preachers love to preach from the following text: “*Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed Thee?’ In tithes and contributions. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse...*” (Mal. 3:8-10) If you should question the validity of this word as being Old Testament, they will immediately bring to consideration this verse of Scripture from the New Testament, “*Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.*” (Matt. 23:23) Notice what they were tithing—mint, dill and cumin. These were herbs and spices, not money. You store food in storehouses—not money. They tithed of their flocks and grain and some of this was eaten before the Lord by the one who tithed it. (Study Deut. 12:6, 7) Please understand, Jesus was born under Law and kept the Law impeccably. After the New Covenant was enacted, I see nothing demanding tithes except to the old order of Levites. I do not wish to go into great depth on the sacrament of giving, but I do want to emphasize the importance of attitude.

I hear people say concerning tithes, “It works for me.” My question then is, “What do you mean—it works for you?” Are

you giving because of some reward that accompanies the tithing or because you wish to bless others? I've heard messages on tithing from the parable of the pounds and the parable of the talents (Matt. 25). They used the increase of their investment as a means of persuading people to give more. Give more—you'll get back more! But look at both of these parables closely. They were investing for someone else. The gain was not theirs. He was speaking of your ability to win others to Christ. Many, many pastors keep the tithing as a supplement to their individual salary; however, the tithes were meant for all the Levites. Originally, the tithes went to all the Levites and some of the offerings were meant for the upkeep of the Tabernacle or temple. In the past, our own church fellowship set up a bank account for those who wanted to pay tithes. That money was shared with visiting ministers, or all the Levites. These men and women the Lord sent to us were blessed, and we were richly blessed by their ministry. In most churches today, special offerings are often received for visiting ministers. Why? The storehouse, if one exists, has been pilfered by someone. Neither Moses nor Aaron considered the storehouse their private bank or grocery store.

The argument persists, "I've been prospered more because of tithing." Anytime we sow seed into the kingdom, that seed will increase. I trust you do not give for the possibility of any increase you might receive in return. If so, you have received your reward in full in this life. Many churches have tithing as a necessary prerequisite to your being received into their fellowship. You either pay your club membership dues or you're not really a member; you can neither vote nor receive communion. You have no voice. I am definitely for giving out of a pure heart. I am reluctant to being ensnared into giving to some churches for all the wrong reasons.

ROAD BUMP NO. 17

THE LAW

There's probably no other road bump on this journey that will knock the shocks off your vehicle faster and more often than the Law. John the Baptist declared, "...Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Again the next day John was standing, and two of his disciples; and he looked upon Jesus as He walked, and said, 'Behold, the Lamb of God!'" (Jn. 1:29, 35, 36) John the Baptist was a type of the Law. He was Law personified. He, personifying Law, was to introduce the Christ. He was a forerunner of the Messiah; but, because he was Law personified, he could not exist alongside the message of grace.

Moses, who was the embodiment of the Law, was permitted to see the land of promise but was forbidden entrance. He could reign supreme from Egypt to Canaan; yet, He was denied entrance to the land of promise. The responsibility of leading Israel into Canaan was entrusted to Joshua—whose name means *Jesus*.

Immediately after the children of Israel entered the land of Canaan, all the men were circumcised who had been born in the wilderness. As they were set to march around Jericho, Joshua saw a man with a drawn sword standing opposite him. Joshua confronted him with this question, "...Are you for us or for our adversaries? And he said, 'No, rather I indeed come now as captain (prince) of the host of the Lord?..." (Josh. 5:13, 14) This man is none other than the Holy Spirit of God. "And take the...sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Eph. 6:17) We all know the Word of God is none other than Jesus Christ. The Spirit uses this Sword as the offensive weapon in His battle against the enemy.

The Spirit was saying, in not so subtle terms, “You have yet too much of Moses (Law) in you. This battle cannot be won by decrees.” The church still has not learned that lesson. The battle we are in cannot be won by enforcing the Law. It will only be won by the Sword of the Spirit.

John the Baptist declared those words, “...*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (Jn. 1:29) Little did he realize he was announcing his resignation from his ministry—or did he? Shortly afterward, he was imprisoned; and because of the provocative dancing of a young woman, he was beheaded. We have no record Jesus ever visited him in prison. The dispensation of Law was finished. Jesus had not come to do away with the Law but to fulfill it.

Saul of Tarsus was a fanatic of the Law. After his conversion, he (Paul) became the Law's most fervent critic. To give justice to grace, I feel I must include a long list of the Law's failures:

- Rom. 3:21 “...*apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested...*”
- Rom. 4:14 “*For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise is nullified.*”
- Rom. 7:4 “...*you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ...*”
- Rom. 7:5 “...*sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law...*”
- Rom. 7:6 “...*now we have been released from the Law...*”
- Rom. 7:7 “...*I would not have come to know sin except through the Law...*”
- Rom. 7:8 “...*apart from the Law sin is dead.*”
- Rom. 8:2 “*For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.*”
- Rom. 8:3 “*For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son...*”
- 2 Cor. 3:6 “...*for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*”

- 2 Cor. 3:7 “...the ministry of death...”
- 2 Cor. 3:9 “...the ministry of condemnation...”
- Deut. 27:26 “Cursed is he who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them...”
- Gal. 2:21 “...if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly.”
- Gal. 3:10 “For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the Law, to perform them.’”
- Gal. 3:12 “...the Law is not of faith...”
- Gal. 3:13 “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law...” (not the curse of sin)
- Gal. 3:22, 23 “But the Scripture (Law) has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law...”
- Gal. 3:24 “...the Law has become our tutor (child conductor) to lead us to Christ...” (or rather, to lead us until Christ)
- Gal. 3:25 “But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”
- Gal. 4:4 “But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.”
- Gal. 4:21-26 “Tell me, you who want to be under the Law, do you not listen to the Law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman. But the son of the bondwoman was born according to the flesh, and the son of the free woman through the promise. This contains an allegory: for these women are two covenants, one proceeding from Mount Sinai (law) bearing children who are to be slaves; she is Hagar. Now this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to

the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free; she is our mother."

- Gal. 4:30 *"But what does the Scripture say? 'Cast out the bondwoman and her son, (the Law and its slavery) for the son of the bondwoman shall not be an heir with the son of the free woman."*
- Eph. 2:15 *"...abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances..."*
- Col. 2:14 *"having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."*
- 1 Tim. 1:9 *"... law is not made for a righteous man, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane..."*
- Heb. 7:19 *"(for the Law made nothing perfect)..."*

Now let me lay the capstone that holds this whole thing together. *"For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also."* (Heb. 7:12) Herein lies the problem; the church, as a whole, has not changed its priesthood. By that, I mean most of the church is still functioning under the priesthood of Aaron rather than Melchizedek. Although Jesus was born under Law and lived His life under Law, He died to set us free from the death-grip of the Law. *"The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, 'Thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'."* (Ps. 110:4)

There is an incredible mixture in the modern church. We preach grace, *"...by grace you have been saved."* (Eph. 2:5) *"...by grace you have been saved through faith..."* (Eph. 2:8) Many denominations embrace this tenet of faith; yet, there are numerous things you must do in addition to believing to really be saved and then an additional number of things you must do to remain saved. *"If you have died with Christ to the elementary principals of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit*

yourself to decrees, such as, do not handle, do not taste, do not touch! These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.” (Col. 2:20, 21, 23)

Religion is a terrible imposter. It is the enemy of reality. It is the carnival clown with all those different masks, which are changed at the wearer's fancy. There are few attendees in the modern church who do not wear a mask—from the preacher down. Most everyone puts on the “happy face” when they arrive at the place of meeting. Reality is a distant acquaintance. Do we dare have reality at the communion table? “Jesus never drank wine!”—many will assert. How did they keep grape juice from fermenting without refrigeration? Anything with sugar content will begin fermentation in about three to five days. Most of the “communion ceremonies” are nothing more than religious exercises. Originally, the Eucharist was a meal—not grape juice and a paper thin wafer. “But,” they protest, “These are symbolic reminders of the real.” What happened to the real? Is the church only a symbolic reminder of the real also?

“Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.” (Col. 2:18) This word “self-abasement” is referring to false humility. I've met some sweet, reverential, almost groveling people in churches, until you cross them. Then—look out! The mask comes off and the real person leaps forward. “Oh! Those people look so holy. Their clothing and their demeanor are so saintly appearing.” Some of this may be real; but, hidden beneath some of those robes is a sheathed sword. I do not wish to appear super critical; but, there are still some people who want the real meal deal, not filler and hype. Let us remember how Jesus taught His disciples about the real source of defilement. It comes from the inside. It comes from that which is already growing within. (Mark 7:20-23)

Both Moses and John the Baptist were types of the Law. Now, allow the Holy Spirit to open your spiritual ears so you may clearly hear the following: *“The Holy Spirit is signifying this, that the way into the holy place has not yet been disclosed, while the outer tabernacle is still standing.”* (Heb. 9:8) Both these men and what they represented had to die before the next door opened in the Spirit. Moses had to die before Israel could enter Canaan. John the Baptist had to die before Jesus could complete His work on Calvary. Jesus had to die in order to validate the new covenant. When the new covenant was validated, the old covenant was no longer in effect. It was outdated. *“But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you.”* (Jn. 16:7) Just as Moses and John the Baptist had to die, Jesus had to die before the Holy Spirit could come. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the churches are a mixture of Law and grace. There has been incorporated an unhealthy dose of Aaron into the recipe. The Aaronic priesthood is dead. To use that Aaronic mixture with the ministry of Melchizedek introduces death into the food. As the sons of the prophets lamented to Elisha, *“...O man of God, there is death in the pot...”* (2 Kings 4:40)

ROAD BUMP NO. 18

THE IMMINENT RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

As mentioned in the introduction, a road bump is something in the road to slow us down or at least gives cause to focus our attention on our immediate surroundings. In the year 1934 when I first met the Lord, I heard these sermons preached: “Any day now, the Lord will break the eastern sky; and we’re going to be caught up in the rapture to forever be with Him—if not today, then next week—if not next week, surely this year.” I recall seeing some artist’s idea of what it would look like. There were all those people in white robes ascending up into heaven toward someone they thought looked like Jesus. Others were standing or kneeling, obviously in great sorrow with hands raised as if begging to go also, but unable. When I reached the age of understanding that the world was round and China was on the other side of the world, I wondered how we could go straight up to meet Christ; and if the Chinese were to go straight up, they (or we) would be soaring off in opposite directions. That was “solved” this year when some brother from California prophesied the church would be raptured at 6 PM on a certain day...but...it would be a rolling rapture. For everyone, it would happen at 6 PM their time and progress from there. I thought, how foolish we have become trying to make our distorted theology fit into this giant jigsaw puzzle when the pieces just don’t fit.

During Mao’s cultural revolution in China from 1966—1976, hundreds of thousands of Christians were brutalized and killed because they were a hindrance to the cause. They were a hindrance because they were Christians, and Mao was an atheist.

Many came to their Christian pastors with the accusation, "You told us we would all be raptured, and we would not have to endure these kinds of torture." Most all lost their faith in their pastors; many lost their faith in God. Someone called me this week and said, "It won't be long until Jesus raptures us out of this mess." My response was, "Don't hold your breath." The gasp and question said it all. "Do you mean we're going to have to go through the whole thing"? I said, "Through every bit of it." You see the crushing and fire is an absolute necessity in order to separate the gold from the slag. That slag is not other people; it's the carnal man that makes up the defining portion of who we are. The gold is that Godly nature, which was planted as a seed deep within us.

I have searched the gospels in vain, attempting to find witness to the pre-tribulation rapture. I find nothing supporting this hypothesis. I also preached this same doctrine for years; and it's humiliating to admit being wrong, especially for most preachers. Surely, one would think, something as important as this would have been part of Jesus' teaching. Let us now go laboriously over some Scriptures that have been used as "proof-texts." The following Scriptures have been used to prove the secret rapture of the church: "*For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.*" (Matt. 24:37-39) They preach this as a proof of the rapture taking people from the earth. It is argued God takes the righteous away in the rapture. Let us look at the same account as given by the gospel of Luke. "*they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.*" (Lu. 17:27) So, you see, Luke makes it obvious that it was not the righteous who were taken away.

“Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; one shall be taken, and the other left. Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” (Matt. 24:40-42 KJV) The one being taken has been taken to Heaven, they contend. Oh, really? Let us see how Luke’s gospel treats this same prophetic word. *“I tell you, on that night there will be two men in one bed; one will be taken, and the other will be left. There will be two women grinding at the same place; one will be taken, the other will be left... And answering they said to Him, ‘Where, Lord?’ And He said to them, ‘Where the body is, there also will the vultures be gathered’.”* (Luke 17:34-37) Notice, it’s the unrighteous who are taken to a dead world or dead church system where there is a gathering of vultures.

Jesus had spoken a parable to them about the tares and the wheat. Remember! They asked, speaking of the tares, *“...Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up? But He said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up the tares, you may root up the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, ‘First, gather up the tares and bind them into bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.’”* (Matt. 13:28-30) Jesus is consistent in this thought. The disciples asked for an explanation to the parable of the tares. Let’s just jump in at verse 40 of the above chapter: *“Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.”* (Matt. 13:40-43) As you will notice in every instance, the righteous are not taken away first, but the wicked. They are all allowed to grow up together, and the wicked are taken from among the righteous—not vice versa. The church is not going; the Lord is coming.

You must believe me when I say; God is not raising hot-house plants. He will cause the sun of tribulation to beat down on you until you send roots down deep to the fresh waters flowing beneath. Read the eleventh chapter of Hebrews slowly and repeatedly. Every one of these heroes had the metal of their character tried in the fire of testing and hardship.

Let me ask you a very simple question, but one crucial to your understanding. What determines the time of the harvest? Does the farmer awaken one morning and say, because it's a nice cool morning, "Well, I think I'll harvest the back forty?" Let us suppose the back forty was only planted last month. That is not the way it works. Day by day he walks the fields, running his hands through the grain, looking for the silk to mature on the corn, or inspecting the soy beans to see if they are full. The harvest does not depend on the farmer. It depends on the crop itself. When will the crop be ready? "*But when the crop permits, he immediately puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.*" (Mark 4:29) Can you not sense Him walking through your midst feeling of the grain? He's not coming by to give you goose bumps. He's checking your maturity. We sing "It's a glorious church without spot or wrinkle..." Can you say with any stretch of imagination, that this is a true statement and the church is pure and ready? "*Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.*" (Rev. 19:7, 8) Even the mother does not dictate the time of birth, the baby does; and that happy event could just as well be in an elevator or taxi cab.

Little is done to some crops from the moment they are planted until the time of harvest. Wheat requires little attention after the seeds are sown into the ground. In modern agriculture, a crop duster may spray fertilizer or insecticide; but we're speaking of crops in Christ's day. About all they could do after planting was pray for rain and try to keep animals out of the emerging

grain. However, let us look at grapes. This is not a fruit that is planted, it is transplanted. The small sprig that is placed in the ground will require years of pruning and oversight lest the “little foxes” ruin the vineyard. When ripe and producing, the grapes will be turned into wine, which in turn will bring joy to the lives of many individuals.

Let us now consider the apple orchard. In comparison to the wheat, the acreage is small; and it will necessitate a great deal more nurturing than the wheat. Each tree needs special attention and care. The fruit is sweet and enticing to a host of hungry creatures. Everything from worms, stinging insects, deer, bear, and even some people are a daily threat to its health. As a grafted tree, the tree itself is not as hardy as is the native tree.

Now compare the crops mentioned above with people. What if the grain of wheat that was planted only reproduced one grain? This is precisely what happened in the parables of the talents and the pounds. The farmer plants in order to reap an abundant increase. The most precious of His gifts receive the greater attention which means pruning, digging and thinning. The Lord is not after leaves no matter how beautiful they may be. Now, look back at our subject of what determines the time of the harvest—the crop of course. Lord, look how lush and full my beautiful foliage is; however, if there is no fruit—there will be no acceptance.

There have been some weird and wonderful theories set forth why the Lord will return on a certain day. All have proven to be false. Then there arose the amazing hypothesis of a dual coming of the Lord. Some say the rapture comes first when Jesus doesn't actually touch the earth; then after the great tribulation, Jesus will return to the earth to reign a thousand years. This theory was never taught in the church for the first 1800 years.

In 1830, during a prayer meeting in Port Glasgow, Scotland, a young lass by the name of Mary McDonald fell into a trance and saw a vision of the church being caught away before the time

of tribulation. J. N. Darby took that vision and started the Plymouth Brethren denomination. Men by the names of C. I. Scofield and Dwight L. Moody were so influenced by Darby and others from England that both became strong believers in a premillennial rapture before the “great tribulation.” Moody included this teaching in his ministry, and Scofield had his Scofield Reference Bible published in 1909 in which he was the first man to include his own notes at the foot of each page. His reference bible became the “handbook” for most Southern Baptists of modern time.

Dwight L. Moody was a tremendous evangelist who, after a successful ministry of evangelism, founded the Moody Bible Institute. Tons of literature were and are sent out through the auspices of Moody Bible Institute. When the Assemblies of God was founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914, there was not one preacher present who embraced the pre-tribulation rapture. At that time, the Assemblies of God had no printing presses so they acquired all their Sunday School literature from Moody Bible Institute. After one generation of Moody teaching, the Assemblies of God, as a whole, accepted as truth the same doctrine as did Moody and Scofield. “God has not called us to wrath,” they contended; consequently, the *divine elevator* will whisk us away before tribulation hits this earth.

If any one person in our day has been successful in promoting the 180-year old pre-trib rapture theory, it has been Hal Lindsey. He exploded on the scene in the early seventies with a book called “The Late Great Planet Earth.” He dramatized his imaginary world after the rapture when God turns it all over to Satan. It swept the globe like bad seed in a hurricane. As Hal Lindsey faded into the background, a man by the name of Tim Lahaye burst on the landscape with his “Left Behind” apocalyptic fiction series, which the church swallowed like a fresh drink of water to a Saharan nomad. He incorporated Hal Lindsey’s theories; and, with the most imaginative Hollywood writer’s skills, wrote, along with Jerry Jenkins, a series of sixteen “Left Behind” books. You

must know there has to be some soap opera and perhaps a little money to find it necessary to write sixteen books in order to exhaust one's imagination or topic on the same subject. That is on the same level as the "Harry Potter" books. In 1981 Tim LaHaye left the pulpit to concentrate on politics and writing. Mike Huckabee, a former minister, governor, and well-known television personality, found the "Left Behind" series to be "a compelling story for non-theologians." I find it to be targeted at those who are not well-schooled in the Bible.

Consider the "rapture before tribulation message" and preach that to all those who were fed to lions during the Roman rule. Read "Fox's Book of Martyrs" and weep over the unbelievable horrors poured out on the Christian church under the rule of Nero and also the Roman Catholic Church. *"and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground. And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised."* (Heb.11:36-39) This was written hundreds of years before the dark ages when the tribulation became more widespread. Now tell me honestly, is this present church more holy or more deserving to be raptured away on some spiritual elevator because we're too pure to go through trials of like nature? How God-centered is the American church today? God does not change. There is much rigor and hardship exerted in order to separate the chaff from the kernel of wheat. The same is true for God to separate the carnal man from the spiritual man.

There is simply not enough space to give this road bump proper attention and thorough examination. There are some good studies the sincere seeker can explore if they are confused about the subject. This is only a minute reflection on this particular road bump.

ROAD BUMP NO. 19

SATAN IS NOT YOUR ENEMY—YOU ARE

A friend of mine, while preaching in Central America, made this statement, “The devil is your friend.” The interpreter turned and shook his head and said, “I can’t say that.” My friend, a man not to be denied, said with a tone of finality in his voice, “Say it, just as I said it, and I’ll know because I speak Spanish.” The man spoke the exact words to the congregation, which was followed by a collective gasp. He then explained Satan was a servant of the Lord—not a willing one perhaps, but a servant nonetheless. Many people have a huge problem with that, in spite of many Scriptures which say exactly that. “...*I am...the One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these.* (Isa. 45:6, 7) “*Behold, I Myself have created the smith who blows the fire of coals, and brings out a weapon for its work; and I have created the destroyer to ruin.*” (Isa. 54:16) “...*If a calamity occurs in a city has not the Lord done it?*” (Amos 3:6) These are indeed strange Scriptures to the unversed or immature.

Let us imagine a smith preparing a blade for battle. The soft metal has been beaten and formed on the anvil by the skilled hands of the smith. Each blow of the hammer has hardened the blade. Before the finishing touches, the blade is put into the furnace to bring it to the proper temperature. Should I pass by, not schooled in the ways of the smith, and say, “It looks ready to me”; that would not sway the smith one iota. He would pay no attention to me whatsoever. He’s intently watching the flame and color of the blade. At the time he deems proper, he brings the blade

from the flame and immediately plunges it into cold water or oil. If it cools too fast it will be brittle—too slow and it will be too soft. He knows what it takes to bring the carbon, iron, and nickel to that perfect union.

The children of Israel were toiling under the merciless Egyptian sun, mixing mud and straw to make adobe brick. Moses, a ruler in Egypt, passed by and saw an Egyptian treating an Israelite with undue harshness, so he killed the Egyptian and buried him. The next day he came by and two Israelites were fighting. He tried to make peace between them and was immediately met with the accusation, “...*Are you intending to kill me, as you killed the Egyptian...?*” (Ex. 2:14) Everything he thought would be appreciated and kept hidden was now in the open, totally misunderstood and used against him. Pharaoh heard of the matter and tried to kill Moses. Moses ran for his life. Hebrews records, “*By faith he left Egypt...*” (Heb. 11:27) That being true, then I have been a tremendous man of faith at times. Moses’ timing was wrong. Forty years later, while living as a recluse, he saw a bush burning but was not being consumed. God spoke to him from the midst of the flame, “...*I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry...*” (Ex. 3:7 KJV) In other words, Moses wanted the sword brought from the flame 40 years too soon, but they (both Israel and Moses) are now ready. Even after Moses confronted Pharaoh, I do not know how long it was before God killed the firstborn of every human being and every animal in the land of Egypt, all the while preserving the Israelites.

My dear brothers and sisters if you are attempting to understand prophecy, then throw away your calendars. Do not look at current events, look at the church. The flame must reach a certain temperature and the blade a certain color. That is the reason I look at all these “second coming” predictions with reservations. I’m looking more at the modern American church. She is not yet in the fire. That is why Jesus said—No man knows the time or the hour, not even the Son, but the Father only (and

He's waiting on the crop). The Divine Smith knows what is required for the steel.

How many of you believe Satan was defeated at Calvary? As Jesus hung on one cross, His heel was being bruised; but hanging on one of the other crosses, Satan was being bruised in his head. His power was broken. Picture a policeman entering a place from where a disturbance call was sent. His uniform and badge signify his authority; the nightstick and pistol are symbols of his power. Upon entering the place of disturbance, normally the first thing noticed is his authority—his uniform and badge. As a general rule that will suffice, but there are times when the power must come into play. As Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He was met by a father and his epileptic son. The father lamented, “...*I brought him to Your disciples, and they could not cure him.*” (Matt. 17:16) They had the authority but lacked the power. The enemy had ignored the authority, knowing they had not the power. “*And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured at once.*” (Matt. 17:18) The demon recognized Jesus bore the power in His person as well as the authority. We have this outstanding fault. We have the propensity to become Satan conscious rather than God conscious. In the 1970s, there was a widespread ministry of casting out demons, of which I was a part. I soon discovered there were thousands of demons on which I could devote all my time and attention to the total exclusion of Jesus Christ. With the chaining of Satan by that one strong angel at the end time (Rev. 20:1, 2), there will be millions of people immediately loosed from their sicknesses and torments; for not only Satan, but all of his demons will be rendered powerless for a season.

Satan provides the fire while God (the Smith) uses the fire to purify or temper His chosen ones. In that day when all God's children are perfected, there will be no more need for Satan or his work. The fire will be extinguished and the Smith can lay down His hammer and hang up His apron. It is a time of millennial peace when there shall be no more rampant evil.

There are countless church counselors and many psychoanalysts who can, given a few sessions on their couch, make you forget your bad side and think well of yourself. That is not the purpose of the tribulation and troubles. They are not to drive you to a counselor, an analyst, or psychotherapist. They are to drive you to the Lord. Only **in Him** will you find lasting healing and peace. As in the comic strip of old, Pogo made the statement, "We have found the enemy and he is us."

ROAD BUMP NO. 20

HYPHENATED CHRISTIANS

I suppose the custom has always existed in one form or another; but the practice still leaves a bitter taste in my mouth. I'm speaking of a person being referred to as a hyphenated American; e.g., we're German-American, Mexican-American or African-American, etc. Some even go so far as to fly the flag of the country from which they originated. This originally began as a designation of one who was born in another country but had become a naturalized American citizen. In other words, they became a hyphenated American citizen. In most cases to become an American citizen, one must renounce their allegiance to the home of their birth and pledge allegiance to the new land they have adopted. Many, who have been birthed in this country, still carry the hyphenated designation even though no one in their family has been birthed outside this country for many decades. This shows incredible disrespect and disloyalty to their true birth land where they now reside. Some Americans may show unbelievable leniency and acceptance to the trespasser in order to extend a hand of understanding. Others would say, "If you still love that country so much—then go back there."

I've probably said more than I should on this matter; but bear with me as I try to make a point that has been overlooked or brushed aside, for the most part. Almost every Christian I know is a hyphenated Christian to one degree or another. They are Baptist-Christians, Pentecostal-Christians, Roman Catholic-Christians, etc. It would seem the denomination is an appendage that must be tacked on when acknowledging your faith. If you fail

to mention the expected attachment, you will be asked what your hyphenated name is. I seriously doubt if the Lord will ever ask for your club membership card as an entrance permit into heaven. Probably every one of the Lord's disciples could have started their own denomination because they all had some small difference in understanding. Peter was openly rebuked by Paul because of his straying from genuineness.

The apostle Paul was deeply concerned about these hyphenated Christians. When writing to the church at Corinth, he could not have been clearer. *“For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe’s people, that there are quarrels among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, ‘I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ.’ Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?”* (1 Cor. 1:11-13) This was the beginning of denominational division. God was not pleased with it then, nor is He pleased with it today.

If, in the human body, there is a “quarrel” between what goes in the mouth and the digestive track, there will be a noticeable problem. You will have indigestion or worse. If there exists a discrepancy between the eyes, ears, and the bottom of your feet—you will most certainly have vertigo. Your balance depends on these as your gyro stabilizer. Back off mentally and briefly scrutinize the human body. There are remarkably few parts that are duplicates. Can you hear the conversation between these diverse parts as they work together? The elbows say to the knees—you’d work a lot better if you would bend in the direction I do. The liver says to the heart—what is all this drumbeat I hear? Can’t you work quietly like I do? These imagined conversations could go on endlessly, for there are endless areas for disagreement. If you are a completely healthy person, you will never sense one iota of friction in your body; although, all these different parts are totally diverse with different tasks to perform. That is how the body of Christ should function. Although the different body parts never

demand others look and function as do they, denominations frequently do.

As if the ice was not already too thin, I want to now venture even further toward open waters. When one leaves their homeland of Germany, Mexico, Italy or Africa, etc., they should cease to be an active member in that country's affairs. Its wars, celebrations, holidays and politics should be things of the past. Israel had left Egypt forever; but, they still longed for the fish, cucumbers, leeks, melons, onions and garlic of Egypt. They were traveling toward Canaan, but their hearts were still in Egypt. Paul brings up an important issue with Timothy, his son in Christ. "*No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.*" (2 Tim. 2:4) These entanglements are not listed as evil—they're just everyday affairs extending far beyond your needs. No matter how much people tried to persuade Him, Jesus shunned politics like a contagious infection. When you became a Christian, whether you realized it or not, you were conscripted into the army of the Lord for active service (warfare). We invite an immeasurable amount of unnecessary trouble when we attempt to march to "Canaan" with our hearts and lives still involved in Egypt and dragging along a lot of Egypt's utensils.

In years past when my wife and I owned a motorhome, I ran across a cartoon in a paper drawn by one of our dear friends. This man is the "bare-bones" type of cross country hiker. The cartoon was of a hiker with only a very small backpack, well-worn shorts, and hiking boots. Alongside him was a very long motorhome so loaded down with "necessities" you could hardly see the vehicle. The contrast was exceedingly striking. When one goes to war, they carry only those things essential to their survival and the accomplishing of the task at hand.

Really we should have but one concern—pleasing the One who drafted us into His service. Satan's primary weapon, which

has worked so well in the past, is to get us involved in things that do not pertain to the Kingdom of God and use these to derail us from the service unto which we are called—everything from Boy Scouts, Lions Clubs or the local chapter of----- (you fill in the blank). It may help you sell insurance; however, it can be a deadly entanglement for the soldier on active duty serving the One who drafted him. “But we’re going to infiltrate the enemy’s ranks and establish the Kingdom of God from within.” Yeah! Sure! I knew a young lady once who was a “Christian” night-club singer and was going to spread the gospel in the highways and byways of the world’s night-life. What she spread wasn’t gospel, and she lost whatever testimony she ever had. People are quick to point out Joseph, Daniel, the three Hebrew children, and Jeremiah because they all had wonderful testimonies in the midst of the enemy’s camp. Let me quickly remind you that these were also all prisoners. They were not there of their own will.

Matthew’s gospel gives us a graphic picture we have trouble ignoring. *“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”* (Matt. 13:22) The commentary on this one verse could fill volumes.

I’ve been in many churches where there was displayed in the front of the sanctuary the flag of the United States and also the Christian flag. I have witnessed as people pledged allegiance to the U.S. flag and then followed with a pledge of allegiance to the Christian flag. Now you tell me how a person can honestly pledge their loyalty to two kingdoms? There are rare exceptions, in this world, where someone may possess dual citizenship. As we stated earlier, normally to obtain citizenship in an adopted country, you must first relinquish the citizenship to the mother country. It is impossible to have complete faithfulness and commitment to two countries—your earthly birth land and your inherited homeland. I see no difference in whether the kingdoms are earthly or

spiritual. We do know the Kingdom of God is diametrically opposed to all earthly kingdoms and what they represent. Too many Christians display more characteristics of that old kingdom than those of God's kingdom—except on the Sabbath. Their jokes, foolishness, and daily walk smell of Egypt and to discover they are “Christians” comes as a complete surprise to many.

The multitudes and even the disciples tried to pressure Jesus into becoming involved in the local politics of His day. They envisioned the Kingdom of God as an earthly establishment where one could sit on one side and one on the other side of Jesus as He ruled from His throne. The multitude saw Him as someone who could provide them with food forever—without work. He resisted all efforts to divert His attention and energy away from the Kingdom of His Father. Caesar's kingdom held no attraction for Him. But just think! If we can become politically active in the party of our choice and help get the best person elected for a certain office, think of the influence for good it could be. Again, I must remind you—this is not a case of good or evil, which is the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (carnal, fleshly realm). Our choices are in the spiritual realm.

There is an extremely interesting passage of Scripture in Luke's gospel we need to study closely. It occurred when Jesus was on the Mount of Temptation. Satan was using his best weapons against Jesus in order to deter Him from the cross. Satan, understanding Jesus' hunger, attacked Him first in that area. *“And the devil said to Him, ‘If You are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.’”* (Lu. 4:3) *“And he led Him up and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, ‘I will give You all this domain and its glory; for it has been handed over to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. Therefore if You worship me, it shall all be Yours.’”* (Lu. 4:5-7) If all the kingdoms of the world are Satan's domain, you have to know they are unbelievably corrupt. He didn't say those Arab countries. He didn't even say the Nazi or Japanese empires. He said all the kingdoms of the

world. *"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one."* (1 John 5:19) Why would any Christian attempt to become or remain actively involved in a corrupt kingdom, dominated by a corrupt ruler? How did Satan become the owner of this world's kingdoms? Adam and Eve handed it all over to him in a bad trade for godhood.

In the final analysis, it will matter not one whit who is running the country; it will not affect the Kingdom of God one iota. It may, however, affect greatly the influence on the earthly kingdoms. We relinquished, or should have, our relationship to that earthly kingdom when we were adopted into that heavenly kingdom. We can not, or should not, try to manipulate the oversight or laws of another kingdom, which do not concern us. I can guarantee—that earthly kingdom cares neither one iota about you nor your future. They only care about power and control. That has always been the case from Babylon to the Roman Empire. It's still the case today.

ROAD BUMP NO. 21

MAKE ME LAUGH

I don't remember when I first heard the following story; but it's so rich in truth that I must share it:

I remember Dad brought a stranger into our house one day. This odd stranger was the greatest story teller we had ever heard. He was amusing and informative, solemn and outrageous. He never tired of keeping us all informed and entertained.

Mom and Dad were both somewhat concerned because the stranger drank and smoked in the house. They tolerated it because he was such a knowledgeable teacher and comic. He seemed to never run out of funny stories. The whole household was, at times, in laughter. Doctors told us laughter was good for us.

It was almost the final straw when the stranger began to use foul language and tell off-colored jokes. Both Dad and Mom seemed uncomfortable and embarrassed at times but that too soon became almost the norm for his conversation.

Then he seemed to be more interested in relating some lurid, sexual story of conquest. There came a time when we longed for the old days when he just told nice clean stories, but I suppose everything changes with time. He's still in our house. It appears he's found a home—so much for the television set.

In years past, we Pentecostals considered television a terrible sin to have in the home. We heard the argument, "They said the same

thing about radio.” To compare today’s television programming with radio is like comparing 90-proof bourbon with tea. I know of no home today that doesn’t own at least one television set and probably one computer, if not more. Most RVs have at least one TV. Motels and hotels would not think of renting a room without a television and usually high-speed internet hookup. What a deceptive snare.

This chapter is not merely a road bump; it is a detour which leads most Christians off the main road, never to return. I know of almost no one this won’t speak to. Please, don’t be offended by this word, I’m only a messenger, but let it speak to your spiritual man.

I don’t know when comedy began as an industry—probably the court jester was a fore-runner. Jestings was ill received in the early church and had some very impure companions. *“But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among the saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.”* (Eph. 5:3, 4) The early fathers more than frowned on this behavior; they absolutely abhorred and forbade it. How times have changed. It is not only welcomed but has become almost a necessity to the preacher—slash—entertainer. In the above verses of Scripture, there is some sordid company.

Years ago while praying, I began to reason with God. I said, “Lord, I would really like to be a preacher with humor. I believe the gospel can be just as effective if delivered with wit as when delivered with a serious demeanor.” He answered, with exasperation somewhat in His voice, “I didn’t call you to preach because you were funny. I called you because you were you. You preach what I tell you.” There was such finality in His voice that it ended all discussion. This was the first time God had taken me to the proverbial woodshed; but by the time He had finished, I was convinced I should forget that suggestion. Someone called me a number of

years ago and said, “You’ve just got to hear this preacher. He’s so funny.” I replied, “I’m not much into comedic preaching.” Years later I heard the same preacher and his outrageous routine. He’s still around; however, I don’t know how he got the title of preacher. I realized again why God so detests this thing called jesting.

Most of us have had occasion to use a babysitter. If Mom and Dad had something important planned not accommodating children or they simply wanted an evening out, the babysitter was called. To be a good babysitter, you need to know how to keep the children occupied with harmless entertainment. This can become an art form that can be extremely profitable for the sitter. News gets around and they become in great demand.

Along the same line of thought, if the preacher can preach a little and be amusing also, he becomes one who is in constant demand. It is a sad commentary on the state of the church. Like the babysitter, he has learned to keep his congregation occupied and entertained. God doesn’t have to be in it. It can be a message straight from the master of ceremony’s handbook. “Say” a little prayer, tell a little joke, read a short text, tell a little story and spend the next fifteen minutes building up the people’s fine traits and proving it amusingly by the text. His offerings will be large, and he will be welcomed with open arms the next time around. The tragedy is the church has degenerated from adult warriors to a house full of children who must be entertained. The church behind the “iron curtain” and the “bamboo curtain” was one of the most mature churches since the dark ages. In recent years, some Chinese churches have said, “Send us your Bibles but not your preachers.” That is an indictment against the American ministry. You must understand, I am not saying all churches are like this. I am saying the “ordinary” church is.

If a preacher depends on his own intellect and wit, he will normally not be able to stay in one place more than two years. Why? He will have depleted his repertoire of himself. Some

denominations rotate their pastors every two years, because they recognize what the pastor himself does not—he has exhausted his self-man. As we have mentioned earlier, yesterday's manna may not have the smell of decomposition; but, neither will it have that aroma of freshness and life. It may be truth but not present truth. Yesterday's notes, last year's sermons will have no life unless there has been a fresh impartation from the Father. The lamp stand in the Tabernacle in the Wilderness was a depiction of the light of truth. Those lamps had to be trimmed each and every day. The trimmed lamps not only gave a brighter light; but in that case, it was a symbol of truth. Yesterday's truth is not sufficient for today. *"Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink."* (Jn. 6:53-55) His followers were offended because of this saying and many turned back and walked no longer with Him. Even today it is true. You must eat of His Word and of His Spirit.

"The old time religion is good enough for me." That may sound good to say and to sing, but it is not spiritually practical. You can not live on last year's food supply. You will die of starvation. The "normal" congregation of today wants to hear a simple little sermon not lasting more than twenty minutes. One man in California told me, "If a preacher can't convey to me in twenty-five minutes all I need to hear that day, he's not a good communicator." Tell that to Paul. *"And there was a certain young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor, and was picked up dead."* Paul went down and raised the young man back to life. *"And when he had gone back up, and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed."* (Acts 20:9, 11) Children and most Christians need to be entertained. Don't

make them think too deeply or in an extended fashion. “*When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.*” (1 Cor. 13:11)

Singing can be a deceptive trap. I, at one time, sang in a men’s trio. After a concert one night, I was praying and said something like this, “Lord, I am so grateful You have allowed us to minister to Your people in this fashion.” His response was a slap in the face. He remarked, “Don’t call that ministry. That was nothing more than entertainment.” Needless to say, I was devastated; however, to a remarkable degree, it changed my thinking concerning singing and worship. But, you see, most choirs are more into entertainment than praise and worship. The Christmas cantata, the Easter cantata, and other special events are, for the most part, entertainment for the people. In most churches, the singing has become filler for the service. Many of the songs we sing are not scriptural at all. They may be emotional and may be beautiful; but if it is the product of our intellectual or fleshly labors, it is not well received by the Lord. Now, I was a song writer, singer, television “personality,” recording artist, etc., involved in the whole nine yards, so it was a real upheaval in my life to discover it was just so much chaff.

Let me clarify, not all singing is wasted. Some gives honest praise to God. Some sets the stage for the next view on the spiritual horizon. We have one recorded instance where Jesus sang. After the last supper we read, “*And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*” (Matt. 26:30) In addition, Paul admonishes the saints at Ephesus, “*speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord.*” (Eph. 5:19) “*But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*” (Acts 16:25) Notice the outstanding little phrases, “to the Lord” and “to God.” Therein is concealed the outstanding difference. In this instance the singing and praying is

to the Lord, but in another the singing is directed to the people. Singing by anyone who does not have the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon their person will not be praise or worship to God.

Most church people hate prayer meetings, and most really dislike the mid-week service called "Prayer Meeting." These meetings started many years ago because someone recognized a need for God to intervene. Some of the great revivals and outpourings of His Spirit came as a result of prayer meetings. By that, I do not mean where we meet and each one "says" a prayer, but where each, in his or her own way, prays for the Lord of Lords to interrupt our circumstances. Read the history of the great prayer meetings held in Scotland in the 1800s and those held in 1900 in Los Angeles. There resulted tremendous moves of God from them both.

Notice carefully the following Scripture, "*The Lord God has given me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. The Lord God has opened My ear...*" (Isa. 50:4, 5) I would offer this. Until you have experienced the awakening by the Lord early in the morning, you cannot know the excitement and expectation it arouses in the spirit.

ROAD BUMP NO. 22

TRUTH VS. TRADITION

When I was a young man, I worked for a very large company that literally drove me up the wall. In the three years I stayed with them, I saw many ways that would have improved their productivity and would have been easily implemented. My suggestions were always met with, "We've done it this way for forty years and it has worked fine." I'm sure Henry Ford could have said the same thing about the first few cars he produced, but he wanted something better. Therefore, he installed the first assembly line method of manufacturing for Ford automobiles, increasing his production tenfold while greatly lowering the cost of his product. Companies around the world copied his method, and it almost shut down the piece-meal assembly technique. Had he listened to other men, he would have kept building his cars one at a time. Every nook and corner of society has their own brand of tradition which they embrace. The most diabolical brand of tradition is in the religious community.

According to Webster's dictionary, tradition is the handing down of beliefs, opinions, customs, and stories, such as from parents to children, especially by word of mouth or by practice. In Jewish theology, it was the unwritten laws and doctrines, or any one of them believed to have been received by Moses from God and handed down orally from generation to generation. In Christian theology, it is the unwritten precepts or doctrines, or any one of them held to have been received from Jesus and His apostles and handed down orally since then.

The Pharisees and some of the scribes were criticizing Jesus' disciples, for they had seen them eating bread with unwashed hands. *"(For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots). And the Pharisees and the scribes asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat their bread with impure hands?' And He said to them, 'Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men. Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.' He was also saying to them, 'You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition'." (Mk. 7:3-9)*

There are innumerable traditions circulating in the world; and even when the people are confronted with the truth, some still persist in embracing those old ways. Probably the most difficult to deal with are those embedded in theology. Every denomination has numerous traditions and even individual churches have adopted their own, depending on their pastor. Some families inside of churches will adopt their own set of traditions. These gain footholds through dreams, visions and revelations the people have experienced, believing they have been received from God. It makes little difference whether they agree with Scripture or not.

In Jesus' day, there were many of these stories of tradition or folk-lore in the religious community. Jesus warned His disciples, *"...beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees."* (Matt. 16:6) Five verses later He repeats the same warning, so it must have been very significant to their spiritual health. Paul warns his son in Christ against myths. *"This testimony is true. For this*

cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth." (Titus 1:13, 14) The old Rabbis wove many tales into their teachings that had been passed down orally from their clans or teachers. One Rabbi, called Joshua, originated the idea of how Eve was taken from a rib of Adam. The Hebrew word *tsela*, which was translated "rib," would have been better translated "chamber." Only two places was *tsela* translated "rib," and they are both found in the second chapter of Genesis. The Pharisees and Sadducees were notorious for adding different laws that were not written.

Absolute truth came in the form of a Man. They looked at this nondescript Man, who appeared nothing like the pictures we see of Him today, and immediately rejected Him; nevertheless, He was the Word made flesh. *"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..."* (Jn. 1:14) Christians should have one set of rules and that is the Bible, which is the ultimate standard. The problem is the Scriptures have been interpreted by men who could not, nor can not help but inject their own set of beliefs (traditions) into the finished work. It is our responsibility to try, as thoroughly as we can, to make our understanding as near as possible to the template of God—Jesus Christ. We, as a majority, have made God unforgiving, harsh, unapproachable, and unfeeling. If that is how you see God—that is how Jesus was and is to you. Also, if that is how you see God—that is how you will become. *"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit."* (2 Cor. 3:18) We will become the mirror image of the one we worship. Many see the Lord as austere and impatient. They will also be impatient and stern. This is the reason why the Muslims can be so cruel. They see their god in that same light.

Tradition can be likened to a computer virus. It will enter as a very insignificant entity (a worm), which begins to infiltrate the

entire system. It will then distort every segment of operation in the system. At the onset, tradition appears to be very harmless—something that really doesn't matter. As a spiritual comparison, you need look no further than all the pagan holidays observed by Christian churches as "holy days" now set apart and honored. As a matter of fact, all the churches' ceremonies and holy days should be examined in the light of Scripture.

The Apostle Paul has some interesting things to say concerning this subject. His words to the Galatian church are remarkable. *"...I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countrymen, being more extremely zealous for my ancestral traditions."* (Gal. 1:14) Paul was a very learned man—he was not your ordinary "Bible thumper" but schooled in the ways of Gamaliel, an honored teacher of the Pharisees in the generation after Christ. When Paul was mobbed in Jerusalem because of false accusations, he stood to make his defense after being almost killed. *"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God, just as you all are today."* (Acts 22:3) Because it is in strict accordance with the laws of your fathers, does not make it true. Tradition often cloaks itself in the robes of our respected and honored fathers.

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." (Col. 2:8) This word "philosophy" is interesting. It is made up of two words. The word "phile" is the Greek for "lover." "Soph" has to do with wisdom. A philosopher is one who loves wisdom. However, "sophist" or "sophistry" has to do with one who uses the words of wisdom but uses them in a clever and misleading way. "Sopher" was a scribe, one of the ancient teachers or expounders of the Jewish oral law. Notice! This was what the Pharisees were doing. They had incorporated oral law into the written Law of Moses. In other words, they had mixed the

Word of God with folklore. Paul said beware of these men who use “philosophy” as a means of “empty deception.”

You, as well as I, have watched as a bucket of snow-white paint was placed beneath those little spigots, where colors were mixed with it. I’m sure you’ve noticed how only a very small amount of color pigment is needed to tint the whole gallon. This is typical of the extremely small amount of deception needed to contaminate the whole truth.

The old prophet warns, they “...*have walked after the stubbornness of their heart and after the Baals, as their fathers taught them.*” (Jer. 9:14) This was a recycled folklore. The Israelites of old were guilty of this same mixture. “*They feared the Lord and served their own gods...*” (2 Kings 17:33) This is that mixture—that contamination—that impurity which so pollutes the Body of Christ today. There is a difference in being cleansed and being pure. You can take pure gold and add nickel or some other foreign alloy and it becomes fourteen or eighteen karat gold. You can cleanse it with many types of cleanser, but it will always be impure as long as those other elements are present. Being cleansed does not mean being pure. The simplest way to purify it is with fire.

The church has incorporated so much of their fathers’ “old time religion” and oftentimes oral theology that purity has become a foreign word; and yet, our fathers’ religion was probably purer than today’s esoteric religion. This word is found in Paul’s writings to the Colossian church. “*If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ‘do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!’ (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.*” (Col. 2:20-23) This “self-made

religion” is referred to in the Greek as “esoteris” or from within, automatic—auto-soteric. It is a religion whose well-spring is not in Christ. It is called Christianity but is hardly Christian at all. It is gilded with just enough gold to make it appear Christian. This is an enemy to God, and it is attempting to enter through a door other than what He has decreed. It is interesting to note how Islam contends Jesus did not teach Christianity. They say He was a prophet of Islam. This is an example of contamination.

“...let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival (Christmas, Easter, etc.) or a new moon or a Sabbath day (Saturday or Sunday)—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” (Col. 2:16, 17) Why should we encamp around the shadows when they only point to the real? It is much like me embracing a road sign directing me to the next town or trying to walk through an exit sign over a door. They assuredly serve a useful purpose, but we would be foolish to pitch our tent around the sign, even so with the signs of the Bible.

The writer of the book to the Hebrews is even further enlightening. *“Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings, (baptisms) and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.”* (Heb. 6:1, 2) The underlined words—are they not the manna of most modern sermons? He is saying; let us leave that diet of milk and pureed food and go on to solid meat. I have on occasions served a little meat at some tables and the people have gagged, choked and called me a heretic. I then knew what they had been dining on. Paul writes to the Corinthian church and laments, *“And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to babes in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it...”* (1 Cor. 3:1, 2) Isn't it strange many preach so much from Corinthians; and yet, Paul refers to that as milk?

He again writes to the Hebrew church, *“For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for some one to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For every one who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.”* (Heb. 5:12-14) This “milk” to the Hebrews is known to the modern Church as the “Grand Canyon” of Scriptures.

How many of you have been the victim of some person’s zeal to set you straight on baptism (sprinkle, dip or submerge and which words were said over you), what it really takes to be saved, or how often you should partake of communion? There then arises the matter of tithing, dress code, use of makeup, cigarettes, eating pork, shrimp, catfish, eating any meat, drinking coffee or wine, fasting, etc. The list grows as it did in the days of the Pharisees. In the partaking of communion, some will assert that small wafer of which you partake literally becomes the body of Christ. They also declare that small portion of grape juice becomes the literal blood of Jesus. This is called “transubstantiation.” Jesus has become incarnate in that wafer and juice—so they say. They have taken the Scripture, *“...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves”* (Jn. 6:53), and have made it a literal prerequisite to our relationship with Jesus Christ.

Then there is the other side of the coin of those who say, “I just follow my conscience.” You are aware we inherited the conscience at the fall of Adam. Man had no conscience before. Each of us in different social environments has had our conscience trained from childhood according to that society. When we became a Christian, our teachers, pastors, elders and parents began to teach us. They conveyed to us not only what was truth but also their concept of truth derived from the oral gospel or tradition. They taught our conscience, and we began to be guided

by that—whether truth or error. As we progress in the maturity of the gospel, our conscience has to be reprogrammed if we were taught error. That often takes more time than it originally took to learn the error. The walk with Jesus Christ should be a walk of freedom. *“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.”*—or the Law which majored in sin and death. (Rom. 8:1, 2)

Just prior to Jesus' ascension, the disciples tried to pin Him down as to the exact time of restoration. *“...Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”* (Acts 1:6) His answer is one we should store in our strongbox. *“...It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority.”* (Acts 1:7) *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”* (Matt. 24:36) There are certain things the Lord has hidden from our understanding for our own good. However, He gives us many signs and says, *“...when you see all these things (begin to come to pass), recognize that He is near, right at the door.”* (Matt. 24:33) Understand! His timepiece is not synchronized to ours or ours to His. I've preached well over half a century, and I've heard all sorts of predictions from “prophets” and “seers.” Whole congregations of followers have, in some instances, given their belongings away and gone to the mountain top to await His return, only to be disappointed and returned with bowed heads and no bank account. Their leader, who I'm sure, truly believed he had received an accurate revelation and then later got a “correction” in his vision. One of the latest of these revelations I can recall was from a man in Arkansas in the 1980s. He published a book called, “88 Reasons Why the Lord Will Return in '88'.” I made a few people angry when I tried to point out the flaws in the book. Later, when the prophecy had been proven false, they avoided all contact with me.

People love to foretell the future. It makes them look clever. It is not unusual most of the fortune-tellers and palm-readers

are women. Remember, Saul went to the witch of Endor. I occasionally watch this one newscaster as he replays a tape of himself predicting what will be happening today. He doesn't replay his mistakes. This is what gets people involved in a relationship with the world of darkness. Satan knows a lot about men and how they operate; therefore, through reasoning, he can fairly accurately foretell the choices that will be made. Jesus warned about these men. "...*many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many.*" (Matt. 24:11) Again He warns, "*For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.*" (Matt. 24:24) These warnings, which are almost identical, are only a few verses apart; so Jesus must have thought they were of utmost importance. I have been terribly saddened through the years to watch the expansive hype and "Hollywood showmanship" offered to the people as a substitute for the bread of God. I've seen so many comedians preaching the "gospel"; it makes me sick to my stomach. Let me share a word with you the Lord shared with me early one morning. "The anointing makes you believable." You do not need to foretell the future or be comical. You do not need to try and be someone you are not. You need nothing more than the anointing of the Holy Spirit and the Word of the Lord.

I am watching one scenario unfold that is quite interesting. Israel has been, as are all men, stiff-necked and hard-hearted. God has held them up as an example to the world of His love and determination to bring not only this people back to Himself, but the entire world. In spite of blatant blindness and a deaf ear to the Spirit's dealings, Israel has demonstrated a remarkable ability to survive. I watch as the evening news displays the last gap in the fence being put in place around this little country. Egypt has been a buffer-zone, so to speak, to Israel for the last forty years just as she was about forty-five hundred years ago when Egypt served as a haven to Israel. The news of the last few weeks has headlined the uprising in Egypt which, I feel, will be one of the last to close the

gap around Israel in the Arab world. Now we witness Libya and other countries as they join Egypt. This fence of nations around Israel will be—in the eyes of men—impregnable. Unrest in Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Lebanon will surely follow.

Israel has also been able to rely on the United States for military backing and financial aid if she should need it. We have watched this strength being withdrawn; and, soon she will be standing all alone in a very hostile world. The gathering of eagles (vultures) is circling ever nearer. Many in Israel are now either agnostic or outright atheist. In this approaching time of trouble, a great cry will ascend from a people who have nowhere to turn and no one to turn to. Many men, more knowledgeable than I, have termed this the time of Jacob's trouble. (Jer. 30:1-7) I realize this original prophecy primarily had to do with their captivity in Babylon; but, as with most prophecies, it has multiple fulfillments. It could be the United States will not help Israel, not because she has no desire but because of her circumstances she cannot. It is likely the United States will have its hands full at that point in time.

Truth is, at times, as nebulous as gossamer. As a vapor or a wisp of smoke, you must grasp it now or it slips away. There are those who for a lifetime seek truth, and it seems to elude them like a puddle of mercury when dropped on the floor. Paul refers to these men when he wrote to Timothy and said, "*For among them are those who...always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.*" (2 Tim. 3:6, 7) Pilate vacillated with indecision as to how far he should go in attempting to release Jesus. "*And while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him saying, 'Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him'.*" (Matt. 27:19) Almost with miraculous enlightenment, it seems to have hit the governor. "*Pilate therefore said to Him, 'So You are a king?' Jesus answered, 'You say correctly that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the*

truth. Every one who is of the truth hears My voice.’ Pilate said to Him, ‘What is truth?’...” (Jn. 18:37-38) Pilate was as confused as most of civilization is today.

If we listen to politicians or even to the media, we will still be asking, “What is truth?” I can tell you what it’s not. It will not be found in the creed of some universal denomination. They do not realize what they are saying, but most denominations are confessing they are the Christ, or enchristed ones. The following Scripture proves that. *“And then if anyone says to you, ‘Behold, here is the Christ’; or, ‘Behold, He is there’; do not believe him.”* (Mark 13:21) Truth is wrapped up in a “Man”. *“...I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.”* (Jn. 14:6) The use of the definite article “the” denotes the fact there is no other way, truth or life—only One.

People often miss the truth because they are going to the wrong source. In that beautiful chapter on the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus spoke these words, *“I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth: for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.”* (Jn. 16:12, 13) Jesus’ purpose was not to set straight a religious point. His purpose was to set straight wayward souls. The Bible is not to prove a point. It is to point you to the truth. What a wondrous privilege it is that we have as our friend and teacher this Spirit of God, whose purpose it is to lead us into **all** truth. The Holy Spirit is ever available to us. Why would we sit down an hour every week and listen to someone who gives us a mixture of truth, and yet neglect Him who is absolute truth and lives inside us?

How can I tell if what I’m hearing is truth or error? Practice! If you have been born again—and many Christians have not—the Spirit of the living God has taken up residence within you. When you hear truth, there is a leap of excitement within. At first, you

may mistake emotion and excitement for the leap of the Spirit within. When error is spoken, there may be emotional excitement; but you may also sense a numbing of the Spirit. The first few hours may seem great, but afterwards the numbing sets in and a questioning of what is happening. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of Peace. Seek after that Peace. In these last days, there are, and will be, a multitude of charlatans, most of who are looking for financial gain, churning out volumes of jargon that “tickle the ears” but leave the spirit famished. Always look to see if money is the bottom line.

Lyndon Johnson, while President, in order to prop up some proposals he was offering, as is not uncommon in political circles, borrowed a text, although slightly misquoted, from the Bible: “...the truth shall set you free.” (end quote). The Scripture states, “...*you shall know the truth (Truth), and the truth (Truth) shall make you free.*” (Jn. 8:32) The power of this statement hinges on the preceding verse, which states, “...*If you abide in My word, then... you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.*” (Jn. 8:31, 32) The Jews’ answer to this statement was, “...*We are Abraham’s offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, ‘You shall become free?’*” (Jn. 8:33) How preposterous that they would make this remark with a Roman spear held to their sides. Most people do not realize they are prisoners in the dungeon of sin and flesh. Many Christians are prisoners to tradition.

A host of men have appeared on the scene from the dawn of history claiming to have the truth. It seems all have had a morsel of truth, but none have had all the truth. There was one who alleged the angel Nephi appeared to him and directed him to golden plates buried nearby; and supposedly, etched on these golden plates were “corrections” to the Bible. Actually, Joseph Smith stated on September 21, 1823, the angel’s name was Nephi; but the Mormon Church has made many “alterations” in the “Book of Mormon” and they still call the angel Moroni. There are

some who are so convinced only they have the perfect truth, and they will kill you if you disagree with them. One time called Mohammedans, they are the present day Islamic, or Muslim faith. All “faiths” usually have some outstanding man who headed up their associations, and the majority is guided by a book, which sprang out of man’s novel approach to God.

In most circles, I would be branded a “radical.” I certainly would never demand your adherence to my faith. I would never demand you even change your denomination. I would demand you worship the same Jesus if we are to fellowship. Wrapped up in this Man, is the totality of truth; and of this, I am a radical. We are a part of the Body of Christ, not the body of the Bible. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* (Jn.1:1) Jesus was the incarnate (the embodiment) Word of God. *“And the Word became flesh...”* (Jn.1:14) There are those who seem to believe this means Jesus became the Scripture. The flesh did not become Word—the Word became flesh. I worked with a preacher many years ago who brought his Bible to work every day. He laid his Bible atop his workbench and woe unto anyone who moved it or laid as much as a piece of paper on top of it. To him it was the incarnate Word. No! Jesus was the incarnate Word, not the Bible. Tradition has always been a part of all religions. It is easier to concoct a more acceptable way than follow “The Way.” It is easier to memorize verses of Scripture than develop a relationship with the Lord. Truth has many layers, like a pearl. The pearl is built layer upon layer, liken to the formation of an onion. We teach a child little by little. Truth also develops incrementally. Although this applies to facts, it also applies to the knowledge of Jesus, if not more.

Allow me to get a little radical at this time. I am somewhat nettled by all the pagan holidays the churches have incorporated into their worship. Let me start with Christmas. There are two men whose birthdays were celebrated or even mentioned in the Bible. One was Pharaoh and the other was Herod. On Pharaoh’s

birthday, he hanged the chief baker. On Herod's birthday, he had John the Baptist beheaded. We have invented a day of Jesus' birth, which is probably not even close to the actual day He was born. There are Christmas parades, live nativity scenes, endless parties, laughter and frivolity. We feast, drink, and exchange an endless array of gifts, many of which will be broken or discarded before the New Year begins. A garish array of lights is strung on anything that doesn't move. We watch "It's a Wonderful Life," max out the credit cards, and breathe a huge sigh of relief when it is over. We are up to our eyeballs in debt, and the merchants have become rich. Many of those merchants do not believe at all that Jesus is the Christ, but will gladly provide the merchandise and take money from a gullible public.

Another day, which we inherited from the pagans, is Easter. As you will note, Easter is a lunar holiday. In other words, its occurrence is not on the same day each year, but falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon following the Vernal Equinox. I quote from Barnes Notes regarding Acts 12:4 KJV:

... There never was a more absurd or unhappy translation than this. The original is simply *after the Passover*. The word *Easter* now denotes the festival observed by many Christian churches in honour of the resurrection of the Saviour. But the original has no reference to that; nor is there the slightest evidence any such festival was observed at the time when this book (Acts) was written... The word *Easter* is of Saxon origin, and is supposed to be derived from *Eostre*, the goddess of love, or the Venus of the North, in honour of whom a festival was celebrated by our pagan ancestors in the month of April. (*Webster*). As this festival coincided with the Passover of the Jews, and with the feast observed by Christians in honour of the resurrection of Christ, the name came to be used to denote the latter... In the translation by Wicliffe, the word

paske, i.e., passover, is used. But Tindal and Coverdale used the word *Easter*, and hence it has very improperly crept into our translation... (Clark) (end quote).

Easter is mentioned one time in the Bible and that is a mistranslation of Passover. *“And when he had apprehended him, (Peter) he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions (squad) of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people (to kill him).”* (Acts 12:4 KJV) Other translations use Passover, which is correct, instead of Easter.

Easter has devolved into the Easter Parade, where the ladies exhibit the latest fashions of the clothing industry. To top off this “Holy Season,” we sell baby rabbits, dyed baby chicks and ducks, and have Easter egg hunts; the rabbits have supposedly laid the eggs. We have made these two holidays beautiful and meaningful to us; yet, they are rooted in the “pagan” tradition of the dark past. Again, the merchants smile and fill their coffers.

“All Saints Day” or Halloween, as we call it, is a festival witnessing to the dark spirits of the wicked one. Even that has crept into the church. We changed the name somewhat and call it “Holyween.” There is hardly anything holy about this raucous night where witches, skeletons and demons are glorified; and little children are taught to extort gifts from people on threat of vandalizing their property. Again, the merchants become rich. Do you see a pattern here?

Last of all is that seductive day we call Valentine’s Day. The Saudi Arabian religious police banned the sale of all Valentine’s Day related items because they considered it a Christian holiday. That in itself ought to give us cause to familiarize ourselves with this day’s history and its related activities.

After Constantine the Great legalized Christianity and ended Rome’s persecution of the Christians in 380 A.D., Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire. Many pagans,

however, who adopted Christianity did not entirely abandon the practices held before their “conversion.” One of these traditions brought into the Church was the fertility celebration known as Lupercalia. After the conversion of the Imperial City (Rome), Christians still continued, in the month of February, the annual celebration of Lupercalia to which they ascribed a secret and mysterious influence of the hospitable powers of the animal and vegetable worlds. The Lupercalia festival was partly in honor of Lupa, the she-wolf, who (according to legend) nursed the infant twins, Romulus and Remus, who (according to legend) founded Rome in 753 B.C. During the festival, a goat and a dog were sacrificed. The hide of the goat was cut into strips and dipped in blood; then young naked men ran through the crowd striking the women with the bloody pelts. This was a sort of choosing their sexual mate for this festival.

Twenty-four years after the death of Emperor Anthemism, a Christianized form of the festival Lupercalia was officially adopted by the Church as a day to honor a saint—St. Valentine. Pope Gelasius changed Lupercalia from February 15, to St. Valentine on February 14. Early Christians were happier with the idea of a holiday honoring a saint of romantic causes than one recognizing a pagan festival. Pope Gelasius named February 14 in honor of Saint Valentine, the patron saint of lovers. Countless ministers use this day to preach about love.

Cupid, whose alias is Eros, is the god of desire, affection and erotic love. Today Cupid is shown shooting his arrow into the heart to inspire romantic love. Let me now get a little earthy. A person's heart does not look anything like the pictured heart; however, the picture is similar to another part of the female anatomy. The male arrow is shown puncturing the heart. I dare not become more graphic. And again—the merchants become rich.

Does it really matter? Does God really care how we worship Him as long as we worship Him? **Yes!** Let us see what God has

to say about it. *“When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ You shall not behave thus toward the Lord your God, for every abominable act which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”* (Deut. 12:29-31) It appears God **does care** and it **does matter** how we approach Him.

Someone told me once, in response to the above teaching, “You’re taking all the fun out of being a Christian.” Can you imagine? Fun? FUN? **FUN?** Is that what Christianity is all about—fun? That is why I refer to most “churches” as clubs. They have become a place of entertainment rather than worship—not all, but most. Consequently, in the time of testing most will topple and fall just as did the temple in Jerusalem.

I cannot cover all the areas of tradition in so short a space; however, in addition to the holidays some celebrate, there are such Christian beliefs as (to name a few): walking on streets of gold; sitting on golden thrones and ruling with Jesus; the antichrist putting a computer chip in your hand or forehead, people having 666 branded on their person; and Jesus sitting on a throne in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. There are thousands of traditions which entangle God’s people in a web of deceit. *“...See to it that no one misleads you.”* (Matt. 24:4) Slow down for this road bump; research and discover why it is there.

ROAD BUMP NO. 23

THE ABSENCE OF PRAYER

Immediately after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He was led (driven) unto a mountain to be tempted by the devil. For forty days He was there before His Father. The question might arise, "What was He doing?" We assume He was praying. Why? Was He being prepared for what was awaiting? Did He know what was coming? I doubt it. The unknown is only one of the reasons we pray. We pray oftentimes not knowing why we are impressed to pray, totally oblivious of our present situation or to the problems of the future. We all know how Jesus flawlessly neutralized the temptations of Satan. We can do the same thing.

The church, as a whole, has forgotten the absolute necessity of prayer; or she has foolishly believed her soulish choices are wiser and more practical. Common sense and reason, not the Spirit, will tell us it is unnecessary to pray and wait at length for an answer as to where we should invest our few paltry dollars; and most economic wizards would also warn us that waiting would cost us the better interest. But then, praying and waiting might also keep you from investing in an institution on the brink of bankruptcy. We have, through impatience and pride, neglected prayer for so long most of us have forgotten how to pray. We have been unconsciously pressed into the speed-lane on this highway we're traveling and are unable to disentangle ourselves from the maddening maze of traffic. It has simply become a way of life. We apparently see no need for preparation.

Jesus, who is our pattern, was above all things a man of prayer. As we behold Him, we apparently think He of all people was a man

who needed to pray the least. He was a man of power, a man of insight and a man of great destiny; why should He need to pray? He, above all, needed to pray. The higher the position one holds, the greater the need to spend time in prayer. It was His time in prayer that enabled Him to do the miracles which so enrapt us. Jesus repeatedly said, I do not do or say anything I have not first heard My Father do or say. (Refer to Jn. 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 14:10) Prayer is the essential need to understanding the Father's will. After coming down from the mount of transfiguration, Jesus was met by a man who had an epileptic son. His father lamented “...*I told your disciples to cast it out, and they could not do it.*” (Mark 9:18) After casting out the unclean spirit, His amazed disciples asked Jesus what hindered them from casting it out. His response was, “...*This kind cannot come out by anything but prayer.*” (Mark 9:29) Was this miracle something He had already seen the Father do? Men in “high” positions today (ecclesiastical or political) are so busy they haven't the time to pray. Again we repeat—it is not saying a prayer, but earnestly praying—there's a world of difference.

We, above all, should pray. Why? Because most of us do not know the voice of the Lord well enough to receive instructions from Him. The church has proven to be a dismal failure in teaching—leading its adherents into a personal relationship with our Father. If I were a young man in love with a young woman, I would never, in my wildest imagination, ask another person to do all the courting in my stead. I would especially not feel it a burdensome responsibility to do so myself. When a man and his wife have reached a point in their lives they no longer want to talk to each other, it can be safely assumed they no longer truly love each other and have become distant and cold in their relationship. This was Jesus' complaint to the church of Ephesus. “*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love.*” (Rev. 2:4) If we have left our first love, we will not do much praying.

I think most people absolutely detest being taken for granted. It is degrading; it is belittling; and it is demeaning. We, for the

most part, have become a people who take God for granted. We do not depend on Him any longer for our physical healing for we have good insurance. It's only when we become critically ill, we groan, "We're just going to have to trust in the Lord." That is a terrible indictment against us. That "groan" should have been our first choice.

All of you, I'm sure, have heard the hypocrites pray, preach and prophesy. It has the sound of clanging symbols. It grates against the nerves of the spirit with a dry-mouthed emptiness. Jesus said, *"And when you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full."* (Matt. 6:5) Again, *"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!'"* (Lu. 18:10-13) Jesus said the tax-gatherer was justified rather than the Pharisee because whoever exalts himself shall be humbled and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

The Jews had set aside three times daily which were times to pray. The Moslems have five times daily in which they pray. The church's time to pray devolved into a time of rubbing of beads and repeating a memorized prayer. A Moslem's time of prayer is one of rubbing of beads and repeating memorized prayers, while facing Mecca. Whose prayer will get answered?

During one of my times of meditation, God spoke a strange word to me, or it was strange to me. "The spirit and the soul do not speak the same language," He said. Now, I know most husbands and wives would readily agree; but, I knew He was speaking of

those things of the spirit. The spirit man and the feminine soul are married; yet, they have a strange relationship. She does most of the talking and expresses her opinions more than does her quiet husband. Some would even think him henpecked. You realize I'm not speaking of the fleshly man and wife. Each of us has this ongoing relationship within ourselves.

Why is there such a scarcity of prayer? I think Paul had the answer, not only for his time but especially for our time. *"...the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."* (Rom. 8:26) Amazingly, the Spirit does not really pray His prayers through our soul (our intellectual verbalizing) but through our spirit. To complicate the matter, we have been brainwashed into believing that our souls are the only outlet to God; when more often than not, it is the spirit who has much clearer access.

I have sat at numerous tables to dine, both here and abroad. Often what was set before me was completely unrecognizable. I had to trust the host and hostess. I ate what they ate. Twice I became terribly ill due to tiny parasitic microbes to which they were immune. I can promise you, there are no parasites in the food of the Spirit that is served from God's word. I have often remarked; we are cafeteria-Christians. We pick and choose what we like; and very likely, it is the same thing we ate the last time we were there. As Christians, most want to hear something on the order of what they're familiar with. They will tend to reject the strange or unheard of; although, it just might broaden their knowledge of the Scripture and deepen their relationship with Jesus Christ if they would but dare to take on their tray a dish of different appearance and texture.

Jesus made us a clear and candid promise. *"But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth..."* (Jn.16:13) **How?** One way is by the opening of truth by revelation

in your spirit. Another is by those dishes of foods we have resisted but which are plainly on the spiritual menu. We are clearly creatures of habit. That is why animals are so easily caught in traps.

The fourteenth chapter of First Corinthians is a chapter most Christians avoid like the plague; but look; it is clearly on the divine menu. It's that "tongues" thing. "...*one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men, but to God; for no one understands, but in his spirit he speaks mysteries.*" (1 Cor. 14:2) "*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also.*" (1 Cor. 14:14, 15) Remember! I did not say this; Paul said this.

Because of their aversion to this entrée, many will avoid it at all cost because "that's not how my family or my church believes." You are a composite of spirit, soul and body; all these are designed to work as a unit. "But I function very well on two-thirds power." But your "two-thirds power" is ignoring the most powerful dynamics available to you—The Holy Spirit.

Paul was not a back-woods hick. He was educated by the most famous scholar in the generation after Christ. He authored a major portion of the New Testament which serves as the basis of our faith, as you are well aware. Listen to what he has to say. "*I thank God, I speak in tongues more than you all; however, in the church I desire to speak five words with my mind, that I may instruct others also, rather than ten thousand words in a tongue.*" (1 Cor. 14:18, 19) When did Paul do all that speaking in tongues? When he prayed, of course! When else? He did not speak in tongues in church; and yet, he spoke in tongues more than they all. It had to be when he prayed.

If we only pray with our understanding, we will only express the petitions of our mind. The soul loves to talk; but, she speaks out of her own being—reason, intellect, emotion. Believe

me when I say, most of the time we do not know how to pray so we simply do not pray. We are ignoring The One who knows how to pray the mind of the Father. The local psychologist will have you lay on a couch and talk. The spirit will not speak to the psychologist. The soul will speak of her feelings, desires, angers, disappointments and hurts. The spirit is silent. Why? The spirit converses with God, not with psychologists. Please keep in mind; I'm not speaking of two sexes. I am speaking of the two natures inherent in us.

The United States has a Constitution that is the foundational laws of our land. There have been many amendments Congress has deemed necessary to add to the original structure. Each amendment changes our Constitution somewhat; it may even possibly weaken the Constitution. The church also has a constitution. It is called the Bible. Many groups boast of their creed—"We're a Bible believing church." I have yet to find one group or church embracing the entire Bible. It seems we have added amendments, such as, "that went out with the Apostles," or "that was meant for another time or culture."

I've often wondered why there was and is such opposition to speaking in tongues in the church. I think I now know. It goes back to the soul/spirit relationship in the person. The soul will not submit to the spirit unless forced to, for the soul is the home of self-will. She (the soul) cannot afford to allow the "tongues thing" to operate because, "*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind (soul) is unfruitful.*" (1 Cor. 14:14) She cannot manipulate nor listen in on the prayer, and the soul will not willfully submit to the leadership of the spirit. As he (the spirit) prays in tongues, he speaks mysteries the soul does not understand.

I've listened to countless people admit, "Our services are the "same ole, same ole." Their Sunday bulletin will reinforce that assessment. Let us go back a few thousand years. God had miraculously fed the children of Israel with manna; but now listen

to their complaint, *“We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers and the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic, but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna. The people would go about and gather it and grind it between two millstones or beat it in the mortar, and boil it in the pot and make cakes with it; and its taste was as the taste of cakes baked with oil.”* (Num. 11:5, 6, 8) Can you see what is happening here? The manna kept them alive, but it had become extremely monotonous. They cooked it every way they could imagine and even ate it raw, attempting to take the sameness out of it. Examine closely the following passage. *“Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread out of heaven to eat.’ Jesus therefore said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world.’”* (Jn. 6:31-33) Jesus makes a clear distinction between the bread which Moses gave (Law) and the bread which the Father gives—Jesus Christ, the Bread of Life.

Many, if not most, of our church services have become like those in the wilderness, experimenting with different manna recipes. We have tried everything imaginable to make changes that will inject some fresh life into our meetings. We have even tried to replicate the old carnal life with our music and games. The problem invariably is we have crowded the Holy Spirit out of our meetings or ignored His very existence. The world says, “God is dead.” The church says, in essence, “The Spirit is dead or stopped speaking after the death of the apostles.” Our services in their entirety are the product of the outgrowth of the soul. The soul is shamelessly self-centered. She prays about things that concern her life. She is wrapped up in self. She is not to be allowed to lead or be head of the household. *“For the husband (spirit) is head of the wife (soul)...”* (Eph. 5:23) We must come to

the realization the spirit man must be loosed so he may take his rightful place of leadership.

Wednesday night prayer services have been largely replaced with three lifeless songs and a short sermonette. I am sure God just loves to be crowded into that time frame. We hear, "Let us bow our heads in a moment of silent prayer." Sound familiar? Daniel, knowing the injunction had been signed against praying to any other god, prayed with his window open and as a consequence spent some time in the lion's den—someone had overheard him. On the day of Pentecost, the ones in the upper room prayed with such fervor all the people of Jerusalem heard them; and at least three thousand people gathered to see what the commotion was about. The modern church hardly makes a show of praying anymore. "There is simply no need to pray like that since God is not deaf," is the protest, as we nail another amendment to our church constitution. I know there are countless people who call themselves Christian; but, how many of these truly know how to talk to the Lord? Many people believe in tithing; but, how many tithes their time to the Lord? How many spend 2.4 hours every day totally dedicated to the Lord? There is a familiar passage of Scripture I would like to quote here: "*If my people, which are called by my name, (those who call themselves Christian) 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.*" (2 Chron. 7:14 KJV) By reading this, we will see there are those who are called Christians who have wicked ways. This country desperately needs Christians who care enough to pray. If this nation fails, the responsibility will lay squarely upon the shoulders of those who call themselves Christian.

Prayer is not a food supplement. It is the flow of life itself.

ROAD BUMP NO. 24

SHOW US A SIGN

I have saved this for the last road bump because I believe it to be the most deadly snare on the King's Highway—your heavenly path. It will become even more treacherous as we approach the end of the age. Of all the religions of the world, Christianity is the only one really known for its miraculous. It began with the greatest miracle ever recorded, and its entire history is interwoven with the wonders of God. Even today the Roman Catholic Church reserves the title of sainthood for those who have a proven miracle in their life.

Jesus' ministry began with the wedding in Cana of Galilee. It was here He turned the water into wine. He then went to Jerusalem; and upon entering the temple area, He overturned the money changers' tables and with a whip drove the merchandisers out of the temple. *"The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, 'What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?'"* (Jn. 2:18) Shortly afterwards it is recorded, *"And a great multitude was following Him, because they were seeing the signs which He was performing on those who were sick."* (Jn. 6:2) Later in this same chapter, He fed the five thousand men, not counting women and children, with five loaves and two fish. Then, astonishingly, *"They said therefore to Him, 'What then do You do for a sign, that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?'"* (Jn. 6:30) They seemed to be sign centered.

Much of the Church community today has reached the point now where they will not believe without a sign. Jesus, Himself, witnessed, *"...among those born of women there has not arisen anyone greater than John the Baptist..."* (Matt. 11:11) Yet there is

this testimony, “...*John performed no sign...*” (Jn.10:41) Hear me! I welcome the true signs, but we are on treacherous footing to readily believe anything simply because there are signs following for even the charlatan can produce them. The sorcerers did so in Pharaoh's court in answer to the true miracles of God.

I don't know when the supernatural phenomenon started in modern time, perhaps with Superman. Supposedly, he was put aboard a spaceship as an embryo by his father to save him for his home planet, Krypton, was about to explode into oblivion. He landed in a field in Kansas in 1938 and was born on planet earth. Discovered by the Kents and raised as their own, he grew up with their moral beliefs, but not their earthly weaknesses. Sounds almost Biblical, doesn't it? He was faster than a speeding bullet, more powerful than a locomotive and could leap over tall buildings without effort. What was especially advantageous was that he was a good guy who hated evil.

Next, as a youngster, I was hearing these words, “Open Sesame”, from “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.” Those were magical words that could accomplish wonders. Doors would open, revealing incredible treasures. Children were being taught to believe in the supernatural—and to be a thief. Robin Hood reinforced the latter belief. There followed a swift procession of the supernatural in the movie industry; “The Wizard of Oz”, “Jurassic Park,” and “Star Trek” where Luke Skywalker was encouraged to believe “the force is with you”. Then along came Harry Potter and lured almost an entire generation into his magical web.

Perhaps everyone loves to peek into the unknown. Your daily astrology predictions will prove that. Television shows proclaiming the power of ESP hold people captive. Tarot cards, fortune tellers, palmist, and any number of slight of hand artists captivate people's interest. Can you see where this is leading?

We have recorded in the book of Acts two instances of sorcerers who opposed God's envoys. One was against Peter and

another against Paul. In the first instance: Simon, the sorcerer, was practicing magic in Samaria, astonishing the people. Phillip preached Christ and harvested a great many souls. When the news was received in Jerusalem, Peter and John went down to Samaria and began laying hands on the new converts so they might receive the Holy Spirit. Here again is that two-part regeneration. When Simon saw the miraculous effects of the laying on of the Apostles' hands, he tried to buy the gift from Peter. Peter was swift to reply. "...*May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!*" (Acts 8:20)

The second instance: Paul and Barnabas encountered a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-jesus. This man opposed them as they witnessed to the proconsul. "...*Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze upon him, and said, 'You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?'*" (Acts 13:9, 10) With that said, Paul smote him with blindness; and he went about seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Read carefully verse ten and it will describe the origin and extent of magic.

Let us look briefly at a passage in the book of Revelation. Referring to the false prophet, the word declares, "*And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform...*" (Rev. 13:13, 14) This is not speaking of one man but an order of men. As I have previously said, men love signs. They love the supernatural. Our God is a God of the supernatural, so it should not seem strange Satan would use the same procedure, "...*such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness...*" (2 Cor. 11:13-15)

Now, please understand me. I believe in the supernatural, but I also know how Satan and his servants operate. I have witnessed so many side-shows and carnival trickery my heart now cries for reality; but realize, I must depend entirely on the discernment of the Holy Spirit lest I also rush into error. What alarms me is the number of people who run after ministers seeking a word from them. If you will but learn the voice of the Shepherd, **He** will give you a sure word plus save you gas mileage on the King's Highway, at the same time.

I do not suggest Paul was vacillating because he had this weakness and infirmity in his body; however, I do think at first he thought it may be a poor testimony to his ministry. I know that today any man in the "healing ministry" would be looked upon with suspicion and contempt if he was host to a weakness or infirmity. Because of his great revelation, Paul was given (by God) a thorn in the flesh, a messenger (angel) of Satan (a demon), to keep him humble lest he exalt himself above measure. As we know, he prayed three times for deliverance from this demon only to be informed by God that he did not need freedom from the evil spirit. He needed only the grace of God. How does this correspond with the ministry of exorcism today?

Notice the underlined passage directly above. This messenger of Satan was given to Paul to keep him from future sins—lest he exalt himself above measure. I don't think Paul would have reached that conclusion apart from the revelation of the Spirit. Most of us have little to boast of; yet, pride will boast of unimaginable accomplishments. I truly believe many of the weaknesses and infirmities are given to us to keep us from future sins.

Paul took a strange path in his response to his dilemma. "... *Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses (feeble, frail, disease, malady), that the power of Christ may dwell in me.*" (2 Cor. 12:9) Let us look at how the Amplified version reads. "... *Therefore, I will all the more gladly glory in my weaknesses and*

infirmities, that the strength and power of Christ, the Messiah, may rest—yes, may pitch a tent [over] and dwell—upon me!” This verse of Scripture sounds almost blasphemous in light of today’s faith message. “*Women received back their dead by resurrection; and others were tortured, not accepting their release, in order that they might obtain a better resurrection.*” (Heb. 11:35) This passage is so filled with profundity; few have plumbed its depth. There is obviously contained in these Scriptures a truth eluding most. To endure an infirmity that the medical profession could probably eradicate, or at least alleviate, sounds senseless. It projects a martyr complex.

One might say—Paul, your testimony could have been so much more enhanced if God had performed this wonderful miracle and healed you publicly. That is what Satan told Jesus on the Mount of Temptation. “Think how joyfully You would be accepted if You performed these signs.” Jesus knew, and Paul discovered, there was a better way. I think it would serve us well, when trouble strikes, to not seek immediate deliverance. I know that runs counter to everything we have been taught. Let me offer this observation; we learn much more in times of trouble than when everything is going well. I can almost hear the protests, “*I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*” (Phil. 4:13) This verse’s interpretation is a little misleading. I cannot be a brain surgeon or rocket scientist or leap a river; but, I can be all things I need to be through Christ Jesus.

Thomas earned the unenviable reputation of being a doubter because he demanded a sign from Jesus after His resurrection. “*...Unless I shall see...I will not believe.*” (Jn. 20:25) Later Jesus appeared to him and said, “*...Because you have seen Me, Thomas, do you now believe (trust, have faith)? Blessed and happy and to be envied are those who have never seen Me, and yet have believed...*” (Jn. 20:29 AMP)

I know of “mature” Christians who still “lay fleeces before the Lord.” “*But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you*

into all truth...” (Jn. 16:13) It does not say “the Spirit and a fleece will guide you”—but the Spirit will guide you. If you do not know the voice of the Lord and your fleece is answered, how do you know Satan has not answered it? After Judas committed suicide, Peter, in his rashness, decided another must immediately take his place so they drew lots—drew straws, for Judas’ replacement. That was the equivalent to a fleece. Matthias was chosen. Tell me, what happened to Matthias? To my knowledge he was never heard of again. This all happened before the Day of Pentecost. When the promise of John 16 was fulfilled, that beloved Helper came as the consummate Teacher. God had His replacement for Judas—Paul, an Apostle born out of due season. I never read of the fleece being used again in the New Testament. *“And these signs will accompany those who have believed: in My name they will cast out demons, they will speak with new tongues; they will pick up serpents, and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”* (Mark 16:17, 18) These are not things they are trying to do. This is not their ministry. These things accompany their ministry. They are an outgrowth of that which abides within them.

CONCLUSION

Today the world is crying for reality; and because they have witnessed so much sham, so much hypocrisy and duplicity, they have given up hope of ever encountering, much less experiencing, the authentic. Many years ago, people were entertained in vaudeville with the puppet shows. The marionettes were dolls or puppets made to look like people or animals and were manipulated by hands and strings, often on a little stage. These little marionettes acted out a story, while the puppet-masters were hidden from view by a curtain or wall.

Then along came the ventriloquist who could “throw his voice.” He, in full view of the audience, manipulated his puppets with his hands. For the most part only the puppet’s mouth moved, but on occasions its arms and head also moved. The puppet-master had learned to speak without any visible movement of his lips. One of the most famous, but probably not the best puppet-master, was Edgar Bergen. His puppets became more famous than he. Charlie McCarthy and Mortimer Snerd were his two most famous ones. There is a line taken from one of William Thackeray’s many novels, called “Vanity Fair,” which is a classic; “Come children, let us shut up the box and the puppets, for our play is played out.” My dear friends, the day is fast approaching when we shall hear the words from on high, “The play is played out. Time shall be no more.” Literally, a puppet is a colorful word given to a person or a group whose actions, while apparently independent, are really manipulated or controlled by another power hidden behind the scene, e.g., a ruler, government, church, and/or pastor.

During WW11, there were horrible atrocities committed against innocent people simply because they were different. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, were fed to the furnaces of Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald and Flossenburg. That well-known pastor, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who returned to Germany from the USA against the pleadings of his contemporaries, was hung in Flossenburg in April of 1945, only one month before the prison camp where he was confined was liberated. All in all, there were 146 German concentration camps. When later brought before a court of justice, those criminals who had tortured and executed so many had one excuse, "It was a time of war and we were only following orders." Likened to a puppet, someone pulled their strings; and they responded without question—often gladly.

When Jesus appeared on the scene, the world was hungry for reality. He introduced the authentic into an organization of marionettes and puppet-masters. There were few of those, it seemed, whose strings were not being pulled by either the Roman overlords or the religious autocrats. Jesus introduced the genuine to the slaves of His day, but most of them were so brainwashed they could not distinguish the real from the puppets.

Fast-forward two thousand plus years. Hollywood is a community of puppets who, for the most part, only know how to read and act out a script. Although there may be a handful in the entertainment industry who are thinkers; for the most part, some one else pulls their strings. Because they have been so visible and vocal over the years, there is now an entire generation of people who believe they actually represent reality. Now that is perfectly conceivable since most of the viewers are also blind and deaf to the things of God. Children will believe the inconceivable. That is understandable. However, what is the Church's excuse? *"Therefore, behold, I am sending you prophets and wise men and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to*

city.” (Matt. 23:34) They do not here openly kill them; however, they do openly ridicule them and destroy their reputation.

How will God judge those preachers and pastors whose “strings” are pulled by a local board or Nashville, Kansas City, Springfield, Tulsa or wherever? It could be a host of television preachers who are controlling the strings; but, who’s pulling theirs? God is vitally interested in a people with whom He can have a personal relationship, not a second-hand role through a puppeteer. There are many who have become so deluded as to think the puppet is the real deal. Hey! I’ve been in that place before. Don’t ever become complacent with where you are. If you do, you are dancing with death now. That “Old Time Religion” was good for its time—not for today.

Someone once asked me concerning a man with whom I was very impressed, “Are you impressed with what he said or how he said it?” After much consideration, I answered, “It must be with the way he said it.” I was amazed to discover that error in my being, revealing another subtle flaw which had camouflaged itself. It was the same defect which God had to bring to Samuel’s attention; “*...God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*” (1 Sam. 16:7) Most of us are impressed by the way a man speaks, his body language and, of course, his appearance. A friend of mine spoke with a distinct British accent. After he had spoken in meetings, the rest of us might as well have taken a break unless the Holy Spirit was intensely present. He did not need to say anything profound, because his accent did all the work. It made him sound intelligent because the people were looking on the outward man.

We often, as perhaps we have here, spend too much time on the negative. Let me leave you on a positive note. As you know, God is Spirit. David wrote a song for the choir director’s use concerning God’s omnipresence and omniscience—or His presence being everywhere at once and all-knowing at all times. As David

contemplated these wonders, he remarked, *“Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is too high, I cannot attain to it.”* (Ps. 139:6) He then elaborates on those thoughts. *“Where can I go from Thy Spirit? Or where can I flee from Thy presence?”* (v. 7) The next few verses are referring to David attempting to flee from the presence of God. Perhaps, he was thinking of the dark time of his affair with Bathsheba. *“If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol (hell), behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the dawn, if I dwell in the remotest part of the sea, even there Thy hand will lead me, and Thy right hand will lay hold of me.”* (Ps. 139:8-10)

Adam and Eve had also tried to hide from God. I'm sure God had been observing every detail of their choices. If we simply observe this from the negative standpoint, it will make us tend to be constantly looking over our shoulders; however, let us view this from the positive. King David seems to breathe a huge sigh of relief because, he remembers the positive, *“...Thy hand will lead me...”* (Ps. 139:10) There is no one who has not found themselves in a dark place, seemingly forsaken and forgotten. This is because we're looking with carnal eyes and not the eyes of the Spirit. There is not one cubic inch in this immense universe God does not inhabit. Had those men aboard Apollo 13 never been able to return to earth; the Lord would have been with them. We were shaken by the explosion of the shuttle Columbia over East Texas that Saturday morning; yet, God was with every member of that unfortunate mission. We also watched in horror as the twin towers collapsed in on themselves; yet, we knew God was with every despairing victim of that misguided hatred. If you are faced with cancer, heart trouble or some other life-threatening disease, staring at death daily, God is as close as a thought.

Our Father is ever causing His rain to fall upon the desert of our lives. When it is raining and you want to collect some water, it would be foolish to rush out with a small-mouth coke bottle to do so; you would use a wide-mouth jar or some large vessel.

Likewise, we should always enter His presence with thanksgiving and with large open vessels to receive everything He has for us. Believe me! He has more awaiting us than we can imagine or conceive. Bring a large vessel.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

I SINCERELY PRAY THIS BOOK IS NOT ABOUT ME. If that is what you see, I will have totally missed the goal of my endeavor. Nevertheless, after some fifty-eight years in evangelistic, missionary, and pastoral work, we have experienced many facets of the body of Christ. We must make room for cultural and historical differences; however, there are some aberrations the church simply cannot accommodate. We can no longer embrace any form of idol worship. Approach this writing as you would any other, with open but guarded receptivity. I truly believe in diversity, yet, not division—different gifts but not different goals. Most of us, as yet, see darkly as in a mirror. Our prayer is that we may all see clearly and speak only of those things which we have truly “seen.” Remember! When you encounter a particular Road Bump on this King’s Highway—slow down, stop at a rest stop, study, and do some research through the Scriptures; and, by all means, pray for the Lord’s enlightenment and direction. Your spiritual compass (GPS) may need recalibrating.

