

The Lost Tribes

In the Parables of Messiah

Short Essays

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NOTES

Scripture Translations – A variety of translations are used, including (and especially) the RSV, NJB and SIV. All these excerpts have been modified to convey a more literal feel and understanding. Several translations from the Greek New Testament are my own.

Names are transliterations of the authentic Hebrew and Greek names of the historical characters. Fictional characters are also given authentically transliterated names. The sacred name Yahweh and the title Elohim are returned to the Almighty. The son of Yahweh is returned his rightful, transliterated name, Yahshua.

Fiction – This book contains historical fiction based on known facts about Yahshua and his Gallant Friends. The facts that hold the stories together are either commonly known, footnoted or explained in the text. The brothers of Yahshua are historical figures, as are many of the others including Banyah (Baniyas) the Dunker, who appears in several tales.

Audio – Most of these stories are available for download. As of this writing, the download page is <http://radio-yahweh.com/audio-sermons/snyder.htm>, although one may request a CD of the author of what material is available. Write to anyone@theYahad.com.

It is possible that some of this material has been published by others. If I have incorporated your work, please do contact me at the address above so I may set the record straight on the source.

These essays, and many more to be published in the next two collections, were composed primarily from 2001 – 2005 during my pastorate at Byrneville United Methodist Church, and I thank the people there, as well as the Superintendency and Conference, for affording me time, opportunity and gentle pressure to write during these most productive years of my life. Thank you. Thank you.

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The Face on Mars: Communicating Through Deep Time

Matthew 13:31. Another parable Yahshua put before them, saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed which a man took and sowed in his field; 32. it is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

33. He told them another parable. "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened."

34. All this Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed he said nothing to them without a parable. 35. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: "I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the world."

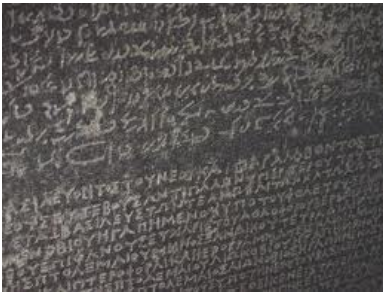
Today we want to look at our parables about the Kingdom of Heaven in a different way than usual. Have you ever buried a time capsule? Let's understand these parables as time capsules buried by a famous man who lived in a faraway place in the distant past, who knew of us long before we were born, and who wanted to convey to us secret, personal insight veiled by mundane and simple stories. Have you ever thought parables in this way?

Communicating Through Deep Time

Consider how we might convey our important messages to people of the future. How might we preserve our wisdom and insight for thousands, tens of thousands, even millions, of years. Modern communications media like tapes, CDs, chips and even books are immediately ruled out; these devices are of a temporary nature. Books deteriorate within 100 years. Electronic media might last a

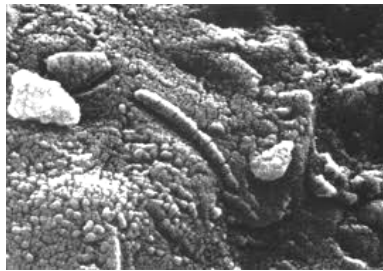
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long, long time – but on what do you play your MP3 in 10,000 years?



My modern computer won't even read the disks I made 20 years ago.

No, the solution to sending messages to the distant future is found in the messages we have received from the distant past – messages that have been written in stone. Writing in stone is a primitive art, but messages written in stone have given us the keys



to vast treasure of knowledge. Finding the Rosetta Stone in 1799 was the key that opened the door to Egyptian history – proving that the hieroglyphics on the ancient stone are not just ancient, ornate pictures,

but a very detailed language. Translations of Egyptian writings in stone have helped us prove in our day that what the Bible says about history is true.



Learning the meanings of messages four thousand years old is incredible enough. But how about messages four hundred thousand years old? The aerial photos of the Martian surface taken in 1976 revealed a human face on Mars surrounded by pyramids, all in

exact geometric formation. At the time NASA dismissed the

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discovery as “a trick of light and shadow,” but if there had been people on Mars 400,000 years ago and they wanted to advertise their presence for a million years, a mountain-sized face surrounded by pyramids would be the way to do it. In 1996, top scientists confirmed that life had existed on Mars with the discovery of meteorite ALH84001, a stone from Mars that clearly displays fossilized bacteria. Another important message conveyed in stone from eons in the past. The only problem in using stone to convey messages is that stone writing must be translated or interpreted. The Egyptian language of the hieroglyphics had long since passed away.

Oral Tradition Transmission

However, there’s another effective method of transmitting messages through time that’s quite similar to writing in stone, except the messages end up translating themselves, no matter how language evolves. Historians call it ‘oral tradition.’ It is like cutting simple stories into the stone of the human heart. These stories are be repeated generation after generation after generation. Perhaps you know a story about one of your kinfolk who passed away before you were even born. Chances are the story you were told about that person helped you to feel like you knew him or her. Chances are you told one of your children or grandchildren the same story. Chances are your grandchildren, when they get old, will repeat the stories to their young kin. Scientists now tell us that they are finding stories patterns in the genetic code that they call *engrams*, hinting that

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certain stories have been passed down through the human bloodline since the beginning.

Oral Tradition is the method of long-term communication with the future that Yahshua employed to cast his word on the currents of time and space. Yahshua was not a tombstone cutter, but he engraved the stone of his hearers' hearts with parables. Parables are short, simple stories that are engaging and easy to remember. They convey a meaning that even the simplest can understand. Yet, under the surface, Yahshua knew that members of his Heavenly Kingdom in the distant future would find secret meaning in them, deep below than that which could be perceived by the simple. In fact, parable means "something cast out beyond the present time."

Parables in Deep Time

Matthew (13:34) tells us that when Yahshua spoke to crowds, he only used parables so folks would easily remember these stories and retell them, never perceiving the deeper meaning not meant for them. The reason Yahshua used this method is found in Psalm 78, which we read from our Psalter today. It bears repeating now. Listen carefully for clues as to why Yahshua used parables to convey his secrets to you:

Psalms 78:2. I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old, 3. things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. 4. We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of Yahweh, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought. 5. He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children; 6. that the next generation might know them, the

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children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children, 7. so that they should set their hope in Elohim, and not forget the works of Elohim, but keep his commandments; 8. and that they should not be like their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation whose heart was not steadfast, whose spirit was not faithful to Elohim.

Not many knew how to read and write in Bible days but Levites like Matthew. Yahshua wanted the stories to be passed from generation to generation through time, whether people could read or write or not, so that the stories might be known hundreds and thousands of years later to millions of people. But even more importantly, that those chosen for the Kingdom in our future present might feel their stony hearts embossed with the deeper meaning of these stories.

On the surface a parable is going to mean the same thing to all people. The fisherman sorts out fish and throws the unclean ones away. The baker throws yeast into the dough. A seed grows into a tree and birds flock there. Somebody buys a field for the pearl found in it. Everybody gets the same meaning. The stories are so simple that they are hardly even stories. But the secret, personal message is going to be different for every chosen Kingdom person. That's the beauty and mystery and miracle of Yahshua' parable preaching. Every believer has a different history, mission and gift. When a believer throws herself into the parable, she receives the personal, individual message from her Savior. This is one of the supernatural ways that Yahshua whispers to believers today despite the vast difference in time. Moreover parables are incredibly anointed; but *their deeper meaning is not for everybody.*

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The Schneider Stone and the Mustard Seed Parable

Let me give you an example of a parable from my life: of how the parable of the mustard seed reveals a personal message to me. Once I took a little trip to the country – to a tiny cemetery behind a tinier Lutheran church 15 miles south of my hometown. There comes a time in every young person’s life when he begins to wonder about where he came from, what his ancestors were like, what they did, their stories, their history, his past. My family didn’t convey much about family history to me. They never shared why there were so many of us Snyders around or how or even if we were all related. All I knew was that the first Snyders came over from somewhere in Europe, and that the family ancestors were buried in this little cemetery I was now visiting.

I found the earliest Schneider / Snyder stone in the cemetery. It is



a small, ornate stone, well engraved, and still legible. The name and date on the stone is still easy to make out – Jacob Schneider, 1792. Unfortunately, the long inscription chiseled into the limestone is in German, and I couldn’t read any of it. At the top of the stone was engraved a picture of a hand with the index finger pointing up to heaven. Surrounding

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the stone were several others with the names Schneider and Snyder, some large, ornate and inscribed. After taking photos of them, I left the cemetery, thinking I might try to translate the inscription later.

From that trip I learned that my family in America went back to 1792 at least. That fact was written in stone over nearly two hundred years before. It was a message from the past – a tiny story that meant the same thing to everyone who could read it – “Jacob Schneider, 1792.” I realized that as long as that stone stood on the earth, so would its story. But what did the inscription have to add to the meaning of the trip? And what had happened since 1792? The deeper, personal message from Jacob Schneider to me had not yet been revealed; in fact, nobody could translate the story written in the stone.

It is exactly the same with the parables of our Savior. We read through them and understand them perfectly; they are so simple, they are ridiculous. Everybody knows these stories – I would venture to say that billions of people have recited them from their hearts or read them from the Book and passed them down the generations. Yet very few see through the veneer to discover the secret Kingdom.

It was 30 years later, in 2001, when I finally translated the stone. A high school boy, Adam Snyder, took a photo of it and emailed it to me. I tried to enhance the image. I worked with it every way. I contacted people who lived around there to trace some of the words with their fingers. I don't know any German, so I had to struggle with the language. I did it letter by letter. I stayed awake thinking about it; studying the words in my mind. I checked atlases; I talked

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to people about obscure words; I went to the Internet for the history of his time looking for clues. I was very frustrated, but I kept getting closer and closer to the secret story. Interpreting the message became an intellectual struggle. But one day, I got it all.

The inscription said that my great-great-great-great grandfather, Jacob Schneider, was born in Sohenstadten in the state of Hessen Darmstadt in western Germany near the French border. He became a career soldier in the German army at the age of 17 and won a commendation for bravery in a battle with or against the forces of Emperor Napoleon I. (Probably on the side of Napoleon.) He was married to Maria and they had at least three children, Hannah, Philip and George. He immigrated to the United States to get his family out of war-torn Europe. He settled in the county where I was to be born in the middle of the 19th century. His eldest son, Philip, had ten children, most of them male, who all had bunches of children who then had bunches more of children. Over the next 150 years, the Hessian soldier Jacob Schneider was responsible for the births of hundreds of people with the same last name as me, including me.

Inserting my own struggles with the stone into the parable, I observed that an awesome mustard tree had grown, beginning with a man's decision to sell everything and make the perilous sea voyage in a time when the whole world was at war. That tree is still growing, and I have been exploring its branches in the past six months. I made two important discoveries: many heavenly birds have come to rest in this great family mustard tree – many saints of Yahweh are found in its branches, and even martyrs. The other discovery was that Jacob Schneider was the great-great-great

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grandfather of both my mother and my father. It is a small world after all.

Secret Personal Meaning of the Parable

And the secret personal meaning of this simple parable? This is it: Yahshua tells me that I will surely meet many, many of these dear people whom I have hitherto known only on paper or through old photos. In fact, I am already with them in the beloved Kingdom about which these stories are written. And soon I'll meet them face to face in the presence of the Savior. So I'm excited about the times we live in and in our work together toward the revelation of this wonderful Kingdom. Excitement grows as we consider how Matthew begins his section on the parables of Yahshua:

*Then the righteous will shine like the sun
in the kingdom of their Father. (Matthew 13:43)*

The righteous of all ages will shine forth at the end of the age; it will be a glorious time of reunion for me, for you and for your beloved friends and family who know and love Yahshua. Now notice how the section ends:

*Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven
is like a householder who brings out of his treasure
what is new and what is old. (Matthew 13:52)*

When Matthew says "scribe" he means a family accountant. A disciple will be like the great grandfather or grandmother of a huge economy of people. We will be shining hearts and guides of a loving family of the sons and daughters of Yahweh, revealing the old stories and bringing new meaning to them in the glory of a Kingdom free of

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evil. Some of us are already revealing stories, both old and new. Some of us are already living in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Dear ones – these parables also speak of a separation – the separation of the wheat from the tare, the fruitless tree from the orchard. That is why you must wrestle them down. They have been conveyed for centuries to help you decode your place in this present darkness and your destiny in the light. They are anointed stories, but the anointing requires that you struggle until the deeper meaning shines forth. Do not let them go until they bless you. Become the denominator in each one and see what value arises out of each equation. Don't let the plainness of these stories elude you as the simplicity of the face on Mars eluded the all-knowing scientists, but let their inner secrets reveal themselves to you. Wait upon your Savior to speak to you with great clarity through them. May he bless you, my friends, with visions and revelations of your destiny in his glorious and holy realm.

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On the Jericho Road: The Allegory of the Good Samaritan

Deuteronomy 6:1-7 (Read in the message)

Luke 10:25. And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26. Yahshua said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you read?" 27. And the Lawyer answered, "You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28. And Yahshua said to him, "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." 29. But he, desiring to justify himself, said, "And who is my neighbor?"

30. Yahshua replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. 31. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

33. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, 34. and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35. And the next day he took out two coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.'

36. Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37. The lawyer said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Yahshua said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Great Affect on Humanity

The Allegory of the Good Samaritan has probably had more effect on humanity than any other story. It can be understood just as it stands, even if we don't know the players. What *anyone* can discern is that, while some pass the mugging victim by, one man stops to save his life.

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We also perceive the Samaritan's *bent* toward goodness. His willingness to do the right thing is as natural as throwing a log on the fire or holding open the assembly door for your neighbor. On the other hand, those who pass by *claim* the moral high ground, but *they just don't do anything* of moral value. In fact, the one who does the good, this Samaritan, is considered by the others to be no good whatsoever.

So already, we've cracked the literal meaning and learned a valuable lesson in neighborly hospitality. Isn't this simple to understand? Sure. But it's much harder *to actually play out the story* – to extend the metaphor to our own assembly, to our own neighbors – to subordinate our time and materials to the higher will of Yahweh rather than just use the letter of the Torah to get by – to use our resources to *save lives* rather than *to erect monuments dedicated to the past*.

Let us pray: "Father, like the Samaritan, let us be mission-minded rather than maintenance-minded, lest we be judged unworthy. Amen."

A Lawyer

Our first character is a lawyer. His kind of law is *religious law* – Torah – the first five books of the Bible – plus the Oral Law that Mark 7:5 calls "Traditions of the Elders." He comes out of the multitude to test Yahshua then best him. He calls Yahshua *Rabbi as though he were a teacher of the same law / traditions that the lawyer practices* – so we have the expert testing (or should we say, tempting) the teacher, for the lawyer inquires about *ageless life*, a subject not

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mentioned in the Torah *at all*. Yet the lawyer's *trying* to get Yahshua to say that ageless life, if it exists, is a matter of inheritance or birthright – as though *some race, culture or religion* had a corner on it.

Yahshua answers hard questions *with* questions. He knows ageless life *isn't mentioned in the Torah*, so he volleys the lawyer's question right back, "You're the lawyer, what does the Torah say on this subject?" The lawyer *quotes the Torah*: Deuteronomy 6:4. "You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

Here, *the Torah* goes on to say that: Deuteronomy 6:6. "These words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart; 7. you shall teach them diligently *to your children*, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when *you walk by the way*, when you lie down, when you rise up." This "law" describes the mangled man in the story – walking by the way, lying down, rising. Had we as children been taught this course of instruction, and had we relayed it to our children and children's children, we might've avoided many muggings and thefts.

But the lawyer isn't finished. He quotes Leviticus 19:18 "You shall love your neighbor as yourself for *I am Yahweh*." We've heard this summation of the Torah before – from the lips of Yahshua earlier – when a different lawyer asked him in Matthew 22:36. "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Torah?" Christians think Yahshua makes up some new commandments when he answers: Matthew 22:37-40. "You shall love Yahweh your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind. This is the great

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and first commandment. And a second is like it, 'You shall love *your neighbor* as yourself.'

Like our lawyer, Yahshua is simply *quoting what Yahweh had already commanded centuries before*. Nobody's saying anything new – only reinforcing what'd been commanded all along. Yahshua says, "So counselor, it seems you've answered your own question." But Yahshua doesn't *promise* the lawyer ageless life; only life. Indeed, the lawyer is alive – at least for the moment. As we are learning week by week, this life can be snuffed out without any warning; even the good die young. This lawyer has the opportunity NOW to believe and be justified before the Father and Yahshua – or he can save *judgment* for the great white throne.

Who Is NOT My Neighbor?

But now the lawyer slips up; he forgets Deuteronomy 6:16. "You shall not put Yahweh your Elohim to the test." "Just who is my neighbor?" he blurts out to save face. These Jews didn't have the same neighborly hospitality as us Southerners. We think of our neighbor as someone next door, or in the community, or someone we see in church. Though the lawyer has a similar idea, he also knows *who his neighbor definitely isn't*. He remembers: Deuteronomy 15:2,3. "Every creditor will dissolve *his neighbor's debts* [but] *of a foreigner* you may demand payment."

The lawyer *doesn't* include *foreigners, aliens* or *Samaritans* in his definition of neighbor, even if one lives next door. This lawyer is a racist who uses the Bible to justify his sin. This is hardly uncommon

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today. (Many a Fascist uses a Bible to justify his hatred in the twenty-first century every bit as much as in the twentieth).

However, Yahshua judges this lawyer compassionately: he knows the Torah *better* because he had his *finger* in the stone tablet! His judgment comes by means of a story about the type of person the lawyer would despise – a Samaritan. A good place for us to start is in asking, “What’s a Samaritan?”

Samaritans

Go back seven hundred years (721 BC) when Assyria’s king (Shalmaneser) conquered Israel (the northern kingdom of ten tribes). 2 Kings 17 tells us that the Israelites were deported and replaced by foreigners: superstitious heathens from all over Asia. They had no taste for Yahweh, but the local mountain lions *had a great taste for them*. Lions visited their settlements in large packs for fine dining. The people planted in Israel feared that the Israelite god was using the lions for revenge, so they called on King Shalmaneser, and he sent them a corrupt priest from among the captives to try to placate Yahweh. So in Israel there developed a “mongrelized people” known as Samarkans who worshiped their gods right along with a perverted form of Judaism. This is called *syncretism*. Later, the religion of the “Samaritans” became official, quite orthodox, and nearly Christian in theology – they built a temple to Yahweh on Mount Gerazim in the province of Ephraim, considered themselves new Israelites, kept Torah, believed in the day of judgment, and awaited the Messiah. Theologically, they weren’t that different from us Nazoreans.

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Because of their origins in Asia, Samaritans were still considered foreigners, thus inferior and unclean. If a Samaritan was caught walking the Jericho Road in Judea, he was likely to be robbed and stoned. On the other hand, if a Jew was caught at a well in Samaria, he was likely to be murdered. However, there'd always been a remnant of Israelites left in Samaria, and some Israelite blood mingled with that of the so-called "foreigners."

Do you remember the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4)? She said Jacob was her ancestor – she was perhaps a member of the "lost" tribe of Ephraim. How about the lady Anna who prophesied when Yahshua was born? She was of the "lost" tribe of Asher. There *were* members of the "lost tribes" thereabouts, especially in Samaria and Galilee. But when Yahshua first sends his disciples out, he tells them *not to go into Samaria*. And in the previous chapter (Luke 9), the Samaritans don't allow Yahshua to stay there.

But soon, there's a revival in Samaria; Acts (8:5ff) tells us that the Samaritans received the Ruach ha Qodesh (Holy Spirit) and fire. Would you believe *there's still a remnant of these same Samaritans yet today*, living in the same place as Yahshua visited two thousand years ago? Yes, there are – and they're not Muslims! They still believe the same tenets as their ancestors.

Still, in those days, though they had inhabited Israel for centuries, Samaritans weren't considered neighbors, but unclean foreigners.

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The Story

So here's this lone Samaritan walking in a very dangerous place – in Judea – on the road between Jerusalem and Jericho – a treacherous twelve-mile stretch. Muggers left a “half-dead man,” robbed and stripped, in the road. The Levites who walked this road were the epitome of morality – they spent their whole lives in service to Yahweh and the temple. They were like rich, powerful gods who could do no wrong. But the Levites on the Jericho Road today know that if they come in the vicinity of a corpse, they'll be unclean and can't go home. Torah is *almost* a legitimate excuse for lack of compassion. Assuming the man in the road could die at any time, they pass by on the other side (Leviticus 22:4). They *use the Torah* as a *pretext* to go about their own business *and leave a neighbor to die*.

The Samaritan was in the same dilemma as the Levites – he could be inconvenienced if he became ritually unclean or got a little bloody or prodigal – spending money and time on a dead man. But for him, *racism, ritual purity* and *financial considerations* took a back seat to COMPASSION. The Samaritan followed a *higher layer of the Torah* – he *cared*. Like his blood, compassion is a mixture – a mixture of pity and action – a love that works. The Samaritan, a foreigner, considers the unclean, bloodied man as his neighbor – *touches the corpse*, pours oil and wine into the wounds, picks up the *wretched man*, sets him on his animal and checks him into a motel, paying for the room and care in advance, promising to pay more when he returns.

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The Lawyer's Justification

With the story at an end, Yahshua asks the lawyer (who is himself a Levite), "Now who do you think was this man's neighbor?" The lawyer says, "*I suppose* the one who showed mercy." Even this was a stretch for this *legalistic racist* to say. He can't even utter the word "*Samaritan*" for fear of being defiled. Nevertheless, Yahshua commands him *to defile himself* "Lawyer, if you want to live on, go and do like the Samaritan."

Give the lawyer the benefit of the doubt: let's say he *thought* about doing good for a few days. He had seen a "muggee" on the Jericho Road before; there were certainly plenty in passing! But our lawyer probably just glanced for a moment, said "Nah," and moved on toward his clean little temple, so stained with *the blood of bull*.

As for us, Yahweh points us to that man – robbed, beaten half to death, bleeding in the road. Shall we get a little blood on our clothes or pass our neighbor by? Friends, we *are* passing him by – because *time is passing us by while we pass idly away*.

Might our personal laws ever be subordinated to a higher and more compassionate Law? Don't we realize that a neighbor's life is at stake? Who'll step in and see him saved? If we don't take what we have and step in, *Yahshua will step in instead* – with healing for some, life for some – and judgment for others.

The Cast and Crew

Allegories like "The Good Samaritan" also contain embedded messages from long ago – cut into stone – faded from the erosion of centuries. There's deeper meaning here that transcends past time –

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and alights upon the end-time – our time. What message has Yahshua hidden in stone for his people of the twenty-first century? Behold!

Look at the ***Half-dead Man*** – the neighbor – he represents “the lost tribes” of Israel – he’s you and me and anyone else whose heart and blood seek the Promised Land. He’s mugged on the ***Jericho Road*** – there where blind Bartimaeus sat – where *the tribes of Israel* were numbered (Numbers 26:63) – where Yahweh promised them their inheritance of *land* (Deuteronomy 34:4) – where they finally passed into the promise – and where Moses died, having *seen* the promise, but never entering (32:49) – all on the Jericho Road – the rough road to the promise of ageless life.

The robbers are the false prophets and teachers of Israel – who’d rob Elohim of His authority, truth and possessions – who’d lead true Israelites into idolatry – who tempt Yahweh to empty out Israel by means of the king of Assyria – who made His house of prayer a den of thieves – Malachi 3:9. “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me; the whole nation of you, says Yahweh.” They would steal away Israel’s inheritance and fill the land with superstitious idolaters – and *one false priest* with a mission to steal, kill and destroy that little dab that was left. There are plenty of these robbers today.

The Priest and the Levite – two men – were the earthly representatives of Yahweh, such as they were. Like the lawyer and the Pharisees, these men were experts in the letter and tradition of Torah – yet they never attain to the *higher law*, that Yahweh the

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lawgiver *loves* and has *compassion*, and that *his care may transcend any law that he makes*. One prophet assures us,

(Isaiah 63:7-9.) I will mention the lovingkindnesses of Yahweh, and the praises of Yahweh, according to all that He has bestowed on us, and *His great goodness toward the house of Israel. In all their affliction **He** was afflicted*, and His angel saved them. When an Israelite is afflicted, Yahweh is afflicted and feels the pain.

The Priests and the Levites *were passing on by* – Yahshua means to say that they were passing away *forever*. Priests, Levites and their temple were all destroyed within the generation, putting an end to these holy offices entirely. Why? Again we turn to the prophet:

(Isaiah 56:11,12.) “The shepherds have no understanding [of compassion?]; *they have all turned their own way*, each to his own gain. “Come,” they say, “let’s get us some wine and fill ourselves – tomorrow will be just like today, great beyond measure!”

What fools are passing by on the Jericho Road!

The Good Samaritan is Yahshua, of course. Did you know he owned property in Samaria? Jacob’s Well near Sychar was *his* to claim (Matthew 1:2,18.;) – he was Jacob’s heir. Yahshua was brought up in what used to be Samaria, now Galilee. Though the Priests and Levites pass the wounded Israelite by, Yahshua is sent to seek out the lost of Israel. Many still living in Samaria, including the woman at the well in John 4, were, by blood, of “the lost tribes.” We remember the great confessions that Yahshua made to the Samaritan woman (John 4:22.) “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, *for salvation is from the Judahites.*”

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And this is what the Samaritan's **two coins** represent – *the two tribes now called Jews* – Judah and Benjamin – from which salvation originated; for Judah and Benjamin preserved the Torah and the prophets (two more coins), both predicting the coming of Yahweh's Salvation (John 5:46) – *the Commandments of Elohim* and *Testimony of Yahshua* – the end-time currency of true saints – the coin that buys them out of tribulation. They're the Torah and Prophets, just as the lawyer mentioned at the beginning: *love Yahweh; love your neighbor*. Do we imagine tomorrow will be just like today, "great beyond measure"? Love your enemies and your ageless days will indeed be great.

The **inn** to which the wounded Israelite is taken represents *the true temple, that of the Ruach ha Qodesh*.

1 Corinthians 3:16,17. Do you not know that you are the temple and that the Spirit of Yahweh dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of Yahweh, him will Yahweh destroy; for the temple of Yahweh is qadosh; and you are that temple!

Recall again the words of Yahshua to the Samaritan woman at the well –

John 4:21,23,24. "Lady, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. The hour is coming, and now is, when the *true worshippers* will worship the Father in spirit and truth."

The **innkeeper** is the Paraclete – the Ruach. He **stands in** for the Good Samaritan while he goes about his business. Before he leaves, the Samaritan promises the wounded neighbor:

John 14: 16,17. "I will pray the Father, and he will give you a Helper – the Spirit of truth – you will know him for he'll live with you."

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That helper, the spirit of truth, the Paraclete, is the keeper of the temple. He should also be the keeper of our homes and lives, and the influence for good in all our decisions.

The Good Samaritan promises the *innkeeper* that he'll come back and pay all that's owing. This "Promissory Note" details Yahshua's pledge to return *with the rod of iron and the staff of the shepherd*. With rod and staff, he'll pay ALL THAT'S OWING. He'll repay the innkeeper for his faithfulness. He'll repay the robbers for the harm they've done his neighbor. He'll repay the Priest and Levite, and all other false shepherds, and perhaps cast them into the Lake of Fire with their father the devil, who knows?.

Jeremiah 12:14. Yahweh says this about *all my evil neighbors* who touch the inheritance of my people Israel: "Behold, I will **pluck them up** right off their property!"

The false teachers of these end-times *will have their rapture*, all right; Yahweh will pluck them up and judge them harshly. Indeed,

"If any **nation** will not listen, then I will utterly pluck it up and destroy it, says Yahweh" (Jeremiah 12:17).

But *afterward*, the Good Samaritan promises that:

"I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding. You shall no more call for the ark of the covenant. It shall never even come to mind" (Jeremiah 3:15,16).

When he "shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalms 23:9), I'll be confessing,

Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: his rod and staff *comfort* me. Surely goodness and

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mercy will follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the Yahweh's house forever (Psalms 23:5,6).

Is That Not Our Claim?

This is how I want my own walk on the Jericho Road to end – in the House of Yahweh forever. I want that for you, too – ye modern-day Israelites – ye lost tribes, found! I implore you to forsake the clean side of the road for the blood-stained – the easy decision for the lasting good – temporal life for ageless life.

“What shall I do to inherit ageless life?” the lawyer asked. Here's Yahshua's answer (*though it is also a parable*): Matthew 19:28-30. “In the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on thrones, judging the tribes of Israel ... and inherit eternal life. Many that are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

Friend, on the Jericho Road today, there's room for just two: Yahshua and You. Swallow your pride and allow yourself to be rescued; you may be a mangled mess of flesh on the verge of eternity, and this may be your last opportunity, for there's a judgment of works on the horizon. Do your very best to be judged while yet in this life by the measure of your compassion, love and action. Amein.

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Resurrection - Riddle and Reward: The Riddle of the Sadducees, The Parable of the Faithful and Wise Steward

Luke 20:27. **THE RIDDLE OF THE SADDUCEES:** There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, 28. and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother.

29. Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; 30. and the second 31. and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. 32. Afterward the woman also died. 33. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife."

34. And Yahshua said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; 35. but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36. for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of Elohim, being sons of the resurrection.

37. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls Yahweh the Elohim of Abraham and the Elohim of Isaac and the Elohim of Jacob. 38. Now he is not Elohim of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."

39. And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." 40. For they no longer dared to ask him any question.

Luke 12:42. And the Master said, "Who then is **THE FAITHFUL AND WISE STEWARD**, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43. Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. 44. Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions.

45. But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the menservants and the

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maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46. the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful.

47. And that servant who knew his master's will, but did not make ready or act according to his will, shall receive a severe beating. 48. But he who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, shall receive a light beating.

Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.

Fantastic Claims

With the release and subsequent success of the motion picture *The Passion of the Christ*, it has become a matter of dispute as to who actually was responsible for Yahshua's death – the Jews or the Romans. But Yahshua made it perfectly clear who was the responsible party prior to meeting his torturers. He claimed:

John 10:18. No one takes [my life], but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father.

This power to take up one's life after laying it down voluntarily is the very definition of *resurrection*: the person *who lays down her life* may regain it, and in much greater measure, through the power of HIS resurrection, and invalidate death entirely as *he* did. How so? This is how **so**; that

John 3:16. Elohim loved the world **so**, that *he gave* his only Son. Whoever believes him might not perish but have eternal life. 17. For Elohim sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved.

Saved from what? I wonder. Why of course – he last enemy – *death!*

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Just as the resurrection of Yahshua is the point upon which history rests, the fervent belief that Yahshua laid down his life and took it up again is the point upon which *all our faith rests*, as well. As one man explains it,

1 Corinthians 15:14. If [Yahshua] has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and *your faith is in vain*. 15. We are even guilty of misrepresenting Elohim, because we testified that He raised [Yahshua] ... 17. If [Yahshua] has not been raised, your faith is futile, and ... 18. ... those also who have [died] in [Yahshua] have *perished*.

What makes us *faithful* isn't that we believe Yahshua lived and died as any man lives and dies, but that *he died and rose from death by his own power*; further, that he will, on a soon-coming day of awe, bring *all who ever lived back from death to life*. **ALL WHO EVER LIVED.**

It's a fantastic claim. And *you* make it – every time you receive Communion – every time you pray to Yahweh *in the name of Yahshua*. *You make that claim: that he died and rose from death by his own power*, every time you sincerely enter a house of worship or do a good deed in his honor. You stake your claim upon *an eruption* in the physical nature of the universe that happened only once, two thousand years ago, and never happened before nor since – a man died and came back by his own power to live forever – and that *he* has the authority *to raise you up as well*.

He Lives!

Yahshua lives! we claim. If he doesn't, we have no basis for faith, and we have no hope. If he doesn't live, then you who've suffered

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tremendously for him, whether by persecution, depression or disease, have little cause for optimism – you'll die in your sins. If Yahshua doesn't live, I'm a liar along with thousands of others who preach him resurrected – we've dedicated our lives to a baseless philosophy of "morality" that's put us at odds with the world and caused immense hardship for our families. If he doesn't live, we've deluded millions who'll perish in the false hope of eternity, gaining nothing but shame, burning Sheol or nothingness in the end.

But, my friend, let me profess that *I have no doubt* whatsoever that he lives. He lives! He lives! The signs of his life are everywhere; his work and mission is the only truly benevolent and worthwhile effort in the world! Why? Because our work in Him and His work through us glorify a Creator who loved us enough to sacrifice his greatest creation not for some special elect, but *for all of us* (Revelation 3:14). We think *we've* sacrificed – but Yahweh has sacrificed so much more.

No, we should never fear to trust that Yahshua's taking back his life from the jaws of death for, as the hymn writer expressed it, *even through the rustling grass I hear him pass: He speaks to me everywhere*. An even greater witness to his life comes from another hymn: *You ask me how I know he lives? He lives within my heart*. Who can bear witness to those words? Who can testify to this truth? Who has a living heartful of Yahshua? Who can say without a doubt, "He Lives!?" Amen! Hallelujah!

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Bad, You See

Listen. Wherever truth and goodness break as a beam through the darkness, they simply can't be ignored – they'll pierce. But there're those who prefer their own shade of "light," a gray or yellow kind of dim glow in the back row of the blackness. So,

John 3:19. ***This is the crisis***, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20. For everyone who does evil hates the light, and stays out of it, lest his deeds should be exposed.

These dark Sadducees were about to be exposed to the crisis of a laser beam.

So who were they? The *Sadducees* of the New Testament (there were others) began as a political movement named after Zadok, the faithful priest who advised King David. In English, they *should* be called Zadokites rather than Sadducees – both mean "the righteous ones." The original Sadducees of the tribe of Levi were indeed righteous; they meant to return to the Torah as it had been in the time of Solomon, before the great biblical prophets. Consequently, Sadducees neither approved of nor used the Scriptures written after King David's time. They believed that the supernatural died away with Moses. Their philosophy was like that of Solomon,

However many years you live, enjoy them, for *the days of darkness* will be many and futility awaits you at the end (Ecclesiastes 11:8).

The Sadducees had of late been corrupted by the *influence* of the horrible Herods and the *affluence* of the pagan Greeks. In Yahshua's day, Herod appoints Sadducees rule the Temple of Yahweh. The

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priesthood is passed down the bloodline (at this time). Caiaphas is High Priest, the son-in-law of the last. Just as Caiaphas is instrumental in the death of Yahshua, his son, Hannan (Ananus), would later murder Yahshua's brother, Ya'aqov (aka James the Just). So these so-called "Righteous" were sworn enemies of righteousness, killing the prophets and stoning those who were sent to them from heaven (Luke 13:34). Each Sadd-u-cee was somewhat bad, you see.

What They Believed

Although they ruled religion and Judaism, they rejected prophets (as I mentioned before), supernaturalism, life after death, angels, devils and spiritual agents of Yahweh, like the Son of Man before them now. They especially abhorred the concept of resurrection. They believed instead that they should grab for all the power, wealth, and gusto they might get – grasping even for the authority of Yahweh – believing that *many possessions* were proof of Yahweh's blessing. Sound familiar? Many believe the same today, especially those Christians aspiring to be rich.

The Sadducees' books speak of death in terms most Christians understand – that the dead go down into a pit called Sheol (Genesis 37:35), where fire's heaped up to them torment forever (Deuteronomy 32:22). But the enterprising Sadducees ignored this part of their Law and instead taught what educators teach today – that there *is no afterlife at all* – that bodies simply decay back into Mother Earth and that's the end – reason enough to grab and grasp

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and enjoy it *now*. For death simply takes you out of existence – ¿then who cares what happens ever after?

I've heard a popular TV preacher say something very Sadducee-like to a huge crowd; he said, "The only reason God put you on this earth is so that you could enjoy your life." Hmmm. I always thought we were created to worship and serve Yahweh: *there is enjoyment in that*, if you find your joy in holiness. Most people don't. No wonder this preacher's so popular and I'm not. However, his summation is a perfect representation of what the Sadducees believed and taught – ***prosperity*** – name it, claim it – then find a way to grasp it.

Seven Marriages

Sadducees were pretty disinterested in other religious groups since they were top dogs. However, they'd definitely be interested in any religious figure who became popular, especially if that popularity pertained to the politics of *supernatural signs*. They *wouldn't tolerate their authority being challenged* or their affluence threatened – not even by Elohim. This is why they come out – to discredit Yahshua before the people with a powerful riddle that none who believed in resurrection could solve. They'd used this riddle against the Pharisees (for Pharisees believed in resurrection): but the Pharisees, mindless fundamentalists, were easily duped. Now they would befuddle Yahshua with the Riddle of Seven Husbands for One Wife.

The riddle originates in the book of

Tobit 3:8. Sarah [daughter of Raguel] had been given in marriage seven times, and Asmodeus, the worst of demons, had killed her bridegrooms one after another before ever they knew her as man with wife.

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Sarah had gotten seven propositions because her beaus were brothers who dared not disobey the Torah:

Deuteronomy 25:5. If brothers live together and one of them dies childless ... her husband's brother must come to her and ... make her his wife.

If brothers didn't do their lawful marital duty, they were forced to endure public humiliation, and their family was ostracized. For Hebrews in those days, the "ban" was a fate worse than death.

But Yahshua had a ready answer to the riddle because he inhabited the spiritual dimension before he became flesh and dwelt among us – and he would live on in the spiritual dimension long after Yahweh Tsaviot destroyed the three-dimensional Sadducees. Yahshua's answer was this:

- He said: *Some* will be found worthy to attain the *first resurrection* in the spiritual dimension. I call these "Firsters." (See - there are four classes of resurrection and, like on Delta, "first class" is the best.) The implication is that *the worthy* will have already died to the three-dimensional world in order to come alive to the four-dimensional world of the spirit. They die *in the now* to live *in the then*.
- He said: They'll be like angels; they'll be *fourth dimensional creations* with spiritual bodies far more limber and able than these rickety shells riddled with disease that we wear now. So sturdy will they be that they *won't be able to die*. The bodies of the "Firsters" will be composed of pure

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energy with which they will be able *to shape matter as they choose* or as Yahweh has need.

- And there will definitely be need in the Millennium Rule of our King over the earth when he returns. Those who are worthy of the first resurrection will be able to take the shape of angels or humans; they'll be able to interact with humans, teach them, judge them. The very fact that they have attained to the first resurrection proves them to *be wiser* than the residual of humankind.
- And to be even more specific in answering the riddle, Yahshua says the "Firsters" don't marry because marriage and procreation were designed for men and women of earth. Such are three-dimensional activities. Remember that angels fell because they *descended* of their own accord to marry women and procreate (Genesis 6:6ff). This is why we say they left their first estate. What happened to them? Yahweh despised their unnatural acts, locked them up in Sheol and sent a flood upon the earth.

It's the first resurrection that we seek. Indeed, Yahshua says that *these* never die at all, but simply cast off their flesh and take up residence with him – *and* they will be with him when he comes again. In the meantime, theologians tell us of an "Intermediate State" between the body's demise and the return of Yahshua. Deep thinkers describe this state in these words:

Departed believers are no longer active in contemporary earthly time and space, yet they are fully alert to their new environment, for they are not only 'resting' from their labors in joyful satisfaction, but are literally in the 'presence of [Messiah],'

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'live for [Yahweh's] glory,' and 'live spiritually, as [Yahshua] does' (Isaiah 63:16, Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8, Luke 20:38, 1 Peter 4:6) (Ferguson, Wright & Packer, *New Dictionary of Theology*, 339).

This "Intermediate State" in which the Firsters rests is extremely important, because in it the new creation will learn how to *perfectly abide* while the spiritual body is maturing.

Rest! There's work to be done soon enough, when Yahshua returns to rule and reign with the rod of iron and the staff of the shepherd. The Firsters must know how to move as Yahshua moves in order to be his agents in subduing the world in love.

As For the Rest

Yahshua goes even farther in answering these Sadducees: not only will the "Firsters" be resurrected, but unto Yahweh, *all the rest of the dead live also*, and all men and women of every age will eventually return, whether they believe it or not. But they won't be resurrected as spiritual beings like the Firsters – they'll find themselves back in the flesh on earth. Yahshua explains what becomes of these billions who come back to life during his Millennium reign in another parable, the one called "The Faithful and Wise Steward" in Luke 12. Here he describes the fate of two other groups of the resurrected symbolically. These believed in Yahshua and made a commitment to his service, but they didn't fulfill their commitment as they promised.

One steward knew the will of his Master but didn't do it. Yahshua says,

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Luke 12:47 And that servant, who having known his Master's will, and not having prepared, nor having gone according to his will, *shall be beaten with many stripes.*

If you saw *The Passion of the Christ*, you understand what kind of beating Yahshua is talking about: he endured the beating for you *only on the condition* that you *learn* then *perfectly fulfill* his will for your life. Hey, the commitment you made to Messiah isn't like joining the lodge, being blindfolded and knocked over a few times. Your commitment to *Yahshua* is for keeps, and your master promises that if you remain out of his will you will be beaten to a pulp. ¿Are these the words of the kindly child, meek and mild, that the masses celebrate around Christmas? Hardly. Yahshua is an equitable judge; we'll all get what we deserve in the resurrection – be it reward or beating. Even those who made the commitment to the Savior *who don't understand his service* will still receive a beating – howbeit, a light beating. For, everyone to whom much is given, of him will much be required.

Effective Beating

My earthly father loved me; but he was a very strong man and he knew how to give a child an effective beating with his belt. As a nine-year-old, I knew I had one coming. But before being summoned, I grabbed a tin pie pan and put it in the back of my pants. Dad wailed that pan in my pants as hard as he could, but it didn't hurt me at all. *He knew* that pan was in there, and I would've gotten away with the deception had I not, when he was finished, taken the pan out, held it up, and laughed him in the face. As I said, I could have gotten

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away had I not taunted him, but in the end, I assure you, *I did not get by with it*. Hebrews 10:31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living El.

To Love Him is the Better Way

My friend, we don't know exactly what lies on the other side of the resurrection. We have stories, parables, conjecture and as many opinions as there are people. What we do know is that Yahshua lives and he's present in our lives and he's given us a mission. As uncertain as we may be of what form life will take over yonder, there is absolutely no uncertainty when it comes to what form life must take NOW. His word is crystal clear as to what is required for that better resurrection, that *first resurrection*. Anybody who can read, or hear, or understand anything can modify their life to serve him and gain that better resurrection, if they only will (Hebrews 11:35). Go for the best rewards!

Hah! Hopefully, you've caught me in a contradiction. For most Christians like that TV preacher, the unsolved and unsolvable riddle is, "How may I gain all by losing everything?" *It's Saduccean in a way* to sell all you have to obtain the pearl of great price, or to serve Yahshua so you can gain rewards in the end. But those who do so will certainly reap rewards.

However, the answer to gaining by losing that so few in our materialistic culture understand is that it's far superior to serve Yahshua because one *knows him* and *loves him* rather than for a reward. I believe *like many of you*, that even if there were no reward, no resurrection, no heaven or hell, no Cadillacs in the sky, no angels

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or supernatural healings or signs and wonders, I'd *still* put my life at his command – because I know him *and love him*. And I'll always love him because he *loved me first* and befriended me *first*, a hopeless sinner plucked from the fire. What a great privilege it's been to learn that, "Greater love has none than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Then "Yahshua" told me, "**You** are my friend." And if there's no more, that saying will be reward enough. Amein.

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The Manure Man

Jackson Snyder

Jeremiah 8:13. "When I would gather them," says Yahweh, "there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them." 14. "Why do we sit still? Gather together, let us go into the fortified cities and perish there; for Yahweh our Elohim has doomed us to perish, and has given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against Yahweh. 15. We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but behold, terror."

Luke 13:6-9. (read in the message)

The Honey Wagon

Baseball season just started. Many of us remember back to our youth and how we thought we might grow up to be big leaguers. My brothers and I used to practice baseball all the time. A farmer we knew, Farmer Rose, let us to practice in his cow pasture. But the pasture had its drawbacks: it had cows and cow's manure – piles and piles of it everywhere. We used to use the dried "chips" for bases; but look out for the fresh ones! They were dangerous, causing nasty slips and messy landings!

Farmer Rose also raised feeder pigs, cattle and corn. We could smell those pigs a little, but we couldn't tell where he kept 'em. Until one day Farmer Rose drove his truck up, hopped out, and told us, "You betta get outta hya, boys. Da honey wagon's comin' through."

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And out of a distant barn, we saw a tractor pulling a crazy contraption that we learned to be the honey wagon. As we stood outside the fence, we noticed that the closer the honey wagon, the more intense the foul smell. "That can't be a honey wagon – It don't smell like honey," I told Farmer Rose, who was standing with us ball players. He replied, "Ya dummy! We call dis here wagon a 'honey wagon' cawse we fill 'er up with pig manu!" (He said sh@*!) I remarked, "That pig manure stinks mighty bad." But the farmer countered, "Not to me it don't – to me it smell lok money."

I asked, "Are ya gonna dump the honey wagon in the crick?" "Grow up, kid." *He put his gloved hand on my head.* "Dat honey's goin' on da vegetable gahden – gonna make 'em summer tomatas big and juicy." When he took his hand from my head, I felt my hair, then smelled my hand, just to make sure he didn't leave any honey behind.

That's how I learned from Farmer Rose that manure has great value as a fertilizer. All the nutrients, sulfates, and nitrates in the manure combine with the soil to promote much greater plant growth than the soil alone might have. Thousands of years before those "Big A" fertilizer trucks and their Ammonium Nitrate arrived on the scene, some poor old prehistoric donkey pulled a primitive honey wagon from the sty to the family garden, with a "manure man" walking close behind.

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It's hard to reminisce about playing baseball in my youth without remembering the "wisdom" of Farmer Rose, the foul smell of his pig manure-covered boots, and the great pains we boys took in avoiding the sloppy, smelly cow paddies in our mad dashes for home plate.

Interpreting the Text

Yahshua was, in many ways, like Farmer Rose. He was a real man – a down-to-earth man – a hard working man – a man of the soil – a man who knew how to work with his hands, how to raise animals, how to farm, how to turn the fruits of his labor into profit. And like Yahshua, he knew that the simple folk around couldn't understand deep theological speculation; they didn't know exegesis from isogesis, doctrine from dogma, an epistle from an apostle, or a pericope from an apocraphy. So he spoke to them in stories they could understand – earthy stories – hard-hitting stories – stories that we call parables. Stories that could be interpreted on two levels: a simple level for the theologically uneducated or disinterested, and a deeper level for those initiated into mysteries.

Today's text features one of Yahshua parables – a parable that has a meaning that can readily be understood by anyone who knows the purpose of a honey wagon, yet has a deep significance easily passed over.

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Luke 13:6-9 (NRSV) Then [Yahshua] told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7. So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be *spoiling the ground*? 8. He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.”

Yahshua is in a synagogue preaching on the Sabbath. He is preaching his way to Jerusalem, where he will finish his tour. Synagogues were buildings where Jews would gather on the Sabbath to worship and hear teaching. “Synagogue” and “church” are synonymous – they perform the same function.

The Story of the Vintner and the Gardener

Yahshua tells the story of a vintner and his vineyard; there is a fig tree in the midst of the grape vines. Obviously, the fig is out of place – *grapevines* are to grow in a vineyard, not figs. The vintner did not plant this tree in his vineyard, but someone else did, we don’t know who planted. He complains about this tree to his hired man, the gardener. The fig tree hasn’t had fruit for years. In fact, not only is it barren, but it’s spoiling the ground for the grapevines. The vintner gives the gardener a strong order, “Cut ‘er down!”

But the gardener, who is closer to the soil, who loves this out-of-place fig for its shade and fruit in past years pleads for it. He

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tells the vintner, “Leave it just this year – I’ll dig and bring the honey wagon ‘round and throw some manure on it; see if that doesn’t do the trick. If not, we’ll cut ‘er down.” (Proverbs 27:18: Anyone who tends a fig tree will eat its fruit, and anyone who takes care of a master will be honored.)

Interpreting the Story

Cursory readings of the parable give us some advice about how to coax figs out of a barren tree – fertilize it and see what happens. But the deeper meaning must be ferreted out through careful reading and spiritual insight. The vintner represents the Yahweh the Creator. The vineyard represents the people he cares for. The fig tree is more difficult; but when we see it in light of Jeremiah chapter 8, we know that fig stands for the legalistic, idolatrous, and dead religion of the scribes and Pharisees, in whose synagogues he may have been preaching, and whose denominational center was the ill-fated temple in Jerusalem. The fruit of the fig tree represents fruit of this dead belief system – *for there is absolutely no fruit at all*, and there hadn’t been for years. The “manure man” is Yahshua, and the manure is his nourishing Word.

The parable is saying, in essence, that Elohim would command the destruction of the religion of the legalistic Pharisees and scribes, and their temple – for it was yielding no fruit whatsoever. Not only was it unproductive but such

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religion was “spoiling the ground” for those who sincerely desired to grow in grace. Through their traditions and rulebooks, these religious highbrows “loaded folks down with heavy burdens, and would never lift a finger to help.” Although they have all the trappings of being righteous – they wear the right clothes, say the right things, run with the “in crowd” and are hailed by the people as being religious – their spirituality was a false and unrighteous sham, and they themselves were no better than devils masquerading as angels of light.

Yet Yahshua intercedes for even blind Pharisees. He offers his blessed and liberating word to ALL that will hear. Words such as “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.” Words such as “Your sins are forgiven – take up your bed and walk.” Words such as “You will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes upon you.” Words such as these and the spiritual power behind them are the fertilizer that makes for abundant fruit. Words such as these and the spiritual power behind them are the “wonderful words of life” so often raised in our time!

Yet the very ones who the Father and Son most wanted to reach with light and life – these religious masqueraders – wouldn’t hear him. Instead, they plotted and planned his death in hope of forever keeping the yearning masses from receiving the life-changing Good News.

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Yahshua Was an Outsider

You see, the religious leaders didn't like Yahshua, not because he broke *Yahweh's Torah*, but because he broke *their denominational rules*. Yes! That's right. Yahshua was a rebellious outsider from the faith. They called him a demon-possessed wino; he was known to hang around with the wrong crowd – sinners, tax collectors, Samaritans, shady women, *much younger men*; he was ritually unclean, he touched the untouchable, like lepers and corpses; he carried disease, prayed for prisoners without a permit, worked miracles on the Sabbath, he drank blood and ate flesh, he didn't wash his hands before he ate it and drank, he left his candy bar on the toilet tank, he spurned all their social values; he was a religious heretic, an ultra-liberal, a cult leader – he interpreted the Torah in non-traditional ways, he contradicted their hero Moses over and over again, he wore the robes of a teacher, but he never graduated from the right seminary; he was violent, and violently against their system of sacrificing animals, he overthrew their finance tables, he criticized them at every turn, he was consumed with zeal; and he even dared to commit blasphemy by *forgiving sins*, even those of a convicted adulteress who deserved to be stoned!

It's no wonder he was rejected by every established religious denomination of his day. He was rejected by the Pharisees – they thought he was too liberal; the Sadducees – they thought

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he was too conservative; the Essenes – they thought he was too radical; the Zealots – they thought he was a wimp; the Herodians – they thought he was too lean and mean; the Gnostics – they thought he was only a phantasm. He was rejected by the fundamentalists, the liberals, the pagans, the heathens, the evangelicals, the neo-evangelicals, the orthodox, the neo-orthodox, the post-orthodox, the conservatives, the ultra-conservatives, the radical fringe, the dispensationalists, the denominationalists, the Calvinists, the secular humanists, the social elites, the old-liners, the main-liners, the free-willers, the free-lighters, the new-lighters. All these dry, dead, religious groups rejected him. Why? Because unlike Farmer Rose, these religious phonies were so criminally entrenched in their “religion” that they wouldn’t know the value of good manure if it slopped ‘em in the face.

Yahshua does not definitively end the parable, but history does, Yahweh does. We learn from secular history that the Yahweh Sabaoth yanked that worthless, barren, fig tree up by the roots and scattered the rotten dried up figs in 70 AD, when he made a destructive public appearance after his resurrection, making way for a better crop.

Now Let’s Bring this Parable from Yahshua’s Time into Today

Nothing much has changed in 2000 years. The temple and the synagogue have become church buildings. Even Yahshua’

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New Covenant has become a codified, rarified and mortified instead of remaining a living word of faith. His fertilizer has been mined into a moneymaking enterprise. Christianity is big business. The Scribes have become seminary professors; the Sadducees, professional “ordained” clergy; the Pharisees, TV evangelists and authors of popular books on fig tree horticulture, many of who are full manure and not the type that fertilizes, but only stinks.

Trees Trashed

When Yahshua reached Jerusalem, right after he prophesied that the temple would be destroyed, he tells another parable of the fig tree, one that points to a sign for *our* times.

Luke 21: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of Elohim is near. 34. Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.” (NIV)

Yes, there are now many old, barren fig trees in the vineyard, more even than in Yahshua’ day. But now, in what has become the end of the world, as we have known it, *some barren figs are beginning to sprout leaves and fruit.* Some the trees have even

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been found in the desert, all gnarled with age, but now with a leaf here, a fig there, and olive somewhere else. Trees that have never before produced fruit are beginning to bloom forth. And this is one of the final signs of the coming of the Yahweh of the vineyard. Soon, he will be driving along in his little ol' backhoe and yanking all the fruitless figs from the ground they are spoiling, figs weighed down with decadence and anxiety, disfigured by modernism and heresy, ruined by vast sums of money and great popularity. Yahweh Sabaoth (Commander of Armies) will close in on them like a trap so fast that and they will not know who uprooted them. He will accomplish this feat today, tomorrow, or the next day, whenever *he* feels like it.

Revolution

You may wonder, am I advocating that we revolt against our culture and traditions for the sake of a radical new idea? Some of us are still attending churches while at the same time visiting the Yahad on Sabbath. Should we leave the denomination so we can find some better soil? No, I'm not saying that at all. Even a busted clock tells the right time twice a day. The revolution we the people of Elohim need is not temporal, but spiritual, an event that used to be called "a Holy Ghost Revival." Yet although churches and their institutions are the modern-day counterpart of the dead fig tree, they *will*

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remain in the vineyard by the design of the Yahweh of the Harvest; they will continue to be fertilized by the Word; until they either yield fruit or they are burned up to make room. Effectively planting the Word, if that's what you're doing, is never wrong, no matter what field you choose.

One of the great dangers signs for the believer is to become comfortable in your personal traditions when the signs of the coming of the Son of Man are so obvious in these days. You can stick by your guns and proclaim, "We've never done it that way before." But honey, when HE does a new thing, either you get on board or you miss the boat. It's as simple as that. No, don't get too comfortable in your religion! Be alert! Watch and wait! Stand your Post! Abide in the vine. And get to work for the coming Kingdom.

A Living Parable and Call To Discipleship

Here's another quick parable. In Hampton Court near London, there is a grapevine under glass; it's over a thousand years old and has only one root; it's two feet in diameter. *Some of the branches are 200 feet long.* Because of the skill of the gardener, the vine produces several tons of grapes each year. Even though some of the smaller branches are 200 feet from the main stem, they bear much fruit because they are joined to the vine and allow the life of the vine to flow through

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them. A thousand year old vine bearing fruit 200 feet from the root.

Friends, get connected to this kind of vine and be nurtured by the great agriculturalist. Be fruitful before history repeats itself in these last days, and your little fig tree of an assembly ends up without one stone left upon the other. *Yahshua is moving mightily*. Make a new commitment. Do the right thing. Seek Messiah in spirit and in truth, not in dead traditions or in some way you learned forty years ago. Find out what the Spirit is doing HERE AND NOW! Let the great gardener fertilize your spiritual ecosystem. Let Yahshua' Word be the "Miracle Grow" upon which your biological and spiritual life is nourished. Become branches of the true vine, and, like the grapevine in Hampton Court, live for a thousand years.

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Israel Lost; Israel Found The Parable of the Good Shepherd, The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price, The Allegory of the Prodigal Son.

The Good Shepherd

Luke 15:4. "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after the one which is lost, until he finds it? 5. And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6. And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost.' 7. Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."

The Lost Coin

8. "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 10. I tell you, there is joy before the angels of Yahweh over one sinner who repents."

The Prodigal Son

11. "There was a man who had two sons; 12. and the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that falls to me.' And he divided his living between them. 13. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living. 14. And when he had spent everything, a great famine arose in that country, and he began to be in want. 15. So he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16. And he would gladly have fed on the pods that the swine ate; and no one gave him anything. 17. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, but I perish here with hunger! 18. I will

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arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me as one of your hired servants."

20. And he arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22. But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; 23. and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; 24. for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to make merry.

25. "Now his elder son was in the field; and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26. And he called one of the servants and asked what this meant. 27. And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has received him safe and sound.' 28. But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29. but he answered his father, 'Lo, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. 30. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!' 31. And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32. It was fitting to make merry and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'"

The Pearl of Great Price

Matthew 13:45,46. "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

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The Prodigal

We call the first story in our text “The Good Shepherd” and the second story “The Prodigal Son.” “Prodigal” is an old fashioned word that has two meanings: a) “wastefully extravagant” and b) “given lavishly.” The younger son fulfills the first meaning of “prodigal”: he demands his inheritance, then wastes it extravagantly, throwing it away on godless entertainments of every kind, ending up in the filthy hog barn, eating dinner with his ungracious hosts. He’s in such a fix that he has crawl back to father in repentance. “I’ve made the wrong choices; now I’m turning back.” That’s what repentance is all about – “turning back to the good, to the godly, to the perfect.”

Some call this story “The Prodigal Father” because the father fulfills the second meaning of the word “prodigal”; that is, “given lavishly.” The boy doesn’t expect his father’s extravagant welcome, no – he expects to work as a farm hand. But to his surprise, father comes out to meet him, puts the robe upon his back, the shoes upon his feet, the royal ring upon his finger; kills the sacrificial calf and throws a welcome-home barbeque. This prodigal son is elevated back to his place by his prodigal father because sonny boy genuinely repents of leaving, and father is a pushover.

The older brother, who never left, is mad about his father’s grace. We might even call the elder boy a prodigal – he wastes his time complaining when he should be rejoicing. He’s green with envy that the calf should be sacrificed for the youth and not for him! Why, he hasn’t even had a goat in his honor!

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Repentance and Restoration

Yahshua reveals the moral of this story: “There’s joy among the heavenly host for the sake of one sinner who repents!” It doesn’t take much analysis to understand the story, for we also rejoice when one lost lamb comes home, or the lost sheep returns to the assembly, or the black sheep to the family. We rejoice greatly when the one who’s gone astray, seeking her own way, returns to the fold in repentance, Amein? Don’t we prepare a welcome-home dinner?

O, that repentance and return would happen more frequently! No wonder angels rejoice. However, it’s rare – too much pride – too much desire for independence – too much rebellion. And some lost lambs get bemired in the slough on the way back home. And it seems almost impossible to be freed from the slough without the divine intervention of All Prayer; yet we’re not told that father even prayed for his return!

Who has a lost loved one? Who knows of someone in the miry clay? Don’t we hope and pray for those prodigal loved ones to return to the fold? Indeed, we do. We lift them up to the throne room continually. Perhaps our Heavenly Father will arrange circumstances so that they’ll see the evil and turn back to him, then turn back to us!

The Deeper Meaning

Beneath the surface of these stories lies deeper meaning, for they’re parables – meant to convey a literal truth, but for those with discernment, a deeper truth. Some wise men say that every parable has seven levels of truth, like a layer cake.

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First, let's examine the simplest parable and separate the layers.

Look to

Matthew 13:45,46. "The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

The literal truth is available to all who hear it; the merchant was a pearl-monger – he acquired fine pearls. So when he finally found that salt water pearl, so perfectly round, so pure white or pure black in color, the one he'd sought for a lifetime, he traded everything else he had, including his entire pearl collection, to acquire just the one.

What do you not have that you value highly? Think! What'll you give for that pearl of great price? That lottery sweepstakes? That yacht? That Lexus Sedan? That Alpaca? That impossible dream? That mansion on a hilltop? Your family? Is there anything for which you'd give everything? Maybe there's even a person you'd buy back if possible!

The deeper meaning of the pearl parable, which again Yahshua gives away from the very start, is that the pearl of great price is the sky kingdom: those who see the kingdom as being of greatest value, more precious than anything else – they'll give all that they have, even their very lives, to become a part, to acquire kingdom status.

Because there're so many cheap imitations, a genuine, perfectly round salt water pearl is still of great value today. One might reach deep into the pocketbook to buy it. But what's the value of a little stone in comparison to an everlasting purpose in the unseen kingdom? What's that worth to you? People must first decide how

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materialistic they are, then consider how kingdom-oriented they want to become.

That's the beautiful thing about the deeper meaning of parables. You put yourself into the parable, pray for discernment, then Yahweh will give you a distinctive truth – a unique meaning all your own.

An Allegory

Yet “The Prodigal Son,” unlike the stories of the “Pearl of Great Price” and “The Good Shepherd,” is more than a simple parable. The Prodigal Son is an allegory – a longer, extended story with characters and events that represent other things not evident to the casual hearer. One of the most famous allegories of all time is *The Pilgrim's Progress*, written by the preacher John Bunyan while in prison. In the story, Pilgrim leaves the city of destruction and makes his way to the Celestial City enduring every calamity imaginable. If you've read or listened to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, then you'll understand allegory – every character and place that's mentioned stands for a deeper spiritual truth. Pilgrim's progress is every Believer's story.

The same goes for The Prodigal Son. So let me share the deeper meaning with you, because it has to do with us, with prophecy of the future, even with our time.

The Father and His Two Sons

In the last days of King Solomon, the northern tribes of Israel rebelled. Solomon taxed the people hard for temple-building funds and for his own prodigal lifestyle – his luxuries, his palaces, his

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women. When Solomon died, the people hoped for tax cuts when his son Rehoboam took the throne. But Rehoboam taxed them even more heavily. So the northern ten tribes of Israel chose another king, Jeroboam, and in 930 BC, Israel split in two. The older kingdom was Judea, made up of the tribe of Judah (along with Benjamin) – Judahites became known as Jews. The new, northern kingdom kept the name Israel, and there dwelt the other ten tribes. (Ten as in the ten silver coins of Luke 15:8 – ten again stands in for Israel.) So we have two categories of tribes – two brothers – the older: two tribes called Judah or Jews and the younger: the ten lost tribes called Israel.

To keep the Israelites out of Judea for the Feasts in Jerusalem, King Jeroboam of Israel started a new religion. He had two calves smelted of gold and built a temple for each, one temple on the southern-most side of the country and the other on the northern-most – all for the sake of convenience. Jeroboam forced the Israelites to keep his new religion of calf-worship: but they didn't mind, because it was more comfortable, less strict, more fun - and far sexier. The people could worship their own way instead of Yah's way. In the meantime, the Jews in Judea continued worshiping Yahweh in accordance with the Bible and the Temple.

Israel is the Prodigal

Many prophets came and went, all decrying the great sin of Israel, the idolatrous religion of Jeroboam. Yahweh sounded the trumpets of warning to all the kings that succeeded Jeroboam, but to little avail. Israel went after the golden calves, then the gods of many nations, including the Assyrian god named God, whom the Christians

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today still worship. Israel squandered their blessings in the hog lot of loose living the spiritual fornication of church, state and culture.

The prodigal son is Israel. The older son is Judea. Of course, the Father in the story is Yahweh, who loved Israel enough to allow him to take his inheritance and go into slavery so that he might have the opportunity to repent of his great sin (institutionalized by Jeroboam).

Yahweh eventually sent the mighty Assyria against Israel. Assyria took the Israelites out of their land and disbursed them throughout Asia. Through the millennia, Israel sojourned in all the world's nations and became so thoroughly disbursed that the ten tribes of prodigal Israel came to be known as "the lost tribes."

Pigsty

The meaning of the pigsty is "the pigsty of the nations" to where "the lost tribes" of Israel were vanquished. I don't know if you've ever been in a hog lot - I have; but it's the most horrendously filthy and malodorous place on earth. Life in the sty, eating the pig food, is a symbolic way of saying that Israel desired to leave the sheepfold of Yahweh and become like other nations - and Israel became like them - was absorbed by them - took on their customs - took on their godless religions and feasts- lost their identity in Yahweh - and abandoned their connection to their ancestors. Even now, the lost tribes of Israel are still lost here and there, everywhere, living as amnesiacs - wasted away by the cultures of the world - so much so that they don't even know who they are anymore. They can't count their ancestry back any farther than their grandparents; nor can they

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recount the deeds of their ancestors, and they no longer even tell their children the little bit they still remember of their old-world origins.

Israel's been in the pigsty for centuries, and we're in it right now. This clean, decent land we live in is nothing more than a spiritual hog lot. Meanwhile Judea, the older brother, has remained faithful to the Father and land, despite vain customs, persecutions, pogroms and exterminations. That Jews still exist today is proof positive that Yahweh exists and the Bible is built upon the truth. But Israel has yet to return home – for he is still bedding down with the pigs of the nations, eating the cobs of their customs with few knowing any better.

You Shall Live

Why then does the parable say that the Prodigal Son Israel reconsidered and came home? Here's why. Because Yahweh promised to find Israel among the nations and bring him home. Though Israel may've abandoned the name of Yahweh, Yahweh our Shepherd never abandoned Israel; Yahweh loves this lost lamb too much for that.

The prophecy of Ezekiel 37 is in regards to the Father's desire to seek Israel and see him home. Yahweh says,

Ezekiel 37:11 "Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' These bones are the whole house of Israel. 12. Thus says Yahweh: I will open your graves, and raise you, O my people; and I will bring you home 14. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, in your own land; then you shall know that I, Yahweh, have spoken, and I have done it." ... 23. "They shall no longer defile

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themselves any more with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their elohim. 24. They shall all have one shepherd and follow my ordinances and observe my statutes.”

Bring Them In!

Do you know how Yahweh can identify lost Israel and what pigsties contain Israel today? Yahweh knows the whereabouts of his beloved son because he’s observed his migrations down through the centuries. He’s not lost track of even one little lamb! And now he promises to endow lost Israel with his Spirit and give lost Israel new life and cleanse him of the abominations of idolatries. And can you see how Yahweh will forgive Israel – like a father who loves unconditionally – and take him back into his place? And did you notice that when this comes to pass, lost Israel is found, and will again heed Yahweh’s ordinances and statutes? Finally, did you hear how Yahweh promises that he’ll place his good shepherd over found Israel, to protect his scattered sons and daughters and bring them in?

So, who are they? And who’ll lead the prodigal flock home? If we can answer the second question – “Who is the good shepherd?” – then we can also find the prodigal sons and daughters of Israel.

Who Is the Good Shepherd?

You’ve probably already identified the shepherd. It’s Yahweh personified in Yahshua Messiah, the Mighty One of Israel – a no-brainer! And can you believe what he said in Matthew 15:24, that: “I

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was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” He says, “only” to the lost sheep. That excludes anyone else in the world, including the Jews. Only to the prodigal son is the Son sent to save. Furthermore, Yahshua identifies himself in John 10:14-16:

“I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.”

Here he says he knows his own sheep and his sheep know him. Firstly, he’s talking to Jews – those of Judea – the southern kingdom – the older son – both then and now. Yahshua is the shepherd of the Jews – whether they know it or not – whether they hail him or not – whether they like it or not. Jews constantly complain to the Father about his younger son, their brother. They would do anything they possibly could to put a stumbling-block before Israel. But Yahshua will see that faithful Jews get their inheritance, for they’ve been with him all along. He tells all Judahites, “I have sheep not of this fold that I must bring in.”

The other sheep constitute Israel, scattered all over and lost, to whom the Good Shepherd is sent, and he will gather Israel in. It is to Israel yet today that he speaks through his inspired Word: “You will heed my voice and I will bring you home.”

Who Is Israel?

So finally we get down to the question that couldn’t be answered until now – who is this prodigal son – who is Israel today? We may identify him immediately by what Yahshua says about the lost sheep.

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(1) He says, “They’ll know me.” Just who knows Yahshua? Who knows he lives? Who’s convinced of his realness? Who follows his commandments? Who knows his name? Who’s abiding in his love and care? And who’s expecting to be brought home to his Father’s house, where there are many mansions? Who? Who? {Say it, “Me!”}

(2) He also says, “I know them.” I wonder who he knows? Who’s he known well enough to fill with his Spirit? Who’s he delivered and healed? Who’s he saved and set free – even to the uttermost? To whom has he bestowed hope and power? To whom has he delivered visions, revelations and authority over evil? For whom was his blood shed? And who believed his report and preserved it in a holy book?

(3) He also says, “They’re not of this fold.” This other fold isn’t composed of Jews or Muslims or Universalists or Quakers or Buddhists or Baptists – hardly. These titles mean nothing. What fold of sheep even now gather *in his name*? What fold remains in *obedience to his Torah*? What fold accepts him as shepherd and master and recognizes his voice? What fold is it?

You and Me

If we’re still uncertain who the Prodigal is, we may look to the opening verses of *The Revelation*, which tell us directly. Those who were lost but now are found are: (1) those who are obedient to the commandments of Yahweh, and who also (2) bear witness to Yahshua the Messiah.

Those who have received the Word of the Father and the testimony of the Son are the lost tribes of Israel, no matter what we consider to

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be our national heritage, cultural tradition or religious background. It only makes sense. We are Israel. We are the repentant, homebound Prodigal. It's the calling of his Only Begotten that we've heard, and our response to his call is proof positive that, though once lost, we're found. We're rescued! And we shall be saved!

We make a glorious discovery in the deeper meaning of these allegories: that we not only have been found and called back to the sheepfold of the Almighty; but that, as repentant sons and daughters of Israel, our Father and Shepherd has placed the ring of royalty upon our fingers, wrapped us in the robe of his covenant love and killed the fatted calf for our redemption. Yes – for us – for you and me. It's a privilege and a revelation beyond compare. The lost tribes of Israel have been found, and they are us! Hallelujah! What has henceforth been lost is discovered. Let us rejoice and be glad!

For the greatest promise of all is that the One who lives forever has prepared a gracious and spacious place that we tribes may call our own – we who were once lost – we who once ate the swill of pigs – now seated in the heavenly places in HIM, at the head of His table, ever blessing and ever blessed. Amen.

An Optional Ending to the Parable of the Prodigal Son

Not long after the younger son returned, the elder son became very bitter. Finally he went to his father and said, "Sir, I have been thinking about what you told me, and now I want my share of the property – I'm leaving this place and will buy a hog farm in Perea. Give me what is mine!" He distressed his father much that the man soon passed on into the bosom of Abraham. This made both sons

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angry with their dead father, for he was the only person who really knew how to run the farm.

After this, the sons split up what was left of the money and chattel, and both left the farm property, allowing their two sisters to stay on the farm in their absence. These brothers were gone for several years, the older son buying his own property and the younger keeping his brother's pigs. In the meantime, the sisters received a loan from their uncle – just enough to seed a small crop. The ladies worked and sweat over the land for several seasons, and they didn't fail, for they never gave up.

Within a decade, the farm was prospering, the sisters had both married and had children, and a portrait of their father was hung proudly over the mantle of the fireplace. At the time of Unleavened Bread, after the men of the family had killed the fatted calf and were making ready for the Feast, the eldest daughter proclaimed, "It is fitting that we celebrate, for this land was dead but now it is alive; it was lost but now it's found." Amen.

Note on the Lost Coin: This text is included only to show the number that is stacked between the parable and the allegory. Ten is the number of "lost tribes."

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Everlasting Skins: Taxes, Tithes, Offerings

The Allegory of the Unrighteous Steward,

And The Widow's Two Mites

Also, *The Teaching of the Twelve* (Διδαχῆ, *Didachē*)

Luke 16:1. HE ALSO said to the disciples, "There was a rich man who had a steward, and charges were brought to him that this man was wasting his goods. 2. And he called him and said to him, 'What is this that I hear about you? Turn in the account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'

3. And the steward said to himself, 'What shall I do, since my master is taking the stewardship away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. 4. I have decided what to do, so that people may receive me into their houses when I am put out of the stewardship.' 5. So, summoning his master's debtors one by one, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 6. He said, 'A hundred measures of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down quickly and write fifty.' 7. Then he said to another, 'And how much do you owe?' He said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' He said to him, 'Take your bill, and write eighty.'

8. The master commended the unrighteous (αδικίας) steward for his shrewdness; for the sons of this world are shrewder in dealing with their own generation than the sons of light.

9. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon (μαμωνά), so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations. 10. He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and he who is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. 11. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12. And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's who will give you that which is your own?

13. No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve Yahweh and mammon."

The Teaching (*Didachē*) 4:1,5-8. My child, night and day remember the one who preaches Yahweh's word to you and honor him as though he were the Master. For wherever the

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Master's nature is preached, there the Master is. ... Do not be someone who stretches out his hands to receive but withdraws them when it comes to giving. If you earned something by working with your hands, you shall give a ransom for your sins. You shall not hesitate to give nor shall you grumble when giving for you shall come to know who is the good paymaster of the reward. You shall not turn away from someone who is in need but shall share everything with your brother and not claim that anything is your own. For if you are sharers in what is imperishable, how much more so in perishable things?

Matthew 6:1. Take heed that you do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise you have no reward of your Father who is in heaven. 2. Therefore when you do your giving, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Amen I say to you, They have their reward. 3. But when you do giving, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing: 4. So that your giving may be in secret: and your Father who sees in secret himself will reward you openly.

Tyco International

In the past couple of years, we've witnessed several huge corporations whose chief executives have been indicted for fraud, embezzlement, larceny or insider trading. Who hasn't now heard of Enron, Worldcom and Martha Stewart Inc. How about the grand larceny case against former Tyco International's chief executive Dennis Kozlowski and his financial officer Mark Swartz? These top execs used \$170 million of company money to throw parties and buy expensive homes, jewelry and art, and made themselves \$430 million more in bonuses by selling overpriced stock. That's \$600 million dollars between the two. Of course, they pled not guilty. And they were somewhat justified in their plea, since both the Tyco board

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and their independent auditors approved, even blessed, their actions, howbeit after the deeds were done.

The case against these men came to trial in Manhattan in September of 2003 and concluded in April, 2004. Their defense was that since the board and the independent auditors approved of what they did with company funds, there had been *no crime committed*. They'd been given the authority as corporate *stewards*, and were using their authority as they saw fit. What an ingenious defense!

You'll be surprised to learn that theirs was declared *a mistrial* and they were let go. A jury must be in 100% agreement to enter a guilty verdict. While eleven members of the jury voted to convict, one member held out for acquittal – a seventy-nine year old lady known as “juror number four.” Indeed, if the board, auditors and stockholders gave these men the green light to ransack the company, then no law was broken. Juror number four affirms that opinion and *she wouldn't change her mind*. So the jury was deadlocked and the mistrial was declared.

By the way, I mentioned the juror's age only because age doesn't dictate a person's power or lack of it. Juror number four held out under intense pressure, even murderous threats. But did I also mention that juror number four is *a lawyer*? She formed her legal opinion based on years of study and case history. Is she right or is she wrong? Either way, we can say for a fact that juror number four is one of the most tenacious individuals of the twenty-first century thus far.

Yahshua spoke about the *sons of this world*, immoral and greedy men, how when they spread the cash around, they'll be hailed by

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their party friends when their own fortune fails. Certainly, Tyco is an extreme case. Kozlowski and Swartz may be tried again, who knows? In the meantime, though they've lost their jobs, they have \$600 million and lots of friends. They've spread company money around like pig manure on a cornfield. They may never have to dig nor beg. But this is the way of the world – the *legality* of a thing doesn't prove the *morality* of a thing, especially in the matter of money, which the Bible calls *mammon* – the personification of the root of all evil.

The Clever CEO

Our scripture story today is quite similar to the real case scenario of Tyco International. A rich business owner has an overseer in his employ – a chief executive officer – a CEO. The owner only *hears* that the CEO is wasting his money. However, rumor is enough to get him in trouble, and the owner tells him plainly, “I'm going to terminate your employment.” The owner doesn't fire the CEO outright, which would be the wise thing to do if he really is dishonest. Keeping the CEO on board long enough to settle accounts gives him an opportunity to embezzle more money or sabotage the company. But maybe the owner of the business is only putting his CEO to the test, we'll see.

Anyway, the CEO considers his options: the job market is very tight for men of his age, income and status. He certainly won't be offered a job at the Taco Bell after being the boss. He certainly can't dig ditches after years as a desk jockey. What'll he do? What'll he do?

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Here's what he'll do. He makes some quick calls on his delinquent customers. He's ready to deal – for debtors on inexpensive commodities like wheat, he says – “If you pay now, I'll take off 20%.” For high markup commodities like oil, he says – “If you pay now, I'll take off 50%.” He makes lots of calls and settles lots of delinquencies in a short time. So who's he cheating? He's still in charge of the accounts – he hasn't been terminated. So he still has the authority of the owner to do business, else the owner wouldn't have commanded him to settle accounts.

In fact, when he does settle up with the owner, he gets a certificate of achievement for his wall – ***Most Delinquent Accounts Settled*** – signed, Phineas T. Thistledropper, President. And it's a win-win-win situation for everybody. The owner gets his accounts settled (though at a discount), his debtors get an excellent cut, and the CEO, though he gambles with his Master's money (which he's been doing all along anyway), *retains his job*. He won't have to dig or beg or roll burritos – though the owner's keeping a sharp eye on him now.

Unrighteous Mammon

There's only one problem with the CEO's solution. Yahshua calls him *unrighteous*. Practices that are shrewd and commendable and right and completely acceptable and entirely legal in handling other peoples' money within *the economics of the world* are simply *not acceptable* in handling the blessings Yahweh has advanced those *who work for him*.

Yahshua teaches that, like humans in the unregenerate state, *money itself is unrighteous* by nature – it's unclean. It takes on a life of its

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own and becomes god. Righteous and honest people, the elect of Yahweh, aren't cut out for many prosperous business positions of the world because they'll be expected to utilize *unrighteous means* to multiply *unrighteous mammon*, often for *unrighteous people with unrighteous causes*. The dealings of Kozlowski and Swartz prove that they're not sons of light.

For the *sons of this world* are shrewd in dealing with their own evil generation – more so than the sons of light. What Yahshua means is that devilish people will fare *better* than godly people in unclean or unrighteous matters, because the devilish get their shrewdness naturally, from their father the devil – the father of lies. I'm not talking about an honest day's pay for an honest day's work, and neither is Yahshua. He's talking about *selfish speculation* – taking the opportunity to *gain for oneself from that which is the property of Elohim entrusted to them*.

In light of his *low view* of money, Yahshua says something baffling, Luke 16:9. "Make friends for yourselves with unrighteous mammon (*μαμωνα*), so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations." What in the world does that mean? There're two surprising secrets that answer the question of meaning that I'll share at the end of the message.

Yahweh Money Poor

By its very nature, mammon or money is corrupt because it's the currency of the world, which is at enmity with the Almighty. That's why *Yahweh doesn't have a lot of money*. No he doesn't. Do you remember when the chief priests sent their corporate spies to

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Yahshua and asked him, “Is it permissible for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not (Luke 20:22)?” Yahshua points out that the face on the coin is that of Caesar, the Emperor, the Beast, the symbol of the world. If Caesar’s picture’s on it, the coin must be his. On all *our coins and bills* there are pictures of world rulers and buildings fashioned after Roman architecture that acclaimed pagan gods. So the money itself is tainted with the images of godlessness, and belongs to the world. That’s why, though Yahweh may have all the silver and gold and cattle on a thousand hills, he hasn’t much money. Money belongs to the world and its exalted ruler.

Though money makes *the world* go around, it’s ironic that money’s also necessary to build the Kingdom of Yahweh. We have to pay the preacher, pay the phone bill, pay the waste disposal company and pay the government with money. The question we need to answer is, “How do we divorce *the image of the world* from our currency?” Or, “How do we take something godless and unclean and *make it holy*?” There’s always been a way to do that.

The Tax and the Tithe

In temple times, every member of the assembly paid a “church”* tax – this tax was solely for the upkeep of the property. It wasn’t much – about \$25 a year – but everyone gladly paid it – everyone. If the coin had Caesar’s image on it, *it was traded for an imageless token* before it was give. The ministers then sanctified the money by spending it entirely on items that were to be consecrated for use in or repair of the property.

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In addition to the tax, every single soul paid *a tenth of all their income to their ministers*. This is the first tithe. *The tithe never went into the “church” fund*, but went directly to those doing ministry – the preacher, the teacher, the missionary, the musician – *every cent* of the tithe. Not even a light bulb was bought with the tithe unless the minister bought it. According to the prophet, to rob the preacher of the tithe is serious unrighteousness:

Malachi 3:8. “Will a man rob Elohim? Surely not! And yet you have robbed me.” “What do you mean? When did we ever rob you?” “You have robbed me of the tithes and offerings due to me. 9. And so the awesome curse of Elohim is cursing you, for your whole nation has been robbing me. 10. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse *so that there will be food enough in my Temple*; if you do, I will open up the windows of heaven for you and pour out a blessing so great you won’t have room enough to take it in! Try it! Let me prove it to you!” (LVB)

Yahweh didn’t eat the food – Yahweh doesn’t eat. The food stands for *the provision for the ministers*. But Yahweh says he’ll provide a huge blessing to saints who tithe to the ministers. Part of the blessing is that the saint’s money will thus be sanctified.

The ministers who receive the tithe also *pay the tithe of what they received from the people*. But the minister’s tithe is to go back to *their own teachers and ministers* (the priests of Aaron) – not back to the “church.” The ministers must pay the tax but may also *provide offerings* for the church.

Second and Third Tithe, and the Offerings

In addition to the tax and the tithe, there was a *second tithe* that went into a savings account for the Feast of Tabernacles. Each

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September or October, this money was paid back with interest and everyone took a week's vacation with the money.

Every third and sixth year out of the seven-year cycle, a *third tithe* was received exclusively for the poor, orphan and widow. Finally, offerings up and above *the tax* and *the tithe* went for whatever purpose they were given. An offering was not to be accepted unless the tax and tithe were first paid.

This was how mammon was cleansed in Yahshua's day. When a person devoted to Yahweh committed to this system and fulfilled its requirements, Yahweh then cleansed *the rest of his money* for his own use – and this formula is what I use. It sounds like a lot of money, but actually, after *your vacation rebate*, a saint paid about 15% - 20% of his income to Yahweh – far less than Treasury Department taxes – then the rest of the money, images and all – became *clean* for the saint's use – to do whatever he pleased.

Yahshua's Way

Yahshua brought a new dimension to our understanding of money. When he said, "Give Caesar what's his," *he wasn't declaring poverty* – only that *the value of the money* had to be divorced from *the image on the money*. Mammon *had to be redeemed from the devil* and *sanctified unto the use of the saints*. However, Yahshua's method of redeeming unclean money is far stricter than that of the temple because what was once a sound "business" had become *a den of thieves* due to unfaithful stewards. Followers of the Way had to go beyond the righteousness of any scribe or Pharisee.

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Yahshua shows us what is expected in regards to the sanctification of money in:

Luke 21:1. And Yahshua looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. 2. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. 3. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: 4. For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of Elohim: but she of her penury hath cast in *all the living that she had*.

All money that is truly to be devoted to the use of Yahweh must *cease to exist as mammon of unrighteousness*. You see, the penurious widow *put her life in the box* along with her coins! Yahshua said, "In went all the life she had." **All her life**. This says something about the state of her money and of her life, for when her coins dropped from her hands into the tax box, her life also dropped in with them. This wasn't the first time for her. She'd actually dropped her life into that box years earlier, and since that time, everything she touched became clean because *she was clean*.

What that tells us is that if our money is to be redeemed then our lives first must be redeemed from the world. For your possessions to be cleansed, Yahshua must first cleanse you. You can't give anything of any value to the Almighty so long as *you keep yourself back*, so long as you *simply hand it off*. You can't send your money *out of the world and into the Kingdom*; you may only *bring your money out of the world and into the Kingdom*. This way, your gift will be acceptable.

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Conversion

It's no easy matter to convert your money from the currency of Satan to that of the Kingdom. It takes deep devotion – travail – battle – tarrying – warfare – violence. The devil doesn't want to give it up because every coin and bill has his picture on it – it's his to build his Dominion. Even that little bit that belongs to Yahweh *he'll have* if we have *our own way with it*, for we're naturally stingy with what isn't ours. It's easier for some to bring a lost soul into the kingdom than a hundred dollar bill. But unless you bring your life out with your money, it can't be sanctified – you must first be sanctified in order to redeem your possessions unto holy purposes.

Has your money been delivered from the world system? From the devil's purposes? From your own selfish desires? "Can you claim that there's no money in your pocket that belongs to the world, for it's all been converted? Are you willing to pledge to [Yahweh], 'By your grace I'll convert all the money I earn by labor, receive by gifts, garner by inheritance: that all may be yours?'" (Watchman Nee, *Love Not the World*, Chapter 11)

Luke 16:11. If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches? 12. And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's who will give you that which is your own? 13. No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve Elohim and mammon."

The vital question is, "Am I serving Elohim and Mammon? For if I'm steward over both, I'm really only serving mammon." Does the money I'm thinking about – touching – fondling – represent the tithe

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unto the servant of Yahweh or the offering unto the Satan's slave? Am I able, when I receive a dollar or make a dollar or find a dollar, to instantly convert that dollar from currency of the world and its images to the currency of heaven?

Can you say, "Yes, I will take it into the kingdom myself"? If you can do that, and conquer your worship of money, possessions and mammon, and selfishness, poverty-mindedness and stinginess, your *depression mentality*, and tear violently through the veil *with* your treasure chest, then you'll begin of a new spiritual era in your life – you'll be free – and you'll enjoy the power and courage it takes to bring many other precious and valuable things out of the devil's lair of darkness into the light with you. Amein!

The Secrets to Verse Nine

Now, I promised to share two secrets about Luke 16:9, in which Yahshua says:

Luke 16:9. And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of unrighteous mammon, so that when it fails they may receive you into the eternal habitations.

Yahshua is speaking of the failure of money in this passage – make heavenly friends with unrighteous mammon – meaning Yahweh and his saints – so that when your money is gone, Yahweh and his saints will see to your care. There is a variant to this reading that you'll see if you have a text related to the King James Version. It says,

"Make friends for yourselves by unrighteous mammon, that when *you fail*, they may receive you into an everlasting home."

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This variant speaks of *your* demise: that your heavenly friends will be there to usher you into your own place in the Sky if you've invested in the Sky. Yet I think the most startling secret of this text is when it's translated literally. Here's how it reads:

“Make friends with [money] so that when you leave out (εκλειπω), they may take you upward by the hand (δεξωνται) into everlasting skins (σκηνας).”

Now isn't that something? Everlasting skins. That speaks of eternal riches and ageless life! That's even better than 20 more years on this earth with six hundred million dollars to spend! Amein?

*I use church instead of temple or synagogue to make the concept of tithing clearer to our readers.

More About Giving from the Teaching of the Twelve (Didachē)

This text was written by the Apostles of the Assembly in Jerusalem, where Ya'aqov and Shimon, brothers of the Messiah Yahshua, were overseers. Here is the instruction of the Apostles to new overseers of the Nazorean Faith.

Didachē 12:1 Welcome each one who comes in the name of Yahweh. Once you have examined him, you will find out about him; for you will know from both the right hand and the left. 2 If the visitor is a traveler, help him out as much as you can; but more than *a stay of two* or three days is beyond your obligation. 3 If he is a skilled worker and wants to settle in among you, let him get work and eat his bread that way. 4 If he has no skill *and still wants to stay*, use your connections to provide *a means by which* he may live as one of the Anointed, but not in idleness. 5 If he will not do it this way, he is mining-the-anointed. Beware of such.

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Didachē 13:1 Yet each Nevi Emet who wants to settle among you is worth his food. 2 Likewise, a Moreh Emet is worth his food just like the worker. 3 So you will take all first-fruits of the produce, the wine-vat, the threshing-floor, of your cattle and sheep, and give them as first-fruits to the neviim (preachers); for they are your kohenim hagadol (high priests). 5 If you bake bread, take the first-fruits and give in accordance with the mitzvah (commandment). 6 Likewise, when you open a bottle of wine or oil, take the first-fruits and give them to the neviim; 7 yes, and even of money, clothing, and every other possession – take the first-fruits, whatever seems fair to you – and give in accordance to the mitzvah. 4 If you have no nevi, provide for the poor instead.

This ancient teaching, condoned if not written by the brothers of Yahshua, is perfectly clear as to how to disburse monies in the assembly, and one may understand it as a means of cleansing all unrighteous mammon before its use in both Kingdom and secular matters.

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Myth and Meaning: The Rich Man and Lazarus

Genesis 15:1ff (read in the message)

Luke 16:19. "There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. 20. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, 21. who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. 22. The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.

"The rich man also died and was buried; 23. and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes, and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus in his bosom. 24. And he called out, 'Father Abraham, have mercy upon me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame.' 25. But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. 26. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.'

27. "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father's house, 28. for I have five brothers, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.' 29. But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.' 30. And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' 31. He said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.'"

Pay Later

This story is about conviction and judgment. It's loaded with meaning. In the time we have, we can only but touch a finger on that meaning. The simple moral is revealed in the words of Abraham to the rich man: "If your brothers aren't convinced by all Moses and the prophets said and did, the dead rising won't convince them either."

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Believers of our day are convinced that they may live extravagantly as a law unto themselves because they've been taught *and desperately want to believe* that *the grace of the judge is sufficient* to cover up their commandment-ignoring lifestyles.

If the judge in Tallahassee rules on your case, gives you conditions, then tells you to be back in six months, you'd better follow his directives before returning. If you comply, he'll have mercy. But if you ignore his injunction, you'll serve *time*. In the US court system, a person is presumed innocent. But in the Heavenly Court, "There is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of Eloah." This is why we need an advocate – a Savior. We need Yahshua! "For Yahweh justifies him who has faith in Yahshua" (Romans 3:23,26).

People in our day all know of Yahshua – most know him as Jesus or some like term – but they *don't know him* or *his directives* or *his Word*. They don't even know his real name. How will the convicted be able to stand when they must make an account of their discipleship? Some say his grace will be sufficient. But sufficient enough to smooth over willful disobedience? Ignorance of the law is no excuse!

People are afraid of religious conversion because when it happens, they're automatically excommunicated from the Culture Club. The converted are instead involved in a counter-cultural revolution. They know the world system will *pass away* and the worldly with it, but the Torah of Yahweh will stand among *the living* forever. In the now, the converted are endeavoring to usher in that great Kingdom. The worldly want no part in that labor. What *they want* is fine living,

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sumptuous foods, daring entertainments and iconic role models. And in this golden age of luxury, they'll have anything they want. However, the bill must eventually be paid in full. For in the end, Yahweh will send the collection agent with this little message:

Luke 12:20. You fool, this night your soul will be required of you: then to whom will those *things* all, all of which you have provided?

Greek to Me

When I was a boy, my grandmother subscribed to the *First Book* series. Each month I'd receive one. Titles included *The First Book of Indians*, *The First Book of Astronauts*, *The First Book of Dinosaurs*. One of my favorites was *The First Book of Mythology*. There were stories about Greek gods: some may be familiar to you, like "Echo and Narcissus," "Pandora's Box," "The Trojan Horse," "The Golden Fleece," and can you name any? Even today Greek mythology is read by school children. Myths are used in schools as teaching tools. I still remember the stories from my *First Book of Mythology*.

In Yahshua's day, Greek myths were *very popular*, as was Greek culture. Alexander the Great conquered Palestine in 332 BC. His philosophy was to declare that the conquered peoples become Greeks or die. A simple choice! A very successful plan! Now, three hundred years later, in Yahshua's day, the primary language spoken in the world is Greek; Greek gods rule, and the stories children tell are Greek myths.

Greek Jews are called *Hellenists* in the Bible – so named after Helen of Sparta (or Troy) from Greek mythology. Helen was the most beautiful woman ever conceived. She had the "face that launched a

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thousand ships.” Greeks named their culture after her – Hellenism. (You can learn all about Helen in the film, *Troy*.)

Hellenists can be picked out of the Bible by their Greek names: Philip (for example) means ‘horse lover’ in Greek. Peter means ‘a rock.’ Nicodemus means “people-beater.” All of the seven deacons of Acts 6 have Greek names, including Stephen, which means ‘crown.’ Hellenists followed the way of the Greeks, spoke Greek and sometimes worshiped Greek gods in the many shrines throughout Israel. One can’t underestimate Greek influence in Yahshua’s day; many Jews and Romans imitated Greek culture and shared Greek religion. And this influence caused a major division in the people of Israel in the first century, fomenting a civil war.

Hades

Why all this about Greeks? Because *Yahshua mentions a Greek god in this text*. He says the rich man *died* and *was buried*, but from *Hades* he lifted up his eyes. Everywhere else (except Luke 10:15 regarding Capernaum), when Yahshua speaks of the lost dead, he uses the word *Gehenna*, the burning trash heap of Jerusalem. But this story takes place in Greek mythology, *Hades* – a hole in the ground.

I remember Hades from my little book. *Hades* was supposedly the king of the underworld – prominent in many myths, including one that bears *more than a passing similarity* to “The Rich Man and Lazarus”; *i.e.* the tale of “Hades and Persephone.” The woman, Persephone, is abducted by Hades and is taken into the underworld as queen. She finally escapes from the dead to warn her family about

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the underworld. Those to whom Yahshua was speaking knew this story well.

Many who don't study the Bible in context understand our parable as a literal picture of heaven and hell. If this is what you see, let's change the view. Yahshua's simply telling a familiar story – a *Greek* story – about a mythical *Greek* place named *Hades* after its king – to teach a deeper truth about *judgment* and *the resurrection of the dead*. This story isn't about heaven and hell. If it is, then it contradicts just about everything else Yahshua teaches on the subject.

Pagan Stories Today

We use stories from mythology all the time in our culture. Consider the Easter egg and bunny stories we like to tell our children. These come straight from Babylonian religious myths, watered down for young audiences. Yahweh says, "Escape from Babylon, leave the country of the Chaldaeans" (Jeremiah 50:8). I believe we should leave their religious stories behind, including the name of their goddess, Easter (Ashtoreth, Astarte, Oestre). You don't believe in the Easter bunny but you make your children believe year after year, just like Babylonians, thinking it's just for fun and will do no harm.

And the story of Santa Claus and his sleigh with eight tiny reindeer: That comes right out of Greek mythology – Apollo's Chariot encircling the world – his birthday is December 25th. You don't believe in Santa but you encourage your children to believe year after year. When your children are forty-eight years old, they're still

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expecting Santa's help, and *you* are *him*. But Santa can't save. It's better to teach children the stories of the Bible from the very start rather than pagan myths.

As for the "The Rich Man and Lazarus": the Scriptures tell us that Abraham is dead (Hebrews 11:13) – no one can go into his bosom in a literal sense; and if the rich man was aflame, he'd want buckets of water, not a little drop. Unlike the useless Easter bunny and Santa Claus myths *we* tell, Yahshua uses this *myth*, that the Hellenists to whom he was speaking to knew full well, to convey *startling truth* to those with wisdom enough *to seek out the deeper meaning*.

Parables

When he was asked *why* he spoke in parables, Yahshua replied,

Mark 4:9b *exc.* (Cf. Isaiah 6:9) "He who has ears to hear, let *him* hear. 11. To you [who hear] has been given the secret of the kingdom, but for *those outside* everything is in parables; 12. so that they may indeed see *but not perceive*, and may indeed hear *but not understand*; lest they should turn and be forgiven. 13. If you do not understand *this parable* how then will you understand any?"

A professor of preaching advised me that "ordinary people" were too dull-witted to understand my preaching, and that I should dumb it down *for simpletons*. How foolish that professor is! You're far more astute than any others I've tried to teach. You're *Bible believers* and serious students; and you want to understand your place in eternity! You study and pray and listen because you know your spiritual welfare and future kingdom are at stake! You want a better

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resurrection, and you believe I was sent here to teach; praise Eloah. We'll see who's the simpleton in the end.

Yet the inner meaning of *this* parable is difficult for anyone to find – probably far beyond the intellectual capacity of that professor – but the reward of working it out is well worth the exercise.

Abraham and Lazarus

Let's start with Abraham and Lazarus – who do they represent in the story?

Genesis 15:1. *exc.* The word of Yahweh came to Abraham in a vision, "Fear not, Abraham; your reward will be very great." 2. But Abraham said, "O Yahweh, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is *Eliezer of Damascus*?" 3. And Abraham said, "Look, you have given me no offspring; and a slave will be my heir." 4. And see, the word of Yahweh came to him, "This man will not be your heir; your *own* son will be your heir."

Abraham wasn't a Jew – there was no such thing in his day. He came out from the religion of Babylonia. His father, Terah, worshipped the Easter bunny until the day he died. Really. Terah and his idols held Abraham back from the Promised Land for years. But when Terah died and his myths with him, Abraham was free to go. Yahweh told him to take his band south *and leave the world and its gods behind.*

Among his band was his heir, *Eliezer of Damascus*. Eliezer means "helper from Elohim." "Eliezer" is the same as the *Hellenized* name "Lazarus." So Abraham and Lazarus have a history. Abraham was childless at this time, so he must've loved Lazarus a bunch to name him heir to his fortune.

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One story (from *Yashar*) says that Lazarus was a slave who ran into Abraham's camp for sanctuary. When his owners caught up with him to kill him, Abraham instead purchased Lazarus' life and set him free. Lazarus gratefully pledged his service to Abraham for life, saying, "Master, to whom will I go otherwise?" Lazarus served Abraham faithfully until his death.

Abraham and Isaac

Later, Isaac was born through the promise of Yahweh, and now Abraham had his blood heir. Lazarus didn't care about his inheritance being lost to Isaac – he loved Abraham too much to fantasize about living sumptuously and wearing purple robes when his master passed. He'd remain a slave of his own choosing.

Then in Genesis 22, Yahweh commands Abraham to take this son and heir Isaac and "go to the land of Moriah and offer *him* as a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2). The next day Abraham saddled up, took Isaac and Lazarus, and set out for Moriah to sacrifice his son. Leaving Lazarus at the bottom of the mountain, Isaac said to his father as they climbed, "Avi, where is the lamb for the offering?" In perfect faith, Abraham replied, "Son, Elohim will provide it."

Yahweh bade Abraham do something unlike ever before – sacrifice his only son in the fire. Yahweh seems extremely cruel. But his intention is to reveal a new thing for the world of the future – for our world – for all time: "an unprecedented example of steadfast loyalty to Eloah throughout a night of humanly impenetrable darkness" (Fleming Rutledge, *The Bible and The New York Times*, 102). In plain terms, Abraham's entire future, Yahweh's promise and his only

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lovely son was on the line as he raised the dagger in the air over his Isaac. Yet even as he swung that blade, Abraham *still* trusted that Yahweh would provide.

“Abraham! Do *not* stretch out your hand against the boy; for now I know that you fear Elohim, and have not withheld your son, your only son, from me” (Genesis 22:12).

You know the rest of the story.

When Isaac was to marry, Abraham sent Lazarus to fetch Rebekah from Syria. Lazarus could’ve murdered Isaac for the fortune, but Lazarus was faithful to the end out of love. And Abraham trusted Lazarus with his most valuable possession – the son of the promise. It’d be through Isaac and Rebekah that the tribes of Israel would arise, for Jacob came forth, and from him *twelve sons*, the Patriarchs. One of the twelve was to be the ancestor of our own Master, Yahshua, the only-begotten son of Yahweh. This particular son of Jacob is another key to “The Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.” Do you remember which of the twelve was Yahshua’s ancestor? {Can you name them all?}

Lazarus therefore is a moniker for all faithful servants who gave their lives for their master and never expected to receive an inheritance.

Judah is the Rich Man

You’re right – this son of Jacob was Judah, the father of the Jews. The Jews were to be kings over Israel. They wore the royal purple robes and fared sumptuously. Judah’s mother was Leah, Jacob’s first wife. Leah bore *five more sons* for Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi,

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Issachar and Zebulun (and a daughter, Dinah). Thus, like the Rich Man in the parable, *Judah had five brothers*. The descendents of these other brothers weren't Jews, but Israelites. Only the descendants of Judah were properly Jews. Remember that in Yahshua's time, the Israelites had been scattered, but the Jews ruled the roost. In the original parable, the rich man cries out to Abraham, whom he calls 'father,'

Luke 16:27. "Send Lazarus to *my five brothers*, so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment."

The rich man in the parable is Judah son of Jacob, and represents the Jewish leaders of Yahshua's time, clothed in fine linen and eating like royalty every day while beggars starved outside.

Now we've done all the research we need to interpret the parable correctly. Aren't we proud of ourselves?

Interpretation

What Yahshua is telling the Jews in this story should make them furious – if it doesn't go right over their heads. They may be simpletons. The rich man, Judah, *i.e.* Jewish leaders, lived in a fine palace and had it made. The fatness of their food represents the Word of Yahweh and the gated home represents their exclusion of all others. *Keep out, you unclean dogs!* The table is that of the temple showbread, from which crumbs fall. It was upon these crumbs *of the Word* that hopeful outsiders wished to dine, and thus to know Wisdom.

Outside Judah's gates is Lazarus, a slave, full of sores with licking dogs all about. His protector, Abraham, is dead; yet Lazarus must

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wait, dependent upon the crumbs of the Word as his only sustenance, crumbs that were disposed of by the Jews in favor of their pagan god named Mammon. Lazarus was a Gentile, a Syrian, and the dogs represent other Gentiles (*i.e.* non- Jews) here there and everywhere – slaves suffering in silence, desperately hungry for the milk and meat of truth.

Like Yahshua, Lazarus died outside the gates and was conveyed into the company of his beloved Abraham – the master who'd been a father to him – and father to many nations. Just as Lazarus represents the mixed multitude that calls Yahweh 'father,' Abraham represents Yahweh. In the resurrection, those slaves of Yahweh will be with him, never to suffer humiliation and deprivation again. They'll receive sustenance from the loaves of the Word and will thereafter go forth in power.

However, Judah expected to be in the bosom of Abraham too – but here he plays hot foot in Hades. Wasn't Judah in the direct bloodline of Abraham? Hadn't Isaac, Abraham's heir, been Judah's grandfather? Why'd he go to the Hades? Why's Judah and his Jews in Hades, *the Greek* underworld? Why? Because at the time, they were every bit as pagan and irreligious and godless as the Greeks who thought the place up. The Jews wanted to bed down with the Greeks and become Greeks and pagans, hanging on to only a vestige of truth. Therefore, says the Son of Man, that being the case, let Judah share the underworld of Hades with Greeks – right where they belong.

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Why! How Insulting!

The insult is that, in the resurrection, it isn't Isaac, the rightful heir, that goes into the bosom of his father, but Lazarus, the slave of Damascus, the one who had no blood rights to be there unless Abraham negated the claim of his own son in favor of a foreigner. This is exactly what our Father Yahweh did for us outside the gates. He didn't spare his son as Abraham had, but gathered the wood, tied the ropes, swung the knife, lit the fire and immolated his own offspring so that the sore-infested little Lazarus's like you and me could qualify for agelessness and a better resurrection than even that of his chosen people. Isaac, Jacob and Judah were the elect, you know. But there's that Lazarus – that boil-covered dog, in the bosom of Yahweh, meant for them. (Judah should never have sent the Son of Man down that Via Dolorosa.)

Lazarus represents us – we who seek out every little crumb that falls from the table of Yahweh. We who seek to learn his ways and fulfill his commandments! We who love his son, and value beyond all mammon the great ordeal he went through to purchase our redemption from the King of Hades. And now, in the heart of Yahweh, we reside! Hallelujah. Aren't we blessed?

Though there's plenty of suffering to bear, even in our blessing, we're hopeful. And though we may be called *false Jews* and cultists for following the Torah and the prophets, *we remain truthful*. And though we enter the kingdom violently, *we are patient*. And though they grind us to a pulp with their words or burn us with their slanders, we fortunate slaves of Damascus will, in the end, find ourselves at home in the mansions of our Father's heart, to be

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cleansed of our bloodiness, healed of our sores and delivered safe and sound from the evil one – *ready to heed the next valiant mission assigned us* – to fetch Rebekah the bridegroom from the four winds, to receive back our dead, and to populate the Kingdom of the Beloved Son prepared for Lazarus and for us from the foundation of the world. Amein.

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Johnny Appleseed Remembered

Matthew 13:1. THAT SAME day Yahshua went out of the house and sat beside the sea. 2. And great crowds gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat there; and the whole crowd stood on the beach.

3. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. 4. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. 5. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they had not much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, 6. but when the sun rose they were scorched; and since they had no root they withered away. 7. Other seeds fell upon thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. 8. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9. He who has ears, let him hear."

18. "Hear then the parable of the sower. 19. When any one hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in his heart; this is what was sown along the path. 20. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21. yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. 22. As for what was sown among thorns, this is he who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the delight in riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. 23. As for what was sown on good soil, this is he who hears the word and understands it; he indeed bears fruit, and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

The parable of the sower is entirely self-explanatory. On the surface it's about horticulture, but the obvious underlying message for believers is that we must be involved in witnessing for our Messiah. The first section of the passage above is Yahshua' allegory, which is a

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story with a deeper meaning. The second section is the allegory's interpretation for believers.

Three Involved in the Parable

Yahshua says that there are really three persons involved in the process of sowing seed. There Yahweh's witness, who is portrayed as the sower. There is the unregenerated people being witnessed to, portrayed as the soil. The third person isn't mentioned in the parable at all, but only in the interpretation. He is the devil, who steals the seed or uproots the seedling. I'm not going to say much about him now, for I want to focus on the sower, the seed and the ground.

Sowing in Three Steps

The sower in the story seems pretty indiscriminate in his planting. He is not hoeing out rows then planting each seed with care. He doesn't even cultivate the field. He casts seeds around, paying little attention to where they fall as he goes forward. Our sowing begins whenever we go forth into the great field of the world. We witness, that is, "sow seed," by both *our stories* and *our lives*.

One indiscriminant method of sowing word-seeds consists of three easy steps. The first step might be to do a good deed or a favor for somebody. This makes an aperture in the soil for the seed-word. The second step is to tell our own stories of how the proper spiritual experience has positively affected our lives. The third step is to put a name to the seed; that name is Yahshua, who is our Savior.

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Witnessing of the seed-sowing variety is not preaching! If people in the world wanted to be preached at they would already be in the atmosphere where preaching is conducted. Also, witnessing is not itemizing someone's sins for them or throwing someone's shortcomings in their face. Most people already know they are lacking, and they feel unworthy enough of *special love* or *kindness*. To put it in a nutshell, witnessing is: (1) doing a favor (or asking a favor), then (2) telling your own story, (3) then naming Yahshua in the process. It's as simple as that. Though simple, this method is as effective as can be. You do the sowing, somebody else does the cultivating, somebody else does the reaping. You don't really have a whole lot of responsibility in the whole thing *except to sow*.

Seeds to Needs

Sometimes we can sow our seed to a need. Sometimes it is very obvious when someone is open to our testimony – perhaps there's been a death in the family, or there's a suffering family member or a health or financial problem. When these types of issues come up in conversation, and they almost always do, we know that the ground is already cultivated, and our threefold sowing method will often address the spiritual need lingering behind the physical.

It is also obvious when somebody is not open to our testimony. Nevertheless, circumstances will eventually arrange themselves in every life to make a way for a word-seed to germinate. We have seen even the hardest hearts broken open by a little sprout of a seedling when circumstances were right. Charles Wesley, the hymn-writer, expresses sowing seeds to needs in many of his inspired hymns; like,

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“Help us to help each other; each other’s cross to bear; let all their friendly aid afford, and feel each other’s care.” We must be sensitive to the needs of others: your seed if sown in expectancy will often fulfill your friend’s need eventually. Yahshua used this method himself: “Give me a drink,” he said to the woman at Sychar’s well. Yahshua never did get his drink, but that wasn’t really needed anyway; it was his intention to give the lady something helpful, to sow a seed to a need aroused by his question.

Easy and Fun

Although you might not think so at first, asking a favor is one of the most effective ways of witnessing, and you often get your reward immediately as well as later. Here is my little story about a recent encounter, and a favor asked:

I left my lights on in a Kmart parking lot. My battery was dead. Fortunately, I had jumper cables with me. My task was to find someone who would pull their car over for a jump. That’s unusually pretty easy, but I picked out the sourest red face in the parking lot. He had his arms full of stuff. When I asked him for help, he said no! But when I asked him again, he grudgingly said, OK, “but I’m in a big hurry.” He did me a big favor – he started the car. I told him who I was, and that I was at Kmart to buy gifts for kids at church. (That was my true story). Then I left him with the words, “Yahshua bless you, sir.” (I named the name.) By this time he was smiling, and he said something very profound – “THANK YOU!” It was he who did the favor, but he was thanking me!

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This is a perfect example of using the threefold method of sowing seed. It is easy and fun. And you can do it all the time without fear, because you are not responsible for the outcome; somebody else is.

Success Short-lived

Aside from perceiving a need, sowers often have no way of knowing whether the soil is prepared or not for the seed. That's OK, because we just cast our seed wherever we can. It is the *prevenient grace of the Holy Spirit* that does the cultivating long before we sow the seed, and we put our hope in the Spirit for the outcome, then just keep casting forth seeds. Yes, the birds eat some; others fall on rocks. We knew better than to deliberately sow on rocky or hard ground in the first place, but we cast it there anyway. We take advantage of every opportunity. We've all seen how a strong seedling can break a concrete sidewalk, haven't we?

On occasion, success comes, and we are disappointed to find that it is only short-lived. The seed sown germinates and even grows a little. The sinner repents in due time – may even go running to the altar shouting Hallelujah! May even do a little premature witnessing himself, or clean up his act for awhile, or quit swearing or smoking or drinking for awhile. But there may be no depth to it, and resistance stirred up by the devil or the world or that habit limits the person's ability or willingness to pray and fight for what he / she has received. And 40 years later, the "almost persuaded" still gives his testimony of how he "got saved once" or "got religion." Yet this person has since sown no viable seed.

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Years ago I did music ministry at a Baptist Church for their Sunday night services. Every service the pastor asked for testimonies, and every time one woman would pull an old tattered piece of paper out of her purse and read off the story of her salvation in 1957. This sister had religion, but she never even sowed an oat in over 50 years. There are many Believers, so-called, that have a form of godliness but deny the power of it because *they don't do agriculture*. Only the undeserved favor of Yahweh can get these folks through the gate. We pray for mercy; but we pray harder that these folks will get the goad.

Hardly Ever Persuaded

In other cases, money or pride are the seed-stealing devils. Before we even have an opportunity, we are sized up as to whether we are of an acceptable economic or social status. If we don't measure up, every word we say goes into one ear and out the other. People with money and social standing are hard nuts to crack. They are often the stingiest of all. And though they may have great material wealth or power, they often are spiritually bankrupt. Nevertheless, all the veneer disappears when the rich man experiences his deathbed or when the socialite loses her status. The seed has a better chance of germinating then. Either way, we plant because we have compassion for the poor in spirit. We wait, then we cast out seeds.

Persuaded!

There are those in whom we plant the seed that understand it and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they nurture it. Like the mustard, the

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seed-word grows into a great bush that casts off its own seeds in due season. How blessed we are when we have the privilege of seeing the results of our sowing, a soul rescued, a ministry raised up, a Kingdom ascending. In our ministry, we have had the privilege to take part in the raising up of many ministers committed to Yahshua. A few words spoken, a deed done, a powerful name named, and now, no matter what happens to us, we can see a the tall trees that we have planted becoming an apple orchard. Some readers hopefully know what I mean, for you too have raised an orchard of trees with branches hanging low with heavy fruit.

Johnny Appleseed

I grew up in the Ohio corn belt. In my day, children entering public school were taught about Johnny Appleseed. Have you ever heard of Johnny Appleseed? Everyone in the Midwest that is around my age knows who he is. There are statues of him, streets and even towns named after him, and a museum dedicated to him. His greatest contribution to history was planting apple trees. Let me tell you his remarkable story.

“For forty-nine years, John Chapman (1774-1845) roamed the American wilderness, devotedly planting apple trees in the wildernesses of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Kentucky, Illinois and Indiana, spanning an estimated area of 100,000 square miles. Some of these trees are still bearing fruit after 150 years. The reason for John’s mission is unknown, although it’s said he dreamed of a land covered with blossoming apple trees; of a land where no one went hungry because apples were plentiful. John’s gentleness and courage were

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legendary even in his own time. He walked alone in the wilderness, without gun or knife. He chopped down no trees, and killed no animals. He was respected and appreciated by the native American tribes and the new settlers alike. [He was also deeply religious, following the call of the Father.]

“John lived very simply. He slept outdoors, walked barefoot and ate berries and the like. He made his clothes from sacks and wore a tin pot for a hat (and to cook with). John made his drinking water in winter by melting snow with his feet. Even the people of his time were amazed at his endurance. Yet after his death, it was discovered that John was not poor at all. He owned considerable areas of land – on which he planted apple trees, of course. John died at the age of 70 in the home of a friend near Fort Wayne, Indiana. He lies buried there under the epitaph ‘He lived for others.’

“The longevity of trees and their ability to spread makes John Chapman’s contribution perhaps the most lasting in American history. Laws, wars and political parties have come and gone; lawyers, soldiers and statesmen have grown powerful, only to see their life’s work eventually undone. But John’s apple trees have endured and multiplied, changing the face and food of a continent. All from a gentle man, possessed by a strange and wonderful dream.”
(Quote from Johnny Appleseed Homepage at Cornell University.)

Did Johnny Sow It?

As a child, when I looked at an apple tree, I always wondered if Johnny Appleseed had planted it. In school, we were taught to venerate his meek character, his diligence to see his mission

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accomplished, and to his wonderful dream for a peaceful, utopian world. The fruit of his labor is still to be found on many apple trees up north. The picture we see of him in school textbooks is that of a man dressed in rude clothing with a pot on his head, a bag under his arms, and his right hand thrown outward in scattering seed. John never planted according to agricultural methods of Purdue University, he scattered hither and thither, not regarding where each seed falls. Yet many came to fruition, changing lives and landscape forever.

How superior it is for us who scatter the seeds of a Millennium Kingdom! How high is our mission, no matter how low we ourselves may be! For to be a sower of the Word of Yahweh makes one both as lofty as a King and as servile as a slave. Do someone a favor. Tell your story. Name your Savior. Go forth. Sow. If the seed is cast all about, there will always be a crop, and the promise, even for the casual sower, is that he will indeed bear fruit and yield a hundred-fold, sixty-fold or thirty-fold.

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For Crying Out Loud: The Parable of the Widow and the Unrighteous Judge

“Justify me against the one who’s been unjust to me!”

(*Εκδικησον με απο του αντιδικου μου.*)

– The City Widow

“She’s not the problem, we are.”

– Master Chief ‘Jack’ Urgayle in the motion picture *G. I. Jane*

Luke 18:1. Yahshua told them a parable, to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart. 2. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared El nor regarded man; 3. and there was a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Vindicate me against my adversary.’ 4. For a while he refused; but afterward he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear El nor regard man, 5. yet because this widow bothers me, I will vindicate her, or she will wear me out by her continual coming.’”

6. And the Master said, “Hear what the unrighteous judge says. 7. And will not Yahweh vindicate *his elect*, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? 8. I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Exodus 22:21. “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23. If you do afflict them, *and they cry out to me*, I will surely hear their cry; 24. and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.”

Deuteronomy 32:6. Do you thus requite Yahweh, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he *your father*, who created you, who made you and established you? 7. Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell

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you. 8. When *the Most High* gave to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of men, he fixed the bounds of the peoples according to the number of the *sons of Elohim*. 9. For *Yahweh's portion is his people*, Jacob his allotted heritage.

Psalms 82:1. The Almighty has taken his place in the divine council; in the midst of *elohim* he holds judgment: 2. "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked? 3. Give justice to the weak and the fatherless; maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute. 4. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

"God Complex"

In our parable today we have three characters – a widow woman, a crooked judge and the widow's persecutor. We aren't privy to the crime against the widow, but the story implies that she's in the right – she's been harassed or wronged in some way, and seriously enough for her to seek justice. A widow's justice was difficult to achieve in those days because judges were likely to be unfair to women and, as a result, judged *not* in accordance with *the Torah*. Besides, widows were fair game for unscrupulous lawyers who promised security but delivered poverty. The widow may well have been suing her lawyer, for all we know!

In his lofty position, this judge feels he's not only above the law, but also above god and every other authority. The judge has succumbed to the "god complex"; "in my courtroom," he decrees, "I respect neither gods nor men. I AM GOD!" Sounds like many American court justices – willing to do what *they think* the law ought to say rather than what it actually says!

Despite the megalomania of the judge, he's not a god. He knows that avoiding prosecution is dangerous for him; he will certainly lose

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an appeal – maybe then he will find himself implicated in the crime. You see, widows, along with orphans and strangers, have special sanction in the Torah: for Yahweh states, “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him. Neither shall you afflict any widow or orphan” (Exodus 22:21,22).

Not only has a widow been afflicted by her adversary, but the judge’s *hesitancy* may render him equally guilty under the law – both adversary and arbitrator afflict her: the first, by his action; the second, by lack of action.

It may be that the judge is an ultra-liberal, his political inclination is to protect the rights of criminals to the degree of putting his view before the law; or maybe he’s an ultra-conservative, failing to defend the unalienable civil rights of the poorest, preferring the rich. Maybe he’s taken a bribe to ignore this little case. Maybe the defendant is one of his cronies or relatives or someone through whom he may gain political or financial capital by ignoring the crime and gainsaying the law. Maybe the adversary is a religious official or a lawyer himself who devours widows’ houses while praying long public prayers (Mark 12:40).

Nothing to Do with Money

Would judging *for* the widow be such a big deal anyway? Is the case already prominent in the press? Certainly not! She’s no Laci Peterson. She’s no G. I. Jane. What could the adversary have done to her that a few *denarii* couldn’t straighten out? Couldn’t someone just pay her off and be done with it? Wouldn’t that save the taxpayer the cost of an appeal?

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Well, somebody had tried to pay her off – first with a little, then with more – finally with a bunch of money. But she won't have money. No way! To her, this offense has nothing to do with money. And though the world around her may think little of her cause, and though she might not even have two mites to rub together, for this widow, the case is far more important than any amount of money! She wants her day in court! She wants vindication and justification. She wants to be heard out. She wants her justice in *accordance with the Torah* – no more and no less. And she won't shut up, and she won't stop telling, and she won't desist in calling on the judge, and she won't give up with the press and the congressman, and she won't end her storming of heaven, until justice and vindication and righteousness, *according to the law already established on the books*, is hers.

What's at Stake

And just what form does justice take for harassing a widow according to the Torah? What's at stake? What's the sentence to be meted out against the offender? Why is the judge so hesitant and the adversary so afraid? Again we look to the Torah and are surprised to learn the measure of retribution called for:

“You shall not afflict any widow or orphan for my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children orphans.” (Exodus 22: 22,24)

Is this not an extremely harsh decree? Can you imagine a *death sentence* for harassing a widow? Can you picture capital punishment

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for molesting an orphan? And that the punishment extends to the offender's wives and children, making them widows and orphans? Does this sentence fit the crime? Why would the law be so harsh on this point? If Yahweh is compassionate and merciful, why does he call for death?

Now we understand why the judge wants to shut the lady up and dismiss her case. "Unrighteous" in his case means that he doesn't *follow the written law*. Yet she deserves, if she pleases and if she's right, to see the man who done her wrong *die*. Yes, if that's her desire, and if the law is to be followed to its full extent, her adversary will be executed without mercy.

Revenge is a dish best served cold, says the Sicilian proverb, but the widow woman prefers to serve hers steaming.

Justification

Now we see why Yahshua preached to those who sinned against others to

Make friends quickly with your accuser while you are going to court lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; you will never get out till you have paid the last penny. (Matthew 5:25,26)

We have found this to be true unless the judge is unjust and the last penny is a man's life.

On the other hand, does the threat of a stern penalty validate the judge in ignoring the widow's plea and the law? Does the heavy punishment justify the judge in justifying a lawbreaker? (Remember that the meaning of "justify" is "to free a person of the *guilt and*

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penalty attached to grievous sin.”) Is there to be forgiveness without repentance? Can one be justified without a valid confession? Can one receive mercy without an allocution? Questions; questions. Pity the judge who must answer them.

Yahweh’s Harsh Penalties

As we’ve been saying all along, the harshness of Yahweh’s penalties aren’t designed to create more widows and orphans or take the lives of more offenders. It’s not that Yahweh is an untiring political proponent of the death penalty – he isn’t. After all, Yahweh made it possible that *all* might have life – and more abundantly – and more prosperously – and ageless. He even sent his son to die as expiation for the crimes of those who pin their hopes upon him. But Yahweh warns all who know his law that killing, in most instances, is a mortal sin that requires a life for a life. An equal ransom.

You might argue for the defendant that he hasn’t taken a life – the widow is plenty healthy enough to raise a commotion about her case. But your client has taken away her livelihood. He may as well take her life. You want to steal the sole sustenance of an orphan? You want to deny the stranger his due under the law? To do so means to put your victim to a gruesome death of starvation or privation or disease. If you do so, then Yahweh says, be prepared to pay with your own life! “Whatever you wish that folks would do to you, do so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

“Do you think I want to see the Law kill?” the Almighty asks of you. “No, of course not. My primary reason for decreeing grave

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punishments is not to kill but to *protect* the orphan, the widow, the stranger – the believer, the saint – by *preventing* crimes against the powerless or the righteous or the peaceful through the *threat* of capital punishment and divine retribution. The death penalty is my deterrent, but it only works that way if a judge is righteous according to the Torah and thus willing to adhere to the law, especially in the case of the defenseless being harassed and abused. A judge always has the option of *showing mercy* – but never the option of ignoring the cries of the helpless victim or the careless breaking of a heavenly ordinance. If the judge abandons your case, cry out to me. I will surely vindicate you quickly,” says the Almighty.

The judge is unwilling to judge for the widow because he’s ungodly. The Bible language calls him unrighteous (*αδικιας*). He didn’t really care about right and wrong or whether an injustice was addressed. The widow didn’t have the ability to sweeten his pot – she’d already been left destitute by her adversary. But this wasn’t the end of the case. The widow woman wouldn’t take no for an answer. She didn’t easily give up nor lose hope. She knew the Law of Yahweh in regards to her case because, in those days (unlike these), the law was simple – simple enough that anyone could know their rights.

The Moral of the Story

Let me read the passage from the Law I’ve been referring to in its entirety now so you can understand exactly how simple it is, and know what the widow knew, and use what the widow used.

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Exodus 22:21-24. “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, *and they cry out to me*, I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.”

Again, hear the word of Yahweh: “If you *do* afflict them, and *they cry out to me*, I will surely hear their cry.”

This pronouncement makes any decision of the judge a moot point, doesn't it? No, there's no middleman when it comes to the nagging cry of a widow. So the moral of the whole story is that if a widow woman can wear out a godless judge, causing him to judge in her favor, then how much more willing is *a heavenly father* to adjudicate his daughter's case and vindicate her if she *cries out* to Him for justice. And how much more willing is *a heavenly father* to adjudicate your case and vindicate you if you *cry out* to Him for justice. Unlike the unrighteous judge, Yahweh makes the rules; and if he desires, he can *break* the rules with impunity. If you cry out for vindication, you'll not get put off.

For Crying Out Loud!

Yes, if that unrighteous, godless judge fails you, you may appeal his decision to a higher power – you may go *far* over his head – to the legislator who wrote your rights upon stone with his finger and sent them down the Mountain of Sin with Charlton Hesston. Who would dare dishonor you, dear mother? Cry out! Who would dare steal from you, dear brother? Cry out! Who would dare lay a curse at your feet, friend of Yahweh? Cry out! If you're serious in your

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appeal, and plea in accordance to his will (which is easily determined by the plain letter of his Torah), you'll not have to wait long, only *wait short*.

When you cry out to him, circumstances and situations and people and resources start moving into place to bring about that which you have coming to you. Mountains will move, if need be, because he loves you. The sea will part if necessary, because he cares about your case. Boundaries will be broken down in due time, for he is concerned. And your adversary the devil, that old serpent, will be cast into the pit in chains, because he has dared harass a child of the Most High.

Widows, orphans and strangers, give it a little time, but don't quit crying out loud. If you remain steadfast in your hope, he'll answer your need not because he needs to get rich off you, not because he wants some piece of you, but because he loves you and desires the best for you. He's your Father after all! And your Father has power to knock down and build up, kill and heal, establish and repeal. And he may be merciful and show compassion to whomever he pleases.

"Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!" (Matthew 7:7-11) "And will not Yahweh vindicate *his elect*, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will vindicate them speedily." (Luke 18:7,8)

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Consider the Criers

Indeed, we see the most effective “pray-ers” crying out (*sa`aq*) and do so continually, and are speedily vindicated.

Consider Moses: Then *we cried to Yahweh* the Elohim of our fathers, and Yahweh heard our voice, and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression; and Yahweh brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror, with signs and wonders; and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. (Deuteronomy 26:7-9)

Consider the afflicted Job: He lets the cry of the poor come before him; he heeds the cry of the needy. (Job 34:28)

And the prophecy of David: “Because the poor are despoiled, because the needy groan, I will now arise,” says Yahweh; “I will place him in the safety for which he longs.” The promises of Yahweh are promises that are pure, silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times. Do thou, O Yah, protect us, guard us ever from this generation. (Psalm 12:5-7)

Hear the Psalm-singer: When the righteous cry for help, Yahweh hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. Yahweh is near to the brokenhearted, and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but Yahweh delivers him out of them all. (Psalms 34:17-19)

And the Testimony of Asaph: Let the groans of the prisoners come before thee; according to thy great power, preserve those doomed to die! Return sevenfold into the bosom of our neighbors the taunts with which they have taunted thee, O Yah! (Psalms 79:11,12)

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And hear the Maskil of Ethan the Ephramite: O Yahweh, my Elohim, *I call for help* by day; *I cry out* in the night before thee. Let my prayer come before thee, incline thine ear to my cry! For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to Hell [Sheol]. (Psalms 88:1-3)

Who hasn't felt close to hell? Yet **the song of the Sancturay** confirms the faith of those who are at the devil's doorstep: Yahweh is just in all his ways, and kind in all his doings. Yahweh is near to all who call upon him, to all who call upon him in truth. He fulfills the desire of all who fear him, he also hears their cry, and saves them. Yahweh preserves all who love him; but all the wicked he will destroy. (Psalm 145:17-20) Amein.

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Sholom Asch and Divine Democracy

From Sholom Asch, *What I Believe*, Putman, New York, 1941.

Luke 18:9. Yahshua spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else, 10. "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. 11. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, Elohim, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. 12. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get.' 13. The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, 'El, be merciful to me, a sinner.' 14. This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up."

Justification

These two men, a rabbi and a tax collector, went into the Temple court to pray. The reason for them being there and doing that was so that each might be justified before the Heavenly Judge. The word "justify" is very important to our faith, and it means, "To free a person of the guilt and penalty attached to grievous sin." Paul defines justification as "saving justice." As disobedient creatures, we must seek out and find our justification before Yahweh if we're to be saved from a wretched end. Paul reminds us that

Romans 5:17-19. It was by one man's offence that death came to reign over all, but how much greater the reign in life of those who receive the fullness of grace and the gift of saving justice, through the one man, Yahshua Messiah. 18. One man's offence brought condemnation on all humanity; and one man's good act has brought *justification* and *life* to all humanity. 19. Just as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience are many to be made upright.

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Of course, the “one” man herein spoken of was Adam, and the second man, Yahshua.

1 Corinthians 15:22. For as in Adam all die, so also in [Yahshua] shall all be made alive. 45. Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living soul,” but the last Adam, a life-giving spirit.

Let us seek complete *justification* – that our guilt might be washed away – that our record might be expunged – that we might go forward to perfection in the body of the life-giving spirit, Yahshua.

The Pharisee

Look at how the Pharisaical rabbi tried to justify himself before the Heavenly Judge. He spoke to Yahweh, comparing his good deeds to those of a man across the room – a tax collector – the agent of Rome. The rabbi saw this man as the chief of sinners, a traitor to the nation, a collaborator and profligate – and he thanked Elohim that he was so wonderfully righteous in comparison. He reminded the Judge that he’d never been greedy, adulterous or unfair, as everyone else had, especially that tax collector. After all, shouldn’t the rabbi be rewarded with justification since he paid his tithes and fasted twice a week? “Aren’t I good boy, Adonai?” he asked as he stuck in his thumb and pulled out a plumb. Although his works were good, the Pharisee was neglectful of the weightier matters of the law. While the outside of the cup sparkled, inside were cucarachas, maggots and decaying flesh. The Pharisee was only fooling himself – he would not be saved.

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The Tax Collector

On the other side of the room, the odious tax collector beat himself up in anguish for his sins. “And though I be unworthy through my manifold sins to offer thee any sacrifice, yet I beseech thee to accept this my bounden duty and service, not weighing my merits, but pardoning my offenses.”

He admitted everything, holding nothing back, and in King James English. He threw himself upon the mercy of the Judge, begging to be sent forth from that holy place as a changed man – justified – pardoned – cleansed – saved.

Yahshua tells his hearers that it was the sinner who was freed from not only his guilt but also his penalty – a death sentence. The Judge reveals himself to be very shrewd and discerning; he’s able to distinguish not only the haughty from the sincere, but also sincerity from insincerity.

You Choose

John tells us,

1 John 1:8,9. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

To put it another way, the rabbi, in trying to excuse himself by proclaiming his good works and upright character in comparison with the low-downer across the room, pronounced sentence on himself. “For the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Yahweh is merciful and compassionate, but he’s also smart enough to know

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what dwells within each man. “For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up.” As it turned out, one sinner’s repentance was a greater work unto justification and salvation than all the good works of the Pharisee put together.

Now when we remember the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector, we’re psychologically forced to put ourselves in the place of one or the other: that of the saint who is rejected or the sinner who is accepted. *Although most want to think we’re somewhere in between, there isn’t that choice* – it’s one or the other, my friend. Or maybe it’s both at once, the filthy polluting all that’s good.

Sholom Asch¹

I use this parable to introduce an essay I discovered this week written by Sholom Asch in 1941. Born in Poland in 1880 and raised in an intensely Jewish environment, Asch acquired an excellent Hebrew education. He became a United States citizen in 1914 and a patriot for his adopted nation. As his career in writing about Jewish life flourished, many of his readers began to wonder just what kind of Jew Asch really was. Why? Because he wrote favorable biographies of Yahshua, of Mary, and of “The Apostle,” right along with more “Jewish” kinds of characters.

I discovered Sholom Asch in a book that’d been lying on someone’s shelf for sixty years. As I read, I was struck by this man’s patriotism, faith and politics, and the fact that the world situation of 1941 that he wrote of was so similar to that of today. So with your permission, the remainder of this message will express his lost thoughts –

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thoughts that I hope will encourage you to do what's right though not necessarily expedient in the days ahead as you seek your own justification before the bar of the Heavenly Court.

Sholom Asch writes:

Man's Sin²

We have all sinned. We are all guilty in the calamity that has come upon us. We have all contributed to the elevation of the demon of evil to the throne of God. Have we Jews lived according to all the prescriptions thoughtfully provided by our wise men ..., or according to the ethical concepts of the Jewish faith? Were we the holy people, the people of the election, which we were bidden to be, and which we persuade ourselves that we are? What shall I answer?

We have commissioned our Rabbis to make a "settlement" for us with the Accountant on High, while we ourselves pursued earthly well-being as the highest good. It may be, indeed, that we have been somewhat more generous than others ..., simply because ... our common suffering has awakened in us a strong feeling of mutual responsibility as a means of self-preservation. But against this, we have been too [boastful], lacking in reserve and modesty both in our acts and in our contacts

I have the right to address this question to the Christians [as well]: has Christian man ... lived according to this faith? Has he suffered, surrendered, died, and been purified in the spirit of Jesus? Have the limbs of the Christian been the vessels of Messiah? How can Christian man lift his hand to do evil if he believes that he is a part of the suffering Messiah and the Messiah is a part of him?

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All of us must beat our breasts in confession. A great Day of Atonement must come over the world. Life must be remolded. Jew and Christian alike must turn back to the origins of faith. We must choose a path of which we can say with the utmost certainty that it is the good path. – God’s path – the only one to be followed. More than at any other time in our history we must be armed morally, so that every one of us may be conscious that he is a defender of those moral goods without which life is not worth the living. Our house must be put in order, and the order must be a just one, so that every one of us is prepared to lay down his life for it.

Such a change within us, such conviction that we stand on the side of God, cannot be the result of ideals emanating solely from the intelligence. One ideal alone can save us – that which is [equated] with faith in God ..., There is no measure of justice other than the justice of God: for justice is truth, and there is one truth, and one truth only.

What I Believe

(1) It is my deepest belief that just as I have a share in the God of Israel through my faith in Him, that I stand under His authority and am included in the promise of redemption, so my Christian brother has his equal share in the God of Israel, stands equally under the authority and is included equally in the promise of redemption: *for he is a son of Israel equally with me*. His faith has made him a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. My rights are his, and I have a share in his religious values as he has a share in mine. Basing themselves on this

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concept of equality, the sons of every faith must justify themselves in [their] works. Man's ladder to [Heaven] is a ladder of works. ...

(2) It is my deepest belief that man has been chosen by God's grace from among all creatures. Apart from the intelligence, which nature has given to every creature, ... man alone among creatures possesses a heart³ that is a part of the endowment from above. Through his heart man stands in mystic contact with heaven. By means of his heart man can acquire intellectual and intuitive powers that are outside the competence of nature ... God guides every individual destiny through the inspiration of the heart. This inspiration is given to each one, and not only to the elect, so that everyone may, in the exercise of his free will, reach to the higher reason ... of the holy spirit. Each one of us can follow in the footsteps of Amos, abandon the flocks, and become a Prophet in Israel. *I believe in the democracy of divine election*; each one of us can become even a Moses.

(3) ... It is further my profoundest conviction that democracy⁴ – in the social system not less than in faith – is God's especial gift to man and resides in the act of grace that God performed for man in choosing him among all creatures. Democracy is interwoven with faith and cannot be separated from God. In having been chosen by God we became the children of God: "For sons are ye of Yahweh Elohim" – all of us, and not just a few individuals. Any other relationship between us and God or between ourselves would contradict the will of the divinity, and would be incompatible with all that has been given to the Jews by Moses and the Prophets, and all that has been given to the Christians by Yahshua and the Apostles. Democracy is "all the law fulfilled in one word, even in this: Thou

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shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Galatians 5:14). This is the foundation that, together with love toward God, was given through Moses, the Prophets, the Pharisees, Yahshua of Nazareth and the Apostles.

"Love thy neighbor as thyself" does not mean that you must be mild in your dominion over [your neighbor]; it means that you shall not have any dominion over him. He is a son of liberty not less than you, and the relationship between you and him can be built only on a system that assumes the rights of all. ... And as democracy is the will of God in relationship between man and man, it is equally his will in the relationship between man and God. ... The divine law was not given to the angels, but to us. It lies before us like an open book. The measure is in our hand.

Hence I believe profoundly that there is no love of God without love of men. Service to mankind is in my view the higher service of the divinity. But service to mankind must not be seen in the throwing of crumbs to the poor; as we are equal in our faith in God, so we must be equal in our faith in man. We must work out a world order that shall rest upon equal distribution of labor and rewards. "The right to happiness" must not remain an empty gesture in our Declaration of Independence; it must be incorporated in the administrative duties of the state. It must be interpreted in the material sense to which men are bound by their nature: in food and clothing and shelter, in the care for the aged, in our regard for widows, for the sick and the weak. ... The inner security of our citizens must become the cornerstone of our independence and freedom; it must become an [unspoken] obligation ...; not because we regard social injustice as

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the most potent instrument of the devil, ... but because without that obligation our professions of faith are as empty as [gamblers'] oaths. (4) It is further my profoundest belief that we must lead a life in faith; that is, we must become ... a holy people. We can be a holy people only in a pure, ethical life ruled by laws and commandments. But no commandments, though they have a thousand eyes ... can purify and sanctify us if the heart of man does not sanctify his life. The heart is a filter for all acts and thoughts. If the heart is sound, man knows that his highest joy is bound up not with [indulgence] and ... uncontrollable passion, but with purity, with modesty, and with restraint.

There is no level of corruption from which man cannot redeem himself, by the exercise of his free will. Whenever he makes an effort at such redemption, he can be certain of help from above. For God's act of creation was not single and unique; it is a continuity of relationship through the individual destiny. I believe, therefore, that for every individual there [may be] salvation, no matter how low he has sunk.

"Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die," saith Yahweh Elohim, "and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" (Ezekiel 8:23)

The heart of man is bound with the divinity through the light rays⁵ of divinity. To the darkest and most horrible retreats to which men have withdrawn from the divinity, a ray of the divinity penetrates. And for this reason we must never despair of a man, much less of a group that is temporarily lost to the divinity. However deep a group has sunk, we must continue to pray for it and help it with our ...

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sympathies. And no matter how deeply we feel that we have been wronged by such, we must exert ourselves to purify our hearts from bitterness.

We were worms in our physical creation; we have become human in our hunger for the divinity. The drink of God ... has enabled us to mount the ladder of Jacob that rises from earth to heaven. If we will endure, and continue the upward path, we will attain to the true salvation of a world that stands under the authority of God through a single, universal redeemer.

The renewal of faith in the divine force of our moral values as our sole hope in the darkness of our night is what I would wish to submit to a suffering humanity. It is America, which has been saved from the worst terrors of the night, which has not been corrupted with the cynicism that has been the undoing of Europe; it is America, young and powerful, blossoming in the virginity of faith, which must become the leading spirit among the nations. It is America, the land which has taken me in, among so many other homeless ones, as a child of her own, which I would like to see as a "light to the Gentiles," leading the world back out of the night into the authority of the one and only God.

Thus ends the sermon by Sholom Asch. It's amazing that an American Jew wrote it over sixty years ago. It's so relevant for believers today. We must go forth as a repentant and justified people – but not just that. We must DO RIGHT in every situation. We must SAY RIGHT in every conversation. We must INTEND RIGHLY in every transaction – and we must THINK before we ACT: "Will what I

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say or do jeopardize my witness? Disprove my claim to love my neighbor? Demonstrate my will above what I know to be the directive of Yahweh? Am I being what Yahshua would be? Am I godly and righteous even in my secret times? Do I prove my diligence before him even when no one else can see? Or am I a Pharisee and a whitewashed tomb? Am I bound for life or death? For heaven or hell? For justice for all or justice for a few? Am I living as a real American, founded on the Commandments of God and the Testimony of Yahshua, powerfully exercising my right to a morally righteous opinion in this crucial time? Am I? What kind of a Believer am I before Yahweh? A Pharisee who talks the talk but is an inward deception? What will I stand up for? Before his judgment bar, what kind of American will I prove myself to be?"

1 Writer, born in Kutno, C Poland. He studied at his local Hebrew school, then moved to Warsaw (1899), where he wrote stories, plays, poems, and novels in Hebrew and Yiddish. He emigrated to New York City (1914) and began as a writer for Yiddish newspapers. His play *The God of Vengeance* (1910) enjoyed great success in Berlin, and several other plays were later produced in the Yiddish theatre in New York. He continued his prolific career as a writer, occasionally in English, but mostly in Yiddish, and although he became a US citizen (1920) and had a home in Florida, he often lived abroad. Most of his works dealt with Jewish subjects, as in *Mottke the Thief* (1917) and *Three Cities* (1933). His most famous books (to English readers) formed a trilogy, *The Nazarene* (1939), *The Apostle* (1943), and *Mary* (1949), in which he attempted to portray Yahshua, Paul, and Mary in a way that bridged Christianity and Judaism, but he so antagonized some American Jews that he moved to Israel in 1956 where he died in 1957. © Crystal Reference 2003.

2 From *The Wisdom of Israel* by Lewis Brown, Random House, 1945.

3 The translator, Maurice Samuel, uses "soul." I have updated it to "heart" to keep the hearer from confusing Asch's concept of soul with the Roman Catholic concept of "eternal soul."

4 Samuel uses the phrase "the democratic principle" throughout. I have used the "democracy" to defuse any political rendering of these passages, or

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the notion that Asch is speaking of the Democratic political party of the 21st century.

5 Or “radiations of divinity.”

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Wee Little Big Man The Rich Ruler and Zacchai, the Tax Collector

Luke 18:9. He spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being upright and despised everyone else, 10. 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. 11. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, 'I thank you, Elohim, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like everyone else, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. 12. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get.' 13. The tax collector stood some distance away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, 'Elohim, be merciful to me, a sinner.' 14. This man, I tell you, went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up."

Luke 18:18. One of the rulers put this question to him, "Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 19. Yahshua said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but Yahweh alone. 20. You know the commandments: You shall not commit adultery; You shall not kill; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; Honor your father and your mother." 21. He replied, "I have kept all these since my earliest days." 22. And when Yahshua heard this he said, "There is still one thing you lack. Sell everything you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 23. But when he heard this he was overcome with sadness, for he was very rich.

Luke 19:1. Yahshua entered Jericho and was going through the town 2. and suddenly a man whose name was Zacchai made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. 3. He kept trying to see who Yahshua was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; 4. so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Yahshua who was to pass that way. 5. When Yahshua reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him, "Zacchai, come down. Hurry, because I am to stay at your house today." 6. And he

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hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. 7. They all complained when they saw what was happening. "He has gone to stay at a sinner's house," they said. 8. But Zacchai stood his ground and said to the Master, "Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount." 9. And Yahshua said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham; 10. for the Son of man has come to seek out and save what was lost."

Luke 3:10. When all the people asked John, "What must we do, then?" 11. he answered, "Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none, and anyone with something to eat must do the same." 12. There were tax collectors, too, who came for baptism, and these said to him, "Master, what must we do?" 13. He said to them, "Exact no more than the appointed rate." 14. Some soldiers asked him in their turn, "What about us? What must we do?" He said to them, "No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!"

Humility and Justification

In the last message ("Sholom Asch and Divine Democracy"), we recall Yahshua's parable about two men praying in the temple – one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee was praying, "I thank you that I'm not like that tax collector over there, grasping, unjust and adulterous." The tax collector was beating his breast, crying, "Be merciful to me, a sinner." Yahshua's point in the story is that whoever raises up self will be humbled; and whoever humbles self will be *raised*. As you know, humiliation before the Almighty is a recurrent theme in the New Testament.

The Pharisee, a righteous man in the eyes of the religious, exalts his own purity before his god; while the tax collector, considered by most to be exactly as the Pharisee had described him – grasping,

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unjust and adulterous – dares not even lift up his head in his humiliation.

Yahshua tells us that the man who begged for mercy was justified; which, you may recall, means “freed of the *guilt* and *penalty* attached to grievous sin.” We all hope to be rescued from the wrath of the Almighty in the future; but we won’t be saved *then* unless we’re justified *now*.

The actions of the tax collector show us how we may be justified before the Supreme Court of Eternity – and justified right now. Consider your ways, and be wise. (The contexts of the humility passages are worth studying for our own personal spiritual development.¹)

The Strange Order of Commandments

As Yahshua and his group go on their way from there, some people they meet illustrate his parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. First, there’s the synagogue ruler² we meet in Luke 18:18; he’s a Pharisee³ and he’s filthy rich. Pharisees just loved money (Matthew 16:14) though they were well aware that

... the love of money is the root of all evils; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced their hearts with many pangs (1 Timothy 6:10).

The Pharisee ruler approaches the Master and asks him what he must do to inherit *ageless life*. Yahshua says to him, “Man, you already know what to do, don’t you?” Then he lists a few of the ten commandments – the commandments Yahshua *knew* the Pharisee had **not** kept – these commandments:

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“You shall not commit adultery; You shall not kill; You shall not steal; You shall not give false witness; Honor your father and your mother.”

The fact that Yahshua doesn't give these commandments in the proper Biblical order is a mystery to scholars. (Do you have a clue as to why not?) But the explanation for his strange order isn't really so hard to figure when you remember that “he knew all men and needed no one to bear witness of man; for he himself knew what was in man” (John 2:25).

You see, *breaking* these commandments in the order mentioned was the ruler's *road to riches*. Only he could have known this – *it was his secret sin* – and Yahshua condemns him *in this secret way* so no one else will understand. No one else but you and me, that is. *We know* how the ruler got so rich. Consider:

- Yahshua recites the *seventh commandment* first, “You shall not commit adultery.” In managing the estate of a rich widow (for that was one of the duties of a synagogue ruler), he seduced her, inveigling himself in her personal affairs and financial arrangements. The ruler was a conniving adulterer.
- Yahshua then goes back to the *sixth commandment*, “You shall not kill.” Having put himself in good stead with his prey's financial portfolio, the ruler murders the widow so he can collect.
- Yahshua then goes to the *eighth commandment*, “You shall not steal.” After doing away with her, the ruler inherits her fortune, dispossessing her family. He is an adulterer, a murderer and a thief.

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- Then Yahshua goes on to the ninth commandment, “You shall not give false witness.” The ruler lies in court about the affair, the larceny and the murder. After all, he’s a smart lawyer and he’s got the case sewed up. He has to call in some favors; but now, through his lie, he can repay.
- Yahshua then slips back to the fifth commandment, “Honor your father and mother.” After the ruler becomes rich, he’s able to pay the corban tax⁴, giving him the legal right to put his aging parents out of their own house and into the street. Like the Crabby Appleton of myth, the synagogue ruler’s rotten to the core.

The Ruler – “All these I kept out”

There must’ve been a great pause as the Pharisaic ruler considered his answer to Yahshua. “Gulp! I’ve kept all these since my earliest days,” he says through the translator of *The New Jerusalem Bible*. But in the original language, there’s a double meaning. He could *also* be saying, “Since youth, **all these I kept out** (εφυλαξα εκ).” “All these commandments I kept out!” This ruler had *almost* everyone snowed. Didn’t he have a diploma? Wasn’t he wearing righteous robes? Wasn’t he leading the community? Hadn’t many looked to him as an example? Hadn’t he fixed the affairs for plenty of widows? Yet the ruler knew *full well* what was in *his own heart*! And what he was *knowing* he wasn’t *showing*.

“Only one little thing you lack then you can have your eternal life,” said Yahshua. “*Sell everything you have and follow me*. As things are right *now*, your prospect of entering ageless Life is impossible – impossible as dragging a camel through a needle’s eye.”

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In ignorance of the true situation and the condition of this man's soul, those around wondered, "Is this not the righteous ruler, who's 'kept' the commandments his whole life, and taught them, and has even financed this synagogue? Selling *everything* isn't even a commandment! If that's what this *magnificent example of entire sanctification* must do to be saved, then *who can be saved?*"

The ruler knows he's a loaded cigar in a banana skin. Yet, with Yahweh, *all things* are possible – even *eternal life for this criminal* is in the realm of possibility. How so? "Give up your ill-gotten gains, repent and follow me," says Yahshua, "and even *you* may gain treasures in Heaven."

Repent and Follow

"Give up all you have!" Wow! *Well, all **he has** is stolen anyway.* He even stole his parents' home and retirement. One can't be justified *or* saved without first paying back. That's what true repentance is all about – pay back. Salvation without restitution is impossible; yet so many try – so many rationalize or marginalize or compartmentalize their sin – so many will not repay:

So many are thinking that Yahweh is winking

Whenever they transgress his Law.

But most will be pacing, regretfully facing

His judgment in those days of awe.

"I know you are thinking that I am just winking

Those times you so willfully sin.

You're sure you're in clover but when you're time's over,

Oy Vay, what a mess you'll be in, be in, be in;

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Oy Vay, what a mess you'll be in!"

This is why I placed the word "repent" into Yahshua's mouth just for you. It's *impossible* to follow him – it's impossible to have life – it's impossible to avoid harsh judgment and punishment – if one doesn't first repent; that is, give it up and turn it around. Without repentance – justification, salvation and eternal life are simply *impossible*. As for following – Yahshua turned plenty of would-be disciples *back* because their sins were scarlet and they simply weren't willing to be washed white as snow. Yes – with Elohim, all things are *possible* for humankind – even death can be swallowed up in victory – but only if people are willing to give it up and turn it around. If this malicious con man killer could turn over a new leaf and be saved, so could you – easily. But he wasn't willing. *You must be willing.*

Now the group leaves the "would-be saint" behind in the dust, continuing to Jericho. "O, well," the rich ruler sighs. He steers his mind to more enjoyable thoughts: to his religion, the angels and heaven. Hobbies are such pleasant and potent distractions!

Wee Little Man

By this time, Yahshua is gaining in favor among the common people, whom he champions. He's a celebrity. There's a large crowd already formed in Jericho for his arrival. One man has an advantage in seeing Yahshua close up because he's very short and able to rush his way through the crowd⁵ like a pro fullback through a defensive line of cabbage patch kids. Having dodged through, he climbs

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the *sycamore tree*. (This *sycamore* is a type of fig tree, giving us a bit of a hidden meaning.) But that's some feat. Did you ever try to climb a fig tree? Who is this wee little big man? Why, *it's the tax collector of Yahshua's parable* – the one who beat his breast in repentance in the temple – the one with whom the wretched Pharisee was favorably comparing himself.

This *treed* tax collector is actually quite famous for he, too, is a ruler – *the king of collectors*. Everybody hated him because hating tax collectors was in fashion then *just as now*. And also, then just as now, many of them were crooks. Yeah, they hated this tax boss even more than they loved the rich, rotten ruler in the last little town. So this diminutive ball of gristle had become a legend in his own time. He's even more famous in *our* time because everyone in the world knows a song about him.

Zacchaeus was a wee little man, and a wee little man was he,
He climbed on top of a sycamore tree, the good Lord for to see.
And as the Savior passed that way, He looked up in that tree,
And He said, "Zacchaeus, you come down!
For I'm coming to your house today!"

"What?" cried some folks there. "The so-called Son of Yahweh's going *into* the house of this famous sinner? We should've known he'd be no more holy than the rest of those con men on *the radical religious right*. He's going for a bribe – why else would he stay with that repulsive, crooked little gnome?"

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He Stood His Ground

I like the way the *New Jerusalem* tells us that Zacchai “stood his ground.” He might’ve been small of stature, but he didn’t get to be the collections king by acting wimpy! If he could fight through the mob, if he could climb a sycamore tree, he could probably knock a few heads together.

(Funny how every time Bible believers stand their ground, some sinner will point a yellow-stained finger and blubber, “You say you’re a Believer! Believers don’t do that! Believers turn the other cheek!”)

Zacchai fearlessly justified himself from the sycamore tree in earshot of every irritating, treacherous critic in Jericho, and the Son of Yahweh, too! He cried,

“You people, call me a sinner if you dare to judge The Righteous One. (For this is what the name Zacchai means.) You were there when John baptized me. Didn’t John say, ‘You with two coats share with those who haven’t any, and you with food, share’? Well, I do far more than that. Yahshua, sir, I give half of everything to poor people – *half of everything*.

“And didn’t John command tax collectors like me to ‘Collect the tax; but no more’? If I take too much, I give back *four times* the difference, far more than required in Leviticus Six.

“And didn’t John command us not to blackmail? You might think me a gruesome elf, but *y’all* know that I could pay to have any of you ‘offed’; but have I ever blackmailed anyone here? No, I haven’t. I’ve done nothing but good for you people when I could’ve done you a whole lotta hurt.

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“Yahshua, sir, have mercy on me! I’ve more than proved that I fulfill the law of love, even though I’m pretty damned mad at my neighbor just now. Amein?”

What’s the Difference

Well, Zacchai sounds a lot like the Pharisaic ruler who boasted in his holiness, and from a treetop at that. Yes, they did sound alike – bragging in their good deeds – claiming to fulfill the Torah and love the neighbor. However, there’s one huge difference. That difference has nothing to do with profession, social class, religious distinctions, or haughty outbursts. *The difference is that the ruler lied about his obedience and the tax collector told the truth.* The Pharisee had made a career of the Torah but not only didn’t keep it, but lied to Yahweh’s messenger.

Zacchai was thought by all to be a wretched sinner because of his job, but he kept the Torah of Yahweh and was thus *justified* before the Law; and he *was justified in justifying himself* when he was cornered by this mob because he was truth-telling. Obviously, Zacchai had, at one time or another, found himself in that temple where no other tax collectors dared go, looking at the ground, and crying out to the Father in Heaven, “Have mercy upon me, *a sinner.*”

And didn’t we determine that Yahshua knew hearts? It wasn’t because Zacchai’s speech was so compelling that Yahshua counted him righteous, but because he knew the tax collector’s heart. “Zacchai, you come down! Let me lift you up! For I’m coming to your house today!”

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“Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. But this tax collector went home again justified; the other did not. For everyone who raises himself up will be humbled, but anyone who humbles himself will be raised up” (Luke 18:10,14).

What Became of Him

Further preaching is futile considering how obvious the morals of these three narratives are; namely, the story of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, the Biography of the Rich Ruler and the History of Zacchai.

What *isn't so obvious* is what became of Zacchai after Yahshua left his house. The Bible says no more. But according to *The Nazarene Acts of the Apostles*, Zacchai didn't only give half his goods to the poor; he ended up giving all and following Yahshua, then Kefa, into *the upper room*.

Clement, who wrote the *Acts*, expressly tells us that Zacchai was called on to moderate the dispute between Kefa and Simon (Magusa) the Magician (Acts 8:9-24). Kefa had laid hands upon Zacchai and consecrated him overseer of Caesarea. Zacchai then became the Magician's pastor. Kefa appointed twelve disciples in Caesarea with Zacchai as overseer, including Lazarus and Nicodemus. (This according to *The Nazarene Acts of the Apostles*.)

In beautiful Caesarea on the Mediterranean Sea, many came to learn of repentance and justification. And who better to teach and baptize these new disciples than the wee little big man who humbled himself before Yahweh and, in due time, was exalted?

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¹ Humility: See Matthew 18:4; 23:12, Luke 14:11; 16:15; 18:14; Philippians 2:3,8; James 4:6,10; 1 Kefa 5:5,6.

² Ruler: (*αρχων, rulers*).

³ Pharisee: The nature of the ruler's answers indicates he was a Pharisee, which was a sect of laity who had no rule against being rich. Sadducees didn't have synagogues and Essenes took a vow of poverty. Jairus in Mark 5:22 was a synagogue ruler, though the type of synagogue isn't mentioned. However, the same word is used for both.

⁴ Corban: "It occurs only once (Mark 7:11). It means a gift or offering consecrated to Elohim. Anything over which this word was once pronounced was irrevocably dedicated to the temple. Land, however, so dedicated might be redeemed before the year of jubilee (Lev. 27:16-24). Our Master condemns the Pharisees for their false doctrine, inasmuch as by their traditions they had destroyed the commandment which requires children to honor their father and mother, teaching them to find excuse from helping their parents by the device of pronouncing "Corban" over their goods, thus reserving them to their own selfish use. -*Easton's 1897*

⁵ Front Row: Luke 19:4 *προδραμων εις το εμποστηεν* - *having run forward into the front.*

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Out of the Napkin, Into the World: The Allegory of the Ten Pounds And the Lost Tribes of Israel

Obadiah 1:15-21; Psalms 122

Luke 19:11. As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of Elohim was to appear immediately. 12. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. 13. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Trade with these till I come.' 14. But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

15. When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. 16. The first came before him, saying, 'Master, your pound has made ten pounds more.' 17. And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' 18. And the second came, saying, 'Master, your pound has made five pounds.' 19. And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.'

20. Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; 21. for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.' 22. He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? 23. Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?'

24. And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.' 25. (And they said to him, 'Master, he has ten pounds!') 26. 'I

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tell you, that to everyone who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 27. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them before me.”

Prayer: Almighty Father, in your tender love for us you sent your Son Yahshua to take up our nature, live a man’s life, boldly ride through the gates, and suffer death upon a tree, giving us the example of his great humility: We love him! Mercifully grant that we may walk in the way of his triumph, his suffering then share in his resurrection. Amen.

Context of the Parable

The reason I chose this allegory is because it precedes “The Triumphal Entry” of Yahshua into Jerusalem, seated on an ass and the foal of an ass, with the people hailing him king, throwing their clothing into the road and waving palm branches. *The colt* he rides is in fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 9:9.

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: look, *your King comes to you*: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and *riding on an ass*, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

Everyone on the Jerusalem road knew this prophecy, making the connection with Yahshua upon the colt. Throwing their clothes in the road and waving palm branches were what

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people did when a new king arrived. They cried the same thing we cry every time we have Passover – “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of Yahweh.” The Psalm writer (118:26) recorded this *cheer* when David came to town a thousand years earlier.

Yahshua speaks about his entry into Jerusalem when he tells the Allegory of the Pounds. But the symbolism goes far beyond a historic event – we find a great deal of meaning for those of us among the found tribes of Israel in our day.

Maurice Nicoll

I'd like to quote the psychologist and author Dr. Maurice Nicoll (d. 1953), who used the *Tov Besorah* as a psychology textbook in the first half of the twentieth century. He writes:

“Everything recorded in the very concentrated account of Christ's teaching has a special meaning. There is not one sentence, not a single word, in the Gospels, that has not meaning totally beyond the literal meaning.” (Nicoll, *The New Man*, 88)

I agree with his conclusion. Nicoll taught that one might *find truth* in the Bible, but that knowing truth often leads one to *cruelty* rather than goodness. In the story of the Good Samaritan, the Levites had the *truth*, but they acted cruelly when they passed the half-dead man on the road. It was the Samaritan, the one who didn't have *the truth*, who stopped to do *the good* deed. Nicoll's conclusion is something like this:

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knowing the truth can lead to good, to doing nothing, or to nailing an innocent man to a tree. *But truth only finds its highest and best expression in doing good.* We may be full of grace and truth, but do we exalt the Almighty in our work or not? There is the good; then there is the perfect.

This is very appropriate wisdom as we learn the Allegory of the Pounds. When those who *know the truth* of the nobleman's *identity* do the right thing, everyone gains. But the one who knows the truth but doesn't do good loses whatever *truth and good* he might have had. In fact, the one servant in the today's story exchanged the truth for a lie in order to justify his own apathy. Dr. Nicoll is quite correct in saying that *every single word* has meaning beyond the literal – every single word.

Defining the Characters

There are many truths to be discovered in the Allegory: Luke says that Yahshua told this tale because he was nearing Jerusalem and the people supposed there would be a political coup and Yahshua would be the new king. This was not the case and Yahshua knew it.

In the story, Yahshua himself is the **nobleman** – he's going into a far country to receive a kingdom. The **far country** is *death* – and the **Kingdom** is the timeless *Kingdom of Yahweh* composed of the qaddoshim of all ages. Now Yahshua tells us

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who the ten slaves (*δουλοϛ*) are in verse 26. The **ten slaves** are *everyone* who heeds his call to the Good News. In Scripture, *ten is the number of the few*. It is also the number of the tribes of “lost” Israel.

The nobleman has ten pounds (literally *minas*): each worth about six months pay (200 denarii = 1 mina) – that’s a large sum for a slave. {This is important:} These **ten pounds** are *pieces of Yahshua* – his Good News – his very being – his Holy Spirit – each pound is disbursed one by one to *ten slaves*, each slave getting the same amount, one pound.

His **citizens** are *Priests, Levites, Pharisees* and *any others who hate* him, but especially *religious leaders* whom he expected would embrace his nobility, since they knew him from the annals of Moses, their lawgiver. *He came unto his own, but his own didn’t receive him* (John 1:11). These citizens send an embassy against him. The **embassy** is *The Roman Embassy – Pontius Pilate*, the Roman Procurator, and his ilk. With the entrance of the embassy, Yahshua, our nobleman, leaves for the **far country**, which we already defined as *death*.

Judging the Slaves

There, our nobleman receives his Kingdom, *and returns*. He’ll now interview only three of those slaves to see what they’ve done with his pound. (Remember that the **pound** represents a *piece of Yahshua*.) The *first slave* reports that he’s gained *ten*

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pounds through trading. The **ten pounds** represent the *ten "lost" tribes of Israel* that Yahshua had come to seek and save (Matthew 15:24). The nobleman's delighted, and tells this slave, "Well done. Because you've been faithful in *very little*, you will have *ten cities*." **Ten cities** represent the *land Yahweh promised the ten tribes* of Israel – and the first slave has brought them home.

The *second slave* is likewise commended. He's made five pounds and given authority over five cities. **Five** is the number of the *nations* – **five cities** gained represent *the nations of the world*. The **second slave** is like those who go outside the commonwealth of Israel to bring **the mixed multitude** into the Kingdom. Hallelujah – they should be us! We're not left alone, but grafted in! Hallelujah again! The second slave stands for anyone *with a missionary calling* to nations and peoples once considered unclean and unapproachable.

Finally, a *third slave* comes forth and offers the nobleman back the pound that he'd been advanced. He's kept it **in a napkin!** Why? Now that he's to be judged, he says, "I'm afraid of you!" Then the third slave *insults* his master, "You reap what you don't sow!" This saying is a grave error; the slave *lies* because he wants to justify hiding his pound in a napkin. The master's already shown that he *does* sow, and he reaps where he sows. He's sowed a pound of *himself* into each slave and reaped; but he didn't gain anything from the third but jive-

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talk. “So *you think* I reap where I don’t sow, eh? Then why didn’t you prove yourself correct by putting *my pound* in the bank?”

Hide a pound in a napkin? How silly. But it’s the key to knowing who the *third slave* represents. The napkin’s wrapped around Yahshua’s head after he’s killed (Luke 23:23 & John 20:7). The third slave wraps a POUND OF YAHSHUA in a napkin. This ***third slave*** represents the *Levites* – those in charge of Temple religion, including Priests and Temple rulers – hundreds and hundreds of them – rejecting Yahshua, then seeing to his death. Wasn’t it the *head* of the Levites, Caiaphas, who declared, “It would be better for one man to die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed” (John 11:50)?

The pound is taken from the third and given to the first slave, who’d made ten. ***This pound*** is the *tribe of Judah* – *Jews* – which is added to the other ten to make eleven tribes of the original twelve. But what is to happen to the ***third slave***, the *Levites* – the twelfth tribe? He is to have nothing – no currency – no favor. Each one in the Levite class, having hidden his pound in a napkin, will be judged by his laxity and excuses; all that he has will be taken away (unless he repents, loves and does the good rather than the evil).

As for ***the citizens*** who hate the nobleman: the crowd who didn’t heed the call, the reprobate who won’t keep the Torah,

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the mocker and scoffer, the persecutor and evil doer, the commandment-breaker and finger-pointer, the lecherous and wasteful – all those who would not have Yahshua reign? Thus saith Yahweh Tsaviot, “Bring them and slay them before me!”

The Embassy Moves In

Forty years after this story was told on the Jerusalem road, one generation after Yahshua was nailed up, four legions of Roman soldiers descended on Jerusalem. The **embassy** had turned on the very **citizens** who’d it relied upon it to kill the nobleman. After laying siege to the city, the Romans laid it bare. Bodies of the dead were stacked like cords of firewood in the streets. Everyone fell by the sword or fire.

General Titus commanded his legions *not to destroy or burn the Temple*. But the legions disobeyed and set it ablaze. Hundreds of Levites ran into the burning temple rather than become Roman casualties. It was so hot in there that the millions of pounds of silver and gold melted – the precious metal liquefied and ran like water out of the cracks in the stone. Soldiers pried these massive stones apart for the boiling loot. When the Roman **embassy** was finished, the Temple, its pounds of money and all inside were totally annihilated and the Temple was in ruins.

An eyewitness tells the incredible story about *the end of the unworthy slave*. When the smoke had risen in thick columns

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and flames leaped through the roof of the Temple's grand structure, one of Levite priests climbed to the top of the highest Temple tower with the *key to the holy place* in his hand. Atop the pinnacle of the Temple, in smoke and flames, he held the key high and cried, "ADONAI! If you no longer judge us worthy to run Your house, take the key back!" It was reported that a giant hand descended out of the clouds of smoke and *took away the key* as the priest succumbed to the flames (Josephus).

I have news for you: the key to the holy place will soon be returned to the faithful, for the King of Glory has it and will bring it back to those slaves awaiting his coming. HalleluYah! "Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh!"

You and Your Pound

You have been given a pound of Yahshua's flesh: the very flesh you may partake of at the bar of communion. Consider: Where is *your* pound? In a dark cave wrapped in a napkin? What have you accomplished with your gifts? What has his love bought you and your love bought him? Have you respected the nobleman enough to invest *what he has already given you* in worthy enterprises to be redeemed for his glory? Have you earned back ten pounds? Five? One? None?

Heaven forbid that on that great day of reckoning, you be embarrassed, make excuses then be slain. Heaven forbid you

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being that *religious Levite* without even a pound or a key to show for it. Heaven forbid you've cheered on the death of the one who came to save your hide or persecuted his servant mercilessly!

But I know you're not among the religious hypocrites! No way! You're the real thing. You know the truth of the Good News; I know you use that truth to do right. *N'est-ce pas?*

A High Note

My friend, now you have your pound: Yahshua says, "Occupy until I come." Since it's a new day, you *have no past* in the eyes of Yahweh. You may begin afresh *and start building capital* toward the Kingdom promise. Don't get me wrong – you don't work to be saved – but you work because you love the Savior. (Although somebody said, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling" Philippians 2:12.) You keep the Torah, work and pray; let the King change you and make you ready for his Kingdom Come. "If you love me," he says, "then keep my commandments. Be perfect as your Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). To take your *truth* and do good is to follow the pathway to holiness and sanctification. Goodness *must show through in every area of one's life* – at work, at play, at home – as well as in the assembly.

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Karol Wojtyla (John Paul II) addressed those in secular work situations, where it's often difficult to be a public servant of the Savior. He says:

Yes, the world needs more saints than reformers, because saints are the most authentic and productive reformers. Every great period of renewal is linked to important testimonials of holiness. Our conviction is that all [believers] are called to share and spread [scriptural] holiness because they are the new creation – the New Man. This is not just for the spiritual elite – no! Not just for the heroically courageous. People must be encouraged to live *every aspect of their life* – whatever circumstances that [Yahweh] has placed them in – in a *holy manner*, in faith, hope and love.

I know that one's true greatness comes from *what one is* rather than *what one does*. We're taught that in seminary. However, *what you are* is confirmed in very great measure by *what you do*. Many may see Yahshua's pound demonstrated in you *through both* who you are and what you do, and be drawn into the noble country. Such witness of *investing truth* in goodness is **true holiness**.

As Dr. Nicoll said, knowing what's true isn't enough. A man, woman or child of Yahweh must get his pound out of the napkin and into the world! It's in the *doing* that the truth may even transform *one's ignoble flesh* to follow the highway of holiness to its terminus. Let all your people see *this new creation* enfleshed in you, my friend, riding through the ancient

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gates upon the foal of prophecy; Let them rejoice in it, raise the palm branch and hail *him* when they behold *you*.

For the nobleman will certainly return in glory with his great and awesome host – Saviors will come forth out of the earth – kingdoms will be established everywhere (Obadiah 1:21) – and Yahweh will become the world’s great *Shalom* forever. This all will be your doing, beloved! “Well done, good and faithful servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you will have authority over ten cities!”

How It Ends

The Allegory of the Pounds ends by saying that Yahshua went on ahead, going up, into Jerusalem, knowing that soon he was departing on that long journey he spoke of in the allegory. Yahshua *did what he had to do* for you.

The messenger became the message and was cruelly tacked to a rude tree so that you could not only *have* a pound of him, but *become* a pound of him. “We wish to see Yahshua,” they said. What is it that people of our day wish? Look around here! These people want to see Yahshua in you! Get out of the napkin, people! Let’s follow him – let’s go up with him – through the gates of the city – and back out again – to Golgotha the skull – to the stake – to the esteem of great and just Kingdoms. Amein.

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Naming Ten Virgins or Five Dumb Virgins

The Epistle of the Apostles excerpts (read in the message)

Matthew 25:1. "THEN THE kingdom of heaven will be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. 2. Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. 3. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; 4. but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. 5. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

6. But at midnight there was a cry, 'Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' 7. Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. 8. And the foolish said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' 9. But the wise replied, 'Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.'

10. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. 11. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, 'Master, master, open to us.' 12. But he replied, 'Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' 13. Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.

The Wedding Ceremony

The most successful movie based on a Broadway musical is *Fiddler on the Roof*. It's the story of the trials and tribulations of a middle-aged Jewish father in the anti-Semitic Ukraine in the early 20th century. Tevye's greatest challenge is trying to find a happy medium between his notions of religious tradition and the modernism of the secular society in which he lived. This tension plays itself out in his attempts to manipulate the weddings of his three virgin daughters, one of whom wants to marry a Communist. If you've seen this movie, then you'll remember the realistic portrayal of the traditional Jewish marriage ceremony with the bottle dances, the canopy and the cry of "Maz'l Tov." Some of you people may want to rent the

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picture *Fiddler on the Roof*; it's clean, factual and entertaining – and it includes a wedding not unlike the one portrayed in today's reading from the Good News.

On the day of a wedding, the bride's attendants, here called "virgins" (παρθενοίς) gather at the home of the bride's parents for a day of celebration that includes singing, dancing, feasting and gift-giving. The same thing is going on at the home of the groom's parents. The bride and groom have separate parties on the wedding day! Then at dusk, the virgins take up their lamps, actually, torches, and then journey by torchlight to the house of the groom's parents. If all goes according to plan, when they get to the groom's parents' house, the friend of the groom cries out, "The bridegroom is coming! Go meet him!"

The groom then leaves the house and enters into the light of the virgin's torches. The virgins escort him back to the home of the bride's parents, where they collect the bride. Again by torchlight, the whole party turns around and retraces its steps back to the home of the groom's parents, where the party goes into the house where the minister is waiting. The bride and groom marry beneath a canopy (*chuppah*), mentioned in *Song of Solomon*: "He brought me to his banqueting table; His banner over me is love."

Seven days of feasting follow the wedding, and the couple lives thereafter in the home of the groom's parents, where the groom and his father have built an extra bedroom onto the house. This extra room is called a "mansion" in some versions of the Bible: "In my Father's house are many mansions." But I suppose to a newly

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married couple, even a spare room might seem like a mansion. Why? Because it's all theirs.

Today's Wedding Awry

In today's parable, the wedding story's played out, but something goes awry. For a young lady to be an attendant is a high honor. Young girls' dreams were made of such occasions. But five of these girls are so caught up in the *honor* of their role that they fail to consider the *duty* of their role. All ten had gone to collect the groom, but he's delayed. He's not ready to leave the revelry of the party to get married! He's having too much fun (or cold feet)! But the groom's tardiness wasn't unusual.

He takes so much time that all ten girls fall asleep. All ten. They awake when they hear the call, "Here comes the groom! Go to meet him!" All ten torches are out; but five of the girls have brought oil to re-ignite their lights. These girls studied other weddings to know that the groom's usually late. They aren't going to miss the thrill because they're unprepared! But the other five girls are dumb, expecting that all would go just as the minister told them! They beg oil of the girls who had brought extra. But these smart girls are not about to lose their chance on account of their foolish sisters.

"Get to the store for more oil, Cindy!" The five dumb girls have no choice but to hurry! If they don't get oil in time, they'll endure a lifetime of embarrassment, a girl's worst nightmare! And where would they find any oil this time of night anyway? But off they go helter-skelter. By the time they return, the smart girls had already escorted the groom under torchlight to the bride's house, picked her

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up, now return to the house of the groom, where they all enter, where the canopy is erect, where the marriage and feast commence, and, of course, where the door is shut and bolted. The five dumb girls returned too late and are barred entry into the great festivity. Think of their disappointment: they hear what is happening inside, but they can only imagine what might have been.

What It Means

What does this mean to us today? The groom is, of course, the Messiah. Like a groom, he will come out of his Father's house to marry his watchful assembly of believers from all ages. The watchword here is "watchful." There will be a great banquet, and, figuratively, the watchful will live in the Father's house in Beulah Land. Watchful believers who have spent their lives in the service of Yahshua and who are eagerly awaiting his return will not be disappointed, though the wait's very long. He will come and fulfill all their hopes at the end-time – our-time.

These ten virgins represent all true believers, a small number, indicated by the number "ten." They are "virgins" because they are cleansed from sin's stain by Lamb's blood. They are virgins because they are justified and regenerated in the waters of baptism. All ten died awaiting the coming of the Messiah. Sleep is a symbol for death. The alarming shout of the groom's friend, "Behold the Bridegroom," is a symbol for the great trumpet, heralding the public appearance of the Messiah. Those of all ages who died in faith will be awakened by the sound.

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The parable indicates that half of these believers, though awakened, will still be barred from going into the wedding chamber. That's a theological problem. Fully half of all believers are awakened but are unprepared to meet the Messiah and they don't get to attend him. In fact, he says, "I never even knew you," to the dumb virgins. This doesn't mean that he knows not who they are or that he hasn't answered their prayers or loved them. What it does mean is that the Messiah has written them off because they hadn't cultivated the tools necessary to rule and reign with him in his Beulah Land.

Notice that unlike in some of the other parables, these dumb virgins aren't cast into outer darkness or tormented. They simply can't get in the door until the door is again opened. When the wedding feast is over, when the festivities wind down, when the marriage is consummated, when the time is fulfilled, the door will again come open. It must! There are to be comings and goings throughout eternity. But in the meantime, many fervent believers will miss out on the greatest experience of all time, the Lamb's wedding.

Two Classes

What do you believe about life after death? I come from Methodism, and the Methodists rightly believe in the bodily resurrection of Yahshua and the resurrection of those who died loving Yahshua. They also believe in the resurrection of all people who ever lived; they will be held accountable for how they used Yahweh's gift of life. Many of us also understand that the Messiah Yahshua will return to reign as King upon the earth, and his watchful

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saints will rule with him as judges, priests, teachers and armed forces. Though Yahshua will be a harsh King, but he will also be compassionate. When he comes, he and his virgins will whip the world into shape until there's peace in every quarter. This is good news in lawless times.

The parable of the ten virgins teaches us that all believers will come back to life, but that they'll fall into two classes: those who are watchful and prepared to rule with him, and those who are saved but not watchful and thus unprepared to rule. Those who have dedicated their lives to watchfulness will enter into the wedding feast; dumb virgins will still be saved from the wrath of the Almighty, but not permitted to enter the house of this authority.

Sand Lot Leaguers

When I was a teen, I loved to play football. I had my own team and we would play just about every weekend, rain or shine, snow or blow. I went to a big high school, and the football team there was the best in the state. I went out for the school team one year. I was a great player. I thought I might as well get some glory for it. I only weighed 150 pounds, but they tried me out as a guard. I was way too small for that position. On my team, I was the quarterback, calling the shots. But as a guard, I didn't like getting knocked around by mindless bruisers. I hated putting on all that armor that was required, even just to practice. I loathed having all those clothes on in 95-degree heat. I sweat like a cold drink on a hot day. So I quit. I loved playing football, but I could play without all the hassle, discipline and armor of the official high school team.

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Our sand lot games were really rough. Players got hurt; some were hospitalized. One of my guys teased a high school team member, calling him a sissy, challenging him to take off all that padding and bring his team down to our field. We'd teach them real football. The first string of the high school team took the bait and came down to our place. We mopped up the field with them. We beat their socks off. No other high school team could beat them, but us neighborhood kids did.

At the end of the football season, a banquet was held for the high school team at the luxurious country club. Every member who had watchfully stayed the year of strenuous training, traveling and endless practicing, was invited. Of course, they took dates, mostly cheerleaders. Even the ugly guys on the team took good-looking girls. The whole school faculty turned out – it was a high profile, formal affair. Huge trophies were handed out to the most valuable players and the most improved. Everybody there was proud, because they were champs.

At least I suppose that's what happened. I wasn't there. I read about it in the paper. Though my team beat the tar out of the champs, none of us was allowed inside the country club door much less on a date with a cheerleader. We were never willing or able to play on their teams or on their terms. We weren't willing to exert the necessary effort or make the required commitment. We didn't want to get all that serious about it. We just wanted to play! But the banquet was not for sand lot leaguers like us.

Do you get the message of my parable?

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Epistula Apostolorum

The wedding chamber of Yahshua's power in the Millennium Kingdom will not be shared by half of the saved in the resurrection, so says this parable. I always wondered what it would actually take to be in the favored group, to be counted among the five watchful virgins. We're all among the ten, we're all saved, but what does it take to make the final cut, to rule and reign? What is this oil that some have and some haven't?

In 1895, an ancient manuscript was found in a dusty library room in Cairo, Egypt and translated. Scholars were amazed to find a new record of the teachings of Yahshua, *The Epistle of the Apostles*. Included in this work is Yahshua's detailed explanation of the Parable of the Ten Virgins. In this Epistle, Yahshua tells the Apostles that these ten virgin daughters of Yahweh are ten traits that reside within the believer. The first five traits are 'awake' in all believers. They are Faith and Love. Of course, we can't be saved at all unless we have faith and love. These two daughters lead us to the other three: Joy, Peace and Hope of eternity. All five of these daughters are gifts from the Father that come naturally when one believes in his Son, Yahshua.

But when the Apostles inquire about the other five, Yahshua replies in this fashion: "Listen up. They are Discernment, Knowledge, Obedience, Endurance, Mercy: these virgins are sleeping in some believers. Since they sleep they can't obey my commandment to watch. They will remain outside..." These traits of watchfulness are lacking in players because these virgins take great effort. They don't come naturally like faith and hope. Discernment must be tested.

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Knowledge must be discovered. One must remain obedient to the commandments of Yahweh and his Son. One must endure to the end. Mercy must be practiced. These five virgins define what it means to be watchful – they are the ingredients of the precious oil that we must have if we are to relight our torches and follow the bridegroom.

The first five, faith, love, joy, peace and hope are tremendous benefits of our salvation, remuneration from the Almighty for our initial commitment to his way. But discernment, knowledge, obedience, endurance and mercy don't come easily or cheaply. They take a life's work, constant rehearsal and extraordinary discipline. It takes all ten virtues to make the first team!

At the end of the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew, Yahshua commands us to 'Watch!' In *The Epistle of the Apostles*, Yahshua further tells us that without making the effort toward discernment, knowledge, obedience, endurance and mercy, we can't be watchful at all. And if we can't be watchful, we may yet be saved, but we'll never get into the feast door because we'll not even know when it's open!

In the text, the Apostles become concerned on account of the five dumb virgins who were barred outside the door. They challenge Yahshua, "Master, it would suit your greatness to extend grace toward these unfortunate sisters." In other words, why don't you just let them in! We ask the same thing. How can we be saved but still not be watchful enough to get into the wedding feast? How is this possible and why? Yahshua had the perfect answer; he replied, "That's none of your business; it's the will of him who sent me, and we are united (*yahad*)."
Yahshua closes the door with these remarkable words: "Though sisters inside may grieve for sisters

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outside, they'll nevertheless rejoice all the more that they've now entered in with Yahweh. Just you remember! There are fully ten virgin daughters of Yahweh Elohim: Faith, Love, Joy, Peace, and Hope; but also, Discernment, Knowledge, Obedience, Endurance and Mercy. Remember and be watchful!"

Bringing it Home

Yahshua told stories like this so that his hearers might be tempted to find their place within them. Listen to me closely now. Let me ask you: Where are you in this parable? Now I speak to those of you who are committed to Yahshua's great coming Kingdom and ready to assist him in his return. You are saved from the wrath of Elohim; you have gone past the elementary stages of the faith and are now working on discernment, knowledge, obedience, endurance and mercy. You are among the smart virgins who have plenty of oil, enough for watching all night. Identify yourself by raising your hand. Don't be shy.

If you have already turned to the Father in repentance in the past and your hope is now in the Sky Kingdom, but you lack discipline, obedience or good works flowing outward as you should at this stage in your development, you are a virgin with no oil. You want to play, but you have not wanted to work. Yes, you are safe in the long run, but in the glory moment, you will find yourself without oil. If you identify yourself as a dumb virgin, you need to rededicate your life anew to Yahshua, be baptized in his Holy Spirit and get serious about your commitment before it's too late. How many identify yourselves

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as being in need of renewal? Raise your hand if you want to get through the chamber door.

Many of you haven't raised your hand up to now. If you can't identify yourself as a "virgin" unto YHWH, or you're not sure, then you must now take an inventory of your life, repent of your sin against Yahweh and your neighbor, and turn to him in surrendering prayer. You must do it today, right now, before you leave. You must! Are you ready? Raise your hand if you are a sinner in need of a Savior. Raise your hand if you don't want to be left behind. Raise your hand. Amen.

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The Allegory of the Ten Standing Stones: Obscure Prophecies of Future Seers

For the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church

(This message is about the prophetic significance of the martyrs sculpted upon the west front of Westminster Abbey in London. The audience should be filled in about their lives before the message is presented. Short histories of each are found in the next essay.)



Wall of Martyrs, Westminster Abbey (London)

Luke 21:5. And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he saith, 6. "As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down." 7. And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" 8. And he saith, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. 9. And when you hear of wars and tumults,

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do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once.”

10. Then he saith to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; 11. there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven.

12. “But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name’s sake. 13. This will be a time for you to bear testimony. 14. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; 15. for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. 16. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and some of you they will put to death; 17. you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. 18. “But not a hair of your head will perish. 19. By your endurance you will gain your lives.”

Hymn, “Stand By Me”

The Great Temple and Ten Standing Stones

And the disciples asked Jesus, “If parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends will deliver us up, and if we shall be hated by all for thy name’s sake, and if we will be put to death, how is it that not a hair of our heads shall perish? And how is it that we shall endure and thus gain our lives if all these great stones are thrown down thither?”

Jesus rebuked his disciples, and began to tell them a parable – the parable of *the ten standing stones*:

“The day shall soon arrive when my Father shall take up these broken and charred stones and lift them up to build again a great

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edifice unto his Name – a house, and a high, mountainous tower unto his glory. For is it not written,

‘It shall come to pass in the latter days that *the mountain of the house of Yahweh* shall be established as *the highest of the mountains*, and shall be raised above the hills’ (Isaiah 2:2)?

“He shall build his house in the land of lost sheep, in the north of the earth, for is it not also written,

‘Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith Yahweh; I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful and I will not keep anger forever’ (Jeremiah 3:12)?

“And there, in the stone *mountain of the house of Yahweh*, the lost sheep of the house of Israel shall gather to hear the word of Yahweh, for is it not also written, ‘and all the nations shall flow to it’ (Isaiah 2:2)?



“Truly I say unto you, many generations of many nations in those days shall proclaim, ‘Let us go up to *the mountain of the house of Yahweh* that he may teach us his ways’ (Isaiah 2:3). Those sheep will return, for they desire with desire to walk in his paths of righteousness. Yea, even kings and queens, generation after generation, shall gain their crowns within its hallowed halls *in my name*; and many people shall venture in and go forth, to and fro from this holy mount, and all over the earth *in my name*, until the great gathering-in comes to pass. For where the body is, the eagles gather.

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“Many eagles shall fall asleep among its great stones and become living stones within its high tower yonder; verily, the righteous prophets of the New Earth shall arise from slumber in this holy place and carry the good news of the kingdom far and wide – even to the ends of the earth. For this good news of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations (Matthew 24:14). And though the earth shaketh and trembleth in the time of the end; though there art wars and rumors of wars; though men’s hearts faileth them for fear – this vast temple shall never fall nor be destroyed. For it is built of living stone upon the chief cornerstone that the builders rejected – yea, this stone, even this body, hath become the head of the corner, as Yahweh decreed.

“In the latter days, Yahweh will set *ten great standing stones* as watchmen and guardians over the gate of *his house* – ‘These are my ten witnesses heralding my word – for all the ages to come,’ saith the Almighty. Ten standing stones – those humble ones who held to the faith even unto the end, when thine adversary the devil toppled them and sifted them like flour. ‘Amen, saith the prophet,

‘when these standing stones finished their testimony, the beast from the bottomless pit made war upon them and conquered them and killed them, and their dead bodies did lie in the street of the great city. And peoples and tribes and tongues and nations without the place gazed upon their dead bodies and rejoiced over them and made merry and exchanged presents, because these living stones had been a torment to them. But after the three and a half days, a breath of heaven entereth into them, and they stood up on their feet in the mount of Yahweh, and great fear fell on those who saw them’ (based on Revelation 11:7-11).

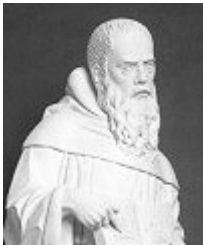
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“This is why these ten standing stones are called *stones of help and awe* – for Yahweh helped them (1 Samuel 7:12). He sent his voice upon the heathen thereby as he declared,

‘I will make ye all standing stones in the temple of my God; never shall ye go out of it. And I shall write upon ye the name Yahweh, and the name of the new Jerusalem that descends out of heaven, and mine own new name’ (based on Rev 3:12).

Then his disciple Philip, who was from Bethsaida in the north of Galilee, saith unto him, “Master, who are these great stones who standeth the watch over the mount of Yahweh, who guardeth day and night the gate so that only the righteous and holy may enter and go out, and what shall be their names?” And Simon surnamed Peter, who was himself a standing stone, saith, “Master, how is it that our adversary the devil will sift them as flour, seeing as how they shall be of stone? Doth he first break them to pieces?”

“The Wheel” - Maximilian Kolbe of Poland



Jesus answered and saith unto them, “Yea, Peter. Thine adversary doth break them and doth grind them, but he destroyeth them not, for our Father in heaven raiseth them up, and *as rock*, such as thou art. The first standing stone shall spy out the left side of the gate – he shall be known as the ‘Wheel Within the Wheel.’ (*Kolbe* meaneth “*piston*.”) The Wheel shall make many disciples and establish an house of charity in that hostile, distant land. He becometh so very influential for the Good News, in all the world, that the Beast shall shut him up in a foul prison with many of

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the sons and daughters of Israel. There, he shall remember the feast of unleavened bread before his brethren, and offer up my body and blood as the life of the world.

“When one prisoner escapes, the ‘Wheel Within the Wheel’ shall then offer up himself upon the altar of sacrifice in the place of this prisoner. His last utterance shall be, “Let me die in this prisoner’s place.” I tell you, greater love hath no man than this, that a man layeth down his life for his friends (John 15:13). But what the “Wheel Within a Wheel” layeth down for his friend, my Father raiseth up and setteth it upon the left pillar in the gate of the house of my God forever. Amen.

Spiritual, “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot”

“The Blood Child” - Manche Masemola of the Pedi Tribe, Transvaal



Then Jesus saith unto them, “The second standing stone shall see comings and goings over the left of the gate, to the right of the Wheel. She shall be a daughter of Israel known as ‘The Child of Sacred Blood.’ (Her tribe, *Pedi*, is Greek for *child*.)

The Child shall be raised in the south of Cush, deep in the wilderness of that land. Indeed, she is just a child when she heareth the words of the Good News, but she believeth and followeth the words, becoming precious to her god.

“Her father selleth her to the unbeliever, but she refuseth going out, holding close to her virginity and vows to the Holy One of Israel. The devil shall tempt her parents until her parents falleth into a furious

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rage against their daughter. Before their parents kill the “Child of the Sacred Blood” in a brutish manner, the Child shall cry out, ‘Father in heaven, baptize thou me in the waters of mine own blood.’ Like wise virgins who keepeth their wicks trimmed, the door to the wedding chamber of the Anointed One openeth unto them, and these blessed children goeth in. Yea, the Child shall go in and be set as a reward over as a pillar in the house of Yahweh forever. Amen.

“Now up, let us go,” saith Jesus. But Judas (not Iscariot) saith, “Master, wilt thou not tell us of the third standing stone?”

“Niger” - Janani Luwum, the Ugandan



Then Jesus saith unto them, “The third standing stone shall stand over the left of yonder gate, at the left hand of the “Blood Child” and the “Wheel.” His name shall be “Niger” and he shall arise in the land south of Put (Acts 13:1). Niger shall a rabbi be, strong in the Scripture and in holiness. He shall preach holiness throughout the land and thus shall become a great Apostle to the people of Yahweh.

“But a little horn shall arise in that dark place; a horn that shall grow exceedingly great toward the south, the east, and the glorious land, even toward the host of heaven. It magnifieth itself, even to the Prince of the host” (after Daniel 8:9-11).

Then the youth John, the brother of James, asketh, “Master, is this the little horn spoken of by the prophet Daniel.”

Jesus saith, “Yeah, my son; this little horn is an unrighteous king, a man of sin and a destroyer of all things righteous, who is destined for

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the Lake of Fire. He shall rule by violence and corruption, setting up a false god, and despoiling many houses of the Most High with the flesh of men sacrificed. Yet Niger will stand up firmly as a stumbling stone against the little horn, encouraging the saints not to conform to 'the powers of darkness.' He shall tell the brethren, "They cometh as one to kill me, but I am not 'afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; for I am among the hallowed host of Yahweh' (Psalm 91:7-9). And Niger shall stand up as a standing stone to guard forever the gate of the great mountain tower of Yahweh.

"Now, up. We shall surely go from this place."

Spiritual, "Fix Me, Jesus"

John Marcus, a Boy

So the disciples followeth Jesus from yon steps of the doomed temple of Herod the King and away, toward the quarters of the "The Way," where they would meet James the Just for bread and wine. As they goeth, the disciples art fearful about the parable of the standing stones, desiring to know more, but daring not to ask of the Master.

John Marcus, a boy who accompanieth Simon surnamed Peter, was not afraid, and he taketh hold of the hem of Jesus' garment, appealing to him, and saying, "Tell us, Master, I pray, tell us more about *the stepping stones*." Jesus deigned not to address John Marcus when he turneth, but Simon Peter instead. "Simon, you have permitted the

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child to come unto me – and I will not hinder him, for to such belongs the kingdom of Yahweh (Mark 10:13). (Jesus speaketh now to John Marcus:) Rightly thou discerneth the parable when thou calleth those *standing stones* ‘stepping stones,’ for many findeth the pathway of righteousness and life through these stones. And so shalt thou, darling boy.”

“The Princess Elisabeth” - The Grand Duchess Elizabeth

Then Jesus saith unto John Marcus, “The fourth standing stone shall guard the center of the gate of glory, on the left hand Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. She will be known as ‘Princess Elisheba’ and she shall be born in the lands of Hessen, but sent on a mission by her Father in heaven to Rosh. There she shall make a marriage to a royal prince and become very strong, making my Father’s name known the world over throughout her generation. The Princess shall heal, and shall give alms at every opportunity; her house shall become known as a house of prayer for all nations.



“But her good works will make her hated by the devil, who sendeth the government to slay her husband the prince with the sword. They shall try to take her life also – commending her into the bowels of a dark pit. As these devilish men she followeth down, she shall cry aloud, ‘Even in the vale of death’s shadow I shall not fear thee, for I am descending into a greater world – that of the poor and suffering.’ Despite the devil’s dark design, she shall indeed stand a princess

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over the royal gate of the tower of Yahweh, a high tower that protecteth the poor and the suffering. Hallelujah.”

“The King” - Martin Luther King

Then Jesus sigheth in spirit, and saith again, “The fifth standing stone shall mind the center of the gate of glory, on the left hand of the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. He shall be known as “The King” and shall arise out from the land of the free and the home of the brave. His father shall be the baptizer of the synagoge at Ebenezer, the stone of help and awe.



“Yahweh sendeth a dream unto the King. ‘I have a dream,’ he shall say unto the lost sheep of the tribe of Judah. From the dream forward, he shall fight persecution, hatred and disobedience with the sword of his mouth. Though he fight, yet he shall win the prize of peace in the land called ‘liberty.’

“But evil and jealous men shall stone him to the death. He remaineth not dead, but liveth on in the spirit to see his dream accomplished, and to become one of the awesome standing stones upon the mountain of the tower of Yahweh. ‘If death of the body is the price I must pay to set my brothers and sisters free from spiritual death,’ he shall say, ‘then let me die that they shall be free.’ Truly, I say to you, among those born of women there has risen no greater than this King; yet he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.”

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Nathanael, a disciple from Cana in Galilee, saith, “Master, how can the least in the Kingdom be greater than the King? Is it not that, in the Kingdom, all shall be equal?”

Spiritual, “He Never Said a Mumbalin’ Word’

“The Savior’s Thunder” - Oscar Romero

Then Jesus answered him, and saith, “Nathanael, Nathanael – you are an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile. Consider thou the words of another prophet from future days who shall say: ‘I must tell



ye all’ (so he will say), ‘I believe not in death apart from the resurrection. If I am killed [for the sake of the Savior], I *shall* arise for the people of the Savior [El Salvador].’ This prophet is the sixth standing stone who shall oversee the gate of

Yahweh’s high tower. He shall be called, “The Savior’s Thunder.” His voice shall be heard in the power of his word through the winds of many great cities. He shall fight injustice and all the wiles of the devil – and shall tear down strongholds for my name’s sake.

“But *his* friend shall be slaughtered by the Beast in that country, and many holy women shall disappear without vengeance being paid. Then when The Savior’s Thunder ministereth in the house of healing, they shall come to do him in, and he shall also die for my sake. Yet his death shall uncover his great work, and lead forth to the healing of the nation. Ye who have ears, hear. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:10).

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At Rest on the Palace Steps

Jesus and his disciples resteth then in the Porches of Herod where they look back to that great temple from whence they'd come. Thomas called "the twin" looketh closely at yonder great stones and trieth to see them broken down and shattered. But the building is magnificent; no vain imagining teareth it down, though its stones appeareth small at this distance.

James surnamed Boanerges looketh the other way – toward the palace of Herod before him – and he trieth to see the forementioned six standing stones above *its* awesome gates. But Jesus, knowing that which is in the hearts of Thomas and James, saith unto them:

"The Good Hope" - Dietrich Bonhoeffer



"Friends, hear the parable of the seventh standing stone shall guard the right side of the gate in my holy mountain, on the left hand of the Thunder, the King, the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. He shall be known as 'The Good Hope,' for he shall send forth good hope to a land in the devil's hand, and he shall send it from behind prison bars. Yea, he will dispute the Beast, even the antichrist, face-to-face, but he shall not presume to pronounce a reviling judgment upon him, but saith instead, 'Yahweh rebuke you'. Though a thousand thousand and seven time a thousand thousand shall perish at thine hand,' he shall say, 'not one hair of one head shall be lost. For my God giveth good hope of the resurrection of the dead, and that speedily, to all who truly love him and obey his commandments.'

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“Then the Beast, even the antichrist, and all the other beasts, ‘heard a loud voice from heaven saying unto to them, “Come up hither!” And in the sight of his foes,’ The Good Hope vanished up into the heavens in a cloud of witnesses.”

Young John, brother of James surnamed Boanerges, payeth careful heed to the parable of the seventh standing stone, for he too would be caught up in the spirit on the Lord’s Day to stand before thrones, elders, angels – and devils.

Now Jesus standeth up from the stones of Herod’s Palace and saith to his disciples, “Sleepers awake, arise from the dead – and we shall go forth to our destination.”

Spiritual, “Nobody Knows the Trouble I See”

“Esther” - Esther John



As they approacheth the place known as the Essene Quarter, where they would take bread, Jesus saith unto them, “The eighth standing stone shall rule over the right side of the gate in the holy tower of my Father’s mountain, on the left hand of the Good Hope, the Thunder, the King, the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. She will be known by the name of the queen of Assyria, even ‘Esther.’

“Esther shall be a daughter of Israel hidden in the land of the Hindis, but my father shall send her a rabbi with these blessed words of life, ‘He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with

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his stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5), and *she will believe his report* (Isaiah 53:1).

“Esther shall teach many of the women slaves to read the Scriptures, keep my word and observe the commandments of my Father; she shall make many disciples in a hostile, foreign land. But because she chooseth to remain a virgin in her ministry, ‘she shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and caused to be put to death. Yeah, Esther shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake’ (Luke 21:16,17). Though hated by man, she is well-beloved in the Kingdom, and shall be a pillar in the house of my God forever.”

“The Musician” - Lucian Tapiedi



Now Jesus and his disciples seeth their destination ahead as they passeth before the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. But before they reach the halls of James the Just, just inside the Essene Gate, Jesus speaketh unto them again; now about the ninth standing stone.

“The ninth standing stone shall guard the right side of the gate in the holy mountain, on the left hand of Esther, the Good Hope, the Thunder, the King, the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. He shall be known as the Musician, for he shall sing forth my name and thus gather many to my Father.

“The Musician shall arise in the far off land of many isles, and be the protector of my apostles who sojourn there in my name. Yea, but the evil host of Javan shall invade their peaceful isle. Then mine elect

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shall flee to the mountains; and they shall depart out; for these shall be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled (Luke 21:21-22).

“And though the Musician shall be innocent and young, a chief of his own people who hateth my name shall take him and his charges and affix them to the torture stake. Yet in death, *he that killeth them seeth my face*, and *he repenteth* of his murders, and *taketh the name* of the Musician, which is Lucian, which meaneth ‘man of brightness’; and afterward *he who did murder buildeth a synagogue* unto my name to bring life back through death. And if thou shalt hear it now, Lucian is the light at the gate of my Father’s tower, so that those who cometh and goeth in and out may see clearly. The light shineth **yet** in the darkness, but the darkness overcame it not” (John 1:5). He who overcometh shall win the crown of Lucian.

Hymn, “Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy”

“The Just One” - At the Abode of James

“Ho, brothers!” crieth James the Just One, for the disciples and Jesus now standeth upon his doorstep. “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price,” crieth James again (Isaiah 55:1). There was much clamor and greeting as they entereth into the house and began to recline at table for their daily bread. Yet before they blessed God, young John Marcus again lifteth up his voice and saith, “Master, shall you leave us with nine of the great standing stones above the gates of the


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mount of your Father? Shall you telleth us not of the tenth pillar in the house of our God?"

But as Jesus was about to rebuke young John Marcus, James the Just breaketh the silence and sayeth, "Young man, let my brother be now, for he is soon going forth to my Father and thy Father. As for the tenth standing stone, I shall tell thee of that matter."

"The Hidden Man" - Wang Zhiming

And James saith unto Marcus and the disciples of Jesus his brother,



"Sirs, the tenth standing stone shall guard the right side of the gate in the holy mountain, on the left hand of the Musician, the Esther, the Good Hope, the Thunder, the King, the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel. He shall be known as the Hidden Man, for he dare not reveal himself before men lest the godless nation smite them all. But in secret, even under the earth, he shall do many good works and teach the Law and Prophets, and the name of the Father in Heaven, until the evil one findeth him and his wife and babes, and smiteth them all unto the death. Yet ours is not the god of the dead but of the living. Amen."

And when the disciples heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine. James continueth in his conversation, "We knoweth not more about the Hidden Man, for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). We shall know him in the day when we take our heavenly flight. And verily I say, he shall know us. Now let us bless the God of Israel."

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The Final Discourse

Now they have yet to bless God, but Jesus saith, "Yea, brother James, I perceive thou art also a prophet, for thou speakest the words of another great pillar in the house of our God – Saulus, who persecuteth thee even now." (The disciples and James wonder, "Is Saulus now among the prophets? Heaven forbid it!" But Jesus saith again,) "Yea, ye disciples, all of ye, verily I say, 'Blessed are ye, when men shall revile thee, and persecute thee, and shall say all manner of evil against thee falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is thy reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before ye' (Matthew 5:11,12).

"Beware – a man's foes shall be of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 10:36-39)

"For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. Verily I say unto ye all, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom (Matthew 16:25-28).

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And Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved leaning on his breast at supper, and saith secretly, "Master, and what shall this man do?"

Jesus saith unto him, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me."

Later, this saying went abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die, but shall be among the standing stones in some great temple of the north. Yet now Jesus saith unto them all,

"Friends, indeed, whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? If thou, Thomas, believest that I AM the one which should come into the world (John 11: 26,27), thou too shalt be a standing pillar in the house of my God, with the Hidden Man, the Musician, the Esther, the Good Hope, the Thunder, the King, the Princess, the Niger, the Blood Child and the Wheel, and all the Holy Friends of eternity."

Then Jesus blessed Yahweh, and blessed the bread and wine, and the disciples and Jesus did eat and make merry, even in the face of persecution and uncertainty. For they were certain of heaven, and the great mountain of Yahweh, a high tower against their enemy, and the marvelous standing stones thereupon, which the feign begin to see, keeping watch over a time, times, and half again a time. Amen.

A Prayer for the Persecuted Church

Dear Father Yahweh,

We know that Yahshua is building his Assembly. We see its evidence as people are coming to Him from every tribe, language, people and nation. We praise you for your redeeming love,

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transforming power and gracious mercy. We know that Yahshua the Anointed One is supreme over all.

Please dear Father, help us fulfill His will and become ONE in spirit. Transform our selfish hearts into hearts that love one another as you love us. We ask for the Holy Spirit to enable us to feel your love for your children, even when it hurts. Give us deep compassion for our brothers and sisters that compels us to pray for them.

Dear Father, we are faced with so many situations that are completely beyond us – whole regions that are oppressed, and nations tearing apart in violent conflict. We confess that many of these terrible situations persist because we have been unfaithful in witness, righteousness, and prayer, without interest in upholding the needs of the suffering and without justice. We repent of our sin, ask for your forgiveness, and seek your mercy for those who suffer.

We pray for our brothers and sisters who suffer under Islamic oppression and jihad, those who live under Communist oppression, those suffering persecution due to rising violent militant religious nationalism, and those humiliated by ridicule, scorn and discrimination because they love and follow You and will not compromise for the sake of personal peace or prosperity. We pray for those in prison and concentration camps, for those who grieve, and for those who are homeless on His account. Father we ask that your Holy Spirit, who is present within each one, will comfort, encourage, revive and counsel them. May they be assured in the depths of their hearts that nothing can separate them from your love (Romans 8:35-39). We ask you Master, to intervene and bring justice to the nations (Isaiah 42:1,4).

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We pray to you, O Father Yahweh, for those who persecute your spiritual temple and mystical body. We know they do this because they do not know you (John 16:3). Please may the Holy Spirit in us help us to love them, pray for them, and be courageous in our witness to them, and pray against them when necessary. We pray that by the power of the Holy Spirit, each persecutor will come under conviction of their sin. We pray for many of those miracles of transformation that turn persecutors into preachers (Galatians 1:23). We pray that you will establish leaders in the nations who will be committed to justice, righteousness, peace and religious freedom so that Believers may live in peace and security and the gospel can be preached to desperately needy lost and dying souls (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Finally we ask that your Holy Spirit will help us to prevail in prayer, not giving up, not distracted, not fooled by the tricks of the devil, but compelled by love into prevailing prayer, with true hearts fully trusting you (Hebrews 12:1-2). For we know that we are ultimately wrestling not with men, or governments, or systems, but we are fighting against principalities and powers of darkness (Ephesians 6:10-18). We know we cannot do this on our own, so we humbly ask for your direction and for your help. Please deliver us from the evil one.

'We do not ask because we deserve help, but because you are so merciful' (Daniel 9:18b). Amen.

Based on Elizabeth Kendal ([WEA RLC](#)) for IDOP 2004 www.idop.org

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Westminster Abbey's Martyr's Row



Stand up for suffering Christians. Take part in the International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church.

Christians face the threat of arrest, beatings, and death every day because they follow Jesus. Their comfort is knowing that the Father will never leave or forsake them, and that you and I are upholding them in fervent prayer.



The twentieth century has been THE century of Christian martyrdom. By conservative estimates, nearly 200,000 Christians die annually as a result of religious persecutions, especially in the Muslim world. That's over 500 Christians dying daily for their faith! (Romans 14:8-9)

In response to such a dramatic rise in worldwide persecution, it was wisely decided to use *the vacant niche above the west door* to commemorate those who gave their lives for their faith in the twentieth century. On July 9, 1998 ten statues of 20th century martyrs were unveiled by the Archbishop of Canterbury in the presence of the Queen, church leaders and representatives from many parts of the world.

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The English Church has done the Christian world a tremendous service in depicting martyrs of several denominations, nationalities and races. Most of these saints were previously unknown. But their stories should be told and their lives celebrated.

THE MOUNTAIN OF YAHWEH - This view of the West Front of Westminster Abbey is one of the best known scenes in the world. The towers of the Abbey were added at the beginning of the 18th century. The lower portion was built in the 13th century, but never completed. The large niche rectangular niche over the door, which appeared to be created to hold statuary of some time, was not filled until the end of the second millennium of Christian worship. **King Henry III** constructed Westminster Abbey in London, an architectural masterpiece, over an ancient Benedictine monastery, in the 13th century. The Abbey is the location of the coronations of every king and queen of England since William the Conqueror in 1066, including Queen Elizabeth. In the last twenty years, the Abbey gained world attention when the marriage of Prince Charles and Lady Diana was televised. Today the abbey is the shrine to and burial place of kings, scientists and great saints of many eras. Christian services continue within the sanctuary daily. A well-prepared visit to Westminster Abbey is not soon forgotten!

THE TEN STANDING STONES

Here are thumbnails of the lives of the martyrs and a closer look at the detail of each statue. The statues were designed then carved from French Richemont Limestone by Tim Crawley, Neil Simmons, John Roberts and Andrew Tanser.

1. THE WHEEL - Maximilan Kolbe was born in 1894 in Poland. At eighteen, he went to Rome to study theology. He and other students formed the *Militia Immaculatae*, an order devoted to good works. In 1927, after returning to Poland, the government allotted the *Militia* a plot of land. There the brothers built a community that became very influential. The ministry expanded to Japan and published many popular journals. Soon after the Nazis occupied Poland in 1939, Kolbe was interned in Auschwitz concentration camp. In the camp he was known to give his food to others (even while he starved), hear confessions and celebrate Communion.



When a prisoner in his cell escaped, Kolbe stepped forward to die in his place. On August 14, 1940 he was executed by lethal injection. Pope John Paul II canonized him a saint in 1981.

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2. THE BLOOD CHILD - Manche Masemola was born around 1913 in Marishane, Transvaal, Africa, of the Pedi tribe. In this time of British and Dutch imperialism, her people were confined to a barren reservation. In 1919, an Anglican mission was established, and Manche first heard the Gospel. She enrolled in Bible classes. When she refused to give up her faith and marry an unbeliever, her parents tried every means to discourage her. When words failed, she was severely beaten. Then on February 28, 1928 her own parents murdered her. A few days later, Manche's younger sister died in the mission hospital of questionable cause. Both children were buried in a



remote area, but memorialized with the planting of trees. Christians made pilgrimages to the gravesites of these sisters over the years. By 1969, Manche's own mother was finally converted through her daughter's witness and baptized.

3. THE NIGER - Janani Luwum, a young schoolteacher, was converted to charismatic Christianity during a revival in his Ugandan village in 1948. Over the course of years, he studied and became ordained as a priest in 1956, an ecclesiastical secretary in 1966 and finally a bishop in 1969. Among those who attended his consecration were Milton Obote, the president of Uganda, and his army chief of staff, Idi Amin. Two years later Amin deposed his predecessor and began a rule marked by terror, intimidation and genocide. Luwum, by then the Anglican Bishop of Uganda, along with Catholic and Muslim leaders, took his stand on February 12, 1976 by personally delivering an official protest against the terrorist tactics of the nation's



security services to Amin. Amin countered by deporting all church leaders but murdering Luwum.

4. PRINCESS ELISHEBA - Elizabeth was born in Darmstadt, Germany in 1864 but came to live under the protection of her grandmother, Queen Elizabeth of England, at a very early age. She married Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, one of the princes of czarist Russia. In 1891, she adapted the Anglican faith of her famous grandmother. The czarist rule of Russia was very oppressive, and a terrorist assassinated her husband in 1905. As a consequence, Elizabeth gave up all her possessions and opened the Martha and Mary home for devout women in Moscow to foster prayer and charity.



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From this work grew many other philanthropic and religious institutions, including hospitals. In 1917, the Communists seized power and thousands of religious people were eliminated. The Czar and other royal family members, including Elizabeth, were exiled to Siberia. On July 17th of that year, the Czar and his family were shot. The next evening, Elizabeth and other sisters of her order were executed in a mineshaft.

5. THE KING – **Martin Luther King** was born in 1929 in Atlanta, Georgia.



His father was the minister of the Ebenezer Baptist Church. As a boy, he experienced the violence of racial hatred and saw the oppression of African Americans at every turn in daily life. He entered Morehouse College in Atlanta at fifteen, then later graduated from Crozier Theological College. King's first appointment was Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama where he became known as a Christian activist for non-violent change in a demonstration against the segregation policies of the local bus company. King believed that violence bred only violence, and love must always reply to hatred. He was hounded by the *status quo* and jailed by the authorities for his stand on such issues.

In the course of time, the Civil Rights Movement in America became a national cause. The epitome of the movement was a march on Washington, DC in August 1963. A Year later, civil rights legislation was passed on a federal level in response. In 1967, King was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Less than a year later he was assassinated in Memphis at the age of thirty-nine in what some now consider to be a government-sponsored murder.

6. THE SAVIOR'S THUNDER –**Oscar Romero** was born in a village in the



mountains of El Salvador in 1917. At the age of thirteen, he declared his intention to become a priest. He completed seminary in the capital city, then went on to Rome and was ordained in 1942. In 1944, he was called back to El Salvador as Secretary of the diocese. In San Miguel, he established many relief organizations, but he became best known for his preaching on radio. By 1977, he was appointed archbishop of all San Salvador. In the same month, soldiers attacked a crowd of protesters in San Miguel. Fr. Grande, a priest, was murdered. There was no inquiry and Romero realized that the government could murder with impunity. He began to document abuses of human rights. The government-controlled press attacked him constantly and viciously. When a succession of priests were murdered, Romero found in their deaths, "testimony of a church incarnated in the problems of its people." In 1979,

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he present seven dossiers describing injustices in El Salvador to the Pope in Rome. Yet the church isolated him. On March 24, 1980, Romero was shot and killed while celebrating Communion in a hospital chapel. "Today the memory of Oscar Romero is cherished by the people of El Salvador, and by countless Christians across the world."

7. THE GOOD HOPE - Dietrich Bonhoeffer was born into a professional family in Poland in 1906. He caused quite a stir when he decided on a career as a Lutheran churchman. In 1930, he came to America to study at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where he experienced conversion while attending the Abyssinian Baptist Church (an *African American* congregation). Disdaining Nazism and the Lutheranism that capitulated, Bonhoeffer moved to Germany and founded an illegal seminary for the anti-nazi Confessing Movement. True discipleship now demanded political resistance against



the criminal state. Bonhoeffer wrote that Christians must live responsibly in the world by God's grace, not by political ideology. In 1943 he was arrested and imprisoned, where he continued to write, smuggling his writing out on scraps of paper. The Nazis hanged him on April 9, 1945, just a few days before the end of the war.

8. THE ESTHER - Esther John was born in Qamar Zia, India in 1929. Her family was Muslim. She attended a Christian mission school and was profoundly affected by the witness of one of her teachers. It was while she was reading Isaiah 53, the Suffering Servant passage, that she found faith in Jesus. When India was divided into Hindu and Muslim regions, Esther and her family moved into the newly created Muslim nation of Pakistan. There she remained a secret Christian. When she was to be married off to a Muslim husband, she fled to the Punjab state and entered a Bible School there. There she began to minister to the women



who were forced to work in the cotton fields, teaching them to read. But her flight from Pakistan and marriage disgraced her family. On February 2, 1960 she was found brutally murdered in her bed, presumably by a family member, though the murder was never solved.

9. THE MUSICIAN - Lucian Tapiedi was born in 1921 in Papua, New Guinea. Tapiedi progressed in mission school so that by 1941 he became a teacher and musician on staff. In 1942, British forces capitulated to the Japanese, and the bishop instructed all missionaries under Japanese occupation to stay at their posts, come what may. There was no way off the

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island. When the Japanese invaded the area of the school, Tapiedi and other missionaries fled into the countryside to evade their enemies. Ten missionaries on the run entered Kurumbo village hoping for sanctuary, but the local tribe was hostile to Christians and one of the tribesmen murdered Tapiedi and two Australian missionaries he was protecting, Mavis Parkinson and May Hayman. This killer later repented and converted to Christianity. He *named himself after his victim* and built a church dedicated to the memory of the martyr.



10. THE HIDDEN MAN - Wang Zhiming was ordained a pastor in the Yunnan province of the Peoples Republic of China in 1951. Between 1966 and 1976, Mao's Cultural Revolution brought repression against anything that was considered old, traditional, intellectual or sacred. The Red Guards, mostly youths, sought to bring a revolutionary society unlike any other in the world. Religion was to be destroyed; Christianity was equated with imperialism. Christians were forced to meet in secret. Little is known of Zhiming except that, as a pastor and educated man, he and his family were arrested and condemned to death in 1969. He was executed in 1973 and his entire family died in captivity. His death caused a riot against the prosecuting officials. In 1980, seven years *after* his execution, Zhiming was declared "rehabilitated" by Communist Party officials.



Global Trends of Christian Persecution

The name of Jesus Christ causes division. A Christian will be persecuted for being counter-cultural, i.e., for being a follower of Jesus Christ in a Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Shinto or Atheist society, or for being righteous in a corrupt, promiscuous and immoral society.

Christians are persecuted worldwide. In some places there is 'active persecution', where authorities are involved and persecution is systematic, operating in accordance with discriminatory and oppressive laws. In other places there is 'passive persecution', where persecution occurs at the community level. The extent of the persecution depends on the nature of the political system. In some countries Christians are protected from severe persecution by good government and the rule of law. In countries where human rights are not respected, Christians lack protection and persecutors appear to have unofficial permission to act with impunity.

Persecution is also an act of spiritual warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18). Through persecution, Satan aims to bury the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13); to snuff out the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16); to silence or

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eliminate ambassadors of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20); to intimidate and weaken the children of God; and to erect a bulwark against the gospel, separating the lost from the Redeemer.

As in Acts 5:17,18 and 6:8-15, Christians may still be persecuted today as a result of jealousy or for political expediency (Acts 12:1-3), but generally Christians are hated and persecuted because the spirit of the world within fallen man is incompatible with the Spirit of God within the believer.

The resurgence of classical pro-jihad Islam.

Islam advanced militarily and ruled oppressively from the 7th Century until it was stopped in its tracks by the emerging power of Europe resulting from the Renaissance, Reformation and Industrial Revolution. Islam suffered its greatest humiliation with the peace settlement following World War I, which saw most Muslim states under Western protectorates and colonial rule. These Muslim states eventually achieved independence at about the same time that Saudi Arabia got access to its oil profits through OPEC, and commenced the global dissemination of its classic, reformed, 'Wahhabi' Islam. The last three decades have seen a phenomenal resurgence of classical pro-jihad Islam. The war in Afghanistan against the Russians in the 1980s stimulated the establishment of a global jihadi force, and ultimately led to the establishment of al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda's aim is to re-establish the Islamic Caliphate under Sharia Law, in order to restore and then advance the Islamic order of dominance established by Mohammad in the 7th Century. The jihad is advancing on Christian populations, and at the same time emerging from within Muslim communities with secular governments.

Confusion surrounding the spectacular growth of evangelical Christianity.

Since 1960, but particularly since 1980, the growth of evangelical Christianity, especially in the non-Western world, has been spectacular. This growth is today being threatened by misunderstandings, by oppressive laws, and by jealousy on the part of traditional religious powers, be they Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or even Orthodox Christian. Some of this opposition can be understood in the light of the rise of Islamic terrorism. It is often assumed that a particular nation's traditional Islam is folk-Islam and nominal, whereas the Islam that incites terrorism is foreign and non-traditional. In line with this logic, traditional Christianity (say, Orthodox) is regarded as acceptable, but evangelical Christianity that is globally connected is perceived as foreign, and therefore a threat to national security.

Tribalism.

Tribalism represents a backlash against globalisation. In its simplest form, the new tribalism consists of a religious and cultural nationalism emerging

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in response to the fear of aggressive Westernisation. Thus Christianity, which is regarded as a manifestation of Western civilisation, is also rejected. The new tribalism glorifies 'traditional' religion. This has led to a proliferation of spiritist sects and occult practices associated with 'traditional' African and Asian religions, and to various forms of paganism in the West. It has also led to a rise in persecution of expressions of Christianity thought to be 'Western', or non-traditional.

This information is in the public domain. I include it here because it is relevant to our belief and cause. Please pray – you may use the prayer I have written above – and offer alms to organizations that track persecution and aid in the deliverance of the persecuted like www.idop.org.