

# NAVIGATING THROUGH LIFE



**Walking By Faith  
In A World Of Trials**

**DICKSON**

# Navigating Through Life

Inscriptions V

Roger E. Dickson

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## Preface

The *Inscriptions* that are first published on the internet are editorials that express my personal views and Bible studies at the time of writing. They are usually written in response to current events and Bible discussions. This is now the fifth e-book that I have published as a collection of these *Inscriptions*.

As you read through this collection of *Inscriptions*, please keep in mind that there is no intentional continuity between the individual *Inscription* themes. As the other e-books of *Inscriptions*, the purpose of this volume is to preserve the *Inscriptions* as an e-book for the *Biblical Research Library* of my website. For the reader's convenience, I have collected into one volume those thoughts that I have had on different occasions in response to relevant matters of history, or discussions in the religious world.

I interpret the events of the world through the revelation of the word of God. As a Christian, my world view is governed by what the Bible teaches. These *Inscriptions*, therefore, are my personal perspectives in response to world events that were occurring at the time of writing. Some world events may have changed since I first published a particular editorial. Nevertheless, the thoughts that are presented in the *Inscriptions* are intentionally Bible based. I assume, therefore, that they are profitable for Bible students to consider after the initial e-book publication.

The advantage of a Bible-based world view is that one's responses to current events can always be sifted through eternal principles that do not change. People today respond to the word of God as they did four thousand or more years ago. God-fearing people from the beginning of time have responded to any revelation from their Creator in reference to the times in which they lived. I reserve the right to do the same. My understanding of matters that must be understood through deductive interpretation may differ from yours. However, those fundamental principles that permeate time need no interpretation, and thus, with these fundamental principles of the Bible in view, I have laid the foundation upon which I seek to respond to current events and religious discussions.

I want to encourage others to forward this book on to others. Through this medium of distribution I have circulated millions of books worldwide throughout my fifty years of ministry writing. You can thus help a great deal by continuing in circulation this particular e-book. At the back of this book is a list of other valuable books that you can download freely, and likewise share with friends around the world.

Roger E. Dickson  
Philadelphia, South Africa  
September 1, 2021

## Chapter 1

# QUESTIONS AND CROSSES

The Greek philosopher Socrates was known during the days of the ancients in the fifth century B.C. to be the wisest man in the world. Unfortunately, he met his fatal end by being condemned to death by a court of five hundred jurors. He was subsequently consigned to a suicidal death by drinking the executioner's cup of the deadly hemlock poison. Socrates' only "crime" was that he asked too many questions, and by asking too many questions he forced his intellectual and political peers to question any absolutes that they considered to be concrete truth. So really, why would someone who was considered to be the wisest man in the world end up condemned by a court of contemporary jurors simply because he asked questions concerning the beliefs of those who thought that they knew all the answers?

The Jewish Messiah Jesus was known in His days of the first century as the wisest man who ever walked across the face of the earth. He was the greatest teacher of moral integrity of all history—Christians know this. But He too by those of His time was condemned to death by both the contemporary religious leaders and the occupying Roman government of Palestine. But why did Jesus meet the same end as Socrates, having also forced to "commit suicide" on a cross outside Jerusalem? Unfortunately, He too asked too many questions that forced people to confront the very soul of their religious beliefs and behavior.

The fatal mistake of both Socrates and Jesus was that they asked too many questions, questions that forced individuals, or groups of individuals, to seriously consider the validity of what they considered to be either truth or moral. And worse yet, we wonder why would some people who were supposed to be either intellectual or spiritual leaders of the people, would behave so hypocritically? The questions of both Socrates and Jesus unleashed a vile eruption on the part of those who were suffering from the indigestion of their own misguided religiosity, or in the case of Socrates, unprovable philosophical conclusions.

Both Jesus and Socrates directed questions to the hearts of those who already harbored damaged souls, and thus, the two thinkers became the opportunity for corrupted souls to unleash their venom on those who would dare question their thinking, whether philosophical or religious.

Socrates believed that in determining the validity of any truth, the truth itself must be approached with a series of questions, each question being asked to force the one who is interrogated to self-judge for himself what he considered to be the truth or a final moral standard.

By being persistent in asking challenging questions, the individual or group is forced to eliminate all alternatives to that which one considers to be the final truth or moral. In this systematic persistence of asking questions, the Socratic method of inquiry was established, which method later gave Socrates the honor of being considered “the father of political philosophy.” The Socratic method of questioning is what defines the existing legal system of the American court.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the Socratic method for determining truth or moral standards fall far short of that truth or moral standards that are maintained and revealed by a Higher Authority, which Higher Authority Socrates failed to discover. He simply saw the assortment of inconsistencies in religion through the interactive Greek gods of Athens who seemed to function only on demand of those who believed in them.

Socrates simply concluded that there was no such thing as a final authority in matters of faith. And if there were no God, then he was right. For him and the Greeks, there was only this catalog of gods who had been created after the imagination of desirous men who sought to play with the imagination of men’s minds. All such religious thinking only presented the opportunity for someone as Socrates to drive into hysteria those who believed in the gods.

Therefore, Socrates was accused of asking too many questions about the imagined gods who supposedly had for centuries playfully interacted with mankind. He was thus endangering the youth of his day, for he motivated them to ask questions concerning the traditional beliefs of the fathers, and the moral political system that was prevalent

in Athens. His questions undermined any religious heritage that may have been given by the gods. He was thus accused of asking too many questions of religionists and politicians, and especially asking questions to which he himself gave no answers. This system of learning, therefore, set him at odds with the religious, philosophical and political establishment of his day. His questioning thus doomed him to a fateful end.

Socrates wrote nothing throughout his entire life. We think that he did not lest his writings be questioned and he be found in some contradiction of what he previously questioned. But in reference to his quest for truth through systematic questioning, to him, no truth could be considered concrete, and thus written down in the permanency of literature. So Socrates responded to his critics, "I know that I know nothing." And if one knew nothing, then there was nothing to write. He was on an endless quest for truth through systematic questioning. In the end, he simply concluded, "The unexamined life is not worth living."

It seems that Jesus was not unfamiliar with Socrates, whose method of systematic questioning made its way from Greece to Palestine three hundred years later through the writings of one of Socrates' most famous students, Plato. At least the apostle John many years after the death of Jesus was familiar with the writings of Plato, for when John searched throughout the Greek dictionary in order to write concerning the incarnation of God, there was only one word in the entire Greek dictionary that he could use in reference to God Himself coming into the world of humanity. John thus wrote, "*In the beginning was the Word [Gr. logos], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*" (Jn 1:1).

The Greek word *logos* was the best word, if not the only word in the Greek dictionary, that John could use to define how a "god" could incarnate into the affairs of the world. And it was Plato, the student of Socrates, who had three centuries before defined for philosophy the "logos" to be the word that should be used in reference to "the gods" intervening (fellowship) in the affairs of man. If John wanted to use only one word to explain the incarnation, it was the Greek word *logos*.

So that he might not be misunderstood, in the same text of the preceding statement, John explained, “*The Word [logos] was made flesh and dwelt among us*” (Jn 1:14). This is what set the stage for the irreconcilable confrontation between religiously broken souls and Jesus’ call for the broken to look beyond Him as the Word, to the fact that He was indeed God in the flesh.

These were considerations that Socrates forced “believers” in gods to reconsider. Plato simply put the matter into words, or at least, one word. So back to the point of comparison. During his final trial—and see if you do not recognize this today—Socrates accused his five hundred prejudiced jurors, who sought to impeach him, that they were more worried about their careers and political ambitions than they were about damaging their souls with an unjust condemnation of him. As all prejudiced judges, what they would cast upon him would even further damage their souls. The point being, that through the injustices by which they were about to vote in reference to his fate, their vote of death would validate the fact that damaged souls could act no differently. With every prejudicial judgment, damaged souls only sink deeper into the abyss of injustice and the irony of twisted judgments.

Their unjust trial and judgment would continue to damage their souls because of their deep seated prejudices to condemn him were not based on their search for truth, but on promoting their own political agendas. Whatever judgment they made, therefore, would be prejudiced, and thus the revelation that their souls were deeply damaged morally. (Does this remind you of any contemporary circumstances?) Jurors with damaged souls render few fair verdicts.

Jesus fell victim to the same fate that was poured out by the damaged souls of Socrates’ court. As Socrates, Jesus asked too many questions. On one occasion, the religious court asked Jesus in reference to His plucking of grain on the Sabbath, “*Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath*” (Mt 12:2)—of course, this was not a violation of the Sinai law, only their self-imposed religious law.

But Jesus in turn questioned this court of religiously damaged souls in order to make them face up to their own hypocritical inconsistencies: “*Have you not heard what David did ... he entered into the house*

of God and ate the showbread?” (Mt 12:3,4)—now this was against the Sinai law. The religious jurors, however, justified David who actually violated the Sinai law, but they condemned Jesus because He questioned them about justifying David, who did violate the Sinai law, but condemned Jesus by violating some of their religious rites, rituals and ceremonies that they had invented for themselves.

And then on another occasion there was the case when Jesus, as Socrates, asked a question of the religious court of His day in order to reveal their broken souls. He asked, “*Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?*” (Mt 12:10). The damaged soul of the religious leaders was on this occasion again revealed because the religionists, without answering, “*went out and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him*” (Mt 12:14).

Religious courts do not like to have their honored religious rites, rituals and ceremonies questioned. The jurors of such courts especially do not like their morals questioned. Such questioning of long held norms more often reveals the fact that one’s religious heritage and accepted behavior are based only on traditions, or the pronouncements of Diotrephetic leaders. Such theologies exist among religious adherents because people are often compelled to base their faith on biblically baseless mandates that are cried out from podiums around the world by persuasive religious propagandists.

Socrates questioned all such morals and traditional heritages by which men determined that which was true. In the case of religion, he questioned the inconsistencies of the religionists of his day who manufactured gods after the imagination of spirited people who had the gift of persuasion, and thus could talk the people into believing anything. Jesus did the same in questioning such religionists. He exposed their beliefs by leading them to self-examining their own thinking. Their concept of God was found lacking because the one true and living God was standing incarnate right there before their eyes.

Throughout His short ministry, Jesus continually questioned the religious establishment. On one occasion He questioned His religious judges, “*Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil?*” (Mk 3:4). By this time in His ministry, the self-righteous religious judges

could say nothing to such a pointed and direct question. So, “*they held their peace*” (Mk 3:4). Their frustration was building, and Jesus knew this. In this way He was taking Himself to the cross, for He knew what damaged souls would eventually do if they were forced to realize the inconsistent theologies of their own religiosity, but especially the evil of their own hearts.

By the time in His ministry when Jesus started introducing the truth that He was God in the flesh, His continual questioning had embarrassed His adversaries so much that they remained silent. Eventually, they would lash out at Him. Their initial silence, however, revealed that they were religious judges with damaged souls, for only those with damaged souls would reject the incarnate Son of God who stood in their midst. Therefore, because they were morally damaged, it was not possible for them to see the Father through the Son.

When inquisitive minds question matters of tradition and heritage, especially matters of religious tradition and moral standards, those with damaged souls will lash out with fury, no matter how sincere they might claim to be in their religiosity. Since religion exists because of biblical ignorance, zealously religious people will often be the first to lash out at those who ask questions that force religionists to validate their beliefs and behavior with a Bible book, chapter and verse. It is at this time that inquiring individuals should be looking out for a cup of hemlock, or possibly the echoing sound of a cross being built.

We know the conclusion to the life of Socrates. Instead of fleeing to safety from His opposition, as did Confucius, he willingly took the cup and drank the poisonous hemlock. And Jesus did the same. He too drank the poisonous “cross” in order to crucify Himself for the salvation of those who did believe. We must not forget what He said in anticipation of the cross: “*I lay down My life for the sheep ... I lay down My life so that I may take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again*” (Jn 10:15,17,18). He could have called on legions of angels to deliver Him from the fate that was handed to Him by the unjust judges. Instead, He “swallowed” death on the cross in order that one day death might be swallowed up in our victory.

Yes indeed, the religious court of Jesus' day sent an innocent man to crucify Himself. All the jurors voted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" So He relinquished to their cries and drank of the cross for us.

Jesus wrote not a word during His life. Only His immediate disciples recorded His life and word in which we grow. As His disciples, we write with the dedication of our lives that He is the greatest intellectual who ever set foot on this earth, and now, the greatest King who reigns over all this earth.

By our love for one another, people understand that we are not those with damaged souls, but the church of those who have responded with love and gratitude to the grace of the One who allowed nails to be driven through incarnate hands and feet on our behalf (2 Co 4:15; 5:14). Our faith in Him, therefore, is not shallow, for faith is only kept shallow by some damage in our souls that seems to persist.

We must continually remind ourselves, however, that all the damage that we may have brought on our souls in the past has now been healed by His grace. Therefore, in forgiving ourselves as He forgave us through the cross, our faith continues to grow deeper. It goes deeper as we grow in grace and the knowledge of Him who revealed this grace to us (2 Pt 3:18). We will not, therefore, damage our souls again by heaping unjust judgment upon another who is likewise struggling to keep his or her soul clean with the blood of Jesus (See Mt 18:21-35).

There is moral truth to the truth of the Socratic method of inquiry that has permeated thinking since the days of Socrates, and then Jesus. It is the imperative of every disciple to ask questions concerning the "why" we believe or behave in this or that way (1 Pt 3:15). If we ask the questions, and all that comes in return from the religious establishment is the reply, "This is simply what we have been handed to us by our fathers, and thus we will continue to believe," then it is time for further questions. If at the end of our systematic questioning we do not receive a Bible book, chapter and verse in answer to our persistent questions, then the one giving us answers is caught up in religion. It is then time for us to cuddle our Bibles in our hands and move on.

As with those who finally led to the end of Jesus and Socrates on earth, questions will engender frustration, if not outright rage. There-

fore, if we still hammer away with questions about why we religiously do this or that, the outcome is not always pleasant. Socrates was forced to drink the hemlock. Jesus was forced to carry His cross to Calvary. And we would suppose that those today who cannot give Bible book, chapter and verse replies to all our questions concerning faith, they too will do as Diotrefes who loved power more than Bible, even more than the apostle of love, John. Because his soul was damaged, as the religious leaders of Jesus' day, with a thirst for power he kicked every questioning "Socrates" out of his cloned monastery of religious robots (3 Jn 10).

The behavior of philosophers today is no different than the philosophers of Socrates' day, who did not want their political social order disrupted by someone who was persistently forcing them to answer questions that made them go deep into their souls concerning what they believed was the foundation of their moral and political views. Socrates was an outsider in reference to the religious, philosophical and political establishment. And because he was, there was no place for him in their establishment. Jesus came into and became the same in the religious establishment of His day. Because both asked too many questions, both had to be eliminated.

The behavior of some religionists today is no different than the hypocritical antagonists of Jesus' day who likewise did not want their "Jewish religion" to be disrupted by someone who persistently questioned their inconsistent theologies and religious leadership (See Gl 1:14). The religious leaders did not like being forced to see the hypocrisies of their own behavior (See Mt 6:2,5,16; 7:5; 15:9; 22:18; 23:13-15,23-29).

Jesus' persistent questioning forced the religious leaders to answer questions that revealed the inconsistencies of their thinking and hypocritical behavior in reference to their own teachings. They were thus embarrassed before the people. The cross was subsequently the only answer for their embarrassment.

Therefore, the extreme frustration of the religious leaders come to a climax. Jesus' questions forced them to be the judges of their own souls, and to face the inconsistencies of their own theologies. In fact,

those who were persistently questioned by Jesus became so frustrated that they eventually schemed to commit murder. Such a scheme proved that they were indeed damaged souls of the lowest level. Therefore, Jesus' judgment of them was validated: *"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do"* (Jn 8:44).

And so it is today. If you ask too many questions of the guardians of the religious establishment, and do not receive book, chapter and verse answers for your questions, then there will probably be handed you a cup of "hemlock" disfellowship, or possibly a cross which you can carry outside the church house, and nail yourself thereon. Questions presented to those who seek to defend biblically unsubstantiated religious heritages will engender great hostility. Depending on where you live in the world, it might be written of you in your questioning the religious establishment, as it was in the final hours of the life of Jesus: *"Now the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him"* (Lk 22:2).

## Chapter 2

# LEARNING TO NAVIGATE LIFE

History has forever labelled it the "forgotten pandemic." It appeared first in America in the spring of 1918, at the time when history was about to draw the curtain on WW 1. It was a time when the American government, as well as all governments of the Allied Forces, had hushed all negative news broadcasts that might discourage the people from supporting the Allied fighting forces in Europe in their defeat of Germany. Therefore, all news media, except for Spain who remained neutral during the war, could not report to the world a plague that was sweeping across certain population areas of the earth.

Unfortunately, the Spanish media alone went public to report the pandemic scourge that was killing millions of people. This was the influenza pandemic. And because only the nation of Spain was broadcasting the devastation of the pandemic through their news media, the

plague was eventually labelled the “Spanish flu.”

Today, no one really understands the origin of the influenza virus and why it would eventually claim from 50 to 100 million lives worldwide. Some virologists have suggested that it originated in the deplorable conditions of the trenches in Europe when the Allied Forces were deadlocked against the Germans in WW I between 1914 and 1918. Others have suggested that the first outbreak was in the Shanxi Province of China in 1917. And then some have suggested that it originated at the American military base of Camp Funston, Kansas in early 1918. A Kansas health official reported that 40 soldiers in the camp had died from some mysterious strand of a vicious flu virus. In the spring of 1918, hundreds of soldiers from this military camp were eventually shipped to other camps, and then onto crowded ships that transported them overseas to fight in the war.

It was from both Europe and America that the virus spread like wildfire around the world in only a few months. In one religious newspaper in South Africa, one of the religious leaders of the country reported, “People died by the thousands. It has not yet been fully determined how many died as a result of the sickness [of influenza]” (*Pentecostal Holiness Advocate*, Apr. 3, 1919). In fact, during the two-year long pandemic more people died in America, about 675,000, than all the American soldiers who died during WW I. Because the reports of the pandemic were kept under wraps in America during the final days of the war, some thought that all the deaths were only the result of the common flu virus. However, it was everything but common.

Though this flu virus by September 28, 1918 had been reported to be spreading at pandemic light speed around the world, on that day the leaders of the city of Philadelphia went forward with their plans and conducted the Liberty Loan Parade in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. They had decided to carry on with the parade because it was an event where tens of thousands of people could come together in a mass crowd of celebration, especially in signing the coming armistice that took place in France two months latter on November 11, 1918 to end the hostilities of WW I. However, within ten days after the event, 1000 Philadelphians were dead. 200,000 were sick and confined to beds. By March

of 1919 over 15,000 had died from the virus.

In contrast to the behavior of the leaders in Philadelphia, the civic leaders of St. Louis, Missouri shut down all their theaters, schools, and banned all public gatherings, including churches. As a result, at the peak of the pandemic the city suffered only one-eighth of the number of deaths that occurred in Philadelphia.

By the summer of 1918, the pandemic was raging across America. In the month of October alone in 1918, it was reported that 195,000 people died across America because of the virus. Civic leaders vigorously reacted to the mounting death rate by asking the public to refrain from hand shaking, wear masks and also discontinue all public assemblies, including church assemblies. In fact, in San Francisco, California, the civic leaders were so serious about the pandemic that citizens were fined \$5.00 if they were found in public without a face mask. At that time that amount would be equivalent today to a few hundred dollars. Those who did not wear a face mask were mockingly called “mask slackers.”

### **A. Church response to a pandemic:**

In response to the pandemic, churches of America were called on to terminate their assemblies for the safety of the members. Thousands of churches throughout America subsequently complied with this request because the church was the true beacon of love in society. And in order for the members to love one another, they had to distance themselves from one another. By discontinuing their assemblies they revealed that they truly did love one another. However, though gathering together is certainly a signal of Christian love, during a pandemic, assemblies actually revealed a lack of love for one another.

This call to restrict assemblies also came to the people of central Kansas where my forefathers almost fifty years before had homesteaded the area. One of the churches that had been established by the pioneering Christian homesteaders was the Peace Creek church of Christ that was only a few miles from where I grew up on a farm in central Kansas. The Peace Creek church building itself was about ten miles (about 15)

kilometers) from the nearest town of Sylvia, Kansas. (Please read of the history and work of the Peace Creek church in the book, *A Prairie Beacon* by Grant M. Clothier and Jeanie Clothier Montford. Find it on Amazon.)

After several people of central Kansas had succumbed to the influenza virus, the members of Peace Creek decided to close the doors on their assembly. And such they did for about three months. They conformed to the best understanding that the health authorities had at that time concerning the spread of the virus through the air when people spoke to one another in close proximity, or coughed or sneezed. I have always thought it interesting that these farmers out on the plains of Kansas were willing to educate themselves as much as possible about a pandemic, and then take action to do their part in stopping the spread of the virus.

In order to impede the virus through human to human contact, the Peace Creek members, as well as thousands of other churches across America, decided that as churches they would protect themselves from one another by terminating their assemblies. The members, therefore, went into isolation to their own homes and stayed there in lockdown with their children. Unfortunately, the virus had already struck down one of the leading members of the Peace Creek church, leaving a widow and eight children without a breadwinner for the grieving family. This was a common scenario that was repeated thousands of times throughout America in those days. But the members of this church, as well as thousands of other churches across America, closed their doors in order to save their lives.

By the summer of 1919, the influenza pandemic was subsiding. Virologists stated that so many people had recovered from the virus that “herd immunity” had been achieved. However, so many people had died from the virus, that only those who remained alive survived the virus by developing an immunity to the virus. The immunity thus prevented the continued spread of the virus. The virus had no place to go. It had run its course.

## **B. Living with mutations:**

Nevertheless, the “Spanish flu” virus still lingers with us today through mutated variants of the original virus. Because flu viruses quickly mutate, they have a tendency to bypass immunity and carry on throughout history. An effective vaccine against the influenza virus was not discovered and made available until 1938, and then it was initially given only to military servicemen who were going into WW II in Europe.

We are fortunate today because several vaccines have now come on the market to stop the present pandemic, and its variants. It would certainly be unwise, if not irresponsible, to advise people not to be vaccinated. If you are one of those who have voiced your apprehensions about being vaccinated, please keep in mind that your unwise advice may be gossiped to hundreds of other people, who respond by not being vaccinated because of your apprehensions. If a thousand people refuse to be vaccinated in South Africa because of your apprehensions that you have voiced to others, two or three of the one thousand who took your advice seriously will be infected and die. This is true because about ten percent of those who are infected in South Africa die from the present pandemic virus.

The problem with any virus is that some people can have the virus, but be asymptomatic for days before any indications arise that one is infected. While one is asymptomatic, he or she can be infecting others. With the influenza virus, one might not show any symptoms, but eventually come down with the usual chills, fever, fatigue, and then recover. The Spanish flu virus was so vicious that one could be dead from the virus within a few hours, and at the most, a few days.

## **C. Victims of misguided religiosity:**

So now you are asking me why all this discussion about the 1917-1919 influenza pandemic that took so many lives throughout the world? The problem is that many in the religious world today are becoming victims of a new virus because they are victims of some of their reli-

gious behavior and some unfortunate interpretations that are associated with their particular religion, specifically in reference to the practice that they continue unrestricted assemblies. It might be good here to point out some of these scenarios where some might find themselves testing God. James said, “*Let no man say when he is tempted [tested], ‘I am tempted [tested] by God.’ For God cannot be tempted with evil, neither does He tempt [or test] any man*” (Js 1:13).

We need to pay close attention to James in reference to the present pandemic that is upon us. God does not test us by leading us into evil, nor does He test us by inflicting suffering. At the same time, neither can we test God by thinking that we can lead Him into doing evil (suffering) to us. We are testing God if we unwisely put ourselves into a situation where we suppose He is going to work some miracle to deliver us directly from our own foolish behavior. When dealing with evil and suffering, all such happenings in the fallen world must be accredited to Satan, who goes about as a roaring lion. He continually seeks permission from God, as he did in reference to Job, in order to do some evil in this world or cause some suffering. We would advise that this is a time for all of us to read the book of Job. If we willingly endanger our health, while thinking that God will heal us, then we are testing God. It is like a smoker asking God to heal his or her lung cancer, and then lights up another cigarette.

Nevertheless, when we do suffer from the plagues of this material world, we pray fervently that God would heal us (Js 5:13,14). But if God does not bring recovery, we will not blame Him for directly inflicting us with suffering. It is simply a simple faith to blame God for that which is in this world through the work of Satan.

#### **D. Behaving wisely:**

We must continually be positive about these matters, as was inferred by Isaiah: “*For when Your [God’s] judgments are on the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness*” (Is 26:9). God will take responsibility for all the “judgments” that inflict the world, though the pandemics, with God’s permission, originate directly from

Satan. The blessing of the pandemics, however, is that people of true faith move closer to God. It was the same James in the same book who introduced his theme with the words, “*Count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the trying of your faith produces patience*” (Js 1:2,3).

If we foolishly do not take all the precautions that we know to guard ourselves from evil and suffering in this time of a pandemic, then we will possibly be infected with a virus that will cause us much suffering, if not death. If we behave foolishly, then we cannot blame God by saying that He directly infected us with a virus, and thus He must be held directly responsible for our suffering, and possible death. Also, if we are infected with the virus, but continue to blame God for not healing us, then we are blaming the wrong entity. Evil and suffering are the business work of Satan.

We cannot test God by putting ourselves in a situation where we can be infected, and then presume that God did not protect us from infection when we test positive for the infectious virus. We cannot test God with such foolishness. Satan is roaming about as a roaring lion, and if we step into his realm of roaming, then we open ourselves up to be “bitten” by a pandemic virus. Sometimes we are “bitten” even though we make all precautions to stay safe.

However, we are not so foolish as to step off a high building and think that God will protect us from the law of gravity. We cannot be so foolish as to place ourselves in harms way of a virus and think that God controls all those viruses so that they will not infect us. If we do such things, we are foolishly testing God.

We will not be involved in such mockery of God. We enshrine one particular statement of the Holy Spirit that came through the pen of Paul’s hand: “*Be not deceived. God is not mocked, for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap correction*” (Gl 6:7).

In reference to this, and all pandemics, many preachers are sitting between a rock and a hard place on this matter. In fact, some have even involved themselves in testing God—those of you who live in Western countries will probably not understand what I am going to advise here

for some of our preachers who live in the developing world. My advice is that many preachers need to take another look at what they are doing in reference to the assembly of God's innocent flock.

Here is the dilemma. There are hundreds of local preachers who have faithfully worked hard to establish churches in their communities. In the past, and on every Sunday, the members of these churches have faithfully assembled and taken up a contribution to support their faithful preachers and their families—this story could also be told of those who lived over one hundred years ago during the influenza pandemic.

As in any pandemic, people die in the thousands worldwide. Friends, relatives and members of the body of Christ are almost daily laid to rest in graves, some who could have possibly not have faced this fate if someone had behaved sensibly as those members of the Peace Creek church and hundreds of other churches in America during the influenza pandemic.

Health officials around the world today have faithfully sought to function for the safety of the people. So when the health officials of a particular nation mandated that all public assemblies be shut down in order to abate the pandemic and protect church members, many preachers around the world lost their weekly income. If they had no garden to till for food, then their families often went into destitution. If they were urban preachers, they could have no gardens to feed their families.

So what some of these preachers have done is to behave unwisely. They have continued to call their members together in the close assemblies of small church buildings with little ventilation so they could take up a contribution for food for their families. The result has been that members have infected one another with the virus and people have died. I am personally acquainted with several cases as this. Some of our preachers are thrown into the lion's den by infected members calling them to funerals, praying for members beside deathbeds, counseling in times of grief, etc. It is unfair and unwise. In Africa we do not have Zoom. We do not have internet communications. There is no live-streaming in the village. We are often in a village where people just die like they have always done throughout the centuries.

But in the preceding scenario some preachers have become Grim

Reapers, that is, for the sake of the contribution they have presented the opportunity for the virus, and subsequent death, to spread among the members because they needed the weekly contributions from the assembled members in order to feed their families. They thus loved their families more than the health of the members.

Those of you in the West need to keep in mind that we live in Africa, and India; in the developing world where living is often from day to day. Therefore, before you are too harsh with these preachers who continue to call the members of the church together into small church buildings with little ventilation, for which they struggled to piece together with a few bricks and sticks, we need to understand that this is their world.

Some in the West helped them to build these confined premises, and thus do not want them to stand empty during this dreadful pandemic. Some are intimidating the local folks to continue to meet in something that has become a hall of death. Pictures are thus posted on social media to reaffirm the supporters that meetings are still taking place, and often with little social distancing. Therefore, before we criticize the preacher for reporting back that he had no one in attendance on Sunday morning, we must think again about requiring him and the members of the church in his area to do a most unwise thing in reference to the present pandemic.

Even in houses in the cities, the same scenario has developed. I recently had one church leader come by and boast that he had thirty-five people present in the assembly of his house last Sunday—and yes he was given this same lesson of exhortation I am now writing to you.

Thousands of preachers throughout the world are living in these dire circumstances and calling the members of the body to continue to assemble in small “coffins” with little ventilation wherein the virus has every opportunity to migrate from one victim to another. These cases are primarily in rural situations as in those days back in 1918 when the Peace Creek church shut down their assembly. Those farmers had enough sense to follow the instructions of their health departments, and thus, not offer the opportunity for the influenza virus to spread in the public gatherings of the churches. They also had enough knowl-

edge of the Bible to understand that God gave no law concerning assemblies that would endanger the health of His people.

Nevertheless, there may be some differences between then and now. The Peace Creek members, and many other churches in those days, had no full-time preacher who depended exclusively on the contributions every Sunday to survive. Unfortunately, some preachers of rural Africa and India have made the mistake of making themselves “full-time,” and thus subjugated themselves to depending on the weekly contributions of the saints. Therefore, when an assembly is closed down, so also is closed down the income of a family.

The result of all this is that there are thousands of “full-time” preachers in the developing world who continue to unwisely call their members together into an environment wherein the members are infected with the pandemic virus of today. Some of these preachers seem to be more concerned about the weekly contribution than they are about the safety of the members. And the fact that they have harped for years to the members that unless they “give to God, God will not give to them,” they must come together and make their contributions in order that God continue to bless them.

And then there are those preachers who have for years been teaching an erroneous legalized system of assembly and worship. They have convinced themselves, and those who attend their assemblies, that there is no true worship if the members do not assemble together in order to perform five legal ceremonial acts of worship, with focus on the act of contribution. They have failed to understand that Paul and Silas were truly worshiping alone as two Christian prisoners in a Philippian prison.

Some preachers have taught for years that unless members come together and legally perform their acts of worship, then no true worship has transpired. To them, the church ceases to exist if there is no assembly of the members—I am not making this up. There are thousands of preachers out there who have for years preached this message, and thus they have made the members feel guilty if they did not regularly show up on Sunday morning for their ceremonial worship, and thus make the contribution. And now, many of these members are sitting at home

alone in lockdown on Sunday morning at 10:00, feeling that they are out of touch with God. Again, I am not making this up. (See Book 36, *Worship Freely*, Biblical Research Library, [www.africainternational.org](http://www.africainternational.org).)

### **E. Struggle against misguided theology:**

Fancy terms have been added to theological discussions on this matter. One can worship in his or her house, but then there is the official “corporate” worship of all the members on Sunday morning. If one does not attend the official “corporate” worship, then he or she has not truly worshiped God in spirit and truth. And if one seeks to worship with his family and friends in a house when there is a “corporate” worship going on in town at the same time, then one has supposed “left the church.” Of course this is all theological nonsense.

This terminology and theology developed many years after the existence of the rural Peace Creek church, which church of members—according to the thinking of these modern-day theologians who master in the subject of assembliology—supposedly gave up their “corporate” worship in order to worship as families in their homes. They subsequently and supposedly terminated the existence of the church in the Peace Creek community.

However, did the Peace Creek really cease to exist as the church because the members ceased to assemble for some “corporate worship”? According to some, their worship was also supposedly not “true” until they were all able to come back together again into one assembly three months later after the pandemic.

On the positive side of these matters, one of the blessings of the pandemic is that it has forced people to take another look at the assembly instructions concerning the church. Isaiah was right. Hard times make us think.

Nevertheless, we are in an era where the present pandemic will be spread among millions who unwisely persist in maintaining their unfortunate understanding of the assembly of the saints in hotspots where the Covid-19 virus is raging in a third wave throughout a society. I asked a north Malawian church leader about what the members of the

church were doing in northern Malawi. He replied, “The members are carrying on as usual in their assemblies.” And then recently on the news one of the doctors of the association, *Doctors Without Borders*, said of Malawi, “The pandemic will soon hit hard in the country of Malawi,” as it will in all those countries where people walk in ignorance of the infectious nature of the present virus.

What the Western world does not understand about Africa is the ingrained fatalism that permeates the thinking of the typical African. Africans have been dying from diseases for centuries. Influenza, Ebola, AIDS, and now Covid; “we just die” as one brother told me. The most recent cause of death is just another pandemic that will take thousands of lives, even as the Spanish flu did a little over one hundred years ago. The lack of education on these matters, combined with a fatalistic view of life, will lead to a great number of our brothers and sisters going on to glory before their time.

It is the responsibility of church leaders in these times of a worldwide pandemic to act wisely in order to protect God’s people. This virus is not going away anytime soon. Therefore, it is a time to hunker down and pray for the Lord to come and deliver us from this Satan infected world. I am ready to go up directly to the arms of Jesus when He is visibly revealed with His mighty angels. Until that time, however, I would just as soon not have to meet Him via some Covid grave, though regardless, the final destination will be the same.

### Chapter 3

## WEAPONIZING FOR WAR

On the day that I finally decided to put the following words into an article, I was informed that three more Christian families in my area here in South Africa had their homes invaded by the Covid-19 virus. I already knew of five other Christian families that had experienced the same attack. By the time of writing, two fathers of these families had died of Covid, with other family members in hospitals on oxygen strug-

gling for their lives. This is the Covid War, something that has never been experienced in the history of mankind.

The Black Death of the fourteenth century sent millions on to eternity, some estimating that as many as one hundred million died in that pandemic. In 1917/18, the influenza flu pandemic likewise took millions worldwide from life as it ravaged in selected regions of the world. But the Covid pandemic is different. It is a worldwide attack against humanity as a whole. Because the population of the world has become so mobile in the last century, the Covid virus has boarded every means of travel to every nation of the world. The Covid virus has immigrated to six of the seven continents of the world. Only Antarctica has been spared ... so far.

The reason for the spread of the virus worldwide can be attributed to several favorable factors that have expedited its attack:

### **A. Infringement on freedom?**

Some, particularly in the West, seem to believe that their freedoms are being endangered by government Covid restrictions. They thus refuse to make needed lifesaving behavioral changes in order to guard themselves against the virus. There has been so much fake news propagated through the news media that people have simply rebelled against all precautions in reference to the virus. They carry on with their normal lives regardless of the Covid attack.

### **B. Aloof victims:**

And then there are some who seem to be aloof to the Covid War itself, refusing to weaponize themselves against the virus by being vaccinated. This is a particular problem in villages throughout the world who have little or no knowledge that the world is in a pandemic war. And then there are those in the West who pose a unique social phenomenon in reference to vaccination. One of the surprising behavioral characteristics in reference to the vaccination program in the West is that many have participated in the first vaccination, but have not showed up

for the second. So much has been propagated about the “safety” of the vaccines. As a result, many have simply decided to stay away from vaccination centers. (Because the third wave of the pandemic is now reaching into the Western Cape province of South Africa, the government has, at the date of this writing, set up almost 200 vaccination centers. They plan to vaccinate several thousand people a week if people will just show up at one of the centers.)

### **C. Battle against ignorance:**

In most of the world, the virus is finding its way into societies through ignorance. Much of the Western world has been very educated concerning the nature of the Covid-19 virus, and its mutant variations. However, millions throughout the developing world are ignorant of both the virus and the precautions that must be made in order to guard oneself against infection. These individuals simply carry on in life as if there were no pandemic.

### **D. Infectious nature:**

Another problem is the progressively infectious nature of the variants of the original Covid-19. The highly infectious nature of the Covid variants has caught many people off guard. After the first wave of the virus passed through in 2020, people became somewhat complacent in reference to protecting themselves. To a great extent, what caused the second wave is that people, through their nonchalant attitudes, became impervious to the virus. In order to save livelihoods, almost everyone went back to “normal.” But then came the Delta variant, which is more infectious. And now out of Peru has come the Lambda variant that is now into more than thirty countries of the world, including Europe. (At the time of writing, it had not yet reached the continent of Africa.) Some virologist believe that this variant may be more infectious than the Delta variant. We will only know this when the statistics start to come in during the end of this third wave.

What the Covid War has revealed is the character of many people

around the world. It has revealed that some cultures of people simply ignore the virus as it makes its way through a society. This attitude is prevalent in cultures that have a deep seated fatalistic world view.

The vaccinations against the virus have revealed that some people are somewhat selfish in that they think only of themselves. Through social media, they have heard so many fake news stories about the vaccinations that they have convinced themselves that the vaccines that are now being administered throughout the world are dangerous. In reference to the vaccinations, some people have simply become quite hypocritical in this matter. For example, there are those mothers who march their children off to the doctor to be vaccinated against measles, smallpox, polio, etc., and yet, the same mothers will not vaccinate themselves against Covid-19.

And then there are those church leaders who seem to be more concerned about reaping a contribution from an assembly of people, than limiting assemblies to a few in order to protect the people. When the South African health department limited most public assemblies to fifty people, banned after-funeral meetings, political meetings, and asked churches to follow suit, a delegation of South African religious leaders went to the government in order to protest the banning of their large assemblies. For them, if there were only small assemblies, then there would be a drastic cut in pay checks.

Of course the religious leaders pled with the government saying that the people needed their spiritual care during these trying times. But such was only a ploy because the religious leaders seemed to be more concerned about their Sunday morning pay checks and less concerned for the safety of the people in their small unventilated church buildings.

But as the police did in shutting down one religious assembly during the 2020 lockdown, so recently they walked into a shopping mall in a Covid hot spot in Cape Town. They temporarily shut down the mall, and ushered all the people outside into the parking lot. They then allowed to return inside only 250 people at a time of those who were wearing masks. Only 250 shoppers enjoyed the rest of their shopping, while the others had to wait their turn to enter the center. The maskless

and shopping mob had violated a Presidential mandate, and thus, they revealed their arrogance, or rebellion, by not following the advice of the national health department.

In reference to vaccinations, we do understand that there is no vaccination that does not have side effects. Also, no vaccine is one hundred percent affective. However, the anti-vaccinators need to remember that vaccination is for a purpose that is far beyond the individual. The Delta variant is so infectious that it attacks families through individual members of the families. As stated before, I know of several Christian families in our area wherein many members of the family were infected initially by one family member. Some members of these families have died, and others will die before humanity wins this war, or our Lord says, “Enough is enough,” and then comes to destroy this infected and imperfect world wherein we have been cursed to dwell.

As Christians, it is our purpose to be the “salt of the earth.” I wonder if we could take this thought beyond spiritual matters. I personally seek to protect myself through vaccination, wearing of a mask in public, and social distancing in order to protect my wife. If one’s apprehensions about being vaccinated is simply personal, then that person is simply selfish. The Delta variant is so infectious that if one family member is infected, it is most likely that the entire family will likewise become infected.

Most of the population of the world does not live in mansions as the West. A normal house in the rest of the world can be the size of a master bedroom in a Western house. In this “master bedroom house,” there can be living five or more people. Try social distancing in such an environment. For this reason, the Covid War is ravaging through congested cities around the world. In Africa about sixty percent of the people live in congested cities. You can only imagine what is happening on this continent, and is yet to come in the future in reference to the Covid War. This war is far from over.

In every way of life, Christians are to allow God to use them to heal society, both spiritually and physically. We seem to do well with the spiritual part through the teaching of the gospel. However, in my experience, there are many Christians that I know who are failing in

reference to being vaccinated in order to protect their own families, and society in general. By refusing to be vaccinated, they are not only endangering themselves, but their entire families. They are allowing themselves to be the vehicle through which the Covid virus can make its way into whole families, and society in general. Those religious leaders who do not follow the advice of their health departments, are aiding and abetting the enemy.

Vaccinations have been with us for over a century. They will continue to protect us into the future against the Covid attack. God's laws for cleanliness for Israel were not just good advice for Israel. The reason for sanitizing themselves had deeper purposes than the ceremonial socializing of the Israelites. Wearing a mask in public places, though the commonly used surgical mask is not one hundred percent effective, will also probably be a new normal for the future in public places. Social distancing, as unnatural as it may be, will also be with us in our social contact with one another and assemblies. But for this time in the heat of the battle, humanity will greatly be protected against the Covid virus and its variants through vaccinations and the recovery of Covid infected individuals who are somewhat immune to the virus. However, virologists say that the Covid virus is here for the long run. The Covid War will not end soon.

## **Chapter 4**

### **THE LAST SAFARI**

If you have survived unto and passed through your threescore and ten years, having experienced many journeys in your lifetime, then there is one last epic adventure on which you must go. Though maybe with some apprehensions, you should look forward to this next adventure. Putting aside all anxiety about leaping into this adventure, we must all keep in mind that we are all destined to an appointment that was allotted to all of us the day we were born (Hb 9:27).

In Africa, we use the word "safari" when anticipating an exciting ad-

venture on which we are about to embark. This is the Swahili word for “journey.” And indeed we all are predestined as mortals for an adventurous journey into the unknown realm of death. But in our preparation for this intriguing safari, we have faithfully packed a supply of hope in our minds. We have been vaccinated with the blood of Jesus, and thus, as in all other journeys we have experienced in this life, we are assured that we will survive alive from this journey also. We will come out alive on the other side!

Nevertheless, Crawford would remind us of our common despair concerning this last safari:

Death is to most people the most unpleasant fact in this universe. We do not like to think about death. To reconcile ourselves to the fact of death is a difficult task. Some try to be indifferent to the matter, and in order to do so, they lose themselves in the mad quest for thrills and forgetfulness.

We choose not to so distract ourselves. Nevertheless, throughout history there have been countless expeditions made to evade the certainty of death. History is littered with stories of explorers who have sought to discover the “fountain of youth.” Over a century ago the Russian scientist, Alexander Bogomolets, assumed to have produced a “youth serum.” Bogomolets asserted that his serum would move the inevitable unto 150 years in one’s future. But Bogomolets personally proved that his assumptions were fake when he died at 64! Shakespeare was right: “By medicine life may be prolonged, yet death will seize the doctor too.”

But we are Christians. And being such, we have a safari Leader who has already immunized our minds against the things of this world. With anticipation, we are driven to focus on things that are above, and especially, on those things that are yet to come (Cl 3:1,2).

We also understand that our real enemy is Satan, for he is the father of sin and death (Jn 8:44). He tempted Adam to sin, and with this one sin, Adam, with all humanity, was banned from the tree of life (Gn 3:22-24). It is said that Dutch Shultz, the notorious mob gangster in early twentieth century American history, put \$725 into the hands of an emer-

gency medical intern when he had been fatally shot. He said to the intern, "Take care of me." It was all to no avail. Schultz suffered as all unbelievers who try to live with a hope that is confined to this world. Shultz died once in the flesh, and then again from the presence of God! He should have been vaccinated with the blood of the incarnate Son of God.

Only for Christians have the gallows of death been turned into a gateway into eternal glory in heaven (Hb 2:14-17). As an aged Christian nears that gateway, and often able only to utter silent words of hope, he or she can clearly hear the resounding shout of Jesus echo down through two millennia of history, "Lazarus, come forth!" (Jn 11:25,26). Though Lazarus stepped forward out of that tomb, he eventually had to be laid back in it on his last safari on this earth.

However, the One who shouted the eternal command was validated as the author of eternal life when an angel said to two astonished women at an empty tomb outside Jerusalem, "He is risen!" (Mt 28:6). This risen One would never experience again a cold grave, and so He promised us the same after our final safari. The One in whom we have hope had to demonstrate that for which we all have hope. He had to prove that we too will transition through life on our last safari into the somewhat unknown dark forest of death. He wanted us to know that if we sign up with Him, we too will have the victory (1 Co 15:54-57; Rv 14:13).

It is thus not by any meager accomplishments in this frail mortal existence that we would seek to divert our attention from this destined safari on which every living soul must go. It is only by the grace of God that was poured out of heaven through the Son that we will eventually find ourselves waking up alive, and finally home at the end of this last safari (Jn 3:16). We would not, therefore, try to convince ourselves that we are truly alive in this life. It is only that we must transition through this life in order that we might truly live in His presence in the next life wherein there will be no more safaris.

And now we understand what David meant when the Holy Spirit guided his hand to write, "*Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints*" (Ps 116:15). So it is truly as the poet Victor Scott wrote, "We

walked with God, and talked with God; like Enoch, on life's way, till God spoke: 'You are near my home; come home with Me and stay.'" We also better comprehend Paul's indecision while in a Roman prison: "*For I am torn between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is much better*" (Ph 1:23). Paul had simply deducted from the continuous trials of this life that it was surely better on the other side. He may have been as someone said, "This world is but a thoroughfare of woe, and we are pilgrims, passing to and fro. Death is the end of every worldly sorrow." And therefore, it is as someone quoted a dying Christian, "I am in the land of the dying, but I hope soon to be in the land of the living."

On some old tombstone the following words were written:

Remember friend when passing by,  
as you are now, so once was I.  
As I am now, soon you will be;  
prepare for death and follow me.

But then some passing doubter added beneath the inscription, "To follow you I'm not content, until I know which way you went."

## Chapter 5 BE NOT DECEIVED

In view of the calamity that was coming upon national Israel, Jesus knew that in the decade before the final event in A.D. 70, the news media, especially the Jewish news media, would be reporting all sorts of nonsense in reference to the affairs of the times. Knowing that the calamity was coming, accompanied with all the sensationalism of the news media, thirty years before the event, Jesus warned His disciples, "*Take heed that you not be deceived*" (Lk 21:8). We would add, "Take heed that you not be deceived by the local and international news media concerning the events of the times."

So one morning in our own home we sat there for a moment, stunned in our chairs! We just could not believe what came out of the mouth of an international news correspondent on our television news of April 2021. This was one of those moments when one simply falls back in his chair, pleasantly surprised by the use of one simple word, realizing that not all news reporters have lost their way by reporting either twisted or fake news.

The reporter's frank use of a biblical word to cast judgment on another news media organization was reassuring. In the surreal experience of the moment, the word that was used by this "secular" reporter floated around in our living room, trying to unravel all our prejudices that had been implanted by the liberal news media of the day. In some things, we too had allowed ourselves to be deceived. Nevertheless, we thought we would never hear such things coming forth from the secular news media, especially in these times when much of the news media have long forgotten their moral bearings.

My father grew up in the wake of the William Randolph Hearst (1863 - 1951) news media corporation of the first of the last century. I can still see my father sitting in the living room of the old farm house after a long day in the field choking on either dust or grain chaff. But in the evening he would just sit there in that old hole-ridden armchair with the weekly newspaper held up and spread across the entire width of the chair. We could only identify him to be there by two legs that protruded from under the newspaper and the Prince Albert smoke from his pipe that bellowed up over the top of the newspaper.

One time after reading a provocative article, he slowly lowered the now worn newspaper, took that charred pipe out of his mouth, and said to all of us, "Boys . . . you can't trust half of what you read in these newspapers. And the other half . . . well . . . you must always question its truth."

I have never forgotten those wise words. Our father was living in an era after William Randolph Hearst had bought up newspapers across early twentieth century America, and by doing so, built the largest network of newspapers in the world. By controlling the editorials and news reports of local newspapers, Hearst figured out that he could have

voted into or out of political offices those candidates he either favored or disliked. He would do his political deed by running stories, or propaganda—whichever you like—that favored one candidate and slandered the opponent. Hearst had no moral values in reference to honest news reporting in a democratic society. He was morally bankrupt. He was, as most corporate news media, into the news media for the money.

So on that April morning in our living room, when we heard the use of a three-letter word by an international news reporter, the judgment of God was enacted on most of the liberal Western news media of today. And would you believe it, that reporter who made the moral pronouncement was a Russian. Yes, a Russian news reporter.

The particular story upon which the Russian called down higher powers of judgment was a story that had been leaked from an employee of a well-known cable news network in America. The “whistle blower” revealed that it was the determined purpose of the cable news network to distort all their reporting during the four years leading up to a presidential election in a manner that would bring down the sitting President of the United States. As the story unfolded, it was explained that from the very top of the news organization, to the those who gave live panel reviews and reports throughout the election cycle, the determined purpose was to slant all stories in order to make the existing President look bad, and thus, unelectable.

It was as if William Randolph Hearst had been resurrected from the dead and was now running this particular media organization. As Hearst, the news organization determined that they did not like the President of the time, so they would use all their influence through their “news” organization to bring him down.

In order to accomplish their deed, specialists in politics and doctors of medicine were scheduled for interviews who would assume that the administration was making all the wrong decisions concerning the pandemic. Reporters became political agents by presenting only one side of the story. The President was presumed to be in some alliance with foreign demons. The media organization, as the Hearst organization, had no moral value system by which to conduct honest reporting and interviews, and thus most of the personalities of the media network

focused on a twisted understanding of the sitting President. Lies were pronounced to be truth. Good was called evil, and evil good.

This particular news corporation under consideration simply became a political arm of the opposition party. Objectivity in news reporting was sacrificed for hidden political agendas.

We then remembered the words of our father. Therefore, this was not news to us, only the old Hearst behavior that surfaced from within those who are in the business of selling twisted sensationalism. (It is particularly interesting to note that after all the sensationalism of the past four years in America, the number of viewers of the news corporation under consideration fell by about half after the November 2020 election.)

The particular news media organization against which our Russian reporter made the striking condemnation had lost its moral compass. This was brought out in the leaked testimony of one of the employees of the offending corporate news organization. What was revealed was that the particular news organization under consideration persisted with the claim that they were an objective “news” media network. However, we must not forget that when either politicians or religionists lose their moral compass, they will always establish a corrupted behavioral pattern of leadership that will seek to win over and maintain the votes of the populace.

When the religionists of a society forsake the authority of the Scriptures in matters of faith (see Hs 4:6), they will invent their own authority, and thus use their religious inventions as the standard by which to make judgments in reference to the behavior of others (See Mk 7:1-9). In the same manner, when political leaders and news media lose their moral integrity, they too will go in search of demons to shoot and crucify. If they find none, then they will manufacture some. And sometimes, and if possible, police states will assume that all protestors in the streets are demons, and thus must be shot. Protest leaders must be nailed on crosses.

Since liberal religionists have given up the authority of the word of God, they must have some standard by which to make judgments against their opposition. Someone or something must be demonized.

Through propaganda (“lies”), they will convince the multitudes to crucify any opposition candidates. The Pharisees, scribes (lawyers) and Sadducees knew well this tactic.

It is no different with the liberal left in politics. Since the liberal left has forsaken any conservative principles by which to determine judgments, and thus, recruit the voters through principles and policies, they must demonize something or someone in order to persuade the people to vote for their party. The voter, without considering principles or policies for which to vote, thus becomes a puppet to vote against the manufactured demon.

In order to demonize an opposing candidate in today’s political world, much of the news media operates as the arm of the liberal left. Sometimes, the liberal left must extend its tentacles throughout the world in order that demons be found in the leadership of other countries. International leaders are thus judged either “tyrants,” being without souls, or dishonest merchants who seek to steal away our riches.

Liberals cannot win elections in a democratic state without demons, both locally and internationally. Collective opposition to demons is the only foundation upon which liberals have to stand. They win elections, therefore, by opposing their manufactured demons. They do not win by taking a stand on a foundation of moral principles and policies. If they established a moral standard upon which to stand in an election, then they would be considered conservatives. If you have forgotten this, then you are a prime candidate for the persuasion of the liberal news media that circles as vultures for those like themselves who have also lost their moral values, and especially their integrity. They circle because they have no moral compass to direct them to a specific location.

All of us who live outside America can see the vultures circling over America. It is as one respected reporter outside America recently stated, “It is now time that we start talking about end-of-empire issues in reference to America because that society is losing, if not already lost, its moral compass.” These are things that transition over a century or two, and thus are largely not realized by the citizens who live at any particular time within a society during its decline. Bible scholars who are deep into the history of the Old Testament recognize these trends.

Moral decay is slow and always without social pain. Those who notice the decline are simply shouted, if not intimidated, into silence. In fact, the silence of the old guard of a declining empire is evidence that an empire is morally in decline. When the past majority that brought an empire to its zenith eventually becomes the minority, then the new majority threatens the old to the point that the old is intimidated into silence. “Cancel culture” is the order of the day since culture always reflects the past. The culture of “cancel culture” means that all discussion is over, and the new order seeks to suppress alternative ideas. (Any historian will reveal that this is an elementary principle to identify empires in decline.)

So back to our living room when we heard that Russian reporter turn to preaching. The Russian reporter was correct in making an assessment of the four to five years of political conspiratorial behavior that was broadcast throughout society leading up to the 2020 presidential election in America. Though nauseatingly regurgitated from day to day from the American media corporation that had lost its integrity in the business of honest and objective news reporting, Russia, and much of the world, have simply dismissed one particular news network in reference to news reporting. When this story broke on the international Russian news network, *Russia Today*—the news media that was previously judged a demon by the liberal left—the Russian reporter pronounced his judgment. His judgment was a startling denunciation of the twisted behavior of the American cable news network. He judged, “This is SIN! It is beyond propaganda.” And the Russian was absolutely correct.

When declining democratic empires lose their moral compass, such is reflected in the candidates that the citizens of the empire chose to be their leaders. When the people lose their moral integrity, they will vote into office like-minded people.

Nevertheless, we will keep a cautious eye on the coming years of the American Empire. We are waiting to see if the now silenced moral minority will once again rise to save the nation. If it does not, then we must add the existing American Empire with all those empires that have come and gone, or going, throughout history

## Chapter 6

# FOR WRITERS ONLY

Long forgotten years ago when they reluctantly gave me a graduation certificate from a small-village high school in central Kansas, all the students in my grade had to take what was called at that time a General Aptitude Exam. This was an exam—they did not call it a “test”—where a collective of psychologists tried to get into our farmer brains and discover if there was any hope there for the future of America. At the time, I was a farmer boy with little interest in things pertaining to my most disliked class in school . . . English and grammar.

Nevertheless, we all had to succumb to the rigorous discipline of meandering through a six-hour examination in one day in order to determine if farm boys had any aptitude for anything other than machinery and crops. At the time, my brother and I were intensely involved in building and racing hot rods, with tractors and farming on the side. So you can imagine how little interest we had in school, and especially, my disdain for English class.

Nevertheless, after six hours of mind-draining, verbal water-boarding throughout the day of the exam, the teacher finally seized the exam papers, folded them up, sealed them securely in an envelope, and as if they were the launch codes for the nuclear arsenal of America, they were whisked off to the post office and dispatched to the educational department in the capital of the state of Kansas.

With little anticipation from us students, the results of the ordeal came back to our small village school in about six weeks. Each unsuspecting student was then summoned one by one into an information room and stationed before a teacher, in this case, my not-so-beloved English teacher.

As my English teacher quietly surveyed through the results on my “aptitude” exam, and after an eternity of quarantined silence, we then had stilted comments with one another as she made subtle suggestions concerning the fate of the rest of my life. Nevertheless, I initially sought

to be positive in the matter during her silence. Would the “interrogation exam” suggest that I should be a prospective scientist in order to follow up on Einstein’s theory of relativity, or possibly launch me into the mysteries of string theory? Or maybe I would be some astute politician—please, no—or a famous surgeon. My mind ran wild with speculations concerning what that six-hour interrogation exam would reveal concerning my destiny.

My English teacher was finally forthcoming with a verdict on who I would be. She encouragingly informed me, “Roger, of the seven categories of aptitude that come from your exam evaluation, it seems that you registered to have a high interest in both English and composition.”

Now you can only imagine the expression on my face as I stared stunned into the face of my English teacher. I immediately concluded that it had all been a conspiracy, for I had a great dislike for the subject of English in my curriculum, and in composition, I was a dud. Surely, she was in on a conspiracy to generate within my soul some compassion for her English class.

It was then that I knew that that General Aptitude exam was of less value than a fallen leaf on a cold winter day. After the interview, I headed straight home to the farm in order to lose myself in work on a tractor engine, and then farm the north quarter. After all, what good is an exam that would score one high in that which one certainly had little interest . . . English and composition (writing). And besides, I was a challenged reader, and have been all my life. Though my mother was an occasional columnist writer in a local newspaper, I was certain that the gene pool in writing had terminated with her generation. Or, the “writing gene” skipped over my generation and found itself a home in my oldest daughter, who is a very natural and skilled writer in the corporate business world.

Must I also confess to my frustration with those English courses that always kept me off the “honor roll” throughout my high school years? My highest grade I could ever muster for the yearly English courses was never above C+. Nevertheless, I still have that high school English course textbook right here in my office. I have had a love-hate

relationship with it all the days of my writing life. It is a reminder that I could never make the “grade” in English.

Nevertheless, I must also confess that I have throughout these fifty plus years since graduating from that small village high school been guided in my writing by that once bedeviled, but now beloved, English grammar book. I think I have learned more from it in the five decades since graduation than in all those days in high school when I daydreamed about cars and crops during English class. Little did I realize that back in those English class days that the “prophecy” of some General Aptitude exam would eventually find fulfillment in my life.

And now to this day, a deeply embedded literary gift from God has allowed me to reach out with Bible teaching to thousands of Bible-loving people around the world. Nevertheless, it took God at least a decade to resurrect this hidden gift that He had given to me. Back in those early years, God gifted me with something for which He knew would be my destiny. However, I must confess that I labored intensely against Him on this matter for it was much easier just to stand up and speak a lesson, than to sit down for hours and painfully scratch it out on paper. Writhing in writing anything was always difficult for me. I must say that the gift, or “urge,” can be there, but it is difficult to do the work because God does not gift one with good grammar and spelling. On these matters one must struggle with a good grammar book and dictionary, and then consider that book as a second bible in reference to language the rest of his life. Nevertheless, I was as Paul, “*I obtained mercy so that in me first, Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering*” (1 Tm 1:16).

I write all this because I am sure there are others out there who have been so gifted. Unfortunately, some have the desire to write something, but when they put pen to paper, the outcome is that it might be good to keep on searching for some other gift. The multimedia of today has embarrassingly revealed that very few people are gifted with writing. After one has struggled through one paragraph, it is sometimes clear that he or she might have presumed wrongfully in reference to the ability to write.

However, I remember that initially I too should have been search-

ing around for some other gift than writing. I have never considered myself a good writer. But I have kept on struggling with that second paragraph. I kept reading good writing. I have read books on writing. Where I am today has come with great pain since I have never been a good speller. When in school in my younger years they never called me up to participate in the regional Spelling Bee contest.

Some people are natural writers. I was not one of them. So I write for the purpose of encouraging those want-to-be writers out there who seek to write in order to teach the word of God. It will take some years to get to where you want to be, but be patient, and just keep writing. You will get there after much practice.

It was not that God gave me all the grammatical tools with the gift. The tools all came with pain. Neither did He gift me with the ability to write in several different literary styles. That came only with writing hours a day throughout the years. And if you want to know how much writing it took me to get started on my journey, back in the days of the 70s before computers, I was emptying out a Bic ink pen a week to first write everything in longhand before typing the first draft. I want young prospective writers to know that there is no easy way to learn how to transcribe your thoughts fluently on a piece of paper. It is most laborious and time consuming, if not sometimes, down right discouraging. But if you have something to say, you will overcome.

Since the door is now wide open for writing ministries because of the Internet, there are a few suggestions that I would make to help one discover a possible hidden gift one might have in reference to writing.

- **First, one must read good writing.** Reader's Digest is a good source because this publication is written on about a US sixth grade educational level. Read newspaper articles. Read everything. I once had a goal of reading a book a week when I graduated from Bible school. I recorded the books I read, and then stopped this schedule when I reached one thousand books. Reading all those books helped me discover writing styles and continuity in putting thoughts on paper.

• **Second, if you have the opportunity, do as I did, and buy books that explain how to write.** I even took a class in university on literature. It is like a prospective actor. The first thing every prospective young actor must do is to go to “drama school.” He or she cannot just step before a camera without a certificate that is secured from a drama school.

• **Third, one must focus on developing his or her own style of writing.** One’s writing style will develop over the years. But once a smooth and communicative style of writing is mastered, then one can consider progressing into prose or poetry. Regardless of expanding one’s writing styles, it is beneficial to master one’s own style in order to encourage others to read what one has to say.

• **Fourth, revise, revise, revise and rewrite.** I go through my scribbles about ten times before they even get to the proof readers. Being gifted with the desire to write some prolific thought comes only through great struggle. This is why some of the writing that I see online should probably not be there. It is evident that someone just starting clicking out words on a screen, and thought there was some cohesion to what really came forth as very confusing.

Here is a suggestion if you are writing for online presentations. I first write out what I want to say in a word processing program on my computer. I then revise, revise, revise, and then have someone else read the material. After much proof reading, it is only then that I cut and paste my material into WordPad, and then cut and paste it online. I would suggest that others do the same, for it might save one some embarrassment. Everyone has written and posted reactive statements that they have later regretted. But keep in mind that people usually react negatively to reactive writing. People simply listen little to sloppy responses and writing. These are the ones who usually turn off a negative preacher.

• **Fifth, find a good proof reader or two or three.** A writer must always understand that he always falls short in proof reading his own

material. One can go to a certain level of proof reading his own writing, but then fail to catch some “obvious” wrong grammar or spelling. I must confess that this is one of the most frustrating problems in writing. After one has spent a great deal of time in proof reading of one’s own material, when it is eventually published mistakes are discovered. It is almost inevitable to find a spelling mistake, or just a bad sentence. Nevertheless, and however, prospective writers must become somewhat fatalistic about this matter. Just conclude that no one is perfect, and just keep on writing for no one’s writing is perfect.

- **Sixth, writing in one’s second language is often not what one’s writing would be in our first language.** This does not mean that one who has written material in a second language over decades cannot write well in the second language. However, that is a unique skill and is very rare. Throughout my life I have known only one writer who could write “pretty good” in a second language. Unfortunately, since English is the language of the Internet, it will be quite difficult for some to write in English on the Internet as their second language. Nevertheless, I would suggest that you give it a good try, and then find a proof reader whose first language is English. (Remember, first write in a word processor, cut and paste into Wordpad, and then onto the Internet. It may save you some embarrassment.)

When looking for proof readers, it is sometimes good that they are not writers themselves. Good writers sometimes do not make the best proof readers because they want to change what you have written into their own style of writing. And also, when finding a good proof reader, I have always desired that any proof reader who was worth being a proof reader was somewhat brutal with what I write. If the proof reader wants to be kind, and not hurt my feelings, then he or she is not the best proof reader. If something in my writing is not right, or does not sound right, then I want to know so I can change it. Always keep in mind that if the proof reader cannot understand a particular sentence, then neither can many other readers.

Now back to writing styles. If you continue to develop in your

writing style over a period of years, then you will have to live with the curse of all writers who can write with different writing styles, depending on the subject about which they write. For almost two centuries, theologians have launched accusations against the book of Isaiah. These critics forget that over a period of about thirty years Isaiah wrote what is now the book of Isaiah in our Bibles. Through inspiration, the Holy Spirit, as with all those He inspired to write Holy Scripture, did not resort to dictating every word that the writers used in their documents. If He had, then there would be a consistent “Holy Spirit-writing style” from Genesis to Revelation. The Hebrew language in which Isaiah wrote over a thirty year period would have stayed the same. But this is not the case.

What the Spirit did was allow each biblical writer to use his own writing style at any particular time in life he was called upon to write Holy Scripture. Now imagine how Isaiah grew in his writing style throughout the thirty-plus years of his ministry. His style became so different throughout his life that some biblical critics have assumed that there was more than one author of all the material of the book of Isaiah that is in our Bible today. For example, the writing style of the first part of the book is so different from what is written from chapter 40 onward that some have assumed that “the Isaiah” who wrote chapters 1-39 was supposedly different than “the Isaiah” who wrote chapter 40 onward.

You will face the same criticism as your writing improves over the years. So be ready for the criticism of those who find it difficult to write even a compound sentence. Though there is such a thing as a “ghost writer,”—someone writes from the notes of an interview with you—write your own material. If someone else writes the document for you, then it is truly not your own, at least not your own writing style. Though the apostle Paul used a “ghost writer” for some of his material, this material was dictated directly from him to the writer as the Holy Spirit moved him to speak by inspiration (See Rm 16:22).

I have found that when writing strictly biblical exegesis, I resort to an analytical style. When writing conceptual material, I struggle into prose. And when just having fun in writing, I resort to historical narra-

tive. Fiction is fun, but I have not yet quite mastered that style, though I have this spiritual novel in my head that is struggling to break free.

The curse of the writer is that when people read your writing, they will sometimes think someone else wrote the material if they are familiar with only one style of writing you have commonly used in your material. But writers know that after they have long laid down their pen, the non-writers will have fun guessing here and there about what you have written, just as they do with Isaiah.

So you would ask me my advice concerning how one would know if he or she is gifted by God to write. You do not have to ask the question. You will know. If writing is not fun, then you are not gifted. If you have some book you have always wanted to write, but have never started writing it, then you are not gifted. And if you write something, and a proof reader has to totally reconstruct what you have written, then you probably should just be a reader, or possibly a speaker. But keep in mind that if you are gifted in writing, but find it difficult to write, then the only way to learn how to write is just write. Practice makes perfect.

But when venturing out into the literary world, one must not initially expect to produce literary masterpieces. A few years after you have initially written what you personally considered at the time a spiritual Hemingway, you will say, "That was junk." And it probably was. (Believe me. Some of the first material I wrote was just junk. The content was great, but the writing style was quite notorious.) The point is that you wrote something, and if you are gifted, you are still writing, and still learning to do better. If you are gifted to write, you can't help yourself but write. It is your ministry.

Young writers always ask me how to publish "their book." To be honest, publishing one's writings in hard back form is almost impossible, if not almost gone. If one does not have the funds to self-publish a book, then one cannot publish his or her book unless there is an audience interested in what one has written.

And in these days of apostasy, the majority of Christians are no longer readers. Most do not even read their Bibles. They can read a statement or two on a Facebook site. However, if a statement turns into

a paragraph, the reader challenged “Christian” becomes bored and moves on to all the pictures and cute statements on other Facebook sites. (Most Facebook readers will never get to this point in reading this post. If you are still with me, then you are not typical. Pat yourself on your back. I am almost finished.)

Therefore, if the material you have written is beyond “Facebook length”—which is about two sentences—then there is little hope of having one’s material read if it is somewhat lengthy. Nevertheless, there are the few Bible-study people out there who will read beyond a paragraph, that is, if the paragraph is written well.

What I have always suggested to potential writers throughout the developing world is to write a manuscript on a particular subject. Read it through and revise it at least ten times yourself. Make ten copies of the manuscript. Ask ten different people to please read the copied manuscripts and make any suggestions or revisions. Once the ten copies are read and returned to you, add the needed revisions. If needed, make ten new copies, and then ask ten different people to read the material. Repeat the process. At least you are getting many other people reading what you have written.

(And no, I cannot be one of those ten people who read your material. I am too busy trying to sort out my own mistakes. It has for years been a policy that I do not proof read other manuscripts than my own. And besides, there are professional proof readers out there who can proof read your manuscript.)

For all those one-in-a-million hidden writers out there, this is the century for you to arise to the occasion and dig up your talent. The Internet has opened wide the door for all Bible-oriented writers to teach the Bible to the world. Printing books in hard copies is generally something of the past. Printing books is so geographically limiting when comparing such to the publication of an e-book on the internet. With the click of a computer key one’s e-writings can be electronically shouted around the world. For this reason I want to encourage all those potential writers out there who have been sitting dormant with a buried talent that they could potentially touch millions if they applied themselves to the task.

If you are truly gifted in this matter, then you cannot help yourself but write. At least you can now use a personal Facebook site to publish what you transcribe. In order to get started, just write something. If it is just a few simple paragraphs, at least that is a start. It may take one or two decades for one to become prolific. Therefore, one must be patient with himself or herself in the beginning, and stay the course through the years of literary development. While God matures you in this ministry, keep in mind that Jesus needs more people who would use this medium of communication in order to reach the world with gospel-written material.

We must believe that the Internet did not come around for people to plaster their faces all over the world, or to boast about their latest dish of food they produced in the kitchen. The Internet came into existence because God wants the gospel of His incarnate Son proclaimed to the world.

## Chapter 7

# REACHING MILLIONS

I can identify with the apostle Paul in reference to being a personal speaker and literary teacher of the truth of the gospel. He reminded Timothy, “*I speak [and write] the truth in Christ*” (1 Tm 2:7). Though Paul was called personally by Jesus, I feel called indirectly to function as Paul, to be “*a teacher [and writer] of the Gentiles [nations] in faith and truth*” (1 Tm 2:7). In Paul’s personal writings to Timothy, who had no written New Testament Scriptures in hand at the time he wrote of “the truth in Christ,” Paul motivated Timothy to be to the nations that which he himself had been since coming forth from the baptismal waters of Damascus: “*These things,*” Paul encouraged Timothy, “*command and teach*” (1 Tm 4:11). He continued, “*Give heed to reading, to exhortation, to teaching*” (1 Tm 4:13). “*These things teach and exhort*” (1 Tm 6:2). And in his final letter to his spiritual son in the faith, Paul concluded at the end of his life, “*The things that you have*

heard from me among many witnesses, **the same commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also**” (2 Tm 2:2). And herein is revealed the method of reaching millions of people throughout the world.

We can only estimated that the preceding words have been read by millions of faithful teachers for the last two thousand years. By putting the truth of the gospel into the written words of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit had in mind a method of teaching. The method was that in the first century through the hand-copied original autographs of the New Testament letters, millions over the next two thousand years would eventually read the written text of the New Testament.

It was the “mission method” of the Holy Spirit that the message of the gospel should be propagated worldwide in written form until Jesus would come again in order to conclude our dependence on the written word. The transition from the written to the person message would happen when King Jesus will eventually set aside the written word in order that once again we focus directly on His spoken word.

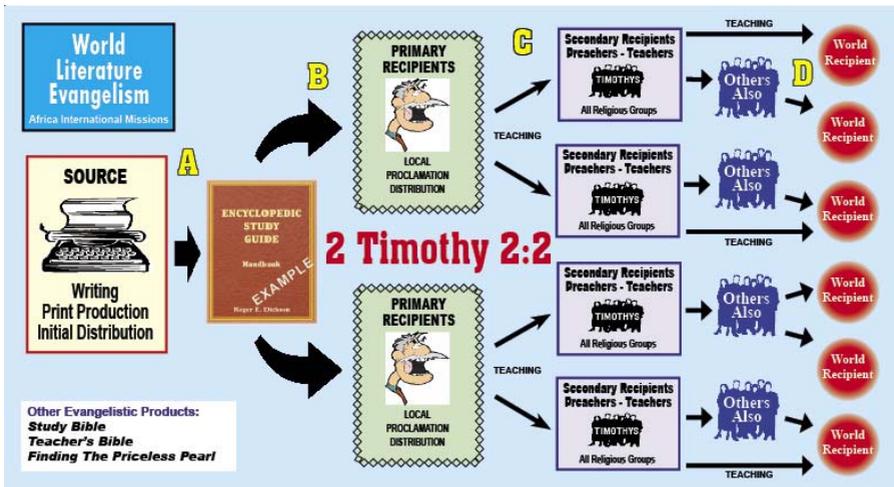
Throughout my world ministry I have focused on this method of missions in order to reach millions. The accompanying diagram of this ministry method illustrates what has transpired throughout a few decades in reference to what the power of the printed word can do in reaching millions. Others in the last century have also excelled in this system of using the power of the pen to reach the masses. This is the same method of teaching that Paul and the other New Testament writers used in writing the letters to the churches in the first century. In reference to using the printed page to accomplish Paul’s mandate to teach others also, here is how I and others have accomplished this mandate as world evangelists:

**(A) Production and printing:** I once pecked away on a typewriter, and then God had the computer invented to aid all of us who have felt a calling to reach the world through the power of the printed page. Because of the invention of the printing press, that which I and others have written, was printed and distributed to millions around the world. Just one example of this system of world evangelism was the writing and printing of the *Encyclopedic Study Guide Handbook*. This

small Bible study aid has been printed in various forms and formats over the past fifty years. Over two million of copies have been printed and distributed worldwide since it was first published in 1972.

In order to illustrate what can be done—but not to boast—in a decade during the 1990s and 2000s, I was printing and distributing an average of about five 20-foot shipping containers of my written materials every year to locations throughout the world. At the same time Martha and I were packaging and sending out about one hundred forty-five pound mail bags a month of the Bible teaching materials that I wrote. Such illustrates what God can do if one truly puts his hand to the pen in reference to teaching through the printed page.

**(B) Distribution to primary recipients:** From the days of Brazil, throughout the West Indies, and since the end of the 1980s, I have distributed millions of copies of the material that we have sent to key recipients throughout the world. In one year alone in Africa I sent out thirteen 20-foot shipping containers of what I had written. This material was sent to key primary recipients who were distribution centers for Africa. In the ministry of the International Bible Institute, we sent out boxes and mail bags of materials to over fifty nations to an enrollment of over six thousand preachers. These primary recipients were teachers who researched the materials that they received. I remember



in the West Indies literary ministry that we had established a network of about one hundred primary recipients. These initial recipients were using the materials to teach about four hundred and fifty secondary recipients, who in turn were teaching a network of churches with over 6,000 members.

**(C) Secondary recipients:** Bible preachers and teachers around the world have received the printed materials that have come from my pen, via some printing press, and then distributed through post offices and shipping containers. When the primary recipients went to work fulfilling the commission of Paul to Timothy, then the magic of the system exploded far beyond what we could imagine. When local Bible preachers and teachers go to work, using our materials as their research for Bible-oriented preaching and teaching, it is then that the mandate of 2 Timothy 2:2 is accomplished to its fullest.

**(D) Teaching Bible for millions:** The *Encyclopedic Study Guide Handbook* is a good example of how we have used small booklets to accomplish the mandate of 2 Timothy 2:2. Since the date it was first published, the booklet has been expanded and printed in English and Portuguese. It has been printed by churches around the world, and distributed to millions. The material of the booklet has not only been printed as individual booklets, the material in one form or another has been included as study material in the printing of the *Teacher's Bible* and *Mission Study Bible*, as well as the book, *Finding the Priceless Pearl*, of which over two million copies have been printed. The *Handbook*, therefore, has been distributed to millions, and thus continues to have influence in teaching people to this day.

Before I wrote and printed my own material in order to accomplish the mandate of Paul in 2 Timothy 2:2, I used the material of other writers. In Brazil—when I could not write in Portuguese—I used the material of others in order to distribute to preachers and teachers. In the West Indies I had the material of others sent to us from America in order that I could ship out Bible study research material to local preachers

and teachers—postal increases have substantially diminished this method of distribution around the world. In Africa I have written and shipped out only the material I have written and printed in Cape Town, and then eventually printed with Amity Press in China.

In the area of Bible tracts, I printed personally over thirteen million on the press that we once operated in Cape Town. These tracts were distributed throughout Africa in mail bags and containers that went throughout this continent of over one billion people.

During the 1800s, and early part of the 1900s, the American and European churches, many of whom were poor rural churches, decided to print materials for their own use. They thus organized together in order to have enough funds to print what various gifted writers had written. The churches subsequently printed tracts, Bible class lessons, study books, commentaries and Bibles. There was no “colonial church” who printed the material for them. The printing of all the Bibles and Bible study material the church needed was printed and sold to the local churches in order to pay for the printing. Churches came to their own rescue in order to print and distribute materials, which policy revealed the spiritual strength of the American and European churches. Unless churches throughout the world follow this example, the members will remain spiritual infants, always holding out their hand to others to send them some materials.

If the church of any nation wants to reach the millions that live within the borders of their nation, then they must take ownership of mass evangelistic outreach through the printed page of the word of God. In order to do this, churches must learn to cooperate financially in order to print their own evangelistic material for the lost souls of their own nation. When the church within a nation matures to this level, then they will fully appreciate the power of the printed page.

## Chapter 8

# BIBLE-BASED AUTHORITY

We live in a religiously divided world wherein there are many today who are seeking to struggle toward unity in faith with one another. This is a noble desire, but one that is often fraught with the danger of becoming religious rather than righteous according to the word of God. We would thus caution many who are on their quest to discover a renewed faith. We must find our Bibles and seek for the old road to the right way.

Unfortunately, some have confused themselves by relying on their own religious zeal. In their misguided religious zeal, some are unfortunately carried off in the wrong direction by their desire to live according to their own rules. Paul had such people in mind when he wrote that such folks are “*always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tm 3:7). He said this about religious people, not unbelievers. He judged “*that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*” (Rm 10:2). In their ignorance of the righteousness of God, therefore, they seek “*to establish their own righteousness*” (Rm 10:3).

It is certainly our desire to establish a stronger relationship with our Savior Jesus Christ, but sometimes, in our efforts to be closer to Jesus, we often seek to establish our own road maps to spiritual growth. This is the heart of religion. This is the cause of divided religious groups wherein each group distributes their own spiritual road map.

The first problem is that we live in a religious world that is incredibly ignorant of the word of God. In fact, it might be safe to say that the Bible plays a minimal part in the world of Christendom wherein worshipers are drawn to religious performances more than paying attention to Bible preaching. In this dearth of ignorance of the Bible, individual road maps to spiritual growth have led the world of Christendom in the direction of “narcissistic religiosity.”

We need to explain our primary point in order to be clearly under-

stood. Admittedly, we are all different, and subsequently, our expressions of worship are also different. But in our ignorance of the word of God, we have often carried ourselves away from the One authority we seek to worship and serve. When we carry ourselves away by our own religious inventions, we start assuming that our way of worship and service of God is the right and only way. What follows is only natural. Our religious narcissism starts to play itself out in our relationship with other people of faith. We start demanding that others also approach the Creator in the precise manner that we do. The result is that we begin to impose on one another religious rituals and ceremonies that we have led ourselves to believe are either “scriptural” or “biblical.” These two terms have actually become very divisive, if not arrogant. In fact, those who use such terms in their discussions with others concerning religious matters often do not understand what they are implying in their use of such terms. Therefore, what does it actually mean to be “scriptural” or “biblical”?

What is often defined as either “scriptural” or “biblical” is sometimes actually “unscriptural” and “unbiblical.” What has often occurred in the religious world is that some have studied their way through the Bible, searching for some hint of a belief or behavior that would validate their own self-improvised religiosity. In this scurry to discover “proof text” examples of behavior of the early Christians are highlighted, copied and cloned. These examples of the early Christians then become the authority by which we determine if one’s behavior is either “scriptural” or “biblical.” So we become quite hypocritical in our use of such terms as a standard for judging others.

Examples of behavior in the lives of the early disciples have sometimes become the authority for establishing doctrinal points on our outline to identify the New Testament church. The problem with this system of establishing the identity of the church **is that we are often quite inconsistent, if not hypocritical.** For example, as the church we want to refer to ourselves with a specific name, while there are several different references in the New Testament to the church. Which “name” is “biblical” or “scriptural” is a matter of opinion. Also, the early Christians sold their possessions (At 4:32-35). As we read their example of

doing so, we want to covet our possessions and store them away in our garages or attics. And when we assemble, we completely ignore the fact that the early Christians assembled in their homes (Rm 16:5; 1 Co 16:19). Of course meeting in a house is a supposed lower location of assembly, while “high church” must construct some structure and call such a “church house.” Unfortunately, in the manufacture of our outline on the identity of “the church,” we simply pick and choose those examples we have traditionally determined that make us “biblical” or “scriptural.” The sad thing about this narrative is that there are so many who do not see the inconsistency of promoting such divisive theology.

Using examples of behavior in the lives of the early disciples as authority in matters of faith can be quite exhausting, if not very dubious. We must also keep in mind that how the early disciples behaved was **how they responded to the gospel**. Being first generation Christians without the New Testament Scriptures to guide them for the first twenty to thirty years after the coming of the Holy Spirit on the apostles in Acts 2, their beliefs and behavior during those intervening years was sometimes quite flawed. The purpose for which the early letters were written to the early churches as a whole was to correct dysfunctional behavior in the lives of the first disciples. We would do well, therefore, to be quite cautious about using any examples of behavior of the early disciples as authority in our faith. We would certainly not follow all the examples of the first generation of Christians in Corinth.

Today, we have the right to respond to the gospel, and in responding, we will often find no “scriptural” or “biblical” validation for some of the things we do as we live the gospel. In other words, building a church building is not “unscriptural” or “unbiblical” because we can find no examples of church buildings in the New Testament. Establishing some “order of assembly” when we come together in assembly has no “scriptural” or “biblical” authority, though Christians are free to bring order to their assemblies by establishing an order to assembly.

Even the meeting time of Sunday morning has become a tradition for which there is no “biblical” or “scriptural” support. As far as can be determined from the New Testament, Christians must come together on the first day of the week, or Sunday, though there is no specific

command to do such (See At 20:7; 1 Co 16:2). This was the day on which the early Christians came together. Meeting in the morning or evening is our choice, depending on what the assembled group desires to do. But there is no “biblical authority” for meeting on either Sunday morning or Sunday night, or both Sunday morning and evening on the same Sunday.

Meeting at any other time throughout the week would not be “biblical” or “scriptural” simply because we find no mandates to do such in the New Testament. Nevertheless, if those who have responded to the gospel want to meet on another day of the week, in conjunction with their meeting on Sunday, then they have the freedom to do so, though a weekday meeting would not be a matter of faith. Our faith may move us to assemble more throughout the week, but our faith is not validated by our assemblies.

As the early Christians had the freedom to respond to the gospel in their own lives—which was often determined by culture—so do we. For example, wearing a head covering was a cultural symbol of submission. Paul even instructed the Corinthians to continue the custom (1 Co 11:4-12), as he encouraged some to whom he wrote not to marry in times of social distress (1 Co 7:26).

The examples of the early disciples cannot be established as authority for our faith today. We learn from the examples of the early disciples, but we do not establish law from the example of their behavior. If we could go back to the first century in a time machine, we could not bind all the examples of our response to the gospel today on the early disciples of the first century. Christ has set both them and us free, and thus we will not be brought into the bondage of any religious behavior of the religious world in which we now live (Gl 5:1). Our faith is determined by what we objectively read in our Bibles.

This brings us to a concept that is quite liberating in reference to our personal response to the gospel. It is critical to understand first the following statement in order to preserve our freedom that we have in Christ: **We must have Bible authority in all matters of fundamental faith.** We are confident that few people really understand what this statement means. It is often erroneously used in the context of binding

on Christians today many things in the New Testament that God never intended to be bound, especially in reference to the examples of the early Christians. But when understood correctly, the statement actually refers to preserving the freedom of Christians lest they lead themselves into being religionists who are far removed from God, especially in these times when ignorance of the Bible is running rampant throughout the religious world.

In the following concept, Paul laid the foundation for understanding the preceding statement: “*So then faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of Christ*” (Rm 10:17). **Our faith is based on what we read in our Bibles.** However, if we have little knowledge of our Bibles, then it follows that we have little faith, or a faith that is not pleasing to God. Our faith, therefore, must not be based primarily on the religious heritage of our fathers of the past, or possibly our present religious rituals and ceremonies that we have invented for ourselves in order to validate our faith (Hb 11:6). Unfortunately, in these times Sunday morning has often become a ceremony for the validation of our faith because we have performed certain religious rituals or ceremonies. Once the Sunday morning religious rituals and ceremonies are performed, we then assume that our faith is validated and we go on our way feeling renewed.

Faith to the religionists, therefore, is strengthened by adhering to Sunday morning rituals and ceremonies. We must remember that one is stuck in religion if he or she feels “unfaithful” if the performance of certain rituals and ceremonies are not adhered to regularly on Sunday morning. But at the same time, those who are walking by a faith that is based on the grace of the gospel, feel “unfaithful” if they have missed an opportunity to assemble with fellow gospel-obedient brothers and sisters in Christ. The religionist misses the performances. Those who are walking by a faith that is based on the gospel miss fellow gospel-obedient saints around the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. One can determine if he or she is involved in religion according to what he or she misses when for some unforeseen reason assembly with the saints is hindered.

This brings us closer to understanding that we must have “author-

ity in matters of faith.” The faith that is pleasing to God must result from what we read in the word of God. The Hebrew statement could thus read, “*But without faith [that is based on the word of God] it is impossible to please Him*” (Hb 11:6). The religionist struggles with this matter. In the behavior of the religionist there are numerous rituals and ceremonies that are not explicitly defined in the word of God. These rituals and ceremonies can be performed, **but they can never become a matter of being a test of our fellowship with one another.** They can never be used to validate our faith. They can never be used to grow our faith. If this were the case, then we would find ourselves caught up in the fanaticism of some cult.

An example is here in order to illustrate a very significant manner by which we behave in our response to the gospel. It is imperative to understand that “authority in matters of faith” can never endanger our freedom that we have in our continued response to the gospel. Our individual responses to the gospel will differ. We may even find some similar example of our responses in the behavior of the New Testament Christians, for they too responded to the same gospel. Our responses to the gospel may be similar to theirs, but the example of their response can never be used to validate our faith. For example, in their response to the gospel, the early Christians in Jerusalem sold their possessions and parted the proceeds to those in need (At 2:45). We have the freedom to do the same, but their example of so doing does not establish a mandate (law) that we too must sell what we have and give to those in need.

Having authority in matters of faith is not a license to twist the Scriptures to the point that we become legal religionists by which we would bind where God never intended to bind. God never intended that we should give ourselves into poverty. In the historical context of the example of the first Christians, those early Christians sold their possessions in order to aid those who had come to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feast, intending to stay only fifty days in Jerusalem before they returned home. But extenuating circumstances prevailed—the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles—and the travelers needed help to stay on at the apostles’ feet in order to learn more truth (At 2:42; see

Jn 14:26; 16:13). Therefore, the local respondents to the gospel in Jerusalem shared with those visitors from other countries who had originally intended to stay in Jerusalem for a short period of time. The selling of possessions by the local respondents to the gospel revealed the power of the gospel working in their lives.

An easily understood example may be in order to make a specific application to our own situation today. Before and after assemblies, some today have customarily chosen to have an “opening” and “closing” prayer in reference to their assemblies. Christians certainly have the freedom to carry on with these prayers before and after their assemblies. However, since neither an “opening” nor “closing” prayer is found in the word of God, then such can never become a matter of faith. “Opening” and “closing” prayers are only the invention of ourselves. Such prayers, therefore, have no “biblical authority.” Strictly speaking, therefore, they are “unbiblical” or “unscriptural.” They are so because “opening” and “closing” prayers are found nowhere in the Bible.

Add to this example a host of examples that have become so entrenched in our assembly behavior that people do not feel right when there is no “closing” prayer. But not feeling right about something is subjective religiosity. “Not feeling right” about something leads us into being religionists. In other words, “feelings” become the validation for what is either right or wrong in reference to our obedience to the gospel, specifically in reference to our assemblies. This is called “subjective religion.” In other words, our behavior as a Christian is subjected to our feelings. We establish authority in our faith by what either feels good or bad.

On the other hand, having Bible authority in matters of faith is **objective**. It is objective because our beliefs and behavior are authorized by what is actually stated in the word of God. For example, baptism is an objective action of behavior simply because it is stated in the New Testament. One can be baptized, therefore, not as a subjective action in order to perform some religious tradition, but because of an objective reading of such in the New Testament. Baptism, therefore, is a matter of faith. We can thus establish baptism as a foundation upon

which to determine fellowship, for in baptism, one is baptized into Christ (Rm 6:3-6). Those who have not responded to the gospel by being baptized into Christ are good religious friends, but they are not brothers or sisters in Christ.

“Opening” and “closing” prayers, meeting in “church buildings,” vacation Bible schools, song books, Bible tracts and Sunday school material are not matters of faith. They are not because they are not mentioned in the New Testament. This does not mean that they are wrong to do or use, only that they are not matters of faith. Therefore, no test of fellowship can ever be made between brothers who have the freedom to use those things that are not matters of faith, that is, things that are in the realm of their freedom to use in their response to the gospel. We must understand, therefore, that when we use the phrase “Bible authority in all matters of faith,” we are respecting the freedom of others to use or do that which they have freedom to do, even though we cannot find such in the Bible. They have the right to so act even if we do not feel good about their actions. If such actions are not contrary to what the Bible clearly states, then there is freedom to act.

It is imperative, therefore, that people of faith must know their Bibles. If they do not know their Bibles, then they will become religionists, and religion is inherently divisive because the identity of each particular religion is based on the performance of certain rituals and ceremonies. For this reason, religions are essentially very emotionally based on the performance of the accepted, or traditional rituals and ceremonies. Adherents to specific religious groups, therefore, are very defensive about the identity of their particular religious group, for their faith is validated by a strict performance of the traditional rituals and ceremonies that identify their particular religious group. And now we understand what God meant when Hosea recorded Hosea 4:6. The Israelites became religionists after Baal because they forsook the word of God, and subsequently established their own faith that was based on their own religious inventions.

## Chapter 9

# THE GOD BEYOND SENSE PERCEPTION

Before we can understand the following terrestrial challenge, we must first step for a moment into a science class. When a material object is struck, strummed, plucked, or somehow disturbed, it vibrates. The vibration in turn disturbs the immediate surrounding air molecules, which molecules disturb neighboring molecules. This chain reaction of vibration carries on from molecule to molecule until the final molecules of the chain reaction collide with a receiving eardrum, specifically the eardrum of our inner ear. The vibration of molecules against our eardrum is then translated into electrical energy, which energy is sent on to our brain. The brain receives and perceives that a sound has been created by the vibration of some material object. Now that you have graduated from “sound school” we can now move on to a better understanding of God.

We believe in a God who hears no sound as we hear sounds simply because He exists beyond the molecules of our atmosphere. No humanly produce sound of this world can make its way outside the confines of our atmosphere. Since God is not confined to our physical means of hearing, then He does not need to hear sounds. He thus needs no physical ears. He is spirit without ears, and thus does not “hear” as we hear one another (Jn 4:24). So how does God “hear” our prayers? Now we have moved into the realm of metaphor—keep reading.

He is likewise a God without vocal cords to excite air molecules in order to be carried along through the atmosphere by air molecules bumping against one another, and eventually ending up as vibration on our eardrums. He is indeed the God beyond our senses, and certainly, beyond the molecules of our atmosphere.

When God “said” to Moses, “*I AM THAT I AM,*” He was not speaking through the vibrating vocal cords of a literal mouth (Ex 3:14). The same would be true in reference to what the bystanders heard from heaven at the time of Jesus’ baptism: “*Behold, a voice from heaven,*

saying, *‘This is My beloved Son’*” (Mt 3:17). By applying our scientific understanding of sound to this “voice,” we must conclude that the God who has no physical vocal cords was able to vibrate the molecules of our atmosphere until neighboring molecules eventually made their way to the eardrums of the bystanders, whose brains eventually translated the sound of the words into a message. However, the origin of the “voice” came from space where there is no atmosphere, where there is no sound. It was thus the miraculous power of God that generated words for our eardrums, and thus a message from the dwelling of God (See Jn 12:30).

It is God’s power that vibrates the molecules of the physical atmosphere of our world in order that words be generated. It was the vibrating molecules of this atmosphere that came as a “voice” to Moses on Mount Sinai (At 7:31). We must not be so naive as to think that the “voice” with which God spoke to Moses assumes that God has physical vocal cords and lips that can produce words. The “voice” only assumes that God, who is spirit, can powerfully touch the molecules of our atmosphere in a way that words can be formulated in order to bring us a message from beyond the confinement of our world.

Therefore, we believe in a God who is beyond the limitations of the blue atmosphere that surrounds this world, and in which our continued existence is made possible. Since man can reside only within an atmosphere of air, then unless we can find an atmosphere with air on another heavenly body of the universe, we must assume that man resides on this earth alone.

And since the “voice” of God can be produced and heard only where there are air molecules to bump against one another in order to produce “words” for eardrums, then we extend our reasoning beyond this world in view of the fact that there need be no atmospheres on other heavenly bodies that can be used by God to communicate through “words.” The conclusion, therefore, is that there is no life on other heavenly bodies, specifically human life, for whom the Son of God would have to be incarnate also for their salvation.

Richard Branson, with other fellow earthly passengers, recently climbed into the Virgin Galactic vessel named SpaceShipTwo, and then

blasted themselves into the realm where our God dwells—space. In order to survive in this realm where only God can exist, the occupants of the SpaceShipTwo enclosed a portion of this earth’s atmosphere in order that the occupants might be able to communicate with one another with their voices when they arrived outside the confines of our atmosphere. However, they had to remain in the confines of their transported portion of earth’s atmosphere. Likewise, and a week later, Jeff Bezos and other passengers, made a similar trip into space, transporting with them also a portion of earth’s atmosphere.

If any of these space travelers could have stepped outside their portion of transported atmosphere that they took along with them from earth, then they could never have communicated with one another except through electronic radios. They could not have communicated because there are no air molecules in space, and thus, no voice transmission from one person to another. The triune God in whom we believe dwells in this realm, but does not communicate among themselves with words of this world.

This nature of space in which God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit dwell was pictorially illustrated in the 2013 movie entitled *GRAVITY*. Stars, Sandra Bullock and George Clooney, could communicate with one another in space only through the electronic transmitting devices within their space suits. In order to prepare the viewing audience for an “out-of-this-world” experience, the movie prepared the audience for the experience with the leading statements, “372 miles above the earth.” “There is nothing to carry sound.” “No air pressure.” “No oxygen.” They thus explained the environment in which our God dwells.

The theme of the movie realistically communicated the tragic drama that was experienced by Bullock and Clooney. However, the producers could only graphically illustrate the eventful and tragic decimation of their space station and space shuttle. When encircling debris from an exploded Russian space station on the other side of the world eventually encircled the earth, the debris began to impact and destroy the space station and shuttle of Bullock and Clooney. As viewers, we could only see, not hear, the destruction.

The visuals of the impact were graphic. However, the audience

could hear no sound of ripping metal, or the impact of the Russian space station debris impacting the US space station. There was no sound at that time in the movie. We cannot even use the words “explosion” to explain the tragedy because such a word assumes sound. So on screen there was the space station being silently torn apart without any sounds whatsoever. If one did not understand the introductory explanation at the beginning of the movie, then he might have thought that the sound system of the theater had failed at the time of the impact.

This is the realm in which our God dwells. It is truly the “third heaven” in which there is no sound. If a giant meteor the size of our moon somehow hurdled through space and struck the moon, there would be total silence of the destruction on earth because there are no air molecules between the earth and moon that could bump against one another. Therefore, if God seeks to communicate personally out of this realm of silent space to those who are confined to the atmosphere of this world, then He must either vibrate the molecules of our atmosphere, or communicate with us through incarnate vocal cords. And that He did.

If one does not understand the metaphors of communication that are used by the Holy Spirit in Scripture in reference to our communication with the God who resides in the silence of space wherein there is no sound or the transmission of sound, then he or she might move into the realm of idolatry. It is in the realm of idolatry that we perceive gods with whom we can communicate with words as we do with one another on this earth.

We must guard ourselves against using the earthly definition of communication that we use with one another in the confinement of our atmosphere in reference to God communicating to us from His realm of total silence. If we do not understand that God’s communication with us through the metaphorical use of the words of our world, then we will be moved into creating a god after our own physical image. We will argue that this god must speak as we speak, and thus have vocal cords and lips as a human being.

If our world with its atmosphere did not exist, would we conclude that our god also would not exist? If we assumed that He speaks as we

speak to one another with vocal cords and lips, then we have conceived an idol god in our minds. Therefore, in order to understand the God who is beyond this world, we must understand Him as though this world did not exist. And indeed, He existed without time long before the creation of this world, its atmosphere, and earthly bound inhabitants.

Our God is beyond the definitions of the words of our dictionary, specifically the definition of those words that refer to our communication with one another concerning His existence. In fact, there are no words in our dictionary that can adequately explain the God of space. By believing in this God of space, some might think that we are somewhat distant from being idolaters. And they would be correct.

We have witnessed in Africa of old that drums are used in “pagan,” or animistic ceremonies in order to excite an emotional self-hypnotic frenzy on the part of those who worshiped the spirits. The worshipers of gods (spirits) came alive in the minds of the worshipers only when the drums rhythmically stirred alive the imagination of the subjects. This same means of generating gods in fertile imaginations has been brought into the realm of many religious groups in these times. Instrumentalists in worship centers around the world turn up the volume and beat harder on the drums in order to call on gods who respond to their noise and the beat of their drums.

Nothing has changed since the days of Elijah. An opportunity to illustrate imagined gods was organized by Elijah who invited all the religionists of the Baals and the Asherah to Mount Carmel (1 Kg 18:17-46). It was at Mount Carmel that a challenge was made between the imagined gods of the religionist idolaters with the God of space who is above and beyond this world.

During the contest of “gods,” and after the religionists had cried out aloud for hours and cut themselves in order to gain some response from their god, “*Elijah mocked them*” (1 Kg 18:27). He continued his mocking with the words, “*Cry aloud, for he is a god*” (1 Kg 18:27).

Unfortunately, Baal was a god only in their minds. He was a god who could not be awoken no matter how much noise the worshipers produced. Nevertheless, he was a god they believed could hear their loud cries (or, drum beats), and see the blood flow from the ascetic

self-inflicted wounds of their wrists. He was an idol god they believed could “see” and “hear.” This god dwelt in the confines of this world’s atmosphere, and only in the minds of the deceived.

We believe in a God who cannot see as we see and who cannot hear as we hear. He is a God who dwells in a realm that is not confined to our atmosphere where sound exists and can be scientifically defined. He is a God, therefore, who cannot be awoken out of sleep, as Elijah mocked the Baal prophets (1 Kg 18:27). He need not be awoken by the drummers playing louder and the instrumentalists strumming more vigorously to produce an ear-splitting noise through magnified speakers. Those sounding instruments may stir the worshipers into a self-hypnotic frenzy emotional ecstasy. However, the one true God who is spirit is in His holy temple beyond this world. Therefore, let all the earth keep silence before him.

The apostle Paul was caught up in vision to Paradise, whatever or wherever this may be. We do not fully understand. He “heard” what he later defined as “inexpressible words” (2 Co 12:4). They were certainly inexpressible as words that we use in this world, if indeed he was caught up in vision to a place that was beyond the atmosphere of this world.

The destination of his terrestrial journey “landed” him in the “third heaven” (2 Co 12:2). To the Jews, the birds flew in the first heaven, the clouds were in the second, and the third was the dwelling place of terrestrial bodies as the sun, moon and stars. If indeed Paul were caught up to a realm in which only God dwells, then the only Greek word phrase he could have used to speak of what he encountered would be “inexpressible words.” There are no words of our world that could be used to explain that which he saw in a realm in which “words” do not exist.

The God in whom we believe is spirit, and thus must be communicated with through our inner spirit. Vocal words can pour out as vibrated sounds through our mouths, but the intent, meaning and definition of these words that proceed from our mouths must first have originated in devoted hearts. It is for this reason that God “listens” to hearts, not the strumming sounds of harps. It is something like the first Rus-

sian cosmonaut, Yuri Gargarin, later said after being the first man to orbit the earth in 1961: “An astronaut cannot be suspended in space and not have God in his mind and heart.”

One may want to cry out his prayers at the top of his voice. However, we must always remember that the God who dwells in the realm of total silence is listening to the silent pleas of our hearts before our thoughts make their way to our vocal cords, and eventually to the God who dwells in a realm of silence. He truly hears the sound of our silence long before we ask. This is the God in whom “*we live and move and have our being*” (At 17:28).

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## ABBREVIATIONS

### OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

### NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**