

# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 26, Number 2

March-April 2017

A photograph of a mountain goat standing on a rocky, grassy slope. The goat is the central focus, looking towards the left. The background shows a steep, rocky mountain with patches of green grass and small flowers. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

THE GOAT  
OF COMPLETE REMOVAL

# March-April 2017

Volume 26, Number 2

## 3

**PERSONAL** from *John W. Ritenbaugh*  
Leadership and the Covenants (Part Eight)

## 7

**READY ANSWER**  
Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—  
Satan or Christ? (Part Two)  
BY DAVID C. GRABBE

## 11

**PROPHECY WATCH**  
Scattering and Gathering:  
Images of History and Prophecy (Part One)  
BY CHARLES F. WHITAKER

## 19

**WORLDWATCH**  
Safe Spaces or Dangerous Places?  
The Assault Upon Our Future (Part Two)  
BY JOSEPH BAITY

## 20

**BIBLE STUDY**  
Does I John 5:7-8 Support the Trinity  
Doctrine?  
BY MARTIN G. COLLINS

## Cover

The Day of Atonement ritual in Leviticus 16 includes two goats: one to be sacrificed as a sin offering and the other to bear the sins of the people "to an uninhabited land" (verse 22). These two goats represent two of our Savior's major works: paying the penalty for our sins with His blood and completely removing our sins, not just from sight, but also from memory. On this holiest of days, the focus is completely on Jesus Christ.

*iStockphoto*

Back cover: *iStockphoto*

## Forerunner

**EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**  
JOHN W. RITENBAUGH

**MANAGING EDITOR**  
RICHARD T. RITENBAUGH

**ASSOCIATE EDITORS**  
MARTIN G. COLLINS  
DAVID C. GRABBE

**DESIGN EDITOR**  
KRISTEN M. COLLINS

**NEWS EDITOR**  
JOSEPH BAITY

**CIRCULATION**  
DIANE R. MCIVER

**PROOFREADERS**  
PHYLLIS FORD      CINDY HINDS  
DIANE MCIVER

## CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

JAMES BEAUBELLE  
TED E. BOWLING  
AUSTIN DEL CASTILLO  
DAN ELMORE  
CLYDE FINKLEA  
MIKE FORD  
MIKE FUHRER  
RONNY H. GRAHAM  
WILLIAM GRAY      PAT HIGGINS  
DAVID F. MAAS  
GARY MONKS  
GARY MONTGOMERY  
BILL ONISICK  
JOHN REISS  
MARK SCHINDLER  
CHARLES F. WHITAKER

*Forerunner* is published six times a year as a free educational and religious service in the public interest. Articles, illustrations, and photographs will not be returned unless specifically requested, and if used, become the property of the Church of the Great God. Comments, suggestions, requests, and changes of address should be sent to the nearest address listed below.

This free publication is made possible through the voluntary tithes and offerings of its subscribers and members of the Church of the Great God. All American and Canadian donations are tax-deductible.

© Copyright 2017, Church of the Great God.  
*All Rights Reserved.* Printed in the U.S.A.

## Contact

**UNITED STATES:** P.O. Box 471846, Charlotte, NC 28247-1846 U.S.A.  
803.802.7075 / 803.802.7089 FAX

**CARIBBEAN:** P.O. Box 7004, St. Anns Post Office, St. Anns Rd, St. Anns, Trinidad, West Indies

**FRANCE:** Amicale Ruben, 370 Hameau du Bourg L'Abbé, La Mailleraye-sur-Seine, 76940 France

**THE PHILIPPINES:** No. 13 Mt. Daho, Amityville, Rodriguez, Rizal 1860 The Philippines

**UNITED KINGDOM:** Barnes CCG-UK, Barnham Court Farm, Church Lane, Barnham,  
Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO22 0BP, U.K.  
PHONE 07792 897339

## Web

<http://www.cgg.org>  
<http://www.bibletools.org>  
<http://www.biblicaljesus.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/cgg.org>

<http://www.sabbath.org>  
<http://www.theborean.org>  
<http://www.truegospel.org>

# Leadership and Covenants

## Part Eight

At its heart, Proverbs 14:12—“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”—instructs mankind in a vital truth: No truth is clearer, more direct, and more rewarding than God’s truth. Nobody else’s truth can exceed the reliability of God’s truth, and in fact, it is impossible for Him to lie (Hebrews 6:18). *The Amplified Bible* provides this expansion: “There is a way which seems right to a man and appears straight before him, but at the end of it is the way of death.” Yet, no deception is present when God and His Word are involved.

The word “death” at the proverb’s conclusion is a clue that its instruction deals primarily with a choice of whether to sin in any circumstance. Within Proverbs, this verse is only one among many dealing with the human proclivity to make bad choices motivated by devious carnal desires to get the most and best for the self.

In the first chapter of his book, Solomon admonishes us that we will be confronted with difficult choices on whether to sin:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not consent. If they say, “Come with us, let us lie in wait to shed blood; let us lurk secretly for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them

alive like Sheol, and whole, like those who go down to the Pit. We shall find all kinds of precious possessions, we shall fill our houses with spoil; cast in your lot among us, let us all have one purse.” My son, do not walk in the way with them, keep your foot from their path; for their feet run to evil, and they make haste to shed blood. (Proverbs 1:10-16)

Not every opportunity to choose to sin will be as obviously presented as this one. Yet, we all fall victim to the truth expressed in Proverbs 14:12. Adam and Eve, after being warned directly and personally by God, nonetheless almost immediately did what God had said *not* to do. The urge to satisfy our desires despite warnings exists for us just as it did for Adam and Eve. That we, too, sin after He reveals Himself to us is significant evidence that we truly do not respect and believe God as we should.

A great deal more evidence exists within Proverbs of how deeply pride is engrained in our character, persuading us to forge our way ahead rather than follow the wise counsel of men, let alone that of God. We may not fall into immediate death, but we do fall in achieving the success we had hoped for through carnal impatience, avoiding

## Personal

### Leadership and Covenants

hard work, or even sheer hardheadedness because we refuse to follow sound counsel.

Before moving on, we will expand the instruction in Proverbs 14:12 more explicitly. The verse depicts a person following a path on a journey, which applies directly to all of us because, since our calling, we are on the way of salvation (Acts 16:17; 18:25-26). The Hebrew term underlying “right” more specifically means “straight” or “level,” but it also contains moral implica-

“The way of a fool is right in his own eyes,  
but he who heeds counsel is wise.”  
—Proverbs 12:15



tions. The same Hebrew word is translated in verse 11 as “upright,” clearly showing its moral connotations.

Notice the strength of the scorn the proverb projects onto the traveler: The first phrase of the verse is singular (“a way”), but in the second phrase, it is plural (“ways”). Since no wise, human counsel appears in the context, it is safe to assume that in this case the counsel comes from God. Regardless, the fool will not listen to His advice.

Thus, as he begins to walk, he perceives a way open before him. This path shows promise of delivering happiness, power, and a long life, despite his being warned that things can easily go wrong in many ways with his preferred choice. Even so, he is blinded by his pride from the lesson God is teaching, which is clear: In God’s way of life, there are no shortcuts to success. His instruction must be followed if one seeks to avoid the pitfalls that will arise.

Proverbs 12:15 follows the same basic path of teaching as Proverbs 14:12, reading, “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise.” The *Revised English Bible* [REB] translates this more strongly in alignment with Proverbs 14:12: “A fool’s conduct is right in his own eyes; to listen to advice shows wisdom.” The REB moves the focus from a person merely thinking, which may lead to rejecting counsel, to literal conduct, showing that he clearly rejected the good counsel God made available. Some are so proud that they tend to think of themselves as rarely wrong. In relation to God, the humanist thinks of himself so, always thinking he knows best. Yet, those who really do know God recognize that the humanist is unaware of the weakness of his relationship with God, and thus they know he is foolish.

A third example involves a more specific application but reaches the same conclusion as the others: “The

way of the lazy man is like a hedge of thorns, but the way of the upright is a highway” (Proverbs 15:19). Everybody would love to hit on a “get-rich-quick scheme” to avoid the rigors and slowness of a tried-and-true way. Those in “get-rich-quick mode” love to find ways to cut corners, quickly getting the job completed and the payment in hand.

The proverb colorfully likens such a person’s way to a hedge of thorns. A hedge of thorns, while not life-threatening, is at least irritatingly painful from the hundreds of small wounds that could have been avoided by laboring with wisdom rather than trying to make a quick buck at another’s expense. The ignored wisdom leads to the sluggard

being constantly hindered by obstacles he has himself created. The *Revised Standard Version’s* translation supplies a clear contrast: “The way of the sluggard is overgrown with thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway.”

An element in the proverb that we may easily overlook is that laziness is contrasted with uprightness, a reminder that an element of immorality tinges the sluggard’s sloth. The immorality often manifests in a form of dishonesty, as the sluggard attempts to hide the reality of his indolence in “reasons” as to why he accomplished so little or failed to carry his portion of the load. Again, the instruction aligns with Proverbs 14:12 in that the lazy person’s attempts to avoid work produces penalties. The straight course, the tried-and-true one, is ultimately the easiest to walk and produces the most. That is God’s way.

A fourth proverb, this one in Proverbs 13:14, declares, “The law of the wise is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.” This one succinctly expresses the teaching, not just of Proverbs 14:12, but of the entire book of Proverbs. The figure of a fountain is especially apt when we consider the dryness of Judah’s weather. A fountain or spring may be the difference between life and death, even as wisdom can be at times.

The Hebrew word *torah* underlies “law” in this verse. “Teaching” or “instruction” more literally expresses its meaning rather than “law.” The foolish ignore wisdom for the sake of their carnal desires and plunge toward painful problems—perhaps even death—that they could have avoided if they had only submitted to the truth contained in either God’s or man’s wisdom. *The Living Bible* renders this verse with pointed counsel: “The advice of a wise man refreshes like water from a mountain spring. Those accepting it become aware of the pitfalls on ahead.”

## Catastrophic Costs

These proverbs provide a concise and unambiguous overview of why this world is the way it is. It has not become this way because God hid the reality of His existence and instruction from mankind (see Romans 1:20), but because mankind has chosen to ignore God's reality and the wisdom He has made available to humanity from the beginning. Adam and Eve, representing all mankind, are the case in point. As they did, so we all have done in our days. Ecclesiastes 7:29 tersely summarizes how human life began and what has gone awry since: "Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes."

Virtually everyone who has ever lived eventually asks, "Why is life such a struggle?" Why does life so frequently seem hopelessly mired in what is base and frustratingly difficult? The answer appears in Genesis 2–3. No other section of the Bible so clearly depicts the stark contrast between the idyllic beauty, innocence, and potential for happiness in life in Eden and the shocking judgments God hands down just a few chapters later. The lesson is clear, but mankind still ignores the reality that, as God warned, sin destroys. Despite the advantages it promises, sin entices human foolishness.

From the first chapters of Genesis, we can learn it does not matter whether any other human sees the sin nor what we think about the sin. What matters is what the Creator says. Nothing can change that because what He says is reality—truth. The early portions of Genesis teach us that, when God turned mankind loose following their sins in the Garden, people used their liberty to commit sin even more freely. Almost no one took to heart the lessons contained within the first sins. Humanity continued doing what *seems* right rather than what *is* right.

In Genesis 4, God records the first murder. In this case, it was not one of just any man but of a humble, righteous, believing man—by his flesh-and-blood brother! In

addition, God banishes the murderer from continuing any kind of relationship with Him. Fear rises in Cain's murderous heart, making life even more burdensome for him following his choice that seemed right to him.

God then gives us a brief glimpse into the life of Cain's grandson, Lamech, who, not only has multiple wives, but also boasts of having killed a man. He then warns—following the worst example of his day, his own grandfather—that should any future harm befall him, he will be

even more menacing. We see humanity's problems compounding as the number of ways that seemed right increases. Through these examples, we see that mankind's arrogance, combined with his poor choices contrary to God's instruction, grew rapidly.

## A Slave to Decay and Death

We must not forget that nature, too, is affected by man's self-centered choices. When our first parents sinned, the divine judgment included effects on nature. The apostle Paul presents an overview of this in Romans 8:19–22, in which he personifies creation:

For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope, because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Some of the descriptors Paul uses portray the creation as seeking freedom from the effects of sin, as if it were straining forward in impatient anticipation to see the revelation of the sons of God. The term *futility* (verse 20) more vividly indicates "uselessness" or "emptiness" as the effect of the curse on creation. Overall, Paul exemplifies nature as a slave to decay and death because of sin—transgressions it did not commit but men did, who imposed on it the pains against which it was helpless to defend itself.

If a thinking and believing person ever needs a reminder that everything in life matters, the results of



"There is a way that seems right to a man,  
but its end is the way of death."

—Proverbs 14:12

Adam's and Eve's sins should do the trick. Neither of them ever considered the long-range and long-lasting effects of what they were about to do. God is showing us broadly that there is no such thing as committing a sin in a corner, one that affects nobody else, because everyone and everything are part of the operation God has created. As its sovereign Governor, He actively rules what He has made. Planet Earth almost seems alive at times because everything is so interconnected.

We must avoid thinking of God's creation as being a mere machine. In addition to its amazing resilience and recuperative powers, creation also contains living, thinking, decision-making beings, either helping to maintain it properly or destroying it. Though people of no consequence in seemingly insignificant circumstances commit sins, their sins always create effects beyond the time, the place, and the people against whom they are committed. It is no wonder that Scripture likens sin to leaven. A major lesson here is that none of us lives in a vacuum. If nothing else, earth's Creator is always overseeing it and judging. Though extremely merciful, He is also just.

The lesson of Proverbs 14:12 is this: Only too late do deluded persons who ignore the reality of God and His Word discover that they are on the crowded highway to

taking place was not good. One of the few things God preserved for our learning (Romans 15:4) is of prime importance to us: He gives an overview of how pre-Flood people behaved, how they conducted their lives. It clarifies what triggered the Flood and more besides. Mankind *earned* the Flood through its vile conduct:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man who I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping

thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." . . .

The earth also was corrupted before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. (Genesis 6:5-7, 11-12)

"Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of his thoughts and heart was only evil continually."

—Genesis 6:5

death. What God presents in His Word is not that sinners were tricked, but that they relied too heavily on their own wisdom rather than turning in humility to the God who offers to mankind a way of clear choices—His way.

### Sin Builds, Sanctification Revealed

Approximately 1,650 years passed between the creation of Adam and Eve and the Flood. That is longer than the time Israel existed as a nation from Moses to the days of Jesus Christ, the destruction of the Temple, and the scattering of the Jews over the world. It is longer than the time between Christ and Columbus landing in the West Indies. It is also longer than the time it took the scattered Israelites and Jews, most having forgotten who they were, to settle and form nations in Europe.

More than a millennium and a half is ample time for humanity to compile a unambiguous record of its relentless sinfulness. God made sure He preserved in His Word a reliable source of truth about that long period of increasing human evil. It is information we have considerable use for.

The people living before the Flood lived very long lives. They were every bit as intelligent as we are, and a great deal was happening in their world. Though God records few details, He lets us know that what was

At this forbidding juncture, God reveals a spiritual doctrine that is supremely vital to our daily lives and ultimately to our salvation. If we do not grasp this doctrine and set its seriousness firmly in mind, it will throw off our understanding of who God's elect are, and we will greatly undervalue the degree of accountability and appreciation we owe to God for His mercy.

It is appropriate to dig into this doctrine at any time, but it is especially appropriate now because of the nature of the period we are living through. The Bible itself, combined with the daily news reports, indicates the time of Jesus' return is drawing near. Many believe that we are in the beginning stages of what has been called "the crisis at the close." Consider how similar those pre-Flood times are to our own. As God tells the story in His Word, we are only into the sixth chapter of the first book, and the end of mankind, except for the few who would be spared, was near at hand!

This similarity brings up a critical question for all of us to consider soberly: Who was saved from the devastation of the Flood? Every person did not die in the Flood. We need to think this through because the Flood most definitely came, just as the Tribulation and the Day of the Lord, as prophesied by the same unchanging God for our time, will also surely come.

(continued on page 15)

# Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat— Satan or Christ?

## Part Two

Part One detailed why the two goats in the Day of Atonement ritual (Leviticus 16) were part of a single sin offering. As “the fulfillment of Moses’ teachings” (Romans 10:4, *God’s Word Translation*), Jesus Christ was the object of the whole system of sacrifices. Every sacrificial animal was an unblemished, substitutionary offering that found its fulfillment in His life or death.

In contrast, Satan is not involved in any sacrifice, let alone in bearing the sins of mankind. The identification of the *azazel* as a type of Satan does not spring from Scripture but ancient Jewish literature—specifically from the inventive *Book of Enoch*.

Each of the two goats played a separate role, and lots were cast so the high priest would know which goat was to fulfill which role, as determined by God. The first goat was “for the LORD,” meaning that it was to satisfy His justice as payment for sin (Leviticus 16:8-9). Its specific purpose was to provide a covering of blood for the Holy Place, the Tabernacle, and the altar (Leviticus 16:15-19). The high priest used its blood to purify the holy objects used in approaching God. Even though individual Israelites did not enter the Sanctuary, God still considered it defiled simply by being within the sinful nation. God’s holiness required the accouterments used to access Him to be purified before He removed Israel’s sins each year.

### Bearing the Sin of Many

Most of what happened with the first goat and its blood was out of view of the congregation. More meaningful to the people was what happened to the second goat, “the goat of departure,” which they could watch as it carried their sins out of sight:

And when he has made an end of atoning for the Holy Place, the tabernacle of

## Ready Answer

*Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—Satan or Christ?*

meeting, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat. Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man. The goat shall bear on itself all their iniquities to an uninhabited land; and he shall release the goat in the wilderness. (Leviticus 16:20-22)

One of the best-known Messianic prophecies provides an unambiguous fulfillment of the live goat's bearing of sins:

Surely He has *borne* our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. . . . He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall *bear* their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He *bore the sin of many*, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:4, 11-12; emphasis ours throughout)

Scripture also describes the Messiah's "bearing" of transgression as acceptance, forgiveness, and pardon (Job 42:8-9; Psalm 25:18; 28:9; 32:1, 5; 85:2; Micah 7:18). The Hebrew word means "to lift up," "to carry," and "to take away." It is tied to forgiveness because it is as if He carries the sins out of sight. While the Bible also uses it to refer to what men do—such as "carry" (Genesis 47:30) and "forgive" (Genesis 50:17)—it is never used to refer to Satan.

Christ's bearing of sins goes beyond paying the penalty, fitting perfectly with one of the meanings of *azazel*, "complete removal" (compare Psalm 103:12). In Isaiah 53:12, the bearing is linked with intercession. They are not the same thing, but the parallelism indicates that an active work occurs in carrying the sins until they are completely removed from view, figuratively "as far as the east is from the west."

Along similar lines, God required Aaron to wear a turban with a blue cord on the front so he could "bear the iniquity of the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts" (Exodus 28:38). This was the high priest's responsibility throughout the year, though the turban is

also specifically mentioned in the Day of Atonement ritual (Leviticus 16:4). He symbolically bore the sins of the nation throughout the year, and on the Day of Atonement, he transferred them to the "goat of departure" (Leviticus 16:21), which bore them out of sight.

We see the same thing in the New Testament. I Peter 2:24 says Jesus "Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree." Not only did He bear the sins, but He did it by Himself, just as the *azazel* did (Leviticus 16:22). He did not share that role. The author writes in Hebrews 9:28, "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many." His single and singular sacrifice both cleansed the sanctuary and bore the sins of many.

As an illustration, God had Ezekiel "bear" the iniquities of Israel (Ezekiel 4:4-6). More than ninety times, God calls Ezekiel "son of man," signifying he was a type of the Messiah, who in the Gospels frequently refers to Himself as "the Son of Man." Ezekiel could not bear Israel's sins in the ultimate sense, but in bearing them figuratively, he, like the high priest, represented Christ rather than the Devil.

### Who Is Responsible for Sin?

Scripture plainly teaches that Christ bears our sins, and the next article will expand on His fulfillment of the Day of Atonement ritual. Yet, we introduce grave error if we gloss over either the Bible's general teaching on sin or whose sins, in particular, are atoned for in Leviticus 16.

One error lies in blaming Satan for the sins of humanity, then interpreting the *azazel* to represent Satan bearing mankind's sins. Apocryphal tradition holds that all sin should be ascribed to a fallen angel named Azazel, and even today it is commonly taught that the real cause—the actual author—of human sin is Satan. However, the Word of God shows that this is not true.

There is no question that Satan deceives (Revelation 12:9). He broadcasts his attitudes, and we all have tuned in to them. Ephesians 2:2 establishes that an evil spirit influence is at work in the world today. Paul calls the Devil "the god of this age" (II Corinthians 4:4), and John declares that "the whole world lies under [his] sway" (I John 5:19).

However, "there is a spirit in man" that is the basis of mankind's reason and free moral agency (Job 32:8; I Corinthians 2:11). This biblically revealed truth means that, while a malignant spirit can *affect* the spirit in man, it does not *force* a person to act. This outside spirit gives people terrible information on which to base their decisions, but God says they have enough evidence of

His power and divine nature to make them without excuse (Romans 1:20).

The ancient Israelites did not have God's Spirit, yet He still set life and death before them, commanding them to choose (see Deuteronomy 30:15-20). They had only the spirit in man, but the power to choose was still theirs. Earlier, God had warned Israel, "Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them" (Deuteronomy 11:16). God's admonition shows that if they allowed themselves to be deceived, it was due to their not "tak[ing] heed." They could blame only themselves. Satan exerts influence, sometimes powerfully, but the responsibility to choose life still belongs to the individual.

When we sin, it is not because Satan authors it. James 1:14 says that we sin when we are drawn away by our desires, which give birth to sin (verse 15). We sin because our hearts are not yet like God's heart, which cannot be tempted. The core problem is not what Satan does—though it is certainly problematic—but the desperately evil human heart (Jeremiah 17:9). The solution is a new, spiritual heart like Christ's (Ezekiel 36:26).

### The Soul Who Sins

In John 8:44, Jesus identifies Satan as the spiritual father of those Jews who opposed Him, implying that they had learned how to murder and lie because the Devil was their spiritual father. They were displaying his characteristics, just as children naturally adopt the traits of their parents. Some might seize on this principle to support the idea that Satan is responsible for their sins—except for what the pre-incarnate Christ says earlier through Ezekiel:

Yet you say, "Why should the son not bear the guilt of the father?" Because the son has done what is lawful and right, and has kept all My statutes and observed them, he shall surely live. The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself. (Ezekiel 18:19-20)

God holds the father accountable for his sins, and the children responsible for their sins. The sinning soul bears its own guilt and penalty—death (Romans 6:23). Ezekiel 18 completely nullifies the justification that a child can blame his parents for his faults. Even though parents exert tremendous influence, God's

view of parent-child relationships does not allow this shifting of blame.

Following this through, God will not accept this justification with regard to an individual blaming his *spiritual* father, Satan, even though he also wields considerable influence. According to the repeated principle in Ezekiel 18, Satan cannot bear the guilt of sins committed by a human. He bears the guilt for his own sins, which include deception, but Satan *cannot* make us sin.

In verses 14-17, God even gives the scenario of a son recognizing the sinfulness of his father and choosing to go a different way. The Jews who opposed Christ in John 8 should have done exactly that—realized that the murder and lies in their hearts did not originate with God, then chosen to act differently from their spiritual father.

In Genesis 3:17, God identifies the trigger of Adam's sin as heeding the voice of his wife. In the same way, our sin may also begin with heeding the voice of another (Satan), but he is not the author of our sin, any more than Eve was the author of Adam's sin. Though Adam and Eve played the blame game, God did not accept their excuses. If we hold to the justification that Satan is the real cause of our sins, we are trying to dodge reality, just as they did.

The apostle Paul declares in Romans 5:12 that sin entered the world through one man, Adam. Notice that God does not put the origin of human sin on Satan, but on Adam, even though Satan sinned long before and overtly lied to Eve (Genesis 3:4). This is how God reckons human sin—as difficult as it may be to accept. The overall point in Romans 5 is that, even though the first man introduced sin to mankind, it is through the Son of Man that humanity will be justified and made righteous. Put simply, humanity has made the choice to sin, and Christ *alone* provides atonement upon repentance (Acts 4:12; Matthew 1:21; I Timothy 2:5-6).

A few chapters later, in Romans 7, we find Paul's anguish over his struggle with sin. His conclusion is not that Satan is the real cause—the Devil gets only one mention in Romans, where the apostle writes that the God of peace will crush him (Romans 16:20). Instead, Paul concludes that *he* had indwelling sin. Rather than point the finger at Satan, he mournfully recognizes his sinful state and declares his faith in Christ's work and deliverance (verse 25).

Paul's conclusion suggests that, in addition to Satan being completely unworthy of being represented by a substitutionary sacrifice, it is also wholly incongruous to suggest that the sins of the people belong on Satan's head. Their sins are their own, and Satan's sins are his own.

### The Second Error in Interpretation

The role of the live goat has been interpreted a second erroneous way. Leviticus 16:21-22 states that the sins in view are human sins, yet some propose that what is being expiated is *Satan's portion* of human sin. In other words, in any given sin, the individual plays a part and Satan plays a part, and thus God must deal with Satan's sins after the first goat is offered to cover humanity's sins.

However, we need to double-check that math very carefully. The Bible says nothing about a co-sinner. God does not split up the death penalty, such that a person earns part of the death penalty, while Satan earns the rest.

Leviticus 5:17 says, "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the LORD, *though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity.*" Sinning in ignorance—including transgressing due to deception—does not mean that less of a sin has been committed against God's holy, spiritual law. Regardless of what led to the infraction, when a sin is committed, the sinner earns the wages of sin. There is no concept of a partial sin or divided guilt in the Scriptures. If a sin involves two beings, then *each* has committed sin, and *both* earn the death penalty, as in the case of Adam and Eve (cf. I Timothy 2:13-14). That is the correct biblical math.

Think about this in terms of money. We each incur our own debt when we sin, and the debt is not shared, no matter how we incurred it and no matter who said what. If a generous benefactor pays our debt for us, then we are in the clear. Our debt's cancellation, though, is in no way pertinent to the slick salesman who suggested that we take it on in the first place. The deceiver is responsible for his lies, and we are responsible if we listen to him and make ourselves indebted.

The principle of "the soul who sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4) is why the Bible places such emphasis on drawing near to God, resisting Satan, loving the truth, and guarding ourselves against deception. The danger is not that Satan will make us sin; he cannot force anybody to sin. The danger is that *we* will sin and incur the death penalty by not taking heed. That God gives us so many admonitions means that *we* incur guilt when we let that happen—it is ours, not Satan's.

Symbolically, to represent the guilty party, the substitutionary animal has sins placed on it that are not its own. Obviously, Satan has his own guilt, so he cannot be a substitute for anyone else. The Bible says these

are human sins, and it is fallacious to try to explain away its clear statements.

In addition, *if* Satan were responsible for all human sin, then what would be the need to show a symbolic transference taking place? Under this assumption, the sins of mankind are already on his head! His guilt has never left him, so it does not need to be placed *back* on him. Yet, the Atonement ritual specifies that the sins be placed on an *innocent* party's head—one that is not already responsible for those sins. At every turn, Satan fails to fit into what Leviticus 16 says.

### An Uninhabited Land

Leviticus 16:22 stipulates that the *azazel* must "bear on itself all their iniquities to an *uninhabited land.*" The Hebrew word for "uninhabited land" (*Strong's* #1509; used only here) literally means "a land cut off." It derives from *Strong's* #1504, defined as "to cut down or off; (figuratively) to destroy, divide, exclude, or decide."

Jeremiah, the presumptive author of Lamentations, employs this root to describe the state of death: "The waters flowed over my head; I said, 'I am cut off!'" (Lamentations 3:54). Isaiah 53:8, part of the Messianic prophecy quoted previously, uses it similarly: "He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was *cut off* from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken."

Jesus Christ was cut off from the land of the living; He was taken to "a land cut off." Similarly, Psalm 88, a Messianic psalm, also describes the Messiah as being "cut off" and put into a "land of forgetfulness":

Adrift among the dead, like the slain who lie in the grave, whom You remember no more, and who are *cut off* from Your hand. . . . Shall Your wonders be known in the dark? And Your righteousness in the *land of forgetfulness*? (Psalm 88:5, 12)

These terms are figurative language for the grave, where no thought or memory occurs, nor knowledge or device (Psalm 6:5; Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10). In taking our sins to the "land cut off" and to the "land of forgetfulness," they are not merely paid for but ultimately forgotten.

In common usage, "forget" and its forms indicate activities of the mind. However, in Hebrew thought, "forgetting" goes beyond the mental realm and into that of action, that is, forgetting contains an act that

(continued on page 18)

# Scattering and Gathering— *Images of History and Prophecy*

## PART ONE, GATHERING: GOD'S COMMITMENT TO SAVE

“Gather” and “scatter” make a couple frequently encountered in the Scriptures. In Matthew 12:30, Christ clarifies that, from His viewpoint, gathering and scattering are opposites and are therefore mutually exclusive: “Anyone who is not for Me is really against Me; anyone who does not help Me gather is really scattering” (*Good News Translation* [GNT]; see also Luke 11:23). You cannot do both at once.

However, as Ecclesiastes 3:5 avers, it is possible to scatter and gather at different times.<sup>1</sup> Through the prophet Jeremiah, God announces that He does just that—scatters today and gathers tomorrow: “I scattered My people, but I will gather them and guard them as a shepherd guards his flock” (Jeremiah 31:10, *GNT*). God “scattered over the whole earth” the descendants of Ham, Japheth, and Shem (Genesis 9:19, *New International Version* [NIV]). Later, He scattered the House of Israel, using the Assyrian as His agent

(II Kings 17:7-18). Still later, He employed the Babylonian to scatter the folk of Judah—all but the “poorest of the land” (II Kings 25:12), a pitiful remnant.

Finally, He hired the Romans to disperse the Jews from Jerusalem and surrounding territories. In doing so, they “destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city” (Matthew 22:7). They carried at least some of the accouterments of the Temple service to Rome. Someone disassembled the altar. The blood sacrifices ceased. The *diaspora* commenced in earnest. Yes, indeed, yesterday, God did plenty of scattering.

### SOW FIRST, REAP LATER

Just as surely as the garnering follows the sowing, God gathers into one what He has earlier widely broadcast. Gathering comes after scattering. Deuteronomy 29 and 30 indicate the sequence. The narrative in Deuteronomy 29:22-28 tells us so much about God's gathering of His people:

*“There is a time to scatter stones.  
And there's a time to gather them.”*

—Ecclesiastes 3:5; *New International Reader's Version*

# Prophecy Watch

*Scattering and Gathering: Images of History and Prophecy*

The generation to come—your descendants who will rise up after you, as well as the foreigner who will come from distant places—will see the afflictions of that land and the illnesses that the LORD has brought on it. The whole land will be covered with brimstone, salt, and burning debris; it will not be planted nor will it sprout or produce grass. It will resemble the destruction of Sodom . . . , which the LORD destroyed in His intense anger. Then all the nations will ask, “Why has the LORD done all this to this land? What is this fierce, heated display of anger all about?” Then people will say, “Because they abandoned the covenant of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, which He made with them when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods they did not know and that He did not permit them to worship. That is why the LORD’s anger erupted against this land, bringing on it all the curses written in this scroll. So the LORD has uprooted them from their land in anger, wrath, and great rage and has deported them to another land, as is clear today.” (*New English Translation [NET]*)

The last phrase of verse 28, “as is clear today,” is an important time marker. The GNT renders it, “where they are today.” The *New Living Translation [NLT]* has it, “where they still live today.” Translator Robert Alter puts it, “as on this day.”<sup>2</sup>

In the light of that phrase, consider that the people to whom Moses spoke were not then scattered, not uprooted. Their land was not one of “brimstone, salt, and burning debris.” Nor does that description fit the lands to which the Assyrians exiled the ancient House of Israel, for the areas south of the Caspian Sea are reasonably well-watered. Further, the terminology of the passage cannot describe the lands to which Israel migrated, lands that are among the most favored on earth: the productive lands of Northern Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

By using this short phrase, Moses indicates that he speaks of a “generation to come” (verse 22), one in the distant future, even beyond Israel’s circumstances today. He is seeing into the time of Jacob’s Trouble, when Israel’s land, ravaged by war, would become environmentally degraded in the extreme. Only then, in this period of extreme distress, will the lands Israel occupies come to resemble ancient Sodom, destroyed by God long ago (Genesis 19).<sup>3</sup>

Those of the “generation” of which Moses speaks, whether Israelite or Gentile, understand that the vast desolation they witness is the result of Israel’s idolatry, in violation of the covenant (verses 25-26). Moses

describes a time beyond our present circumstances when God will have “uprooted” apostate Israel from the lands to which He scattered her centuries before, the lands to which ancient Israel migrated. In short, Moses sees a land that has “vomited out its inhabitants” (Leviticus 18:25).<sup>4</sup>

## UPROOTED AND REPLANTED

The verb “uprooted” (verse 28) evokes the striking image of pulling up plants from their roots.<sup>5</sup> It virtually always appears in contexts of God’s wrathful action against a sinning people, as in Ezekiel’s lamentation for the princes of Israel, recorded in Ezekiel 19:10-14:

Your mother was like a vine in a vineyard planted by the water, fruitful and full of branches by reason of abundant water. Its strong stems became rulers’ scepters; it towered aloft among the thick boughs; it was seen in its height with the mass of its branches. But the vine was plucked up in fury, cast down to the ground; the east wind dried up its fruit; they were stripped off and withered. As for its strong stem, fire consumed it. Now it is planted in the wilderness, in a dry and thirsty land. And fire has gone out from the stem of its shoots, has consumed its fruit, so that there remains in it no strong stem, no scepter for ruling. (*English Standard Version [ESV]*)

In verse 12, God angrily plucks up the vine whose stems have grown into “rulers’ scepters,” towering above others. The image of the highly productive, well-watered vine—perhaps “influential” might fit as well—transplanted into a “dry and thirsty land” (verse 13), is reminiscent of the Sodom-like land Moses mentions in Deuteronomy 29:23.

It is clear, then, that Deuteronomy 29 describes God’s *future* scattering, His uprooting of Israelites from their burned-out land during the time of Jacob’s Trouble. This apostasy on Israel’s part, and the resulting furious uprooting, forms the context of Deuteronomy 30:2-4. Here, however, by referring to “you and your descendants” in verse 2, Moses expands his audience to include the people standing before him as well as those of a future generation.<sup>6</sup>

When you have experienced all these things, both the blessings and the curses I have set before you, you will reflect upon them in all the nations where the LORD your God has banished you. Then if you and your descendants turn to the LORD your God and obey Him with your whole mind and being just as I am commanding

you today, the LORD your God will reverse your captivity and have pity on you. He will turn and gather you from all the peoples among whom He has scattered you. Even if your exiles are in the most distant land, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back. (NET)

Deuteronomy 30:3 lists three actions God will take upon Israel's repentance, only the last of which involves any regathering:

1. He reverses, that is, backs out or turns around, the people's captivity.<sup>7</sup>
2. He "turns" (that is, returns) to His people.
3. Once back with them, He (re)gathers them.

The Hebrew text uses the verb *shûb* twice in verse 3, the translators rendering it "reverse" the first time and "turn" the second. It means "to turn back," "to return," or "to go back." Its first use appears at Genesis 3:19, where God tells Adam he will return into the dust from which he came.

The point is this: To God, gathering is a purposeful and overt *reversal* of the current situation. Upon seeing Israel's changed (or changing) attitude—her repentance—God reciprocates by altering His own course, backing out the scattering He imposed earlier. Additionally, God's is not a timid response to Israel's repentance: As He says in verse 4: "If your outcasts are in the uttermost parts of heaven, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there he will fetch you" (*Revised Standard Version* [RSV]). He will go where He needs to go to gather them.

### FETCH, FIDO

For emphasis, Moses uses two verbs at the end of verse 4: "gather" and "fetch." "Gather" is *qâbas*, the most frequently used verb for "gather" in the Old Testament.<sup>8</sup> Of its 127 occurrences, not surprisingly, almost half (60) appear in the Major and Minor Prophets. *Qâbas*' first use is in Genesis 41:35, where Joseph recommends to Pharaoh that he "gather all the food" during the seven years of plenty against those years of famine to follow. God sees gathering as a carefully planned action, diligently, systemically, and methodically executed with sustained discipline. In this case, the gathering is implemented by Joseph, a type of Christ.

The second verb, "fetch," is quite interesting. It is *lâqah*, which means "to take," "fetch," "lead," "conduct," or "carry off." When combined with the

concept of scattering, it carries the notion of assuming active leadership of the returnees. The Hebrew *lâqah* and English "fetch" share much the same meaning. When a dog fetches a stick, he actively runs after it, seeks it out, and then carries it back posthaste. Likewise, in the first use of *lâqah* (Genesis 2:15), God "took" the newly created Adam and put him into the Garden of Eden, as if He led him there. Importantly, this first use carries the notion of leading a person to the best of lands, in this case, the Garden of Eden.

*The Complete Jewish Bible* conveys this notion of active pursuit, saying that God will "go there and get" the people of Israel, restoring them to the Land of Promise. *The Message* carries the same idea: God will "come back and pick up the pieces from all the places where you were scattered." Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, will not delegate the work of regathering, nor will He gather from a distance. Rather, He will go to the nations and lead the remnant back, assertively participating in the gathering process. This "hands-on" aspect of involvement is reminiscent of God's ongoing and never-failing leadership of the Children of Israel in the wilderness by cloud and pillar (see Exodus 13:20-22).

### SEEKING AND SEARCHING

The evident stress on God's personal engagement in gathering suggests another scripture, this one underscoring the purpose of Christ's work: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). The verb "seek"<sup>9</sup> has much the same force as "fetch" or "gather." Its first use, in Matthew 2:13, refers to Herod's seeking Christ as an infant to kill Him. In that passage, the ESV uses the verb "search," indicating Herod's level of commitment to destroying Christ.

Ezekiel 34, where the prophet contrasts the self-indulgent prophets with the selfless One, the Good Shepherd of John 10, focuses on both ideas—seeking and searching:

Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat . . . but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, . . . the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains

# Prophecy Watch

*Scattering and Gathering: Images of History and Prophecy*

and on every high hill; My sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

“Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As I live, says the Lord GOD, because My sheep have become a prey, and My sheep have become food for all the wild beasts, since there was no shepherd; and because My shepherds have not searched My sheep, but the shepherds have fed themselves, and have not fed my sheep; therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: . . . Behold, I am against the shepherds. . . .

“For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I Myself will search for My sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out My sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring

them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land. . . . I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed . . .” (Ezekiel 34:2-13, 16; RSV)

Does this passage stress the importance of seeking *and* searching to the gathering process? Indeed, it does. The Hebrew verb for “gather” appears only once (in verse 13). But, two different verbs for “seek” appear four times and two different verbs for “search” also appear four times—in aggregate, eight searchings and seekings in the passage. God clearly looks for responsible shepherds to seek actively for stray sheep, to the point of searching them out. This is what Christ will do when He sets His hand to gathering His sheep: “After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him” (John 10:4, *NLT*).<sup>10</sup>

Turning to scattering in the next issue, we will learn, at least in general terms, where God will be searching and seeking for the Israelites He gathers.

—Charles F. Whitaker

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this passage, the Hebrew verb translated “gather” (King James Version [KJV]) is *kânas* (Strong’s #3664). It appears 11 times in the Old Testament, where the KJV translators render it “gather” (5x), “gather together” (4x), “heap up” (1x), and “wrap” (1x). Its first use is in I Chronicles 22:2.

<sup>2</sup> The Five Book of Moses, Norton, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> The Hebrew feminine noun translated “overthrow” in verse 23 always refers in some way to the destruction of Sodom: Deuteronomy 29:23; Isaiah 1:7-9; 13:19; Jeremiah 49:18; 50:40; and Amos 4:11. The noun is *mahp̄kâh* (Strong’s #4144).

<sup>4</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural references are to the English Standard Version (ESV).

<sup>5</sup> The Hebrew verb is *nâtash* (Strong’s #5428), appearing 21 times in the Old Testament, the first time in Deuteronomy 29:28. The KJV translators render it “pluck up” or “pluck out” (13x), “destroyed,” “forsaken,” “routed,” “routed up,” “routed out,” “pulled out,” and “utterly” (each 1x). It is not surprising that 11 of the 21 occurrences of *nâtash* appear in Jeremiah—42.9%.

<sup>6</sup> Compare the audience indicated at Deuteronomy 29:22.

<sup>7</sup> This reversal is equivalent, at least in part, to the “rescue” promised by God in Ezekiel 34:10: “I will rescue My sheep from their mouth, so that they will no longer be food for them.” (Several translations use the verb “deliver,” as the New American Standard Bible: “I will deliver My flock from their mouth....”) The Hebrew verb is *nâsal* (Strong’s #5337), appearing 213 times in the Old Testament, the first time in Genesis 31:9. The KJV

translators render it “deliver” (179x), “recover” (5x), rid (3x), “rescue,” “spoil,” “at all,” “take out” (each 2x), along with 16 miscellaneous translations. *Nâsal* also appears in Ezekiel 34:12, 27. It may not be surprising that *nâsal*, referring to the act of delivering, appears a total of 43 times in the Major Prophets (20.2% of its uses).

<sup>8</sup> The verb “gather” here is *qâbas* (Strong’s #6908). The KJV translators render it “gather” (sometimes “gather up,” “gather out,” or “gather together”) (116x), assemble (6x), “heap,” “resort,” “surely” (each 1x), along with seven miscellaneous translations.

<sup>9</sup> The Greek verb is *zēteō* (Strong’s #2212), appearing 119 times in the New Testament, where the translators of the KJV render it “seek” (or “seek for”) (105x), “go about” (4x), “desire” (3x), with seven miscellaneous renderings.

<sup>10</sup> The image Christ uses in Matthew 23:37 suggests His loving care in gathering His Israel:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! (ESV)

The verb translated by the term “gathered together” is *episynagō* (Strong’s #1996). *Episynagō* appears seven times in the New Testament, where the KJV translators render it “gather together” (5x) and “gather” (2x). Its first appearance is here in Matthew 23:37.

(continued from page 6)

Within God’s record of man’s building sinfulness, Genesis 6:8, 13, 18 states:

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD. . . . And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . . But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you.”

The answer to the critical question is that *only those God specifically spared were saved*. He specifically names them. God’s “grace” is the overall general reason, but the specific aspect of His grace that preserved their lives is that they were *sanctified*—set apart—for salvation from the Flood.

In both the Hebrew and Greek languages, the root words underlying “salvation” mean the same thing. Both terms mean “given deliverance,” implying prosperity despite impending disaster. In this specific instance, the impending disaster is the prophesied Flood. God’s first step in delivering some was to sanctify those He chose, Noah and his family.

### Sanctified for Creation and Salvation

Sanctification is of major importance to those of us called into God’s church, as I Thessalonians 4:3-5 points out: “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like Gentiles who do not know God.” *Sanctification* (Greek *hagiasmos*) is the noun form of the verb *sanctify*, which means “to set apart for God’s use, to make distinct from what is common.” Thus, those called into the church are set apart by God, as were Noah and his family, for His glory, for salvation from prophesied disasters, and for becoming like Him.

II Peter 2:5 carries the Flood record further: “[For God] did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood on the world of the ungodly.” Noah and his family faithfully responded, doing what God sanctified them to do. Noah not only built the ark, which

became the physical means of their salvation, but its construction gave them the time and opportunity to explain to the world why it needed to be built. Noah preached to mankind of God, of their sins, and of the prophesied certainty of the Flood if the people chose not to repent.

From this example, we must grasp God’s intention in His sanctification of us. Noah and his family did not save themselves. This example not only fits into this series on the covenants, but it is also helpful preparation for Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread, and the ongoing new creation in our lives (II Corinthians 5:17). Like Noah and his family, we are required to respond faithfully to what God has ordained us to do. We must understand that we are God’s workmanship (Ephesians 2:10), and the responsibilities He assigns are part of His creation of us in His image.

Here is a key question as we continue: Did the salvation God offered Noah also apply to anyone who randomly chose to join him and his family in fulfilling what God specifically required them to do? Absolutely not! *Only the eight whom God sanctified were saved from the Flood*. We need to take another look at a familiar scripture and update this truth about our calling into the church.

Our Savior declares in John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.” We are all aware of this truth to some degree, but do we understand and appreciate the matchlessness of what we have received as thoroughly as we need to for success in our calling?

Did Jesus really mean “no one”? Was He generalizing,



“No one can come to Me  
unless the Father who sent Me  
draws him.”

—John 6:44

or did He literally mean it? Is there always “open season” in terms of salvation, that is, is it accessible to anyone who wants it?

As a point of contention, this doctrine has faded somewhat, but 400 years ago, as the Protestant Reformation ignited, it was a major issue. It is still Catholic Church teaching that from the moment of birth everybody has good within them. It just needs to be developed. So, at any time in a person’s life, all he needs to do is to hear the gospel, agree with what he heard, accept it

because it connects with the good already in him—and he is on his way to salvation, adding to his goodness and holiness by righteous living. The Protestant reformers did not agree, as they believed, in this case, what the Bible says.

This doctrine marks a major division of beliefs between those called “evangelicals” and other Christians. What the Bible teaches on it is mind-bending and humbling. We can see the biblical truths regarding this doctrine unfold by examining what our Savior said Himself, as well as what His apostles added.

“There is none righteous, no, not one;  
there is none who understands;  
there is none who seeks after God.”  
—Romans 3:10



### Humanity’s Resident Evil

Jesus says in Matthew 9:12-13: “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance” (see Mark 2:17; Luke 5:31-32). Everyone—and that term is all-inclusive—whom the Father draws to Christ for spiritual salvation is not good but spiritually sick, a sinner. Additionally, the word “repentance” implies that those brought to Christ for forgiveness and salvation do not possess goodness but are evil, since only those spiritually enabled to see the need to repent would come to Him for spiritual healing. “Good” people would not.

In Romans 3:10-18, Paul adds emphasis to the exposé of mankind’s character:

There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

This passage is a major indictment of mankind. Notice the terms he uses—“none” and “all,” that is, none is

good, all are evil. David, the author of Psalm 14 from which Paul drew Romans 3:10-18, believed this truth a thousand years before the apostle, and in Psalm 14, David attributes this declaration to God Himself. Do we dare accuse God of lying about those He created?

Matthew 19:17 is exceptionally clear: “So [Jesus] said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.” Jesus is plainly stating that, since God is the only One who is good, no one among all humanity can truly claim to possess goodness.

No one’s goodness rises anywhere near the level of God’s goodness. Jesus, however, then explained to the rich young ruler what he needed to do. As God in the flesh, He knew what the young man needed to do to get on the road to godly goodness, so He taught Him.

Matthew 7:9-11 contains a startling portrayal of mankind’s resident evil:

Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being 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?

Mankind is evil! In this case, Jesus did not use *evil* to indicate “essential wicked character,” but more along the lines of “given to do acts of wicked conduct,” indicating an inclination. Though unconverted and not specifically sanctified to be created in God’s image, a worldly person can on occasion do a good thing. Some uncalled people do them consistently. However, doing some good things now and then does not make an individual good by nature. Thus, doing good does not signify that a person is a called, sanctified, and converted child of God.

Jesus explains the root of mankind’s problem in Matthew 15:16-20:

Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile

a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man.

The heart of man is inclined to evil by nature, which is why humanity has behaved as it has throughout history. Jesus clearly exposes the basic evil nature of the heart of man, so the good it does is sufficient neither for carrying out the responsibilities God has laid on those He has sanctified nor for salvation itself. The human heart needs to be changed through a new creation, the spiritual workmanship of the holy God. This new creation is not merely a repair job like fixing a flat tire. The generator of goodness must be good within itself; goodness must be its essential nature.

### A Totally New Heart

King David makes a pertinent assertion about mankind's heart in Psalm 51:7-10, confirming what Jesus says in Matthew 15. He understood a major element of mankind's problem:

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

David grasped the major difference between the hearts of God and humans. He uses the same Hebrew term for "create" as Moses uses in Genesis 1:1, when God created the heavens and the earth. Man's heart does not have the foundational goodness of our holy God's heart.

His primary request in the psalm concerns his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the arranged murder of Uriah. He first craved forgiveness and cleansing of those sins, but he also undoubtedly wanted his heart to be created anew so that he would never repeat such sinful conduct. He desired the nature of his heart in pristine condition so he could truly glorify God. David is asking God to fulfill in him what Paul speaks of in II Corinthians 5:16-17:

Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This renewal of the heart is not simply godly righteousness legally added to a carnal human heart. The

new heart is not merely a repair of the old one. David speaks of an entirely new, clean heart and of a mind generated and motivated by God's Holy Spirit. It is a completely new creation of God, paralleling what Adam underwent as God created him in Genesis 1. Was not Adam a new creation at that time?

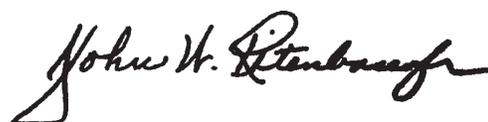
Jesus explains when and how this new creation begins in John 3:1-7:

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'"

Jesus describes the beginning of the process that ultimately leads to salvation and the Kingdom of God. We could also say that this is what triggers a person's calling into the church. He reveals to Nicodemus that the spiritual Creator God must deliberately begin the process. It is not an event that will randomly happen when an individual shows an interest in matters of the Kingdom of God. The new creation will take some time, as the person must be taught of God, experience life in a relationship with Him, and voluntarily cooperate with Him within the relationship.

Spiritually, the Father is totally involved right from the get-go. As the ultimate Creator and Sovereign Ruler, in His salvation process, nothing happens randomly to those He calls. One of the central issues in this spiritual creation is God's sovereignty over His purposes on the one hand, and on the other, as shown by history, mankind's lack of submissive conversion. God, through His creative wisdom and powers within the relationship, must bridge this huge gap. If He is not involved in the birth process from the very beginning, framing us in His image, how can He truly be called our Father?

In Christian love,



## Ready Answer

*Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat—Satan or Christ?*

*(continued from page 10)*

demonstrates that the forgotten thing is no longer a factor. The Hebrew words for *forget*—*shâkah* (#7911) and *nâshâh* (#5382)—mean “to ignore,” “to neglect,” “to forsake,” or “to willfully act in disregard to a person or thing.”

When God forgets our sins, He makes a conscious choice to ignore them—to forsake their occurrence, as it were; to disregard them—so that His actions are not swayed by what we have done. We may still feel other effects from our sins, but as far as God is concerned, He no longer looks at us through the lens of those transgressions. They have been borne away.

Jesus Christ fulfills all aspects of this unique sin offering: His shed blood paid for sin, and He bore those sins to the land of forgetfulness—to the grave—completely removing them from view. Thus, Hebrews 9:28 says that when He appears a second time, it will be “apart from sin.” In Isaiah 43:25, God says, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins.” Isaiah 53:6 states that “the LORD has laid on Him [the Messiah, not Satan] the iniquity of us all.” It is already finished—we are not still waiting for those transgressions to be sent away in the future.

Similarly, under the New Covenant, He promises, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Jesus bore sin out of sight, being cut off. Conversely, Isaiah 14:15-16 shows Satan put in a pit and gazed upon, very much in view.

The *azazel* is led by a “fit” or “suitable” man, who then had to be cleansed (Leviticus 16:26). Similarly, in Matthew 27:1-2, Jesus was bound and led away at the behest of the chief priests and elders. In verse 31, they “led Him away to be crucified” (see also Mark 14:53; 15:1, 16; Luke 23:26). Christ’s well-known petition, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” stands immediately after soldiers led Him to Calvary (Luke 23:32-34). In other words, He appears to be speaking specifically about forgiving those who were leading Him (even though His request would apply to all who participated in His death). In type, the ones leading Him were “cleansed” (forgiven), just like the man who led the *azazel* away.

The common view of Leviticus 16 holds that the goat being led away and released is a type of what happens to Satan. However, neither Satan’s binding (at the beginning of the Millennium; Revelation 20:1-3) nor his being cast into the Lake of Fire (sometime after the Millennium; Revelation 20:10) corresponds with the *azazel* being set free. While not every symbol will necessarily match up in a

spiritual fulfillment, it is hard to see how these things even *begin* to match up. The goat is commanded to be released (Leviticus 16:22), while the fallen archangel is confined, restrained, and (later) cast into fire—completely dissimilar actions. In short, there is no scriptural support for Satan fulfilling the part the live goat plays.

### Christ Is Our Focus

We understand the great danger in underestimating Satan and his influence over the world today, but is there not an even greater peril in ascribing to him the perfect work that Jesus Christ alone can (and did) accomplish? Have we inadvertently made Satan the focus of the most solemn holy day of the year, when our focus should be on the complete work of the Savior?

Recall that the Pharisees, witnessing one of Christ’s exorcisms, attributed the work of the Messiah to the power of “Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons” (Matthew 12:24). In response, Jesus delivered a thunderous warning against blaspheming the Holy Spirit (verses 31-32). Likewise, the proper identification of *who* carries out this work of atonement is critical!

Misunderstanding the *azazel* also gives us an excuse that the source of our problems is Satan. However, Paul identifies “the law of sin and death” working in his members as the source of his wretchedness, never resorting to “the devil made me do it” justification. In Psalm 51, in the great psalm of repentance, David takes full responsibility for his sins and sinfulness, never mentioning that they would be—or needed to be—put on Satan’s head. There is likewise a deafening silence from every other writer of the Bible in ascribing all of humanity’s sin to a fallen angel.

In reality, *sin* separates us from God, not Satan (Isaiah 59:1-3)—and the Devil cannot cause us to sin. He presents his temptations, and *we* choose whether to listen. God commands even carnal men to choose, which would not be possible if the decision of whether to sin were in Satan’s hand. Because sin is the reason for separation between God and man, God accomplishes atonement by dealing with the problem of sin rather than dealing with the presence of Satan. When the Word of God is rightly divided, Satan is nowhere to be seen in the ritual of the two goats. Satan simply is not a part of what God does to make atonement for His people and restore the relationship.

The next article will explore the oft-neglected New Testament explanation of the Day of Atonement ritual and how Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled it.

—David C. Grabbe

---

# *Safe Spaces or Dangerous Places?*

## *The Assault Upon Our Future (Part Two)*

In Part One, we described the contaminated mindset that has overrun the education culture in the Western world with its assault on free speech, conservative values, and critical thinking inside the classroom. This mindset has been percolating within our schools for decades, but with its introduction to the hyper-coddled Millennials—sometimes called the Snowflake Generation—its impact on our culture could reach critical proportions.

Many observers fear the potential for disastrous consequences as snowflake Millennials begin to graduate and move into positions of power and production in our society. While it is common for each generation to live in unwarranted fear of the deficits and flaws of the generations that follow it, we may have finally reached a tipping point in the Age of Man where those fears are more justified.

“The mental state of students is now so precarious for so many,” says Steven Hyman, provost of Harvard University and former director of the National Institute of Mental Health, “it is interfering with the core mission of the university.”

“There’s this idea that speech is violent,” says Jack Foley of the Berkeley College Republicans, “that simply by espousing a view that you don’t like, I am attacking you, I am oppressing you, I am assaulting you. That view is fundamentally incompatible with a Western, liberal democratic society.”

Sara Badge, of the Future Female Leaders movement, denounces the lack of expressive freedom throughout the public educational experience: “[Students’] thoughts and actions are strictly regulated by public school systems, and all of this has resulted in a generation of people that cannot think for themselves and cannot function in society without constant coddling.”

Claire Fox, Director of the Institute of Ideas, decries

this generation’s almost belligerent sense of entitlement. They assume their emotional suffering takes precedence. . . . Speaking at numerous school and university events in recent years, I’ve noticed an increasingly aggrieved response from my young audience to any argument I put forward that they don’t like. . . . Even making a general case for free speech can lead to gasps of disbelief. . . . We need a younger generation that’s prepared to grow a backbone, go out into the world, take risks, and make difficult decisions. Otherwise, the future doesn’t bode well for any of us.

*New York Times* editorialist Bret Stephens, in his commencement address to the class of 2017 at Hampden-Sydney College, admonished:

In the name of being “safe,” students with traditional religious values or conservative political views now feel decidedly unsafe about expressing their views on campus. . . . We are gravely jeopardizing the central task of any serious liberal education.

Moreover, he warns:

Instead of wanting to emerge at last from the cocoons of their “safe spaces,” [these students] want to extend the domain of those spaces into the next stages of their lives. . . . They believe that it is imperative to keep a very safe distance between themselves and the ideas that so disturb them. This is what I fear we are at risk of losing in America today. Too many of our schools are producing students who have never learned properly to engage, understand, or accept an alternative point of view.

Author and clinical psychologist Leon Pomeroy, Ph.D., asks a pertinent question: “Have these students become some sort of canary in the mine of today’s society or civilization itself? Is their behavior indicative of a rising tide of a new form of collective insanity that could spread over time?”

While some observers believe all the criticism and panic to be overwrought, many others, like author and journalist James Howard Kunstler, have even greater fears: “The sanctioning of this deranged hypocrisy is shaping a generation that could easily turn into political monsters when they eventually come into power.” Daniel Greenfield of FrontpageMag.com cautions that “Safe spaces are not where the weak and vulnerable retreat. They are expanding spaces of abuse. From Mizzou to Evergreen, we have seen how the call for safe spaces is a shield for intimidation and violence.”

As we hurtle forward into more troublesome times, the challenges to be faced in the classroom, the boardroom, or the political arena will require greater morality, courage, and leadership skills than, perhaps, ever. Notwithstanding, we are raising and graduating a troubled generation to lead Western civilization through the final days of the Age of Man (Isaiah 3:4-5). Little wonder that many Christians fear the worst.

—Joseph Baity

## Does I John 5:7-8 Support the Trinity Doctrine?

In the New King James Version, I John 5:7-8 reads: “For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.”

The Holy Bible teaches that the God Family currently consists of two fully divine Beings, God the Father and God the Son. However, most nominal Christians believe we should add a third distinct Being, the Holy Spirit, to what is called the “Godhead,” forming a “Trinity,” a term that does not appear anywhere in Scripture. By “rightly dividing the truth” (II Timothy 2:15), one can relatively easily dismiss virtually all the verses used to support this false belief. However, one passage, I John 5:7-8, in four popular translations—the King James, the New King James, the *New Living Bible*, and the *Amplified Bible Classic*—appears to support the Trinity doctrine by using additional verbiage missing from most other translations.

We need to take a close look at these two verses to understand their meaning and how they became corrupted with the extra words. In doing so, we can put to rest any possibility that they might reveal a biblical discrepancy.



### 1. What is the context of I John 5?

**COMMENT:** A recurring theme throughout the apostle John’s writings is the authenticity of Jesus Christ’s testimony that He:

1. was the Creator God—the Son of God the Father (John 1:1);
2. is the promised Messiah (John 1:41);
3. is tasked with announcing the coming Kingdom of God, to provide expiation for mankind’s sins, and to provide a perfect, living example of “the Way,” before being crucified and resurrected (John 1:29; 18:36-37; 14:6; 19:16-37; 20:1-31).

To that end, I John 5:1-5 presents a foundational description of Christ’s followers—those who believe in His authenticity—and how they would display their love for both the Father and the Son and their inspired capacity to overcome the world through their faith.

In verses 6-8, John continues building on this foundation by revealing three of the most significant “witnesses”—all in agreement—to the authenticity of the testimony of Jesus Christ: “the Spirit, the water, and the blood.”

The trouble begins in between, with deceptive language added to verses 7 and 8, again, only in the four previously mentioned translations.

### 2. What is the language added to verses 7 and 8?

**COMMENT:** In the New King James Version, the following *italicized* words were added, apart from the majority of ancient manuscripts: “For there are three that bear witness *in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.*”

### 3. How was this deceptive language added?

**COMMENT:** According to Anthony and Richard Hanson, professors of theology, in their book, *Reasonable Doubt*, the troubling language

was added by some enterprising person or persons in the ancient Church who felt that the New Testament was sadly deficient in direct witness to the kind of doctrine of the Trinity which he favoured and who determined to remedy that defect. (1980, p. 171).

From *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, by Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, we read:

This verse has virtually no support among the early Greek manuscripts, though it is found in Latin manuscripts. Its appearance in late Greek manuscripts is based on the fact that Erasmus was placed under ecclesiastical pressure to include it in his Greek NT of 1522, having omitted it in his two earlier editions of 1516 and 1519 because he could not find any Greek manuscripts which contained it. Its inclusion in the Latin Bible probably results from a scribe incorporating a marginal comment (gloss) into the text as he copied the manuscript of I John. (2008, pp. 540-541)

### 4. Should we consider the possibility of Satanic influence in this case?

**COMMENT:** The wise Christian remains alert to the constant threat of our cunning and beguiling adversary, Satan the Devil, to contaminate God’s truth (II Corinthians 11:3; 2:11; Genesis 3:1; Ephesians 6:11-12). The false doctrine of the Trinity is foundational to many of the aberrant Protestant and Catholic beliefs. It is not by coincidence, then, that deceptive verbiage was added to a passage devoted, not only to proving the authenticity of Jesus Christ as the Messiah, but also to identifying key characteristics of His true disciples. In doing so, the Trinity doctrine is used not only to deceive professing Christians by introducing a false third Being into the God Family, but also to overshadow a major precept of our faith.

—Martin G. Collins