



"The wide world is all about you: you can fence yourselves in, but you cannot for ever fence it out."

—J.R.R. Tolkien

**30-Sep-16**

## **Are These Your Feasts? (Part One)**

As we watch the self-centered insanity growing in a world held captive by the perverted mind of [Satan](#), we perceive that [God](#) has filled—and continues to fill—its positions of leadership with those who, for the most part, are clearly representative of the thinking of all of the inmates in the asylum! When the gifts and blessings of God, given for service to His glory, are thanklessly dissipated on the altar of self-satisfaction, then God slowly removes His hand from the nation, and the insane residents take over the asylum.

"Insane" and "asylum" seem to be appropriate terms because that is what it feels like in a world that [sin](#) has caused to be so fractionalized and violent. The farther removed societies become from the truth of God's Word, the more demanding each individual becomes in claiming "free will" and the right to choose to fit everything and everyone else around them into their own deliriously designed "World of Perfection."

For each individual caught up in this madness, society has devolved into a quest for "the perfect world designed by me, exclusively for everyone who will agree with me!" But the truth is that this is Satan's world, one of

delusion and deception, whose roots reach all the way back to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden ([Genesis 2:17](#)). This earth is a prison, and Satan is its sadistic jailer. The inmates—mankind—do not realize that there is no free will! A prison is designed to take away the freedom of those confined in it.

We must have this important point firmly in mind, as it is the source of how humanity lives in this world. This earth is where Satan and his demons have been confined by God after their rebellion against Him (see [Isaiah 14:12-15](#); [Ezekiel 28:12-17](#); [II Peter 2:4](#); [Jude 6](#)), and man is subsequently being influenced constantly by his lying spirit ([Ephesians 2:1-3](#)).

That we exist side by side with Satan and his demonic forces is one of the main reasons that these days are so dangerous for God's elect, who of all the people on earth have the opportunity now to exercise free-moral agency. Through God's Spirit, we have had the deceptions exposed, and with the guidance of His Word, we can perceive what is actually happening in the world—and act accordingly ([I Corinthians 2:6-16](#); [II Corinthians 3:16](#)). Yet, it is terrifyingly easy to lose focus and become sidetracked by the politics and issues of the day, drifting back into the delusional "Perfect World Designed by Me," and end up in opposition to God's carefully laid out plan and purpose.

The following is a quote from a sermon by John Ritenbaugh titled "We Are Unique":

Why does God allow Satan to blind this world? It is because God is working out His purpose of reproducing Himself through the creation of godly character by means of faith—[faith](#) working together with free-moral agency; and *until God frees us from our blindness to the truth, we are not really free to be able to exercise our free-moral agency*. Because we do not know where God is, we do not know what God's true purpose is, we do not know the way that is going to lead us to the completion of that purpose. And so He begins to open these things up, and then we have the free-moral agency by faith! . . .

God works us into a position where we are free to make the choice in a way that others who do not have the truth revealed to them are not free. He has removed the scales, but it is not a one-time thing, and it is not all done at once. But rather it is something that progresses, each one of us at a different rate, at the rate with which we are capable of using it. However, He always puts us in a position where we have to make a conscious choice; otherwise, we are not [living by faith](#). Otherwise, the character is not going to be built. (Emphasis ours.)

With this in mind, it is important for us to understand that the Father has put the saints—those whose citizenship is in heaven—into exactly the place [Jesus Christ](#) requested of His Father the night before He paid the ultimate price on our behalf. He asked the Father to put us into a relationship with the Father and Himself that allowed us to have true free-moral agency:

But now I come to You, and these things I speak in [the world](#), that they may have My [joy](#) fulfilled in themselves. I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth. As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. ([John 17:13-19](#))

So what are the choices we are to make with this great gift of true free-moral agency while living within this "prison of disobedience, where God has penned all men together" ([Romans 11:32](#); J.B. Phillips' translation)? The answer, of course, lies within Jesus' additional request for sanctification to take place through the words of truth and our living in accord with that truth, as only those with true free-moral agency can! Within the Body of Christ, where final judgment has begun, these choices must be made.

In Part Two, we will see how these principles apply both to the upcoming election and to our keeping of God's fall festivals.

- Mark Schindler

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## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[How Satan Destroys Faith](#)**

by John W. Ritenbaugh

If our faith had been strong over the past 20 years, we would not have been scattered. Because we behave and make choices on what we believe, any affront to the belief system will alter our choices and behavior, placing us on a destructive trajectory. Satan's chief strategy is subtle deception, planting doubts by subtle little half-truths, equivocations, and deliberate lies. Among the lies Satan has foisted off on the world are: (1) God is weak and ineffectual (as seen in effeminate pictures of Jesus, crucifixes, etc.) (2) God is disinterested and has gone off somewhere. (3) God is so merciful that anything goes (we aren't obligated to keep His law). (4) Sin is pleasurable and leads to prosperity. (5) We deserve more than we have been given. By imbibing these deceptions, we shipwreck our faith and jeopardize our salvation.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Whatever Happened to Gnosticism? Part Three: Satan's Three Heresies](#)**

by David C. Grabbe

When Satan confronted humanity's first parents, Adam and Eve, he fed them three heresies that he continues to promote to deceive the world today. David Grabbe expounds on these three lies, revealing how Gnosticism incorporated them into its parasitic philosophy and way of life.

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