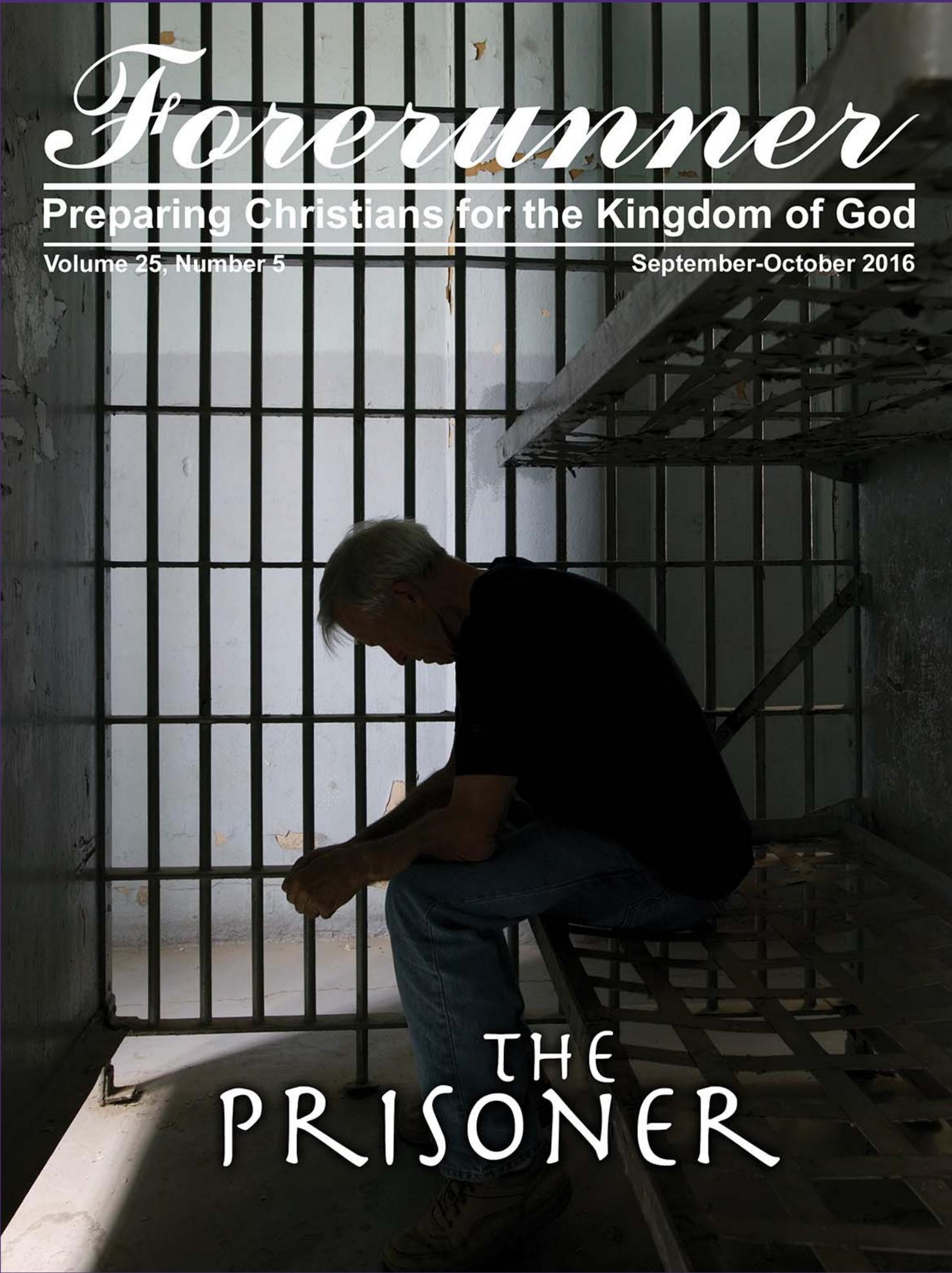


# Forerunner

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 25, Number 5

September-October 2016

A photograph of a man with grey hair, wearing a dark t-shirt and blue jeans, sitting on a metal grate in a prison cell. He is looking down, and his hands are clasped in front of him. The cell has metal bars on the walls and a metal grate floor. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows.

THE  
PRISONER

# September-October 2016

Volume 25, Number 5

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Most of us never end up in jail. None of us would want to go there. But at one time or another, all of us imprison ourselves and others when we lock down our hearts and refuse to forgive one another. Christ came to bring us atonement—reconciliation with God and with each other—and forgiveness is a crucial element in bringing this to pass. When we forgive each other, real freedom becomes possible.

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# Leadership and Covenants

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## Part Six

In the previous issue, we ended with a discussion on God's creation of Eve as Adam's companion. God clearly created her, not to be a mere companion, but Adam's wife, a fact that the man recognizes quickly, saying in Genesis 2:23-24, "'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.' Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." God's overriding reason for creating Eve was to establish marriage and family life, enabling the human population to grow and to provide a stable and positive environment for the rearing of children.

Marriage has served mankind well. It serves both God and mankind very well as long as spouses focus their lives on conforming to God's will and have a living, growing relationship with Him. Sound and healthy morality within a family and nation rises from one's relationship with God. Sadly, such is not the case in our nations today.

In this we see how morality can be radically undercut: by subtly undermining a person's relationship with God. As we saw last time, in large part this has been accomplished. As an institu-

tion, marriage has been severely damaged, and many of our fellow citizens have abandoned God and His ways. Human carnality, always an enemy of God, brazenly flaunts itself against the Almighty, and marriage and family seem to be its most targeted victims.

Though it has been slow in happening—in fact, over a few generations—Americans in growing numbers are becoming alarmed at what has developed in our culture. We see the alarm in the angry rhetoric of the political campaign, as citizens take sides on virtually every political and moral issue. Other dramatic evidence comes to light in American court cases in which citizens are called to account for their obedience to Christian moral standards. The biblically obedient people almost always lose their cases, indicating the judges are already swayed against God's standards. It is our hope that it is not too late for our society to turn around.

The unseen author of the radical decline in morality is Satan. He is the arch-conspirator who has deceived the whole world (Revelation 12:9). He lures people into evil through enticements—always anti-God—that appeal to the carnal nature. These self-serving enticements spawn division, and division brings Satan satis-

faction because division destroys. God Himself names the adversary “Destroyer” in Revelation 9:11.

### Achieving Oneness

In the New King James Version, Genesis 2:24 reads that the man and woman are to “be joined to” each other, while the King James Version uses the more traditional term, “cleave to.” These phrases are important because in them God is signaling to those studying into His purpose for marriage that achieving the oneness He desires in marriage is difficult. If the couple is not truly cleaving to one another, the marriage will not produce good fruit, and the two may slip apart from each other rather than grow ever closer.

The Hebrew term underlying “join” or “cleave,” *dâbaq*, is a strong word that has the literal sense of two being held together by force, as when one person captures another. It has a figurative sense of being “glued to” through positive family care. In a marriage-and-family situation, it portrays a bond of consistent, sacrificial loyalty and devotion.

The word appears in Ruth 1:14: “Then they lifted up their voices and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung [*dâbaq*] to her.” The account shows Orpah remaining in the nation of her birth, distancing herself from Naomi, but Ruth, who clings to her mother-in-law, remains with her and accompanies her to Judea. What God is looking for from each partner in a marriage, then, is a voluntary, sacrificial giving of themselves in loyalty, devotion, and affection so oneness is produced.

The loving efforts toward oneness in marriage are types of what is needed for the Christian to become one spiritually with the Father and the Son. Both partners in a marriage are to give themselves completely to achieving a human type of the oneness that the Father and Son exhibit in Their relationship. God created this process as a deliberate parallel in terms of our overall goals in life. The goals in both a physical marriage and a spiritual relationship with God are in principle essentially the same—achieving oneness. Some individual characteristics are different, of course, because one goal is physical and the other is spiritual.

The idea of marriage partners becoming one flesh feeds into the spiritual reality of our Husband to be, Jesus Christ, and what He is working toward. Jesus prays in John 17:20-23:

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may

believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

These attitudes and actions have impact beyond an immediate family situation. As God unveils His truths through the beginning portions of the Bible, the reader is led to the logical conclusion that, as the populations increased and communities were formed, community needs were filled through family organization. There were no governments, churches, schools, businesses, etc., before marriage and family. Those other institutions took a long time to form. The meeting of community needs arose from the patterns in use within the organized family that the Creator God ordained.

God’s creation of marriage and family provided the model. Following the pattern of the father’s authority in the family, community government formed. The same basic process was involved in the founding of schools beyond the children’s most basic needs. Thus, colleges, universities, and schools of all kinds were developed to meet the needs of communities. One would be hard pressed to name any community institution that does not have some direct or indirect connection to meeting family needs.

### Humanists Achieve Shifts in Emphasis

In I Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul states an order of authority established by God that we need to understand: “But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” By means of the parallel between deity and mankind in God’s order, Paul shows that a wife’s submission to her husband in marriage does not imply her inferiority. How? In the parallel, Christ is not inferior to God the Father. All that God’s order defines in this case is subordination. As the Father and Son are equally divine, the husband and wife are equally human. Even as the Father and Son have different roles in their relationship, so do the husband and wife in God’s purposes for the family.

Thus, in terms of government, there is a distinctive and deliberate similarity between the two organizations. Government is merely a system of operation, a means of directing and controlling so that the purposes of an organization are achieved. Though the Son is one with the Father, being of the same substance, power, and glory, He nonetheless voluntarily submits to the Father. In human marriage, husband and wife, like the Father and Son, are also essentially

the same. In marriage, the submission of a woman to her husband is also intended to be voluntary.

It is at this juncture that Satan, using men he controls through subtle deceits, has dealt a devastating blow to our culture.

“Humanist” is a descriptor given to those who have abandoned a belief in God and religion. Some people refer to such people as “secularists.” Most of them claim atheism. Many of them are university-educated and earn salaries that place them in upper-middle-class income brackets. They also tend to be in positions of authority in government, business, education, and entertainment. Their reputations in the community often carry a great deal of influence. However, having abandoned God, their true spirituality and morality are terribly skewed, making their influence anti-God.

Satan, using the humanists’ influence, has convinced a large percentage of the public that sex and love are the same, a major departure from what was once generally believed in American culture. Sex and love are not equivalent. Love is so much greater in importance than sex that there is no adequate comparison. Humanists have also managed to convince many that everything is morally irrelevant. This, too, is untrue, but many fail to think it through. In reality, moral irrelevance actually drives marriages apart.

In God’s standard of morality, He is quite specific. For example, within marriage, sex is totally, completely, and absolutely limited to one’s legal partner in that specific marriage. There are no exceptions. We find another restriction in I Corinthians 7:3-4:

Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Even before marriage, both the man’s and the woman’s body belongs to their future spouses. Their bodies are not theirs to “just play around with.” This teaches us that fornication contributes to weakening a marriage that has not even occurred yet! Each partner in a marriage belongs to the other even before the marriage takes place. It is therefore each person’s responsibility to preserve the body’s sexual purity for the one he or she will marry.

## A Three-Pronged Attack

Satan has devised a three-pronged attack against the American culture involving the persuasion of Americans to

disregard God’s marriage covenant with the intent of confusing or even obliterating human reliance on God’s ways. Because mankind’s carnality is wide open to the Devil’s deceits, he has achieved an incredibly high rate of success. He began laying the foundation for these end-time attacks long before this present time.

The most important of the three prongs is destroying faith in the sovereign Creator God’s existence and the guidance given in His Word. Humanists insist that God does not exist and that humanity is uncreated, and therefore the Bible is no more authoritative than any other manmade work. They say, “Everything we see simply came into being through natural, resident forces.”

Without belief in God, there is no supreme, authoritative voice to provide a true foundation for moral and spiritual behavior. Everyone’s guess as to what is right or wrong is as good as anyone else’s. With this mindset, people gradually come to believe that they have the freedom to engage in any behavior they choose for themselves. In effect, they make themselves gods. This idea has not yet reached the saturation point in this culture, but the times are such that those who have a strong belief in God are about to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of people the humanists have already convinced.

Humanists are easily identified: They tend to gravitate to the liberal teaching staffs of universities. They find places in the entertainment industry, and play an influential role in the liberal media. They stand on the front lines of the protest movements for feminism, homosexuality, transgenderism, and polygamy. Each group has organized to put pressure on the courts and politicians to bend to their will or lose their votes and support.

These areas are only the most obvious. They are supported by huge numbers of people who, though not directly and actively involved in these sins, unwittingly support them as fellow-travelers. The latter seem unable to connect the dots as to what this humanist immorality is producing, having no understanding that this unrighteous conduct can only end in disaster when God decides to move against it.

## The Second Prong

The second prong is more directly against marriage itself. In our time, the institution is under attack from every side by the rank immorality—nearing outright hedonism—that is incessantly promoted from within the culture. Hedonists falsely proclaim that life’s main purpose is pleasure. In truth, its purpose is to please the God who created and gave us life in the first place.

But the inducement that “everybody’s doing it” puts a person under constant pressure to give in and go along with whatever immorality is in vogue. This pressure to conform is destructively wearying, making it increasingly more difficult to resist the culture’s siren song.

Even the churches, especially the large, liberal, Protestant organizations, have gradually left God and the Bible in favor of their homemade liberalism. They have modified their doctrinal positions to accommodate the demands of humanists and the devolving mores of society. As the sexual revolution took hold in the middle of the last century, they called it the “New Morality,” justifying the changes by saying that these relaxations were fine as long as nobody got hurt. The major flaw in their reasoning is that people who commit such sins cannot truly grasp the results of their sins; they cannot look far enough down the road with any certainty nor pinpoint exactly how the penalties for their sins will fall.

Satan’s attack has been successful. Statistics reveal that adultery and fornication—most especially fornication—are so widespread that, in some places in America, more babies are born out of wedlock than in. Adultery has moved beyond merely being acceptable; it is even being promoted as a means to save failing marriages! Doing so is nothing more than committing more sin to save a person from his or her previously committed sins. It is like spending more money to save oneself from going bankrupt.

### The Third Prong

A third front in Satan’s attack against marriage has been to marshal his followers to persuade each state’s governing authorities to simplify and ease the process to obtain a divorce. This has been done chiefly through no-fault divorce laws. Being granted a divorce by the state used to be a difficult endeavor.

Perhaps the following true example will help us understand why getting a divorce is so much easier today. It exposes the political influences that Satan has used in his attack on marriage.

Karl Marx writes in his *Communist Manifesto* that, for communism to work, Christianity and marriage must be destroyed. Shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution secured governance over Russia, the Party’s leadership made it a national law that all one had to do to obtain a divorce in the Soviet Union was to mail a signed postcard to the appropriate department stating, “I, so-and-so, am divorcing so-and-so.” The divorcing party did not even have to inform the one they were divorcing!

Why did the communists make it so easy?

Communist Party intellectuals discovered that Christian principles working within marriage, which features loyalty to God and to a mate, were a strong barrier to persuading a person to become a communist. Their experience showed them that they needed another avenue of influence to break the hold Christianity and marriage had on people’s rejection of communism. No-fault divorce to end a marriage was an easy first step. As a bonus, it freed a woman from the obligations of a home, allowing her to enter the workforce much more cheaply than a man could. In reality, however, it was a step into slavery. We are witnessing history being repeated in America, as we are being driven into anti-God socialism.

Another attack on marriage and family is baby-murder on demand, commonly called abortion. Even major church organizations have become so persuaded by the “everybody’s doing it” mantra and by their fear of losing members that they cannot find the faith or courage to bring themselves to call abortion what it is: the murder of the weakest and most vulnerable of humans.

State-sponsored abortion is now so easily obtained that, not only does the father of the child not have to give his permission for the murder to be committed, but in some states an underage girl does not have to inform her parents that she will be participating in the murder. The abortionist, then, has more power than parental authority or faith in God. Abortion has become so common that it will soon be the chief means of controlling family size.

In authorizing the shift toward hedonism, combined with allowing divorce to be as easily obtained as writing a check and permitting the lives of the most vulnerable members of humanity to be snuffed out based on a woman’s mere comfort or pleasure, the state has become the major, visible enemy of the kind of marriage and family our Creator intended. The state is the god men have created to satisfy their desires for power. It is no wonder that welfare is nearly breaking the economies of many American states.

### Love, Sex, and Oneness

Because it is so important to our well-being, we must understand at the very least why God entered into the creation of the universe, of this magnificent environment we call earth, and then of mankind. Genesis 1:26 gives us this basic reason when God states, “Let Us create man in Our image, according to Our likeness.” Without going into details, the Bible is showing that God is recreating or reproducing Himself.

(continued on page 12)

# The Prisoner

*“Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant,  
just as I had pity on you?”*

*—Matthew 18:33*

Each year we are commanded by God to keep the Day of Atonement. The great overall message of that day focuses on how we will finally achieve “at-onement” with the Father and Jesus Christ.

In fact, one of the foremost reasons we have been called is to learn our part in God’s kind and compassionate plan to reconcile the whole of mankind to Himself. Our Creator’s kindness and compassion are evidenced in Psalm 102:19-20: “For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; from heaven the LORD viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death.” It is further made clear by Christ’s own words:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed. (Luke 4:18)

God’s gracious desire for reconciliation is a common theme throughout the Bible. In Genesis 17:8, He declares His will to be the God of Abraham’s descendants, and in Revelation 21:3, He expresses His intention to dwell with men. Christ also expresses that same desire during His final evening as a mortal man in His prayer to the Father just prior to His arrest:

Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that

they may be one as We are . . . that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. (John 17:11, 21)

This oneness must go beyond mere agreement on our part. It involves thinking the same way God does and being motivated by the same love that moves Him to take the actions He takes. This thinking must color our approach to everything—all aspects of our lives. This oneness is what God intends for us. What an indescribable honor it is to be invited by the King of all creation to become His true sons and daughters!

## A Crucial Element

We can deepen our understanding of this honor by looking at one crucial element that atonement with God must include: forgiveness.

Without forgiveness from God, we would be little more than the walking dead, if He even allowed us to walk at all! In fact, without His recurring forgiveness, a continuing relationship with Him would be impossible.

What is forgiveness? *The American Heritage College Dictionary* defines it this way: “to excuse for a fault or an offense, pardon; to renounce anger or resentment against; to absolve from payment of (a debt, for example).”

Christ’s Parable of the Unforgiving Servant can teach us a great deal about forgiveness:

Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.” (Matthew 18:21-27)

To clarify, this servant owed the king 10,000 talents—an immense and practically uncollectible amount, likely in the millions of dollars or beyond in today’s value—which we might liken to the enormous and unpayable debt that we, as servants before our eternal

King, have accrued. Whenever we sin, even after we are converted, we come under the death penalty until we repent. Upon our repentance, we receive forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ, and the death penalty is removed. The atoning blood of Christ is a very precious commodity—capable of paying for all the sins of humanity.

Such forgiveness is the reason we need to find and maintain the proper perspective regarding the enormous price continuously being paid—the colossal debt being forgiven—on our behalf. Hence, we return to the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant:

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:28-35)

Is it not odd that this man could have his fellow servant thrown into prison for a relatively small debt (as little as \$20 in today’s money)? We should be thankful to live in a more forgiving culture!

## The Prison of Our Heart

Today, however, there is another way that a fellow-servant can be cast into prison regardless of the laws of the culture. We can easily incarcerate someone within the confines of our own hearts and even throw away the key. It is likely that each of us has someone confined within our own heart’s prison even today.

The late Lewis B. Smedes, a professor of theology at Fuller Seminary, is credited with saying: “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you.”

When we imprison someone in this manner, we sub-

*(continued on page 14)*

## The Nation of Israel— Biblical Israel?

### PART ONE

Writers on the subject of Bible prophecy commonly conclude that all verses that mention Israel actually refer to the modern, Middle East nation of Israel. Does the Bible support that view? To answer that question let us review whom *God* calls Israel and how that compares with the more commonly held beliefs.

We find the first mention of Israel in Genesis 32:28: “And He said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.’” God first uses the name “Israel” to identify Jacob, the progenitor of the twelve tribes of Israel.

From this point forward the Bible uses “Jacob” and “Israel” interchangeably, even in the same sentence. Notice Genesis 48:2: “And Jacob was told, ‘Look, your son Joseph is coming to you’; and Israel strengthened himself and sat up on the bed.”

#### A DISTINCTION BEGINS

Genesis 48 contains the account where Joseph comes to see his sick and dying father and brings along his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim (verse 1). After recounting God’s promise to him, Israel summons the two boys so he can bless them (verse 9). As part of that blessing, Israel says in verse 16, “The Angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; *let my name be named upon them*, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth” (emphasis ours). God through Jacob places the name *Israel* on the

sons of Joseph, *not* Judah, giving us our first glimpse of God’s view.

The term “house of Israel” is used in Exodus 16:31; 40:38, Leviticus 17:3, 8, 10; 22:18, Numbers 20:29, Joshua 21:45, and Ruth 4:11. In these instances, it refers to all the tribes of Israel. But, by the time of King Saul, God begins to distinguish “Israel” from “Judah.”

So he took a yoke of oxen and cut them in pieces, and sent them throughout all the territory of Israel by the hands of messengers, saying, “Whoever does not go out with Saul and Samuel to battle, so it shall be done to his oxen.” And the fear of the LORD fell on the people, and they came out with one consent. When he numbered them in Bezek, the children of Israel were three hundred thousand, and the men of Judah thirty thousand. (I Samuel 11:7-8)

According to the pattern God began in Genesis 48:16, He is establishing that there is a difference between Judah and the other tribes by attaching the name “Israel,” not to Judah, but to those other tribes.

Later, during the time of King David, the distinction continues:

- Ishbosheth, Saul’s son, was forty years old when he began to reign over Israel, and he reigned two years. Only the house of Judah followed David. (II Samuel 2:10)

# Prophecy Watch

*The Nation of Israel—Biblical Israel?*

- David was thirty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years over all Israel and Judah. (II Samuel 5:4-5)

- I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more! (II Samuel 12:8)

These two separate houses had their differences:

Now the king went on to Gilgal, and Chimham went on with him. And all the people of Judah escorted the king, and also half the people of Israel. Just then all the men of Israel came to the king, and said to the king, "Why have our brethren, the men of Judah, stolen you away and brought the king, his household, and all David's men with him across the Jordan?" So all the men of Judah answered the men of Israel, "Because the king is a close relative of ours. Why then are you angry over this matter? Have we ever eaten at the king's expense? Or has he given us any gift?" And the men of Israel answered the men of Judah, and said, "We have ten shares in the king; therefore we also have more right to David than you. Why then do you despise us—were we not the first to advise bringing back our king?" Yet the words of the men of Judah were fiercer than the words of the men of Israel. (II Samuel 19:40-43)

In verse 43, those representing Israel in the disagreement point out that they have "ten shares in the king." The ten shares are the ten tribes that make up the house of Israel. Under the article, "Ten Lost Tribes," Wikipedia states, "The ten lost tribes refers to the ten of the twelve tribes of ancient Israel that were said to have been deported from the Kingdom of Israel after its conquest by the Neo-Assyrian Empire circa 722 BCE."

This deportation took place over 250 years after David's reign. So more than 250 years before they eventually became known as the "Ten Lost Tribes," God reveals to us that this division was already in place and that the name "Israel" did not include Judah. As further evidence of the depth of the division, the disagreement in II Samuel 19 led to a rebellion and a brief civil war between these two houses as recorded in the following chapter.

God is applying the name "Israel" to the ten tribes and not to Judah. This distinction begins well before the famous split after Solomon's reign. The only time God includes Judah under the name "Israel" is when He is talking about *all* the children of Israel. Throughout the Bible, God is confirming for us that Judah is not the Israel of the Bible.

After Solomon's reign, a final separation indeed occurs. Most of the two books of Kings details the activities of the now-separate nations. At this point, the lines are clearly and finally drawn. "Israel" includes the ten tribes, and "Judah" includes Judah, Benjamin, and the Levites.

Also in every city he [Rehoboam, king of Judah] put shields and spears, and made them very strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side. And from all their territories the priests and the Levites who were in all Israel took their stand with him. For the Levites left their common-lands and their possessions and came to Judah and Jerusalem, for Jeroboam and his sons had rejected them from serving as priests to the LORD. (II Chronicles 11:12-14)

## TWO PATHS

After their deportation, the history of these two peoples takes two very different paths. One takes the path of historical oblivion, and the other, the path of perpetual prominence. In David Limbaugh's recent book, *The Emmaus Code*, he writes:

It is utterly remarkable that a nation dispersed for two millennia would retain its identity and regather in the very land it left, and to which God said it would eventually return. Highlighting the astounding nature of these events, Josh McDowell observes that throughout history, every other nation that left its homeland lost its national identity within about five generations. Pastor Tony Evans further notes that no other nation in history vanquished from its land for fifty years or more has ever returned speaking the same language. (p.107)

This quote highlights the different paths of these now two separate nations and peoples. It is the house of Judah, not the house of Israel, which has retained its identity. The house of Israel has disappeared from the scene. As in the quote above, "it is utterly remarkable" that the house of Judah has retained its identity for millennia. But then the God of Judah is an utterly remarkable God who says what He means and means what He says, and most importantly, can make happen what He says in Isaiah 56:4-5:

For thus says the LORD: "To the eunuchs who keep My Sabbaths, and choose what pleases Me, and hold fast My covenant, even to them I will give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off."

If God gives eunuchs "an everlasting name that shall not

be cut off” for keeping His Sabbaths, then it follows that such a promise would apply even more so to His beloved people. His people are *both* the house of Israel and the house of Judah.

### AN IDENTIFYING SIGN

The Sabbath shaped the destiny of these two houses as we see in Ezekiel 20:12-13, 20:

Also I gave them My Sabbaths to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord who sanctifies them (separates and sets them apart). . . . Sanctify My Sabbaths and keep them holy; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that you may know [without any doubt] that I am the Lord your God. (*Amplified Bible*, 2015 Edition)

What caused one house to retain its identity and the other to lose it? God gives the answer—the Sabbath. *Whedon’s Commentary on the Bible* (at verse 12) states, “The Sabbath was the visible sign to the Hebrews and to the world that they were his, and that he was theirs.”

A sign identifies. An example is a burqa, the long, loose garment covering the whole body from head to feet, worn in public by many Muslim women. A woman wearing a burqa is an unmistakable sign that she is Allah’s and that he is her god. It is a sign that separates and identifies.

With these verses in chapter 20 of Ezekiel, God guarantees that if His people keep the Sabbath—the sign that signifies who they are and who they worship—that sign would assure their identity. To be separate *requires* a definable identity. God, by their observance of the Sabbath, guaranteed they would remain separate and set apart, preserved as a select people unmixed with the nations.

Throughout history, the house of Judah has continued to observe the Sabbath. As a result, they have retained their identity. On the other hand, the house of Israel rejected the Sabbath, and true to Ezekiel 20, they have disappeared from view. They have lost their identity. They no longer have the sign that tells them, or the rest of the world, who they are.

The house of Israel chose to rebel against the Sabbath, a proclivity that began as far back as the wilderness journey:

Yet the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes; they despised My judgments, ‘which, if a man does, he shall live by them’; and they greatly defiled My Sabbaths. Then I said I would pour out My fury on them in the wilderness, to consume them. (Ezekiel 20:13)

So, the Bible clearly and consistently identifies as Israel

those nations that have become known as the “Ten Lost Tribes,” rather than the house of Judah. In light of this fact, why is there still such confusion between what we know as “biblical” Israel and the modern nation of Israel—the house of Judah—today? While theological scholars may debate their reasons, it is clear that God’s intention for Israel to remain lost or hidden—*sifted* in Amos 9:9—remains.

### THE TEN LOST TRIBES

If not Judah, the current nation of Israel, then who is the Israel mentioned in the Bible, especially in Bible prophecies? Where are the descendants of the house of Israel today? Are the “Ten Lost Tribes” actually lost? The Bible tells of the time at the end of this age when God will again unite the house of Israel and the house of Judah. For that to happen, the house of Israel must exist, just as the house of Judah currently does. Here are some of the prophecies pointing to this future reunification:

- “For behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “that I will bring back from captivity My people Israel and Judah,” says the LORD. “And I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.” (Jeremiah 30:3)
- He will set up a banner for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12)
- “Say to them, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD: “Surely I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his companions; and I will join them with it, with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they will be one in My hand.” (Ezekiel 37:19)
- Then the children of Judah and the children of Israel shall be gathered together, and appoint for themselves one head; and they shall come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel! (Hosea 1:11)

To themselves and the world, the house of Israel may indeed be lost, but not to God. He tells us that in Amos 9:9: “For surely I will command, and will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground.”

According to God, the lost house of Israel exists today. So, who are they and where are they? In the next issue, we will explore those questions and why the influence of the house of Judah in our world is the result of a gift from God.

—Pat Higgins

(continued from page 6)

It is necessary to add another factor to this that a converted person learns as he comes to know God from within a relationship with Him. God loves to bestow upon others pleasures of the same kinds and qualities that He enjoys, pleasures that have no painful repercussions. I once heard a man exclaim, “Fun is fun when it is always fun.” God desires others to have that kind and level of pleasure, and we can when we share His quality of life.

Genesis 1:31 says, “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.” Does it not give us a sense of pleasure to accomplish something good? Where do we think this gift of experiencing pleasure from accomplishment came from? It was a gift created within us by God as He created us in His image. He desires that we experience these pleasures as He does.

Throughout the Bible, God teaches us by giving historical examples and commands so we can build a foundation for understanding why we should do in a certain way what He instructs us to do. His purpose is to produce proofs and therefore encouragement that His way brings the pleasures that He desires we have. God is increasing His Family Kingdom, and He has willed that we participate in this project. If we desire these pleasures, perhaps most especially from marriage, it builds confidence in us that it is our responsibility to please God in all we do.

It is right here, though, that Satan’s world has put mankind on a collision course with disaster. In today’s Western world, Satan has managed to deceive a huge percentage of people, perhaps especially through movies and novels, that a successful marriage—oneness—is achieved through the sexual relationship. But marriage is God’s creation, and He did not create marriage and its intended oneness to be built on sex. An individual should not attempt to do so, for his marriage will not be as successful as it would be under God’s purposes. He intends that marriage be built on love. Sex and love are not co-equal; they are not one in value to a marriage.

In I John 5:3, *love* is clearly defined, “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” *Sex* has no such specific definition anywhere in God’s Word. “Keep” implies the activity of guarding and doing so by means of our conduct. Thus, the Bible defines love as an *action* not a feeling. Actions also include right attitudes. Feelings are certainly involved, but they are not the primary element that makes love the positive influence that God intends.

A vivid example is rape, which involves a sexual action, but it is most certainly a forcible attack against another. It cannot be considered an affectionate action

in any way. It is the forceful taking of a momentary pleasure while simultaneously injuring another. Such a vile act hardly builds oneness, by any stretch of the imagination.

Love is outgoing concern, behavior that seeks the good of the one loved at least equal to the love of self. It is this element that greatly facilitates husband and wife becoming one in all aspects of life. If a marriage is built around sex, it may indeed last, but it will probably lead to intense emotional frustration and may even produce adultery by one or the other or both. Sex was not created for that purpose. It is one among many expressions of love, one fully intended by God to be expressed—but only within marriage. It is an intimacy reserved only for the one other person sharing the relationship.

By “commandments,” I John 5:3 means all of God’s commandments that bear on what love is, not merely the Ten Commandments. Major adjustments may have to be made if a marriage is going to produce the pleasures God intends. God’s intention is achieved by cultivating the lawful interests and aspirations of both to each other. This is not easy to do because the carnality within us asserts our self-interests so quickly and sometimes so strongly.

This nation is experiencing the tragic results of Satan’s evil attentions. If changes were made to correct things at the same pace God permitted Satan to bring this cancerous deterioration on us, there would be no hope for a turnaround in the lives of all but the youngest now living. We have just about reached a point in our culture similar to the period just before the Flood (Genesis 6). God Himself had to solve those issues by wiping everything clean and starting all over again. Jesus’ Olivet Prophecy guarantees a reversal that does not reach the magnitude of the Flood’s devastation. But happily, at the same time, it will vastly alter people’s conduct through the best government available, that of Jesus Christ.

## Sin Destroys Paradise

Those who believe God and study the Bible should have no doubt in their minds that He created marriage for His pleasure and glory. Likewise, they should not doubt that He gave it to mankind, not only as a wonderful gift, but also as a major vehicle of preparation for His Kingdom. Despite the present state of instability in marriage, believers should also understand that He has not failed in His purpose, nor has marriage.

A Solomonic insight, recorded in Ecclesiastes 7:29, helps to clarify what has happened. “Truly, this only have I found: That God created man upright, but they

have sought out many schemes.” Mankind’s failure to believe God and therefore to use this wonderful gift rightly is what has created the instability and apparent failure of marriage. Bluntly stated, sin, committed at marriage’s inception and continued to this day, has severely marred its godly intent.

Immediately after Adam’s comment on his and Eve’s oneness, Moses reports, “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:25). They were literally naked. Once they sinned, though, they immediately looked for something to cover themselves. God draws attention to it to focus our attention on mankind’s failure.

“Naked” is used as a descriptor 104 times. Depending on the context, it can indicate innocence, purity, defenselessness, vulnerability, helplessness, humiliation, shame, guilt, and judgment. At times, it may indicate several of these qualities within a single context, so the context must be read carefully to grasp how it is specifically being used.

In Genesis 2:25, it indicates good qualities: purity of mind and conduct, innocence, and perhaps also vulnerability. God is setting up the impending radical difference that was the fruit of destruction by sin, using the term to help illustrate the depth of their fall through the sins that followed.

Overall, God’s instruction in this context smashes the false notion that many have: that sin is of minor concern as long as nobody gets hurt. How? This episode teaches there is no such thing as a sin that does no damage. It *always* destroys, and sometimes in multiple areas of life. The damage may not visibly or immediately appear to the perpetrators.

Genesis 3:7 is revealing in terms of what happened immediately after their sins: “Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.” The earlier context offers no indication that their being naked before God and each other had caused even the slightest embarrassment. Once they sinned, they not only realized their nakedness, but with the realization they also felt a sense of shame. They knew they had committed something evil—sin. If there was no shame, why would they seek to cover themselves? The fruit of sin was beginning to grow.

So they hastily searched out the best covering they could find, but what they used—fig leaves—was in reality totally inadequate. The nakedness was not the problem, the sins were. That was not all they did:

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the

LORD God among the trees of the garden. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?” So he said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself.” And He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” (Genesis 3:8-11)

That is very clear. So what was the damage tally from this one event?

First, their sin immediately changed their hearts. They did not have to wait around for somebody to be injured or offended. Sin instantly altered the purity of their thoughts, as shown by the actions they took to “protect” themselves.

Second, their sins damaged their relationship with God. The wrong kind of fear entered the relationship and began separating Him from them. God did not change, of course, but sin immediately marred the quality of the relationship.

Third, their sins distorted their relationship with each other. They could no longer look at each other with the pure innocence they had before, having shared in an evil deed and accused each other and Satan.

Fourth, their sins altered their views about themselves. They knew in their heart of hearts that they had done an evil thing. Their reaction was to justify themselves and shift the blame to others.

Adam and Eve’s choice was costly. Their disloyalty exposed their proclivity to sin on their very first exposure to temptation, costing them a relationship with God. They established a sinful pattern of a life, as shown in the fruit of their marriage, which is evident in the sinful lives of their children. Finally, their sins cost them the blessing of living in the Garden of Eden.

It was not an encouraging beginning for humanity. Yet, because God is patiently merciful, He has called us, revealed His purpose to us, and given us His Spirit. We now have the fabulous opportunity to learn from their examples and use His gifts in a righteous way.

Though sins are committed by insignificant people in seemingly inconsequential circumstances, they always have effects beyond the time, place, and perpetrators of the transgression. A major lesson we must learn from this is that we do not live in a vacuum; this creation’s Creator is always overseeing it and judging. More to follow.

In Christian love,



(continued from page 8)

ject ourselves to the burdensome duty of keeping him there. So instead of one, we now have two prisoners that keep each other imprisoned day in and day out, but only one of them has the key.

We have the *offender* as well as the *offended*. Assuming that most people do not purposefully look to offend, particularly within the church, the offender was probably clumsy or foolishly inconsiderate in his approach to the offended. Or perhaps he possesses, or has displayed, a character flaw that the offended feels is completely unacceptable (e.g., a betrayal of some sort).

Or maybe the offender disregarded the direction given in Galatians 6:1: “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a *spirit of gentleness*, considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (emphasis ours).

To avoid offense, we must remember our humility and our place whenever we are inclined to point out a fault to a brother or sister. The same advice holds for the giver as well as the receiver of a rebuke. Criticism is always difficult to give without offending or to receive without taking offense. Be always mindful that our Creator received rebuke without retaliating. No one has ever been imprisoned in *His* heart!

When we do offend a brother, we are tempted to approach him and immediately ask for forgiveness because we dislike being regarded unfavorably. Remember, our godly purpose is to restore the relationship, if possible, because that is what God wants to see. If we pressure our friend into forgiveness, have we accomplished God’s will? Consider well the adage: “A man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.”

## Restoration Begins with God

This is why God should be the very first from whom we ask forgiveness. We can ask Him to help us understand the severity of the damage we have caused and for the proper level of contrition, humility, and patience to help repair and restore the relationship. We can ask God to open the heart of our offended brother so that he willingly accept our apology and readily extend his forgiveness.

We can liken this request for the opening of our brother’s heart to a request for the opening of his heart’s prison doors, too easily slammed shut by an unforgiving attitude. Instead of having two (or even more) persons confined behind the doors of an intractable grudge, we experience the joy and the freedom of reconciliation. The relationship is restored, a good witness has been made, growth has occurred, and God is glorified.

On the other hand, if we have been offended, instead of giving into the temptation to strike immediately

back—to seek vindication—we should also begin by going to God in prayer for humility, empathy, and mercy. We can ask God to help us understand why the unfortunate deed was done and how we can find a pathway to forgiveness. We can ask for clarity of thought, which is so often missing when anger and offense are present.

If a rebuke was the cause of offense, we should consider Solomon’s words in Proverbs 27:5-6: “Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.” We should always ask God to enable us to give our offending brother the benefit of the doubt at a time when it would be easy to doubt his loyalty. Chances are, the offender feels as pained as the offended.

In these troubled and emotionally charged times, a true friend may feel a need to risk a special friendship for the good of the other. We should always be mindful that God may send us a vital message of correction or rebuke through someone other than our minister or someone we regard as having legitimate authority. We should be prepared to accept criticism, legitimate or not, from any person that God sends across our path. And perhaps, only a true friend would, could, or should point out to us a weakness or fault that no one else might even see or care about.

Whenever we are wronged, especially by a brother, we should strive to avoid becoming so inflexible that we slam shut the doors of animosity against him. The consequences of such a decision—to withhold forgiveness—particularly from a brother who sincerely asks for absolution and reconciliation, can be both devastating and eternal in scope for us. The wrong mindset can lead to a sinful attitude that is in opposition to God, keeping us locked inside a bitter prison of enmity and preventing our entrance into His Kingdom.

Therefore, regardless of whether we are the offender or the offended, let us never forget our constant need to first be forgiven and reconciled with God.

Let us never forget our need for the spirit of humility, which can only come from Him, to lead our efforts toward genuine restoration and reconciliation.

Let us never forget our need to throw open the doors of our heart’s prison to release all, including ourselves, who have been confined within the walls of animosity for too long.

Let us never forget our need to imitate Jesus Christ, as He came to free those who are imprisoned, to “heal the brokenhearted . . . to set at liberty those who are oppressed” (Luke 4:18).

It is a difficult way, but it is the only way to eternal life and oneness with the Father and His Son.

—Austin Del Castillo

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# Germany's Dilemma

As Europe's largest economy, the world's fourth largest economy, and the instigator of World Wars I and II, Germany is a pivotal nation that shapes the course of history, particularly among Israelitish nations. In the wake of World War II, French and American strategists formulated a plan to prevent further European bloodshed and German aggression in particular. They proposed to create an economic integration so close that the resulting prosperity would overcome any desire—let alone perceived need—to go to war. An essential element of the strategy was to harness a defanged Germany's industrial and economic power for the benefit of the rest of Europe, while keeping Germany captive through unparalleled free-trade agreements. Through a series of treaties spanning decades, the European Union (EU) was born.

While largely successful, the reasoning behind the plan contained a significant oversight: The "ever closer union" was predicated on prosperity, but what would happen if—or when—the good times ended? Would the EU still have a reason for existing if the promise of wealth was withdrawn?

In 2008, the plan began to be tested, as the U.S. sub-prime mortgage crisis spread through the world's economies. Aggregate losses rose into the trillions of dollars, and Europe's economies especially suffered a withering blow. Between 2008-2012, nearly thirty European banks failed, and employment throughout the EU was gutted. With no consensus among the nations on how to manage the crisis, the Eurozone entered economic stagnation and political gridlock. Managing prosperity is relatively straightforward; managing mountains of debt among highly disparate economies with a single policy can lead to madness.

Here, German vulnerability is exposed. Germany is an industrial powerhouse, producing far more than it consumes: 47% of its economy is based on exports. While its export capacity is enviable when the world economy is stable, it becomes a liability when demand decreases and markets dry up—as in times of recession. Germany's economy is dependent on exporting the goods it produces (as is China's). A 10% drop in exports, for instance, would result in a 5% drop in GDP.

This is not simply theoretical; it is beginning to take place. Germany's primary export destinations—the U.S., EU, and China—are importing less as their economies struggle to regain their footing. Berlin reported that from July 2015 to July 2016, Germany's exports declined by 10%, mainly due to decreased U.S. imports. Germany is producing, but people elsewhere are buying less.

Similarly, the European free-trade zone, intended to be a captive market for German goods, is losing its ability to consume. Southern Europe, ravaged by unemployment, is lurching from one debt crisis to the next. Italy—another major European economy—is expected to be the locus of the next financial calamity, as a massive 17% of its loans are "nonperforming" and will never be repaid. (Nearly 35% of

Greece's loans are nonperforming, but its economy is much smaller.) Greece and Portugal need regular assistance just to make the payments on their sovereign debt.

Germany is in a bind. It needs a stable Eurozone economy to buy its exports, and as the largest creditor, it has thus far loaned to the struggling nations to keep them viable—and keep them buying. But, with exports shrinking, it cannot continue to prop up weaker areas of the Eurozone indefinitely, especially with the increasing likelihood that one or more nations will default.

Two details show the seriousness of the German position: 1) Deutsche Bank currently has about \$41.9 trillion worth of derivatives on its books; and 2) in January 2016, Moody's downgraded Deutsche Bank's long-term debt, assigning a negative outlook to both its debt and deposit ratings. So, while Germany owns contracts for a tremendous number of assets, their value is becoming less certain, decreasing its capacity to lend more. If Deutsche Bank sinks, how far will the derivative destruction go?

Berlin wields great influence in Brussels, shaping monetary policy for the EU. In the past, Germany has favored forcing austerity on countries it deems to be fiscally irresponsible, while overlooking the fact that it has shaped policy for its own benefit. However, if it takes punitive action against ailing economies, they may decide that default is preferable, and EU membership becomes negotiable.

The recent Brexit vote sets a disturbing precedent, from Germany's point of view, as does the rise of Eurosceptic political parties, which have grown popular enough to challenge mainstream parties. Germany has prospered tremendously from the EU, but now a substantial number of EU citizens are wondering if the EU is still worth it. To them, the promise of prosperity seems to apply only to Germany. Though at the top of the heap now, Germany will be staring into the abyss if the Eurozone begins to crumble.

This drama is unfolding in front of an ominous backdrop. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, the entire Eurasian landmass—home to five billion of the earth's seven billion people—is exhibiting economic, political, and military destabilization. The immigration crisis across Europe is becoming desperate. The world's major powers are ensnared in Syria and the surrounding areas. The Balkans are again becoming restive. China, facing its own export crisis, is centralizing power to keep itself from fragmenting. Economically weak Russia compensates by becoming outwardly strong. Saudi Arabia, reeling from the low price of oil, sees Iran growing into a significant competitor.

Amidst all this, Germany stands at the helm of a behemoth vessel that is taking on water faster than it can be bailed out. As forecaster George Freidman notes, "The last time we saw a pattern like this was before World War II." With such tremendous pressure in the international system right now, Germany has some grave decisions to make.

—David C. Grabbe

## The Miracles of Jesus Christ?

### *The Healing of Malchus' Ear (Part Two)*

Jesus Christ exhibited great power (John 18:6) and mercy (Luke 22:51) when He restored the ear of Malchus, a servant of the high priest who had come to arrest Him in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Despite this miraculous demonstration, the band of men who came with Malchus proceeded to apprehend Jesus, while the disciples fled in fear, refusing to stand with Him (Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:49-51; John 18:1-11). Thus, through no fault of Christ, the miracle had no immediate effect on the observers.

Instead, it exposed their ungodly attitudes and emotions. Resistance to God moved the multitude to detain Jesus (Romans 8:7), while a lack of faith, with the accompanying fear of pain and persecution, motivated the disciples to desert Him (Mark 4:40). Only Jesus remained with His integrity intact.



#### 1. How did Malchus react to the miracle?

**COMMENT:** Jesus' actions in healing Malchus reflect the grace of God in contrast to the madness of His captors for continuing His arrest. But how did Malchus himself react to having his ear restored? What went through his mind? Did he question his antagonism toward Jesus? Or did he coldly resist his Healer? Scripture provides no answers, making it likely that he continued in his foolish apprehension of the Messiah.

Sadly, this is a typical reaction of unbelievers. There is little difference between Malchus' actions in the face of Christ's healing and those today who oppose God while enjoying His many blessings. One who does not give thanks to God for His blessings is selfish, thoughtless, and ungrateful.

In contrast, Jesus Christ always possessed the power to prevent any harm to Himself, but having been born to die as an atoning sacrifice, He meekly submitted to His adversaries. In His suffering and restraint, He glorified God, neither accepting nor providing Himself any defense. Had He desired, He could have called upon twelve legions of angels to protect Him (Matthew 26:53). We can be thankful that He was more interested in fulfilling God's plan than receiving angelic assistance (Matthew 26:54).

2. To what does Jesus refer when He asks for "this cup" to be taken away? (Matthew 26:39; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42).

**COMMENT:** Matthew, Mark, and Luke each record Christ praying to the Father on this fateful night, asking if He might "let this cup pass from Me." He mentions the same "cup" in rebuking Peter's assault on Malchus: "So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?'" (John 18:11).

The image of drinking from a cup is a metaphor for His submission to the Father's will, while the cup itself stands for the enormous burden His submission would require (Luke 22:42-44). Despite desiring that some

other way could be found to accomplish the payment for mankind's sins, Jesus bowed to His Father's will in the matter and gave Himself up to the arresting troops.

3. Why did the Father give this cup to Christ? John 1:14-18, 29.

**COMMENT:** Jesus Christ was sent as the Forerunner (Hebrews 2:10, *archegos*, "one who goes before") to live among men in order to reveal His Father, the Living God (Matthew 11:27; John 14:7-11; 17:6-7). This prodigious work necessitated that Christ be willing to "drink the cup" and suffer many burdens, the greatest being His arrest, persecution, crucifixion, and death at the hands of His own creation. As our Forerunner and an example to all men, it was incumbent on Christ to submit to the will of the Father and to do so with a perfect attitude of faithful humility. His incomparable level of submission allowed Him to become our Savior, a type of which is ultimately required of everyone to enter the Kingdom of God (Hebrews 11:6; James 4:6).

4. Why should we submit to drinking from this cup? Matthew 20:23; I John 2:6.

**COMMENT:** If we, as the elect of God, believe in "Christ crucified" and all that it entails (I Corinthians 1:23), then we must recognize the need for suffering and trial—to drink of the cup that God has prepared for each of us just as He did for our Savior. The apostle Peter encourages us that, if we partake in Christ's sufferings, it will be well worth the effort at His return (I Peter 4:12-13).

We should also realize that in comparison to what was required of Christ, our cup of burden will pale in magnitude; we will only be drinking *from* the cup He had to empty (Matthew 11:30; Romans 12:1). While these two verses should not be taken to mean that our burdens will be undemanding, we should always keep our personal sufferings in perspective by remaining aware and appreciative of the staggering effort required for our Creator and Savior to make the sacrifices he made.

—Martin Collins