

The Millennium Freedom Stone

by Dave Leach (Sneak Preview)

244-3711 \ BibleDiscussions@Saltshaker.US

www.SaveTheWorld.Saltshaker.US

King Neb had a bad dream.

He called all his magicians and ordered them to tell him what it meant. They couldn't. Because he didn't tell them what it *was*. Because he couldn't *remember* what it was. So he ordered them all executed.

Dan, God's man, intervened, telling Neb, and us, its meaning. The 2700-year-old prophecy, about the slow but steady displacement of tyrannical monarchy with its rock-solid opposite,¹ is still being fulfilled.

What is the opposite of tyranny? Freedom, we normally answer – of speech and religion, and the choice of our rulers. Indeed, various degrees of freedom have already displaced monarchies and other dictatorships in two thirds of the world.

But that's not how Freedom has always been defined. Even today an alarming portion of Americans who grew up with free speech are ready to censor "offensive" or "misinformed" speech, prosecute abomination-rejecting religion, (abominations like murdering babies, men wearing dresses and going into girl's bathrooms) and vote for those who rig elections to save the land from misinformed voters.

They are like the people 3100 years ago² who grew tired after 400 years of responsibility for choosing their own leaders – all that messy "politics" that was such a

1 Daniel 2:34-35, 44-45

2 1065 BC

distraction from all the entertainment made possible by freedom. They lobbied Samuel to give them a dictator instead.

Today “theocracy” is defined as a government in which God is dictator, but God told Samuel that *His* definition of “theocracy” is where people elect their own human leaders.³

That first “theocracy” had begun 35 centuries ago, with the election of God as the nation’s God. God wouldn’t give the 10 Commandments to Israel until after the people said unanimously, “All that the LORD hath spoken we will do.”⁴ And *that* election wasn’t held until all the people had elected their own *human* leaders.⁵

3 1 Samuel 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

4 Exodus 19:5-8, 24:3, 7, Deuteronomy 5:27-28, Joshua 24:22.

5 Exodus 18 tells about the establishment of an estimated 78,600 elected judges over Israel. Deuteronomy 1:13 clarifies that the judges were elected. Exodus 19 describes the time the “elders”, presumably those who had freshly been elected, were assembled with Moses before God, and proclaimed their choice to accept God as their God and to obey Him.

The Bible says “all the people” agreed. The context indicates that could mean “all the elders” gathered there. That is assumed by Bible Commentator John Gill. Bible Commentator David Guzik points out that “The people will later be challenged to receive the covenant again, after they heard its terms, and they received it again (Exo_24:1-8).”

It may be that elected representatives is what made it even physically possible for “all the people” to hear Moses’ terms and respond. It is hard to imagine how all five million or so citizens could so interact. But in the days before microphones, when Benjamin Franklin heard George Whitfield preach outdoors, to crowds of 25,000 according to newspapers, Franklin walked as far from Whitfield as he could and still hear him, and then calculated the area of a circle with that radius, and concluded that theoretically 30,000 people could hear Whitfield. (<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becomingamer/ideas/text2/franklinwhitefield.pdf>)

Perhaps with the acoustics of a natural mountainous

Thus began the first government in world history that was elected by *any* of its citizens, in 1462 BC. And the only government over the next 3,000 years that was elected by *all* its citizens.⁶

Will Freedom indeed continue growing until it fills the *whole* world? Will our descendants all over the world live under governments which rule not by cruel force but by the consent of the governed, given through elections?

But Jesus will rule as a “king”, translations say.⁷ Elections don’t fit our usual notion of rule by kings.

But neither does the fact that billions of saints will sit with Jesus and God in their thrones,⁸ helping Jesus judge.⁹ Jesus even *ridiculed* royalty, calling it the opposite of real greatness and commissioning us,

amphitheater, all 78,000 elected representatives could hear Moses.

Or, since the 78,000 included rulers of ten families, those rulers were omitted, reducing the assembled judges to less than 10,000.

6 The elections 800 years later in Athens were for only the free men. No women. And only a small fraction of the men were free. And only half a dozen positions were elected, not tens of thousands – an estimated 78,600 – as in Israel. Elections in England when the Pilgrims landed in America allowed only about 3% of the people to vote – those who owned at least 40 shillings’ worth of land. Even the Puritans, who settled in Boston in 1630, limited voting, and even land ownership, to those who were not only church members but who professed a certain kind of conversion experience. Only the Pilgrims allowed all to vote, and their catechism gives the verses justifying that right. The vote was not just for church members; half their number were not Separatists and yet their vote was welcome. It was not just for “free” men, but also for servants. It was not just for men! My 12th generation grandmother, Elizabeth Warren, was given the vote as “head of household” over five children after her husband, Richard, a passenger of the Mayflower in 1620, died in 1627.

7 Revelation 15:3, 17:14, 19:16. CEV and ERV translate “ruler”, but “king” is the choice of ABP, AFV, ASV, BBE, Bishops, ESV, Geneva, GNB, GW, ISV, KJV, LITV, LSV, Murdock, NENT, NET, TPT, WEB, Webster, YLT.

8 Revelation 3:21

9 1 Corinthians 6:2-3

through Peter, to displace it.¹⁰ (Peter, “the rock”, called Jesus the “foundation stone” and called us “lively stones”. Neb’s dream had prophesied that world tyranny would be displaced by a stone “cut without hands” that would grow and fill the whole earth.)

These details don’t match any kind of monarchy that anybody ever heard of. But they match a republic in which millions share with the executive the responsibility for the direction of government, through their votes and their freedom to run for office.

In fact, βασιλευς, (basileus), the Greek word in Revelation 17:14 where Jesus is called “king of kings”, was known to Greeks as the title of a leader in Athens *elected* to manage religious events and murder trials.

They were elected by ἐκκλησιας. That’s “ecclesias”, in English letters. The word entered English as “ecclesiastical”.

But the English derivative has come to mean nearly the opposite of its Greek source. “Ecclesiastical”, the English word, is about church rituals and church government, and has nothing to do with the government of the whole community or nation that we call “politics”.

But Ἐκκλησιας had more to do with “politics” than “church”. The most famous Ἐκκλησιας among Greeks were assemblies of all the free men of Athens to choose mostly *political* leaders.

It was an “Ἐκκλησιας” that Jesus told Peter He would build on a “rock”.¹¹ So when King James ordered his translators to translate ἐκκλησιας as “church”, the meaning of “ecclesiastical” was repurposed.

10 Luke 22:25-27 is where Jesus establishes the new kind of “greatness” which will displace tyranny, which matches Daniel’s description of a stone cut without hands. 1 Peter 2:4-6 is where Peter fleshes out what is obviously the same metaphor, calling us “lively stones” and Jesus the “chief corner stone”.

11 Matthew 16:18.

“Politics” is a Bible word. Philippians 3:20 says our *politeuma* is that of heaven.¹²

KJV translates it “conversation”. Some modern translations say “citizenship”. But the word means our constitution, our form of government, and/or our laws, according to Thayers’ Bible Dictionary.

Can the verse mean that God doesn’t want us to witness to governments formed after the principles of Hell?

That seems to be the assumption of many churches, but Jesus said we are the light of the world and we need to lift high our torch where its light can heal Darkness.¹³ Jesus compared us to a city on a hill “which cannot be hid”. “City” is the translation of “polis”, from the group of the words that gave English the word “politics”. Jesus spoke of a city “divided against itself”, like the division we see today between political parties, as something even more stupid and tragic than Hell itself; even Satan has enough sense to keep his forces together.¹⁴ We need stable, righteous political structures, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13, 1 Timothy 2:1-2. We need to shine our light on the Darkness that tears our political bonds apart.

The majority of end-times prophecies are, like Daniel

12 Php 3:20 We, however, are citizens [Gr: politeuma, a form of government, or a constitution, or laws] of heaven, [BBE: our country is in Heaven;] and we eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven.

13 Matthew 5:14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

14 Matthew 12:24 But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. 25 And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:

2, clearly about governments. None are about churches. Will God set free the world's governments, but not the world's churches? What happened to make church more like a monarchy than a democracy, with little freedom of speech for members to offer serious solutions of any complexity, and even less to say anything critical about church doctrines or leaders?

This story does not entertain you with speculations about past or future events which are irrelevant to how we live today. This is the story of what we can do *now* to reduce the level of suffering we will need before we get tired of pushing away the rest of God's blessings with our centuries of comfortable traditions.

What does the Bible say Christians should accomplish when they meet? I have discussed these Scriptures with many people through my 25 years editing the Prayer & Action News, and 15 years interviewing people on a cable TV show.

Responses from pastors include: "We have learned better how to worship than people knew in Bible times." "I've been doing it this way for 60 years; you can't expect me to change." "I agree with you about those Scriptures, and I want to do that, but my congregation won't let me." "I gave you 10 minutes to present the idea to the church board, and they voted it down. So that's that. Sorry." "You're asking me to share MY pulpit?" (*Whose pulpit? If we acknowledge God's ownership of it, may we follow God's rules for it?*) And simply, "*I'm not going to do that.*"

The goal of this book is to persuade you that several neglected Scriptures about Christian meetings make sense. They are God's offer of greater blessings, including the healing of America and her churches, and help for victims of tyranny around the world.

This book approaches that goal by tracing how centuries of tradition got so far away from these

Scriptures. It previews the coming government of the Millennium after Jesus physically returns, by following the theory that it will not be different from principles God established thousands of years ago except for the future full willing obedience of the whole world.

God has given us an amazing ability to discern good from evil. Like the ability to think, we pervert it, but the basic capacity is amazing.

There are serious evils around us. Babies slaughtered, children and homes taken from families, children sexualized by schools, refugees abandoned to cruel slaughter in their homelands by ignorant immigration laws.

The greatest evils around us are mostly not hurting us, but others around us. If we do not apply our discernment between good and evil to these serious cruelties that affect mostly other people, our discernment will only have for our target those we love and work with. It is by that means that we will destroy our relationships with those we love, if we do not care about others, enough to act to help them, fulfilling the warning and the promise of Luke 6:38.¹⁵

Love is God’s solution. For our own benefit, not His.



This story is officially “historical fiction”, in which conversation is at least plausible and in the spirit of what can be documented about that time. But little of it is “made up”. This story is heavily footnoted with Scripture, analysis from Bible commentaries, and other historical sources. And most of the rest is based on real conversations which I have had with people

15 Luke 6:38 Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

about these Scriptures, placed in contexts where the likelihood of such conversations in history is at least plausible.

The story of what we can do, before our opportunity is washed away by the next Matthew 7:24-27 storm, must be founded on the Solid Rock – the story of what God helped His people do, and of what He calls us to do.

Forward: overview of this book

This book is in five parts.

The Government of the Millennium. Jesus will rule as a “king”, says the Bible, after defining His rule as more like an elected president than as a dictator.

Millennium-grade Dialog. God really wants us to learn to get along with each other. When we disagree, God really wants us to learn to reason with each other respectfully, with love. This will heal families, churches, communities, politics, and nations. The Biblical evidence, and a few of God’s rules for meetings.

Light in the Darkness. What will the future be like, when Christian light comes out from under the Matthew 5 “bushel”? What verses tells us to be silent about God where God is “controversial”?

What is darkest, in the most urgent need of light? The doctrines over which denominations quibble, or the abominations driven by government with the consent of voting majorities?

When the righteous rule, the people rejoice. But **how can the righteous ever rule, when the most righteous of voters stay home?** And how much light escapes the bushel when the righteous vote and even hold office but never publicly discuss the Scriptures that are the reasons for their positions?

There have always been light shiners, but they were the exception, often alone against tyrants who loved darkness, requiring of them a high cost. Half the Gospels are Jesus’ interaction with local authorities who passed laws and punished lawbreakers, which is the definition of political authority. All our Heroes of Faith in Hebrews 11 were either political leaders or got in the Bible for their interaction with political leaders.

Imagine a world in which God’s people routinely and enthusiastically share the “whole counsel of God” publicly, out in those public forums where citizens decide whether their laws should embody the principles of Heaven or of Hell!

The Growth of the Freedom Stone over the Centuries. Century by century, highlights of the influence of the Gospel in the progress of Freedom of Religion, political freedom, science, education, and technology.

The Church of the Millennium. Bible studies about the kind of fellowship meetings God started, and wants for us today, and that our descendants will see.

Introduction to Part One:

The oppositeness of what will displace tyranny is shown in Daniel 2 by its thoroughly different images. The four world empires described, which were ruthless, bloody, despotic tyrannies by modern standards, were represented by a frightening statue of a man. What replaced it was a stone cut without human hands.

But will the form of government change, or only a change of dictators from human to divine? Will the change be only of the righteousness of the dictator? From bloody tyrannical dictators to the “benevolent dictator”, King Jesus?

There is evidence in Daniel 2 that the change will not be only of dictators, but of dictatorships. God is no dictator.

The evidence is that there were enlightened times during the time of those four empires, when the world emperors actually gave glory to God! For example, Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4, and Darius, Daniel 6:25-27.

But the “good dictatorships” as well as the evil will be powdered.

Chapter One: the Glory of Tyranny

Nothing will stop it now.

It sputtered to life centuries ago. Now it roars, in between increasingly violent sputters.

The Machine built to remove evil from the world.

Built to grind evil to powder with living stones founded on the living Freedom Stone.

The Partnership Machine.

That may sound like a lot of funny words thrown together, and maybe the choice of words is a little different, but that’s pretty much what it was, and is. It dominates the world, though seldom recognized for what it is, and it won’t stop growing until it fills the whole world, as foretold in a tyrant’s nightmare.

It is getting huge and powerful. Almost everything and everybody is challenging it, but nothing is stopping it.

Not even now, in these “Last Days”.

626 BC “Get me my magicians!” The roar rocked the palace.

Had you or I screamed such a demand we would have been carried away to some safe place where we couldn’t hurt ourselves. But when Neb screams something that makes no more sense, it’s *everyone else* at risk of being carried away where *no* one’s goal is to keep anyone from being hurt.

Yes, I know Neb is only the first of the five syllables that fill out his name, and he considers it treason to omit any of them, and his treatment of traitors is most undesirable. I beg you, don’t report me!

But this time, the terror wasn’t just on everyone else’s face. It was in Neb’s voice! Normally when he calls for magicians, it’s for entertainment, not to deal with terror.

Everyone was terrified of Neb, but that is only half the story. It is wise to be afraid of a man with such power. The rest of the story is that everyone admired Neb more than they feared him. A man able to command an army that murders millions all across the known world, burns libraries, loots churches, holds up every bank in the world, and brings home the world’s gold to decorate his buildings – what mother wouldn’t be proud to have her son grow up to be so important, famous, and so great a blessing to mankind, as Neb?!!¹

Now the magicians are assembled before Neb’s throne. Neb looks relieved to see them there. Soon he will have the answer he needs.

“I had a dream”, Neb began. “I have called you here to tell me what it means. All I know for sure is that it is very, very important. It is critical that I find

1 Jesus described the admiration for tyrants that their victims have: “they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.” Luke 22:25.

out what it means. I am counting on you to tell me.”

“Certainly, your majesty”, replied the president of the Magicians Union. “We are honored that you have asked us. We’ll be glad to make up – I mean, tell you what it means. The dragon whisker potions are already boiling. Spider eyes are being stirred in even as we speak. They await your description of what you dreamed.”

“I can’t remember. *You tell me.*”

That was the answer no one expected. Words stuck in the magicians’ president’s throat.

Another spoke up: “How can we tell you what it *means*, if you don’t tell us what it *was*?”

“Well, *duh*, because you are magicians. You make your living off the ability you claim: to contact the gods and gain secrets from the spirit realm. *If* you can do what you claim, you *should* be able to tell me *both* the dream and its interpretation.”²

Shocked blank looks were the magicians’ only answer, as if to say “How *dare* you question the value of a state bureaucracy just because no *evidence* supports it!”

That made Neb furious. “If you don’t tell me, I will have you cut in pieces and your nice homes trampled by elephants. So which will it be?”

“B-b-but the lesser gods we contact – the demons – can’t read a man’s dreams”, several magicians took turns answering. “They are good for what’s important, like if you want to murder, rape, steal, and destroy all the way from Africa to India, which is the definition of

2 Bible commentator David Guzik: “Despite their protests, Nebuchadnezzar wasn’t asking too much of these magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans. These men made their living on their supposed ability to contact the gods and gain secrets from the spirit realm. If they were in reality what they presented themselves as in image, they should be able to tell Nebuchadnezzar both the dream and its interpretation.”

the greatness that Your Majesty enjoys.³ But a forgotten dream doesn't *hurt* anybody and is therefore outside the expertise of our gods, besides being of no interest to them. If it doesn't hurt anybody, what good is it?

“No religion on earth claims that any of its gods can read thoughts which a man has forgotten, and then be willing to tell a mere human what it was. Only the Greatest God can know,⁴ but He is in Heaven and does

3 Luke 22:26 [Contrasting Jesus' new vision of authority with that of the past:] But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.

4 Bible Commentator Albert Barnes on Daniel 2:11: “The word “gods” here - אלהין 'ělohîm□ym, the same as the Hebrew אלהים 'ělohîm□ym - is in the plural number, but might be applied to the true God, as the Hebrew אלהים 'ělohîm□ym often is. It is by no means certain that they meant to use this in the plural, or to say that it was an admitted truth that the gods worshipped in Babylon did not dwell with people.

It was, undoubtedly, the common opinion that they did; that the temples were their abode; and that they frequently appeared among men, and took part in human affairs. But it was a very early opinion that the Supreme God was withdrawn from human affairs, and had committed the government of the world to intermediate beings - internuncii - demons, or aeons: beings of power far superior to that of men, who constantly mingled in human affairs. Their power, however, though great, was limited; and may not the Chaldeans here by the word אלהין 'ělohîm□ym - have meant to refer to the Supreme God, and to say that this was a case which pertained to him alone; that no inferior divinity could be competent to do such a thing as he demanded; and that as the Supreme God did not dwell among men it was hopeless to attempt to explain the matter? Thus understood, the result will convey a higher truth, and will show more impressively the honor put on Daniel. The phrase, “whose dwelling is not with flesh,” means “with men – in human bodies.”

On the supposition that this refers to the Supreme God, this undoubtedly accords with the prevailing sentiment of those times, that however often the inferior divinities might appear to men, and assume human forms, yet the Supreme God was far removed, and never thus took up his abode on the earth. They could hope, therefore, for no communication from Him who alone would be

not communicate with mere humans. No king, for that reason, has ever demanded such a thing of his magicians and wizards.”

Steam roiled out of Neb’s ears, even before the insinuation that he was not important enough to earn the attention of the Greatest God. “There is one teensy problem with your logic. If you have no ability to recover a *forgotten* dream, how can I trust your ability to interpret a *remembered* dream? Any child could *make up* an interpretation. How can I know you would not just be making up something?

“In fact, how can I know you and every other magician and priest of every other religion in the whole wide world isn’t just making up stuff about gods and Heaven and Hell and Nirvana and Reincarnation and every other crazy thing you all come up with?

“Something about my dream has fired an urgency within me to know for sure, and now I know for sure that you can’t back up anything you say. You

competent to the solution, of such a secret as this. This may be regarded, therefore, as a frank confession of their entire failure in the matter under consideration. They acknowledged that “they” themselves were not competent to the solution of the question, and they expressed the opinion that the ability to do it could not be obtained from the help which the inferior gods rendered to men, and that it was hopeless to expect the Supreme God – far withdrawn from human affairs – to interpose. It was a public acknowledgment that their art failed on a most important trial, and thus the way was prepared to show that Daniel, under the teaching of the true God, was able to accomplish what was wholly beyond all human power.

The trial had been fairly made. The wisest men of the Chaldean realm had been applied to. They on whom reliance had been placed in such emergencies; they who professed to be able to explain the prognostics of future events; they who had been assembled at the most important and magnificent court of the world – the very center of Pagan power; they who had devoted their lives to investigations of this nature, and who might be supposed to be competent to such a work, if any on earth could, now openly acknowledged that their art failed them, and expressed the conviction that there was no resource in the case.”

have no evidence.

“As for the power of your gods to destroy, I think my talent for destruction is secure without their help.

“The flight of my dream just turned into a test of your credibility, and you just flunked. I no longer see the benefit to my kingdom of your existence. Guards!”

Scorpion Supper

The roundup was fast.

Until it came to Dan, God’s man. After a guard told Dan what it was all about, Dan asked for permission to approach the king.

“Neb has just ordered you and your kind cut up into scorpion suppers, and you want to jump to the head of the line?”

“I must see him right away.”

“OK. It’s your funeral”, the guard smiled broadly. “And I *love* funerals!”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

1065 BC

OK, so he was getting old and losing his grip. Yes, yes, his two sons were causing problems.

But *this*? The people thought *this* was the way *out* of their problems? A *dictator*?! This is like trying to *dig* your way out of a hole.

What hurt Sam the most was how much of it was his own fault. His two sons were as scandalous as Eli’s two sons when Sam was a boy.

Different scandals, though. When Eli ruled Israel, his sons had helped themselves to the meat of animals brought for sacrifice, and to the women working at the Temple,⁵ before God had Eli’s boys

5 1 Samuel 2:12-16, 22

killed.⁶ Sam's sons at least didn't do that, but they took bribes to rule in court against poor citizens who couldn't afford bribes, and against ethical citizens who refused to fund corruption.

Sam could not have had a more graphic warning about this very problem directly from God way before Sam even *had* sons.

God doesn't talk out loud to people very often. When God first talked out loud to Sam, it was about this very problem, with Eli's sons. It wasn't good news for Eli.

God had stood, literally stood, right by Sam's bed, and told him,⁷ "Some day I am going to do something to the people of Israel that is so terrible that everyone who hears about it will be stunned. On that day I will carry out all my threats against Eli's family, from beginning to end. I have already told him that I am going to punish his family forever because his sons have spoken evil things against me. He knew they were doing this, but he did not stop them. Eli has loved his sons more than he loved my worship. So I solemnly declare to the family of Eli that no sacrifice or offering will ever be able to remove the consequences of this terrible sin."

It wasn't news Sam wanted to give Eli! But Eli demanded that Sam tell him what God had said. Eli accepted Sam's report without complaining. *Yet Eli still kept his sons in power.*

Eli was the elected⁸ supreme judge of Israel, and

6 1 Samuel 2:27-34, 4:11, 17

7 1 Samuel 3:10-14, GNB translation. To this translation is added this summary from Josephus: "Eli has loved his sons more than he loved my worship." Josephus Antiquities, Book V, Chapter 10, #4,

8 Deuteronomy 1:13 says the judges set up to rule Israel were "chosen" by the people they ruled. Moses himself ruled with the consent of the people, Exodus 4:29-31, [John Gill on v. 31, "signifying their readiness to obey all instructions and directions that should be given

a High Priest by inheritance. Eli became Sam's guardian and raised him to serve the Lord, but he could not manage his own sons. Rather than punish them for their criminal actions as he would any other citizen, he let them serve as priests with himself! And now Sam's own sons were copying Eli's sons, and Sam was copying Eli in not punishing them at all but rather empowering them!

Worse: Eli had a better excuse, at least towards the end: he was 98 years old, blind, and fat!⁹ Sam had not lived past sixty. Like the rings on a tree stump tell a tree's age, Sam's hair showed his age, never having been cut.¹⁰ Sam was in a lot better condition to know what was going on and to put a stop to it.

But Sam reminded himself that the people had *asked* Sam to appoint his sons. Sam's declining vigor had made him unable to travel the whole country twice a year judging cases as he had for years, so it was at the request of representatives of the Southern tribes,¹¹ tired of traveling all the way north to Ramah¹² to appear in court, that Sam appointed his eldest, Joel,

to them.”] and never by force except to punish minorities determined to violate laws to which they had themselves agreed and which the majority still supported. For example, when the people made a golden calf, he ordered Levites to slay those determined to still worship it, and when Moab sent prostitutes to tempt Israeli men away from God, Moses ordered the execution of the men who took them. But when a few people are punished for actions considered criminal by the majority, that is not called “ruling by force”, but rather that is simply considered enforcing laws chosen by the majority of voters.

9 1 Samuel 4:15, 18

10 1 Samuel 1:11 says his hair was never cut; his age as not past 60 is the statement of Matthew Henry on 1 Samuel 8:1-3; other Bible commentators agree.

11 Matthew Henry speculated, “Probably the southern countries petitioned for their residence there, that they might not be necessitated to travel far with their causes.”

12 1 Samuel 7:17 says Ramah was Samuel's home. It is about 5 miles north of Jerusalem.

and his kid brother Abiah, to move into the southern cities Bethel and Beersheba, and divided the people in the south into two districts to be under their respective jurisdiction.¹³

Certainly Sam would never have appointed his sons had he any clue they would turn so dark, like mice who play when the cat is away; and if Sam could discern no simmering irresponsibility in them, how could the people? So the people couldn't be blamed for their enthusiasm for the convenience expected from the appointment.¹⁴

They didn't take bribes in *every* case. Just a few, Sam reminded himself. Even a single bribe taken by a judge is a scandal tarnishing his entire record of service. But was it really fair to deny his sons the credit for honest decisions in other cases?

The people could have solved their problem with a lot less harm to themselves than to surrender their power to choose government policy to a dictator. They could have identified and elected more honest judges.¹⁵

13 Josephus, Antiquities, Book VI, Chapter 3, section 2.

14 Matthew Henry on 1 Samuel 8:1-3: "We have reason to think that Samuel gave them their commissions, not because they were his sons (he had no ambition to entail the government upon his family, any more than Gideon had), but because, for aught that yet appeared, they were men very fit for the trust...."

15 The Bible doesn't say whether judges faced "retention" votes like state judges in the U.S., or had lifetime appointments but were subject to impeachment like U.S. federal judges, or had unconditional lifetime appointments like kings. The only judge of Israel whose removal by the people was reported in the Bible was Abimelech, who seized power by force and was removed by force. In 1 Samuel 8 where the people complained about Samuel's bribe-taking sons, the *implication* is they were helpless to replace the men by their votes; but their "helplessness" may have been no more than that of U.S. voters today who want to limit Congressional terms by "term limits", removing from themselves the power to decide yes or no whether to retain a Congressman, not because they have become unable to vote a man out of office, but because that much freedom takes too much work. Easier to forfeit the freedom to keep a good

At the least, they could have asked Sam to appoint more honest judges that they had identified and agreed upon. But no, rather than go to so much work, their solution is to demand a dictator!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

626 BC

Dan got his permission to talk to Neb. Neb loved funerals too, and especially appreciated volunteers.

“Excellency,” Dan began when the amused tyrant gestured for him to speak, “it is true that no demon can recover and explain your dream. But it is also true that God, who rules all demons, can.

“It is a lie that God cares so little about humans that He will not speak to any of us. In fact, He will speak to *any* of us who will obey what He tells us. It is only to the extent that a man loses interest in learning from God, that God loses interest in teaching a man.¹⁶

“God has spoken to my people many times. My people are your captives today, because for a long time they stopped obeying.”

That got Neb’s attention. Neb knew the

person in office. Reducing choice reduces the pressure to think.
16 Luke 11:9 And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. 10 For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. 11 If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? 12 Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? 13 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?

Babylonian giant,¹⁷ Nimrod,¹⁸ had overseen the construction of Babel 1,500 years before, which was stopped by the Miracle of Languages by a God mightier than all the gods helping with the project.

Neb knew the giants had moved to Palestine, where the Israelites wiped them all out, most of them 790 years before, 40 years after leaving Egypt in ruins

17 The Cambridge Bible commentary, commenting on Genesis 6:4, directly says Nimrod was a giant: “the mighty men, &c.] That is to say, ‘the well-known giants of old-world time,’ familiar personages in Israelite folk-lore. To this class belong such names as ‘Nimrod,’ Gen_10:8, and ‘Og,’ Deu_3:11.’ The word ‘mighty’, used to describe Nimrod in Genesis 10:8, is also used to describe the giants in Genesis 6:4. It is used in a way that implies more than an adjective that might describe all kinds of people. However, Bible commentators by no means agree what these verses mean.”

18 Bible commentator David Guzik, on Genesis 10:9: “a. Cush begot Nimrod: One son of Cush worthy of note is Nimrod. He was a mighty one on the earth, but not in a good way. He ruled over Babel, which was the first organized rebellion of humans against God. The name Nimrod itself means, ‘let us rebel.’

“b. Like ‘Nimrod the mighty hunter before the LORD’: The context shows that this is not a compliment of Nimrod. The idea is that Nimrod was an offense before the face of God.

“i. This is not talking about Nimrod’s ability to hunt wild game. He was not a hunter of animals. He was a hunter of men - a warrior. It was through his ability to fight and kill and rule ruthlessly that his kingdom of the Euphrates valley city states was consolidated. (Boice)

“ii. A Jerusalem Targum says: ‘He was powerful in hunting and in wickedness before the Lord, for he was a hunter of the sons of men, and he said to them, ‘Depart from the judgment of the Lord, and adhere to the judgment of Nimrod!’ Therefore it is said: ‘As Nimrod the strong one, strong in hunting, and in wickedness before the Lord.’

“iii. Ginzberg quotes from a Jewish legend: ‘The great success that attended all of Nimrod’s undertakings produced a sinister effect. Men no longer trusted in God, but rather in their own prowess and ability, an attitude to which Nimrod tried to convert the whole world.

“iv. Hence it is likely that Nimrod, having acquired power, used it in tyranny and oppression; and by rapine and violence founded the domination which was the first distinguished by the name of a

through miracles alleged of no other god. Neb had indeed been afraid to invade Jerusalem and destroy its temple, lest Israel's previously mighty God might still live. But Neb's fear was overcome by the fantastic reports of temple wealth which Israel's earlier righteous but ignorant king, Hezekiah, showed Babylonian ambassadors.¹⁹

Ah, the history! Neb reflected with pride that the form of government called "monarchy", in which a King was so secure in his dictatorship that he could pass his tyranny to his son, while the people consider themselves blessed to have it so,²⁰ was established for the first time in human history by Nimrod.²¹ And now Neb, himself, ruled an *empire* – he ruled over *many* kings of *many* nations! *And Neb did it without even being a giant!*

Neb's proud recollections were disturbed by the return of his focus to this boyish man with his proud claims standing before him. And, frankly, by Neb's dream. Neb wondered if his dream had anything to do with Babylon's past kings and Neb's present empire.

Neb was about to learn that his dream was about all these, and more: it was also about the *last* world empire, whose capitol would be – guess where? – again, in Babylon.²²

kingdom on the face of the earth. How many kingdoms have been founded in the same way, in various ages and nations from that time to the present! From the Nimrods of the earth, God deliver the world!" (Clarke)

19 Isaiah 39

20 Jeremiah 5:31, Luke 22:25

21 Bible commentator Jamieson-Faucett-Brown writes, "he [Nimrod] founded the first kingdom in the world [Gen_10:10]." Was it, indeed, the first? His "kingdom" is certainly the earliest one mentioned in the Bible. Commentator John Gill observes that Nimrod's kingdom "is the first kingdom *known* to be set up in the world."

22 Of course Neb was not given the names of the future kingdoms, but is Babylon indeed both the first and last worldwide tyranny? The

Neb studied this boyish man, Dan, who claims his God still lives, and can still do more than any god, and is actually willing to tell men what he knows! The very idea irritated Neb. Why would such an important God talk to such an unimportant boy, and not himself, the most important man on the planet?

Daniel guessed the king's thoughts but did not openly address them. "I beg your permission for a single day to bring you God's answer. I and my companions will pray to our God, that tonight, God will show me the dream He gave you, and its meaning, so that I might bring it to you tomorrow morning."

"You believe, unlike my magicians, that the greatest God is willing to take time away from enjoying Heaven to talk to mere mortals?"

"Not only talk, Excellency, but act. God is wise and powerful. He controls the times and the seasons. He makes and unmakes kings. He made you a king of kings. It is he who gives wisdom and understanding. He reveals things that are deep and secret. He knows what is hidden in darkness, and he himself is surrounded by light. He gives wisdom and strength to men, and answers their prayers."²³

dream has the feel of a summary of all future world history, up through the "end times". Revelation 14 names Babylon as the end-times city whose evil tentacles reach around the world, but the 4th and final empire described in Nebuchadnezzar's dream is ordinarily understood to be the Roman Empire, morphed into the Roman Catholic Church, or Mecca the center of Moslem pilgrimages, depending on who is telling it. Will physical Babylon indeed rise again to be the hub of world commerce, or is the naming symbolic, in the same way Jerusalem "spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt", Revelation 11:8, and the name on the Revelation 17:5 Harlot is "*Mystery* Babylon"? If indeed Nebuchadnezzar's dream intends to summarize the main features of subsequent human history, then the "Babylon" of Revelation 14 has at least *something* to do with it.

²³ This declaration of God's involvement in human history is a summary of what Daniel said when he woke up the next morning: see 2:20-23. Verse 16 reports Daniel's request for more time without

Neb would not have tolerated such claims under other circumstances. But his dream made him teachable. Plus the part about God making him “king of kings” was all right. He was both impressed, hopeful, and skeptical.

Snap! A little crack formed in Neb’s hard heart. It was God Who made him king? No one in Neb’s entire experience, nor in any of Babylon’s historical records, had made such a claim! And for good reason: anyone who dared would normally be fed to the lions!

But The Dream still troubled Neb. It was a nagging reminder that he didn’t know everything. He was not actually God, as was the normal presumption of pagan culture. and as he normally thought of himself and would get back to thinking of himself after this was all over.²⁴

God had plans for that little crack. God was driving a Holy Ghost sledge into that crack, preparing Neb to proclaim to the whole world what he had just been told by Dan.²⁵

But the crack hadn’t widened that much just yet. “You have until tomorrow morning.”

The next morning, Dan brought Neb God’s plans for the next 3800 years.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

1065 BC. OK, so Sam had appointed his sons to

reporting any reasons Daniel gave for asking. I think it reasonable to presume that this understanding in Dan’s mind poured out of his mouth more than once, and a natural place for it to pour out was in this first contact with Neb about Neb’s dream.

24 Daniel 3, Neb demanded to be worshiped as God.

25 Daniel 4:1-3, 34-37. Chapter 4 is an official record of Neb’s proclamation to the whole world over which he ruled.

be judges, at the people's request,²⁶ and they turned rotten. So now the solution the people have dreamed up is to replace their government of elected judges with a *dictator*?

At least Sam's sons were restrained in their evil by the knowledge that their crime spree *could* be ended either by Sam or by the voters. Do the people not consider that a dictator is very likely, under no restraint at all, to be far more wicked, with no recourse for the people? And that dictators have rotten sons too?

But maybe the people aren't that ignorant after all, Sam wondered. What if the people *preferred* being helpless? After all, it is so much easier, and frankly so much more fun, to complain about *others'* lack of responsibility, than to exercise your own!

Presenting Sam with a better judicial candidate would have taken *study* of the various candidates. That takes *time*. It doesn't just require *individual* study: it requires *group* study – by many observers sharing their observations with each other. And as evidence is processed by a group, it takes *reasoning with people who disagree* about how to interpret the evidence.

And the issues that need consensus are not simple. It isn't just “is the guy honest when he is

²⁶ This story says Samuel's sons were elected, or chosen, by the people, because Deuteronomy 1:13 says judges were elected. Nothing in the Bible indicates this had changed by Samuel's time. To the contrary, the fact that 1 Samuel 8:7 describes a night-and-day difference between the tyranny of kings and Israel's previous relative freedom supports the presumption that judges were still elected: were Samuel able to unilaterally appoint his own sons, the difference between that and a monarchy would have been very little – certainly not as clear a contrast as 1 Samuel 8:7 describes. Further evidence that Samuel's sons were elected is that Verse 1 says Samuel “made his sons judges over Israel”, and Deuteronomy 1:13 says Moses “made” those who had been elected “rulers over” the people – the same word both in Hebrew and in English. But Moses “made” them rulers after they were elected, so the process of “making” must refer to an “inauguration” after an election.

trusted to mow the lawn”, as important as that is. It’s also, “Is his morality secure enough to resist great temptation when he is exercising authority where the public can’t see, and where the booty is great?”

But also, “what are this guy’s legal theories? That is, what does this guy think is a fair application of law in certain difficult situations?” So for a group to agree on a judicial candidate that will satisfy most of them, the group has to reach agreement about how laws ought to be applied in many important yet complicated situations.

In short, it takes a “multitude of counsellors”. Not a bunch of weenies who call it “a bunch of arguing” to reason with others who disagree. Or worse, who consider reasoning a distraction from the addictive, mind-numbing pastime of watching bugs crawl across the floor.

A “multitude of counsellors”.²⁷

“Many advisors”, in other words.²⁸ Many advisors reach their goals, Sam had observed. It was a key to Israel’s strength. Millions had freedom of speech to discuss their ideas and solutions, reasoning with each other, both in small groups and at the national level. But a “multitude of counsellors” rolls off the tongue like the drum roll that starts the National Anthem.

Sam had told his sons “Your plans will fall apart right in front of you if you fail to get good advice. But if you first seek out multiple counselors, you’ll watch your plans succeed.”²⁹

A “multitude of counsellors” is the greatest need of nations and neighbors, and that’s what you have to

27 Proverbs 15:22. “Multitude of counsellors” is the word choice of AFV, ASV, Geneva, JPS, KJV, LSV, WEB, Webster, and YLT.

28 “Many advisors” is the word choice for Proverbs 15:22 of ERV, ESV, GW,

29 TPT translation fo Proverbs 15:22.

some degree when citizens are not punished for saying what is true. It's what will guarantee that their "purposes are established". That's what Sam kept telling his sons. That's what Sam will tell the first king, if these short-sighted Israelites persist. Maybe if not the first king, the second, or third, will hear this advice, take it to heart, and become wise.³⁰

"Come to bed, Sam. The world will still be there tomorrow. You can save it then."

As much as Sam loved his wife, that was not possible. Half the night was already gone, and the rest of it seemed far too little time to process what Sam had been asked to do tomorrow.

Chapter 2: Stolen Gold – How God Uses Evil

626 BC Part One of the dream began with Neb's world rule, and proceeded to three additional bloody worldwide swaths of destruction, called "empires", that would follow his, strewing the land with corpses, crushed dreams, and gory. I mean, glory.

In keeping with the conflation of bloodletting with greatness that dominated the values of that time,

30 Well, I don't know if Samuel really said it in those words first, but he *could* have, and indeed, the third king wrote it down for all of us: Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

Daniel told Neb, “Your Majesty, you are the greatest of all kings. The God of heaven has made you emperor and given you power, might, and honor. He has made you ruler of all the inhabited earth and ruler over all the animals and birds. You are the head of gold.”¹

Neb liked that so well he nearly forgot about resenting this young upstart hearing more from God than himself, the most important man in the world. Head of gold! Neb would let God talk to this young waif, as long as what God told him was that Neb is not only the most important man in the world, but the most important kin in all human history! Yes! Let this God keep talking all He likes! Head of Gold! Yes!

But was that the sense in which Daniel understood his own words?

Probably not.

So why did an association occur to Daniel between Babylon and the golden head of Neb’s dreamy statue?

Most likely because Daniel read about it in the Bible.

In the same Bible book, in fact, whose author wrote the scroll mounted on Daniel’s wall,² addressed

1 Daniel 2:37-38, GNB version.

2 Of course this is fiction, but Daniel was the great great grandson of King Hezekiah. As Jerusalem was surrounded by 180,000 Assyrian troops, the Bible records robust communication between Isaiah and Hezekiah. By Daniel’s time, Daniel had emerged, so far as the Bible records, as the wisest and most righteous of Hezekiah’s descendants, so it is likely that he most valued, and was given, custody of sacred family records. Indeed, Isaiah, though rejected for many of his 60 years, was a rock star after God’s angel killed the whole Assyrian army in one night that was surrounding Jerusalem. Isaiah alone had absolute confidence that Assyria’s boasts against God would end in disaster for Assyria. Of course we can’t document what apartment Daniel lived in in Babylon, so even if a scroll by Isaiah were found in Babylon, we couldn’t be sure it was Daniel’s. But so far the oldest surviving copies of Isaiah’s writings were in the Dead Sea Scrolls dating from a little before the time of Jesus. One reason to present

to King Hezekiah, Daniel's grandfather's grandfather³.

713 BC

"How could a God of love allow so much evil in the world?" Isaiah was asked again.

"Babylon, for example. The city of gold, say their travel brochures. *Stolen* gold, say Babylon's neighbors! Babylon's armies destroy and slaughter, just to take gold from those who earned it back to Babylon to make the city look pretty! And God lets them!"

The skeptics thought they were so righteous, they were better than God! They cared more about the evil in the world than God's allowance of it indicated God cared! More righteous than God, according to how much *they said they cared*, though a lot *less* righteous, according to *how little cost they were willing to accept* of taking action, or even of trying to seriously understand.

Isaiah had two answers, but was grieved that so few wanted to hear them.

First, that invaders A seal of "Isaiah the Prophet"

this fiction in this story is to underline Daniel's familiarity with Isaiah, and thus how clear the meaning of the statue's head of gold must have been to him.

- 3 Josephus said Daniel was from a royal family: "there were four of the family of Zedekiah, of most excellent dispositions, one of whom was called Daniel," Antiquities of the Jews, Book X, Chapter 10, paragraph 1. Zedekiah was 21 when he began to reign, 2 Kings 24:18, which was after Nebuchadnezzar's invasion; it was Nebuchadnezzar who made Zedekiah king. Daniel was 17 apparently the same year, the first year of captivity in Babylon. So Daniel and Zedekiah must have been brothers, or perhaps cousins. Zedekiah was King Jehoiachin's uncle, 2 Kings 24:17. So Zedekiah was the brother of Jehoiachin's father, King Jehoiakim; their father was the righteous King Josiah, who was the son of the evil King Amon, 2 Kings 21:24, who was the son of the evil King Manassah, 2 Kings 21:18 (who repented after being a prisoner of war), who was the son of the righteous King Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:21. Therefore, Daniel was a great-great-grandson of King Hezekiah.

from Babylon, who he knew would eventually overrun Israel, were more merciful than Israeli citizens.⁴ At least they didn't throw their babies up into sacrificial fires,⁵ the way Israeli kings had been directing their subjects.⁶

found near artifacts of Hezekiah. See www.thedailybeast.com/did-archaeologists-just-prove-the-existence-of-prophet-isaiah



Second, God didn't create an existence with nothing for humans to do.

Sure, God could wipe out evil all by Himself. He could turn everybody into robots with no capacity to even think evil, much less be tempted by it. But He wants the fellowship of others who care enough about evil to actually try to heal it, rather than just complain about it. Unfortunately the capacity to *choose* good requires the capacity to *not* choose good, which in turn creates the likelihood of evil.

Isn't it enough that God provides infinite resources so that anyone who *does* stand against evil can succeed? No other religion even *values* such divine assistance *with doing good*, much less *promises* it!

4 Isaiah 59, and several other verses, list the crimes of Israel.

5 There is evidence of human sacrifice in ancient Ur, in Abraham's time, but not by Neb's time. Human sacrifice also disgusted the Greeks and Romans, although not enough to completely stamp it out. [www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/did-ancient-greeks-engage-human-sacrifice-180960111/] A Roman law passed in 81 BC characterized human sacrifice as murder committed for magical purposes. Later Rome conquered Britain and ended the human sacrifice of the Druids. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_Rome#Human_sacrifice]

6 2 Chronicles 33:6, Manasseh; 2 Kings 16:3, Ahaz. These verses, also 2 Kings 17:17, also say the kings of Israel (the 10 tribes, not Judah) sacrificed their children.

What weenies, these complainers!

What doubters! How could anyone be such a wus in the face of evil, or “burn out” doing good, Isaiah asked himself, who actually believes God’s promises in places like Psalm 91 of superhero power for those who patiently wait upon the Lord?

Psalm 91:7 A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. ...11 For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. ...13 Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder [deadly snake]: the young lion and the dragon [dinosaur] shalt thou trample under feet. 14 Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.

Isaiah related to God’s frustration with people who hate evil only enough to complain about it. He put God’s complaint about human complaints on a billboard:

Now the time has come for me [God] to save and protect my people. *I looked around, but I saw no one to help me. I was surprised that no one supported me.* So I used my own power to save my people. My own anger supported me. In my anger I trampled down the nations. I punished them in anger and spilled their blood on the ground.⁷

How could God allow so much evil in the world, indeed! How much evil will God have to allow, before His people, who are called by His Name, finally pick up the tools God scatters around, and start removing evil

⁷ Isaiah 63:4-6, ERV

from the world, starting with the evil in their own hearts?

As for Babylon, sure, it was a “golden city”. Isaiah said so frequently.

But his Hebrew hearers knew he wasn’t being complimentary. He used the word מדהבה (madehēbâh) meaning “an exactress of gold.” The word could also be read as marehēbâh, meaning oppression. When it was translated later into Greek it became Επιπουδαστής/Epispoudastēs - ‘Solicitor, or exactor (of gold).’ Tribute, in other words. (Taxes collected by invaders.) In this sense it does not refer to the magnificence of the city, but to its oppressive acts in demanding tribute of gold from Babylon’s victim nations.⁸

Another way Isaiah described Babylon was “the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency.” But not out of admiration, but rather to underline the *vanity* of its wealth by placing that description in a context of Babylon’s coming utter destruction in judgment for the way it got its “glory”.⁹

Isaiah even described Babylon as “the lady of kingdoms”, but not that Isaiah personally ever thought of Babylon in such elegant terms, but to report the time after which no one would ever call her that again.¹⁰ An example of a writer from another nation describing Babylon like that was Aesch. Per. 51. He mentioned Βαβυλων η πολυχρυσος (Babulōn hē poluchrusos) - “Babylon abounding in gold.”¹¹

8 The information in this paragraph is taken from Bible commentator Albert Barnes, commenting on Isaiah 14:4.

9 Isaiah 13:19 And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation:

10 Isaiah 47:5-14.

11 This paragraph is mostly a quote from Bible commentator Albert

The very mention of Babylon both disgusted and saddened Isaiah. He published in his newsletter, “You will no longer be ‘The Queen of the Kingdoms.’ I was angry with my people. They were mine, but I turned against them. I let you punish them, but you showed them no mercy. Even for those who were old you made the work hard.

“You said, ‘I will live forever. I will always be the queen.’ You didn't care what you did to my people. You didn't think about what might happen later.

“So now listen, you who love only pleasure! Feeling so safe, you tell yourself, ‘I alone am important, and no one else matters. I will never be a widow or lose my children.’

“These two things will happen to you: First, you will lose your children and then your husband. And none of your magic spells will help you.

“You do bad things but still feel safe. You say to yourself, ‘No one sees the wrong I do.’ You thought that your wisdom and knowledge would save you. You tell yourself, ‘I alone am important, and no one else matters.’

“Disaster is coming your way. You don't know when it will happen, but disaster is coming. And there is nothing you can do to stop it.

“You worked hard all your life learning magic and spells. So start using that magic. Maybe those spells will help you. Maybe you will be able to frighten someone. You have many advisors.

“Are you tired of the advice they give? Then send out your men who read the stars. They can tell when the month starts, so maybe they can tell you when your troubles will come.

“But they cannot even save themselves. They will

Barnes, commenting on Daniel 2:39.

burn like straw. They will burn so fast that there will be no coals left to cook bread. There will be no fire left to sit by.”¹²

It saddened Isaiah that all that pretty gold in Babylon would later include the gold from Jerusalem’s Temple which David and Solomon had put there to honor God.¹³

And yet, for all the “evil in the world” that Babylon’s marauding armies represented, were they worse than God’s own people, who are called by His Name? Will the Babylonian king plug his ears to God’s counsel as tightly as God’s own people are doing?

What if God foresees more teachability in the future Babylonian king than in His own people, and He has plans to save the least wicked of His own people and put them under a more righteous government than they are willing to administer themselves, besides softening hard hearts all over the world through the testimony of a world ruler?

626 BC

“Head of gold, indeed”, thought Daniel. “All stolen.” But to be fair, Daniel perceived what an effective tool Neb was in the hand of God to purify His people from the sin of idolatry.

So effective, Dan half imagined, half prayed, that in the Last Days the world would be able to look back on Jewish history and see that the Jewish nation will have never since sunk into idolatry. Centuries – indeed, millennia, will have passed away; Jews may have been wanderers and exiles in all lands; they may have been persecuted, ridiculed, and oppressed on account of their religion; they may have been placed under every possible inducement to conform to the

¹² Isaiah 47:5-14, ERV version

¹³ 2 Kings 20:12-19

religion around them, and yet, as professed worshipers of Jehovah, the God of their fathers, they will have maintained their integrity, and neither promises nor threatenings, neither hopes nor fears, neither life nor death, will have been sufficient to constrain the Hebrew people to bow the knee to an idol god.¹⁴

Or so Dan prayed.

There was another sense in which gold seemed the right metaphor for the Babylonian head of this statue, which Dan pondered but only half grasped. Could it be that the most costly metal correlated with the form of government most costly *to human happiness?*

Dan rephrased the idea: Could it be that the metal most desired by man is a metaphor of – or is itself – the greatest threat to human happiness?

Obviously, the dream is about forms of government, and just as obviously, there is a downward progression in value from gold, down through silver, then brass, then iron, all the way down to the least costly materials: clay, and then stone.

Except that it is the common material which, “cut without hands”, lives and grows, given life by God, representing the best government, founded by God and patterned after the principles of Heaven. While the precious materials represent the worst kinds of government, patterned after the principles of Hell, which God will crush and blow out of existence.

That is, what men regard as common, God prepares for eternity, while what men most desire, and value as most precious, God never wants to see again.

Since the gold, silver, brass, and iron represent human governments while only stone represents what

¹⁴ This observation about the effectiveness of captivity in permanently curing Jews of idolatry is almost word for word taken from Bible commentator Albert Barnes, regarding Daniel 2:44.

God establishes, therefore the downward progression in *human*-assigned value must represent somehow an upward progression towards God's ideal.

Hmmm. If so, in what sense? If Neb's empire will prove the most evil of the four empires, being the most costly, in what sense?

Neb was as absolute a dictator as one could be. Although no other government was as free as Israel's when Israel's began, not every government was as dictatorial as Neb's. Maybe future human empires would be a little more free.

Dan was not a good person to ask about how wonderful Neb's dictatorship had been. No family of Israel had escaped its terror. But Dan's feelings about absolute dictatorship had a firmer foundation than personal experience.

Dan knew a dictatorship was the worst kind of government because he had read 1 Samuel 8.

There were surely other great empires in other parts of the world, but as Matthew Henry points out, these are the four empires which affected Israel up through the time of Jesus, when the smashing began. As the smashing began of tyranny, tyranny gave Israel one last smash and it ceased being a nation for nearly 2,000 years.

The first such world empire was the one world government of Babylon from [626-539](#). Then Medo-Persia: [550-330](#). Greece: [334-275](#); Rome: [509 BC-395AD](#).

Chapter 3: Voting to End All Voting

1065 BC

As much as Sam loved getting into bed with his wife, he could not satisfy her request, this night. Understanding the next day's duty could not be put off until the next day.

"The people are tired of all the reasoning that Freedom requires", Sam answered, as if he actually thought that would impress upon her the urgency of thinking about it all night.

"I know, I know. I get tired of it too. A bunch of arguing."

"They want to give up the choice of their own rulers. A choice held by the people for 400 years. They want it in the trash."

"But how has that 'choice' worked out? That history book you're writing, 'Judges', just lists the judges who obeyed God and led Israel *out* of captivity. It doesn't talk about the ones, *chosen by the people*, whose sins led Israel *into* captivity."

"Abimelech was..."

"OK, you wrote about Abimelech. But the fact is, not only did voters tolerate *slightly* corrupt leaders like our sons, they tolerated leaders so far from God that about every third generation was enslaved, because they were so tyrannical that foreign invasion was merciful. At least that's what you tell me all the time."

Sam found it especially difficult when his wife quoted himself to him, forcing him to argue with himself.

"Then there were the judges, from the top judges all the way down, who were OK when they were elected, but got poisoned by power, but voters left them in because they were too apathetic to monitor them

and then intelligently replace them.¹⁵ Not exactly an ideal system, this Democracy.”

“Republic”, Sam corrected. Oh, not again. How could he be ready to persuade the whole nation that freedom was better than tyranny, if he had still failed to fully persuade his own wife?

“Oh right, Republic. Not quite Heaven.”

“But it is *God’s* system, given through Jethro.”

Sam drew on a mission statement he had been working on for his newsletter: “If men through fear, fraud or mistake, should in terms renounce and give up any essential natural right, the eternal law of reason and the great end of society, would absolutely vacate such renunciation. The right to freedom being the gift of God Almighty, it is not in the power of Man to alienate this gift, and voluntarily become a slave.”¹⁶

“Yes dear. Come to bed.”

“Bribe-taking, a reason to give up elections, indeed! How many citizens are *glad* our sons take bribes, because they can afford to buy favorable court rulings with them? Voters can’t even agree that bribes are bad! Yes, *some* complain. But not all! Some very influential, very respected organizations very powerfully resist reform!”

“Yes, dear. And when you *did* take measures to find replacements for our sons, and for other judges who were just as bad, those special interests opposed

15 That pretty much describes all that is wrong with America today, although to give freedom credit, the willingness of Americans to reason with each other that *does* exist accounts for all that is right with America today. The unwillingness of Israel as they demanded of Samuel their first king is proved by the reasons they gave Samuel for their request: so that their king could fight their battles for them. Like Americans today voting for bigger and more powerful government to take over more and more responsibility that free citizens used to take care of without government.

16 This is actually plagiarized from Samuel Adams (1772).

you, and you didn't get much help from these people complaining about our sons now."¹⁷

Sam nodded and smiled, until his wife added, "Although you really should have taken stronger action to replace your own sons."

"Yes, I know. How well I know. I'm not reviewing these things in my mind to excuse myself, but to analyze the wisdom of the people in giving up elections so perhaps I will be able to reason with them tomorrow.

"Look at the *reason* they give: so they will have even *less* responsibility to manage their own government!"

"They didn't come right out and say that, surely."

"Oh, but they did! They came right out and said they want a king – a dictator whose tyranny is so secure that he can even pass it on to his sons and the people will love to have it so – so that: 'our sovereign shall rule us and go out before us and fight our battles.'"¹⁸

"I remember how the people chose you", Sam's wife said, coming near, sitting in his lap, and putting

17 I don't have a source that says powerful interests opposed reform of corruption, but it is certainly true in America today where our justice system is at least effective enough to push bribery far enough into the shadows for the public to know it exists. So powerful interests must surely have resisted reform then too, when justice had deteriorated to the extent that bribery's existence was common knowledge.

18 1 Samuel 8:20, "Then we shall be, we also, like all the nations, and our sovereign shall rule us and go out before us and fight our battles." - TS2009 translation. Later Jeremiah noted a similar surrender of power to tyrannical priests, enabled, not by legal sovereignty, but simply by the political apathy of the people which left a vacuum of power which unprincipled priests were only too happy to fill: Jeremiah 5:30 "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; 31 The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?"

her arms around him. “I voted for you myself! I couldn’t believe how lucky I was when you invited me into your heart! From the time God first spoke to you about Eli’s sons, all Israel was falling in love with you like I was, and it seemed even God was in love with you.¹⁹ Apparently the people don’t regret their choice yet, because here they are, asking *you* to pick their first dictator.”

Sam’s voice softened. He returned her embrace, and repeated her words. “They want *me* to dictate their first dictator! How ironic is that? And iron has so recently been invented!”

Sam thought about the distress of the people because they don’t have a dictator. They wish they already had one. Hmmm. If they already had one, who would it be? Himself, it would seem. Sam.

“Hmmm. Do you think the people want *me* to be their king?”

“No doubt they would, except for your age.”

Sam thought. “But suppose all this happened when we were younger, and I were willing to be the king they wanted. I wonder if any of the people consider that if I were their king, that one of our bribe-taking sons who they are complaining about now would be their *next* king?”

Sam’s wife laughed long at the justice of it all.

“No, these people do not consider very much at all”, Sam monologued. “Even if they regret their choice, shouldn’t it feel better to be able to make it, than to have the selection forced down your throat?”

Sam’s wife laid her head on Sam’s broad shoulder, softened by a thick pad of hair. “We all chose you, and now they want you to choose their king to replace you. Why? Why don’t they pick their king

19 1 Samuel 2:26

themselves?

“They rejected your advice, which was God’s advice, to not *want* a king – why do they want your advice on who should *be* their king?”

“Interesting point. As if it’s a game they are playing with their own consciences: if God and I go along with selecting their king, they will figure God and I have thought it over and now approve? They respected me because I spoke for God. But they don’t respect Him enough to *take* His advice, and they don’t respect God enough to be satisfied with God being their only ‘king’”.²⁰

Sam’s wife finally got him *to* their bed, but he couldn’t get in. He just couldn’t. He knelt by it, and glorified God for the rest of the night.

How different a “king” God was, Sam told God, than all the tyrants surrounding Israel whom the people before him wanted to copy!

God answered, again: “Listen to everything the people say to you. You are not the one they have rejected; I am the one they have rejected as their king. Ever since I brought them out of Egypt, they have turned away from me and worshiped other gods; and now they are doing to you what they have always done to me. So then, listen to them, but give them strict warnings and explain how their kings will treat them.”²¹

Chapter 5: the Birth

20 1 Samuel 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

21 1 Samuel 8:7-9, GNB translation

of Freedom

1462 BC, noon

Moses was exhausted. He was the only judge for 5 million cranky people who were so hard to please, not even God Himself could satisfy them for longer than a couple of days.

What long lines they formed! How unaccustomed they were to waiting in long, tumultuous lines! It didn't make them more agreeable!

Aaron and Miriam, Moses' brother and sister, brought him lunch. Moses hung up his "Out to Lunch" sign. Those waiting were fed by relatives and friends.

Moses prayed over the meal. He was grateful for the fellowship of his brother and sister, their spouses, their children, and their grandchildren. He missed his own wife and sons.

After prayer, Moses told his family "Many of my first 40 years were spent in Pharaoh's court, being groomed as a next Pharaoh. Pharaoh judged cases too, but his lines were a lot shorter."

"Maybe that was because Pharaoh's fuse was so much shorter. His subjects were wary of the hideous tortures he invented for litigants who bored him", Aaron remembered.

Miriam chimed in, "When it came to any concept of human rights, he was definitely a fickle Pharaoh."

Moses recalled "Certainly the idea of equal rights for the poor with the rich,²² for women with men,²³ for

22 Exodus 23:3 (CEV) Make sure that the poor are given equal justice in court.

23 Deuteronomy 24:17 "Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:" This verse declares the inalienable right to equal protection of the laws for widows, who are the women least able to defend themselves. How much more does this verse presume that women

immigrants with citizens,²⁴ for servants with masters,²⁵ or most importantly for those without a bribe with those with,²⁶ had never occurred to Pharaoh, nor to any other ruler or citizen in the whole wide world outside Israel. Or at least not to any of the ambassadors or traders I met with.”

“Fairness.” said Aaron. “That’s what you give the people. Abraham’s legacy was one of ‘fairness’, a concept unknown, and frankly unwanted, outside Israel.”

better able to defend themselves will, as they should, receive “equal protection of the laws (a phrase from the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)!

24 Exodus 12:49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you.

25 God’s laws left no room for slavery as experienced in the U.S. South two centuries ago or anywhere else in the world. A search for the words “slave”, “slaves”, or “slavery” in the KJV turns up no such status in Israel. There were “bondservants/bondmen”, whose work obligation was not allowed to exceed six years, similar to American actors, soldiers, teachers and athletes signing a multi-year contract. But it was their own actions that led to their work obligation. People became bondservants (1) voluntarily to pay off debt, buy a house, or get married, (2) by stealing and being sentenced to pay restitution, (3) by being arrested for terrorism, or sold by terrorists.

All bondservants had rights in court under God’s laws. If the employer causes a permanent injury, the bondservant goes free without having to work off any more debt, Exodus 21:26-27. If a master causes his bondman’s death, he will be executed, Leviticus 24:17 and 21:20. If a bondservant did nothing to cause their work obligation but was “stolen” by a slave trader, the “man stealer” was to be executed, Exodus 21:16, and were on a list of the worst of criminals in 1 Timothy 1:10. Terrorists/prisoners of war were kept working past the six years when others were released, (a good idea for national security), but even they were not kept past the “Jubile” which God ordained to occur every 50 years. Leviticus 25:42-46 (Bible commentator John Gill says they were “not...released at the year jubilee”, but Smith Bible Dictionary, under “slavery”, says “These words (like “forever”) are however, interpreted by Josephus and by the rabbinsts as meaning *until* the Year of Jubilee.”

26 Deuteronomy 16:19 Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

“Here, rules apply equally to all the parties to a dispute”, Miriam added.

The concept made Israeli hearts uniquely open to rules of justice centuries ahead of their time, (meaning centuries ahead of the willingness of population majorities to understand and support them), which Moses was pioneering as judge of the nation, and which he was waiting on God to further clarify.

“All the way from legal and political rights to the right to be heard: God stretches our vision of Equal Rights that far”, Moses observed. “God teaches us that if we would hear from God, *we must listen to each other*, because we never know when or to what extent God will speak to us through sometimes the unlikeliest of human messengers.”²⁷

“If God would speak to me the way He speaks to you,” Miriam confessed, “it would be easy for me to think that is all the information I need, so why would I listen to mere humans? But since God does not, forcing me to listen to lowly humans, that pressures me to be nice to humans; to build relationships with humans; to learn to love humans. God must want us to learn to love each other, is all I can figure.”

Moses laughed. “Pharaoh was greater than his people. He didn’t need to listen to anybody. Not even God.” Moses and Aaron smiled at the sarcasm. “Myself, I am not so blessed. I am no greater than my countrymen. I have to listen.

²⁷ Evidence that this very thought was on Moses’ mind at that time is found in Exodus 18:24, which describes what Moses did the next day after the story here. “So Moses obeyed the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said”. The Geneva Bible note observes: “Godly counsel ought ever to be obeyed, though it come of our inferiors, for of such God oftentimes giveth wisdom to humble them that are exalted, and to declare that one member hath need of another.”

“God doesn’t tell me everything directly. In fact 80 years went by before God had *anything* to say to me. I have no idea why He speaks to me now. But He leaves plenty for me to learn by listening to humans. And not just respectable, smart, honest humans, but all of them.

“Not that I have to agree with everything. But if I disagree, I feel pressure to at least think about it enough to provide a good reason. And if I can’t, or I’m not sure, or a person seems difficult to reason with, being part of a team of advisors saves me. They help me reason. They help me understand and respond well to the most obtuse challenges.²⁸

“As part of getting us to learn to love even our enemies, God sometimes speaks to us even through evil men, forcing us, to the extent we value the wisdom of God, to weigh even the ramblings of the foolish, judging even *their* ideas on their merits rather than by their source.²⁹

28 Proverbs 15:22 Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established.

29 For example, the righteous King Josiah died because he did not listen to the commandment of God given through the pagan Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt. Josiah was the most righteous king in Israel’s history: 2 Kings 23:21 And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as it is written in the book of this covenant. 22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah; 24 Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law 25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

It seems Josiah was even more righteous than King David. He may even have been more righteous than any of us. God gives us two amazing lessons through him. First, what made him righteous: his ruthlessness towards traditional theologies that got in the way of

“For example, consider the skills I’ve acquired, the lessons learned, in Pharaoh’s court. Even the idiotic mythology that strangles Egyptian intelligence has equipped me with a grasp of the blindfold that pagans put on at the approach of reality or reason.

“I’ve interacted with traders and ambassadors from all the nations of Canaan, the land which God promised to Abraham. I’ve learned how they think. I know several of their languages. But I am under no illusions about the adequacy of my own human skill for the challenges and dangers ahead.

“But God sometimes talks to *me*. *Listens* to me. And acts mightily in response to my tiny little mustard seed of faith³⁰ – about enough faith to give me enough

obeying the Word of God, despite the chorus of voices saying “that won’t work in today’s culture”. Second, how severely he was punished, and his nation plunged into sin, for not seriously considering whether God might actually be speaking to him through the unlikeliest prophet on the planet!

Yet righteous Josiah died because he ignored God’s warning through wicked Necho! 2 Chronicles 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Carchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him. 21 But [Necho] sent ambassadors to him, saying,.... I come not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not. 22 Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, ... 24 and he died, and was buried. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25 And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah:

Josiah’s deadly lesson warns us not to dismiss ANY church member as unqualified to speak for God! From clergy to layman, we had better be vigilant to evaluate ANY warning or correction, offered by ANYONE, on its merits, and not just “consider its source”!

30 Matthew 17:19 Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out? 20 And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.

courage to wave a stick in public.³¹

“If God is willing to talk to me, who is as far below Him as a slug is below the sun, how dare I, then, mount a pedestal and count myself so much higher than a fellow human that I needn’t listen to *him*?

“God listens to man! Even God considers our prayers on their merits, and does not dismiss any prayer because of its source! God even answers *Satan’s* prayers, we read in Job,³² limited only to what God is ready to turn into good!³³ And when our prayers are reasonable, He rearranges the universe to accommodate us! How then dare any mere man refuse to help another meet a reasonable need?”

“You can be pretty hard to listen to” complained Miriam.

Aaron defended his kid brother. “Actually the hardest Moses is to listen to is when he isn’t speaking for himself but for God.

“So really it is *God* who is hard to listen to. *God* makes us leave all we were used to and follow Him into the wilderness, facing deadly obstacles that make grown men wet their robes. Not Moses. Moses is as much a crybaby as the rest of us. Which is the only reason I’m here.”³⁴

“True, too true”, Miriam answered, but to defend her complaint, added, “but I was thinking of right now. Listen to all this stuff coming out of Moses’ mouth.

31 Exodus 7:10, 17, 8:5, 16, 9:23, 10:13, 14:16, 17:5

32 Job 1:6-12, 2:1-6.

33 Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

34 Aaron became Moses’ mouthpiece to Pharaoh because when God told Moses to speak to Pharaoh, Moses complained that he couldn’t because he stuttered. “Who made mouths?” God retorted. But Moses still whined, so God enlisted Aaron, Moses’ older brother. See Exodus 4.

Makes a person *think* too much. *Always thinking*. Why can't you just relax and *enjoy your boiled Manna?*"

Miriam was half joking. The part of her that was joking was the part that knew her complaints would accomplish nothing. The part of her that was not joking was the part that wanted to stop thinking so hard.

"That's what keeps wisdom from becoming very popular", Aaron observed, glancing at Miriam. "Requires thinking."

Miriam winced. Moses smiled.

Moses couldn't stop thinking. But he could stop talking, seeing limited interest in it. As he finished his Manna, he barely tasted it, savoring instead the riches of God's principles.

God's habit of speaking even to the most righteous of men through the most wicked, when we least expect it, warns us not to dismiss *anyone* as unqualified to tell us what God wants us to know, Moses reflected

When our pride tempts us to ignore others who are "below" ourselves, we fall into the pagan mindset of higher and lower classes of people, dehumanization of the lowest, and exemption of the highest from the laws and obligations binding the lower.

That mindset inevitably imagines a God so much higher than ourselves that we are unworthy of speaking to him, much less expecting any help. The real God, revealed in the writings of Adam, Noah, Job, and Abraham, listens to man with patience and love – a concept that butts heads with any concept of ourselves as being any more worthy than anyone else of being heard, or of being exempt from needing to listen.

That is a perspective perfectly consistent with pagan prejudiced dehumanization of a culture's targets. But it is the perspective that renders one the

greatest of sinners by God's standard of equal rights, opportunities, and respect for all.³⁵

It was as Moses was considering these great truths, that his father-in-law came to visit.

“Cousin³⁶ Jethro! Father Reuel!³⁷ All day long I tell *other* people the will of God in *their* cases, and now *you* come to tell *me* the will of God in *my* case!”

35 Luke 18:9 There were some people who thought they were very good and looked down on everyone else. Jesus used this story to teach them: 10 "One time there was a Pharisee and a tax collector. One day they both went to the Temple to pray. 11 The Pharisee stood alone, away from the tax collector. When the Pharisee prayed, he said, 'O God, I thank you that I am not as bad as other people. I am not like men who steal, cheat, or commit adultery. I thank you that I am better than this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week, and I give a tenth of everything I get!' 13 "The tax collector stood alone too. But when he prayed, he would not even look up to heaven. He felt very humble before God. He said, 'O God, have mercy on me. I am a sinner!' 14 I tell you, when this man finished his prayer and went home, he was right with God. But the Pharisee, who felt that he was better than others, was not right with God. People who make themselves important will be made humble. But those who make themselves humble will be made important." (ERV version)

36 Moses and Jethro (priest of Midian) were distant cousins, because they were both descended from Abraham: “Abraham had taken another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak and Shuah.” (Genesis 25:1-2). Of course all of us have Noah as our common ancestor, but the label “distant cousins” generally is reserved for people who can identify a common ancestor later than Noah.

37 Exodus 18 called Moses' father-in-law “Jethro”. But in Exodus 2:18 he is called “Reuel”. The man had two names in the same way that Jacob was given the additional name Israel and Simon was given the additional name Peter.

Josephus explicitly treats the two names as belonging to the same man: “Antiquities, Book II, Chapter 12, section 1: “Now Moses, when he had obtained the favor of Jethro, for that was one of the names of Raguel...” (Also Book III, Chapter 3, the first two sentences treat the names as interchangeable.) Although the Geneva Bible note on Exodus 2:18 theorizes that Reuel was his wife's *grandfather*.

There has also been confusion about Judges 4:11, which names Hobab as the father-in-law of Moses, according to the CEV, ERV, Geneva, GW, ISV, JPS, JUB, KJV, TLV, TS2009, and YLT

How right he was! Jethro's counsel was exactly the relief Moses had prayed for, for himself, and far more: it was the answer to the people's prayers for deliverance from tyrants. It led to the first national elections in all of recorded human history.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

626 BC The Next Morning

When Dan opened his eyes, Abednego was staring into them, concern pouring out of his sweat glands. Dan smiled broadly, transforming Abednego's worry into joy.

Abednego shouted, "Shadrach! Meshach! Come!"

As they ran to him, Dan shouted loud enough to wake up the executioner, "May the name of God be praised for ever and ever! For wisdom and strength are his! By him times and years are changed! By him kings are taken away and kings are lifted up!

"He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those whose minds are awake. He is the unveiler of deep and secret things. He has knowledge of what is in the dark, and the light has its living-place with him.

"I give you praise and worship, O God of my fathers, who have given me wisdom and strength, and have now made clear to me what we were requesting from you: for you have given us knowledge of the king's business."³⁸

The four discussed The Dream as they dressed

translations. However, Hobab was Moses' *brother-in-law* according to the ASV, BBE, and GNB translations. The confusion is fueled by the fact that ancient Hebrew had no vowels. The Hebrew word for Father-in-law sounds like hoteen. The word for brother-in-law sounds like hay-tayn. The same identical consonants. Numbers 10:29 more explicitly says Hobab was Moses' brother-in-law.

38 Daniel 2:20-23, BBE version. Only the punctuation is modified.

for their breakfast of vegetables and water.³⁹

Neb's dream had been of a huge statue with a head of gold, representing Neb's empire; a breast of silver, representing the next world empire; and a belly of brass and legs of iron, representing the following two empires. Then a stone was cut without hands, which smashed the statue. The stone then grew! The crumbling statue disintegrated into dust, which the wind blew away, leaving no trace, as the stone grew to fill the whole earth.⁴⁰

The part about the Four Metals especially interested Meshach, who was a metallurgist. He was part of a team researching bronze⁴¹ v. iron swords. Iron is harder and slightly lighter. Both are soft enough that soldiers in battle have to step on their swords to straighten them after an especially successful strike. (Although the *real* heroes straighten their swords in their teeth. Or at least that's what they tell their children.)

Iron is harder to smelt (to separate from its ore with heat). Bronze can be melted in a pot over a fire, but iron's melting temperature is 1100 degrees hotter.

Availability encourages a preference for iron: it is a common element, while tin (the alloy that turns copper into bronze) is rare, and made rarer by disruption of trade by frequent wars.

There was an arms race with Persia,

39 Daniel 1:12

40 Daniel 2

41 Bible translations follow the King James Version in saying this metal was "brass", but whether brass or bronze is indicated by the Hebrew word is not clear. The Cambridge Bible says, of Daniel 2:32, "As for that image, its head was, &c. brass] i.e. copper (or bronze): see Wright's Bible Word-book." Brass is an alloy of copper and zinc, while bronze was in ancient times an alloy of copper and tin. Since all four empires represented by the statue took their lands by violence, and swords were made of bronze but not brass, it seems reasonable to assume the metal in Daniel's description was bronze.

experimenting with iron alloys to see if there is a stronger alloy in the same way copper alloys are stronger than pure copper. A name tossed about for such a theoretical alloy was “steel”. Yet to be discovered was how to mix another metal with iron at so much higher a temperature.

Meshach’s work made him the first of Daniel’s friends to think of a context in which to compare the four metals: their military usefulness, for making swords, shields, or body armor.

“Isn’t it ironic, that gold is the metal most prized as war booty, but is the least useful of the metals for any military purpose? Gold is way too soft, too heavy, and too rare to make a sword, a shield, or body armor. Twice as soft, over twice as heavy.

“True, King Solomon made 200 gold shields out of 15 pounds of gold each, and 300 shields out of 4 pounds of gold each⁴². We don’t have any record that he ever used them in battle though. They were for decorations and parades. And carrying them in *parades* wore out soldiers as much as carrying lighter shields in *battle*.

“Silver is a bit over half the weight of gold – but just as soft. Brass is a little lighter, and suitable for swords, iron still more suitable; and yet a small stone in a sling, so much lighter not only because of its size but because stone is only an eighth the weight of gold, was used by David to slay Goliath.”

Dan observed, “Then these four metals could be

42 1 Kings 10:16-17. Translators differ on whether the larger shields used 7-1/2 pounds of gold (CEV translation) or 15 (ERV, GNB, GW). YLT, Young’s Literal Translation, reflects the fact that in the Hebrew, the actual unit of weight was not specified but only implied: “And king Solomon maketh two hundred targets of alloyed gold—six hundred of gold go up on the one target;” Interesting that YLT says “alloyed” gold, but the Hebrew says “hammered” and every other English translation says “hammered” or “beaten”.

metaphors of four empires which are progressively more effective machines of death, until they are thoroughly displaced by God's rule which is powered by Life.

“So is Life, not the power to destroy, the engine of history? Will future history prove, as Israel's past has shown, that a nation founded on love and free choice is more powerful even in battle than nations founded on hatred, dehumanization, and violence?”

Over breakfast, Dan laid out his theory that the metals represent different degrees of tyranny before God will blow all tyranny away with Freedom under God, represented by a rock containing only traces of metals.

“Neb is as absolute a dictator as a dictator can be. He is the only one in his government with free choice. Persia's ruler is less dictatorial; it is ruled by a monarchical oligarchy with the nobles equal to the king in all but office.⁴³ Greece – at least parts of Greece – have still greater freedom, their ambassadors tell me. They are ruled by mass meetings of 20% of the men who vote as equals, with a somewhat equal voice.”

“No women? No ‘Deborahs’ in their history?”

“No. Only wives.”

“And the other 80%?”

“Slaves. Nothing like Jethro's system under which every household has an equal vote, even those of servants, and under which there were no lifetime slaves whose children were thereby born into slavery.⁴⁴

43 This sentence is taken from Bible commentator David Guzik, regarding Daniel 2:44.

44 Leviticus 25:42-46 is widely understood as an exception to the 6-year limits on contract debt, in which, sort of like today where people can buy a home with a 30-year mortgage, people can borrow a large sum and agree to work it off – for a maximum of 6 years under Moses' law. But in Leviticus 25, it seems to say you can get lifetime slaves, either as prisoners of war or by buying them from other nations. But

But still, an equal voice for 20% of the men is progress, especially for a nation that rejects God.”⁴⁵

“So are we considering that Persia and Greece might be the future empires represented in this Dream?”

“We can only speculate. What we can know from Persia and Greece is that Neb’s absolute dictatorship is not the only kind of government in the world. There are other forms of government that inch towards the freedom God gave Israel through Moses and Jethro.

“We know also that the absolute contrast

Isaiah 14:1-2 says it will be justice, since it will be after Israelites had been made slaves of those same nations. But commentators see evidence in Isaiah 60:14 that the “bondage” will not be physical, but foreigners will come by choice, “with bent heads” and “on their faces at your feet”. Commentator Jamiesson-Faucett-Brown says that means “not by physical, but by moral might; the force of love, and regard to Israel’s God”. Barnes says “They would be willing to return with them, and occupy a humble place among them, as servants, for the sake of enjoying the privileges of the true religion.” Certainly there is no record of Israel, from the time of Isaiah until now, either buying slaves from abroad or making slaves out of prisoners of war. And in any case no servants under God’s laws were treated like slaves in any other nation; for example Exodus 21 set servants free from their remaining debt if any punishment caused serious injury.

45 Even though Deuteronomy 1:13 flatly says judges under Moses were chosen by the people, it is widely assumed that they were not. So little if any thought is given to whether servants had any less political rights than anyone else. The fact that servitude lasted 6 years maximum, except for prisoners of war which could be held in service for up to 50 years, indicates that if their right to vote was suspended at all, it was temporary. When the Pilgrims settled in Massachusetts in 1620, every household had an equal vote, even those of servants, non-church members, and women! (My 12th generation grandmother, Elizabeth Warren, was the first woman in America to vote; in 1627, when her husband Richard died, she was given a vote as “head of household” over their 5 children. Remember, this is a story. Not every detail written here can be documented. But the goal in writing has been to research the historical records in order to keep the peripheral details as consistent with them as possible, while of course keeping the claims about Scripture absolutely faithful to Scripture.

between Neb's government and God's past and presumably future government implies that the four human governments of the Dream belong somewhere on this same continuum between tyranny and freedom.

"Might Persia and Greece, or other nations with governments like theirs, become world empires after Babylon? Might a fourth tyranny arise after that, slightly more free? That is for our descendants to know."

Dan could not know, or at least he did not write about it if he did, that 117 years later, the Roman Republic would be founded, in which citizens elected magistrates⁴⁶ who in turn appointed senators⁴⁷, who in turn in emergencies chose an executive, which they called a "dictator" but who had limited powers. (At first, that is. Freedom has a way of slipping away when it is not closely guarded – as it did in Israel after 400 years.)

Shadrach developed the thread that Dan started: "Here's what we know. The Four Metals are obviously metaphors of *something*. Perhaps of several things. What we don't know is whether any other government that exists *today* will turn out to be one of the other three indicated in the Dream.

"We know Neb's government is an absolute dictatorship, and God's government was, under Jethro, a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, which God had told Samuel amounted to accepting God as their 'king'."⁴⁸

"Yet we know from Neb's dream that the freedom established by Moses that lasted 400 years isn't represented by the Stone, since the chronology of the dream is that the Stone was cut *after* the fourth world

46 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_magistrate

47 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senate_of_the_Roman_Republic

48 1 Samuel 8:7

empire will have existed, which is well into our future.

“And yet God, who will cut that Stone, also established the freedom experienced through Moses, which He characterized to Samuel, as I said, as accepting the rule of God. So the future rule represented by the Stone must be closer to the Freedom known under Moses, than to the tyrannies represented by the Statue.”

“So therefore,” Meshach added, “the ‘stone cut without hands’ must be the perfection of what Jethro previewed. And, differences between the four metals are surely metaphors of differences *like* the differences between governments today.

“So let’s chart the differences between the metals, and see if anything about them corresponds to the differences Dan tells us there are between governments in existence today.”

Chapter 6:

The First and Last Elections

1462 BC Jethro smiled at Moses' introduction of himself to the hundreds of people standing in line, attended by Moses' broad smile, respectful bow, and hearty Mideastern cheek-to-cheek "kiss".⁴⁹

Observing the stranger's ancient age even compared to their leader's 80 years, marveling at the concept of *anyone* being *Moses'* advisor even in jest, and seeing their reciprocal familiarity, the people murmured to each other, "he must be Moses' father-in-law."

That wasn't their only clue. Jethro had brought with him Moses' two sons, and his wife, Zipporah, to celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary.⁵⁰ Those who had never seen Moses' wife recognized her by her kiss after the 80-year-old ran to her at his first sight of her, before he had even seemed to notice Jethro. It wasn't one of those silly Mideastern "kisses". It was the Mother Of All Kisses.

Another clue was that the whole nation had come to Mount Sinai, the location of the famed Burning Bush, near the home of this Priest of Midian,⁵¹ where Moses had met Zipporah, the priest's daughter.

But as sweet as family reunions are, the people

49 Exodus 18:7 And Moses went out to meet his father in law, and did obeisance, and kissed him; and they asked each other of their welfare; and they came into the tent.

50 Acts 7:23 says Moses was 40 when he fled Egypt and met his wife, and Exodus 7:7 says Moses was 80 when he returned and spoke to Pharaoh.

51 "And when he had offered sacrifice, he made a feast for the multitude, near the Bush he had formerly seen...." Josephus, Antiquities, Book III, Chapter 3, Section 1.

in line had mixed feelings when Moses turned to them and said “Party time!”

Especially since most of them weren’t invited to the party.⁵²

However, their leaders were,⁵³ and humans are curiously drawn to parades, rallies, and festivals featuring their leaders.

Sacrifice. The bonus was that this was no ordinary festival. They saw, for the second time in any of their lives,⁵⁴ a sacrifice of thanksgiving to God. And the first time was only a few days ago, after a defensive war in which not one Israelite was lost.⁵⁵

52 Although translations and commentators list only the “elders” as those invited, Josephus seems to say the feast was arranged by families but included everyone. “And when he had offered sacrifice, he made a feast for the multitude, near the Bush he had formerly seen; which multitude, every one according to their families, partook of the feast.” Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book III, Chapter 3, Section 1. It is hard to imagine 5 million people physically eating even within sight of each other, and yet the spirit of the event supports the interpretation that, as much as physically possible, the event was for the pleasure and benefit of all.

53 Exodus 18:12 And Jethro, Moses' father in law, took a burnt offering and sacrifices for God: and Aaron came, and all the elders of Israel, to eat bread with Moses' father in law before God.

54 Adam Clarke on Exodus 5:3, “The Israelites could not sacrifice in the land of Egypt, because the animals they were to offer to God were held sacred by the Egyptians; and they could not omit this duty, because it was essential to religion even before the giving of the law.” JFB on Exodus 5:3, “*The God of the Hebrews hath met with us* — Instead of being provoked into reproaches or threats, they mildly assured him that it was not a proposal originating among themselves, but a duty enjoined on them by their God. They had for a long series of years been debarred from the privilege of religious worship, and as there was reason to fear that a continued neglect of divine ordinances would draw down upon them the judgments of offended heaven, they begged permission to go three days’ journey into the desert - a place of seclusion - where their sacrificial observances would neither suffer interruption nor give umbrage to the Egyptians.”

55 Josephus: “Nor was any one of the Hebrews slain; but the slain of the enemy's army were too many to be enumerated. So Moses offered

They all knew the stories of sacrifices by their ancestor Abraham. For example, the notorious offering of the ram which had started out as a sacrifice of his son, their ancestor Isaac.⁵⁶ But during all their years of slavery, they could not sacrifice to God. Because the animals which Israel's customs require them to sacrifice to God are animals which Egyptians worship and will not permit to be slain. Had they done that in Egypt the Egyptians would have risen in a mass, and stoned them to death.⁵⁷

Indeed, that is exactly what Moses told Pharaoh, and Pharaoh did not disagree. Moses had asked to make a 3 days' journey from Egypt to offer sacrifices. Pharaoh had tried a compromise: "Go and make your offering to your God here in the land." Moses explained why that would be impossible: "It is not right to do so; for we make our offerings of that to which the Egyptians give worship; and if we do so before their eyes, certainly we will be stoned."⁵⁸

As Jethro's first-in-their-lifetime sacrifice proceeded, and as the people feasted on part of the meat of the sacrifice supplemented by Manna,⁵⁹ they listened to Jethro's speeches of praise for the wonderful

sacrifices of thanksgiving to God, and built an altar, which he named The Lord the Conqueror." Antiquities, Book III, Chapter 2, Section 5.

56 Genesis 22

57 This is the explanation of Bible Commentator Adam Clarke on Exodus 8:26.

58 These words are taken from Exodus 8:25-26, BBE translation.

59 "...the bread they ate was, no doubt, the manna, which Jethro, though a Midianite, yet a descendant of Abraham, and a good man, partook of, and is put for the whole repast, the flesh of the sacrifices and what else were eaten." - John Gill on Exodus 18:12. John Wesley on the same passage: "And Jethro took a burnt offering for God - And probably offered it himself, for he was a priest in Midian, and a worshipper of the true God, and the priesthood was not yet settled in Israel." Geneva Bible note: "They ate in that place, where the sacrifice was offered: for part was burnt, and the rest eaten."

things God had done for His people. The longer they listened, all the people from Moses on down to the least Israelite began increasingly to feel shame. Shame that this stranger who was not even a beneficiary of these acts of God⁶⁰ seemed more grateful for what God had done for them than they were!

In fact, the more rapturous Jethro's praises, the lower sunk Israelite heads. God had humbled their slave drivers, walked them through a dry ocean bed, healed polluted water, given them angels' food, and none of that had been enough to prod them to erect an altar and offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving! It wasn't until God brought them through a battle with the ruthless, war-loving Amalekites, who were joined by several other armies,⁶¹ without the loss of a single Israelite life, and made them rich beyond their wildest dreams from the gold, silver, furniture, fabrics, cattle, and weapons of the slain Amalekites, that they were grateful enough to formally, publicly thank God!⁶² And

60 "Jethro was the first to utter a benediction to God for the wonders performed for the Israelites. It was a reproach to Moses and the 600,000 Israelites that they did not bless the Lord until Jethro came and did so." www.geni.com/people/Jethro/6000000001056501091 Moses had just recently offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving after defeating the Amalekites a few days earlier, but Jethro's praise was for all the rest of God's mighty works also.

61 The Bible mentions only the Amalekites. Josephus says it was a coalition of nations led by the Amalekites. Josephus: "How The Amalekites And The Neighbouring Nations, Made War With The Hebrews And Were Beaten.... The name of the Hebrews began already to be every where renowned, and rumors about them ran abroad. This made the inhabitants of those countries to be in no small fear. Accordingly they sent ambassadors to one another, and exhorted one another to defend themselves, and to endeavor to destroy these men. Those that induced the rest to do so, were such as inhabited Gobelitis and Petra. They were called Amalekites, and were the most warlike of the nations that lived thereabout;"

62 Josephus: "they got ready booty for the public, and for their own private families, whereas till then they had not any sort of plenty, of even necessary food.... Moreover, they acquired a vast quantity of

even then, not for any of the frankly more astonishing deliverances!

Their sheepish glances puzzled Jethro. So to compensate for their sadness, he became the more articulate in explaining the love, selflessness, and humility of God. Jethro explained how desirable these qualities were in God, and why the theologies of other nations displayed no intelligence by seeing in those qualities only weakness. Yet the people's happiness remained muted. Oh well, Jethro observed, at least gone are the proud looks he had noticed before.

Moses was especially humbled by his father-in-law's praises of God. It was Moses who had stood before Pharaoh and told him several times⁶³ the reason they needed to leave for a little while was so they could sacrifice to God without being stoned by the Egyptians. They would go three days away, Moses promised, and then sacrifice. Yet three *months* elapsed before their first sacrifice.⁶⁴

Why had Moses put it off? Was it because he found himself over a population so disinclined to thank God, that he wanted to avoid deliberately provoking any more eye-rolling?

Who can relate to not wanting to *glorify* God,

riches; for a great deal of silver and gold was left in the enemy's camp; as also brazen vessels, which they made common use of in their families; many utensils also that were embroidered there were of both sorts, that is, of what were weaved, and what were the ornaments of their armor, and other things that served for use in the family, and for the furniture of their rooms; they got also the prey of their cattle," Antiquities, Book III, Chapter 2, Section 4.

63 Exodus 3:18, 5:3, 8:27, and 10:25

64 April 16 to May 29 – 6 weeks – are the dates which are the closest that the Reese Chronological Bible can calculate. But Josephus says, "And going gradually on, [after the war with the Amalekites] he came to Mount Sinai, in three months' time after they were removed out of Egypt; at which mountain, as we have before related, the vision of the bush, and the other wonderful appearances, had happened." Antiquities, Book III, Chapter 2, section 5.

Moses chided himself, in the presence of people who *complain* about God? Aren't the people who choose to forget the evidence of God's goodness the very people most desperately in need of brightening up their sad existence?

So here he was, meekly answering Jethro's questions about what God did, and for every answer Jethro had 20 questions along with exclamations of wonder over every detail! And all the while of hearing of these wonders, Jethro thought he had surely stepped into Heaven, munching on angels' food!⁶⁵

1065 BC Sam's Night Musings. Sam couldn't sleep. As much as his eyes hurt, his mind was having too much fun. Every burden is lighter after hearing from God, whether directly or through the Bible.

Samuel's reflections on what kings do to people filled him with inspiration about what a great "king" God had been over Israel.

God took nothing from anybody, but only gave. What could God do with anything man could give? If a man gave God a cow, would He butcher it and fill His freezer with hamburgers? God could have any beast of the forest or any of the cattle on a thousand hills if He were hungry, without telling, much less asking any man.⁶⁶

65 Psalm 78:24 ...so that manna rained down on them for food and he sent them the grain of heaven. 25 Mortal men ate the food of angels; he sent provision to them in abundance. (ISV)

66 Psalm 50:6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah. 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God. 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before me. 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds. 10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness

How about the sacrifices? God's critics say God's demand that people sacrifice to Him shows His selfishness. But how can they really be for *God's* benefit? God talks as if they *are* for Him, but isn't that like when a parent says "won't you eat this broccoli *for me?*" when the parent derives zero benefit from the child being healthy but is asking for the *child's* sake? Most of the sacrifices are really church barbecues with the meat eaten by the people sacrificing and/or by the priests, with rules for the health of all Israel such as don't eat the fat or guts or drink the blood. Burn them all "for my sake". God says He likes the smell of burning fat,⁶⁷ but of course that too is for the pleasure of humans. What a great smell, *for humans!*

In fact, what could any man do, good or evil, that could help or hurt God in any way? None of the laws God gave Moses were for *God's* benefit, but only for *ours*. As Job had pointed out, "If you sin, that does no harm to God. If you do wrong many times, does that affect him? Do you help God by being so righteous? There is nothing God needs from you. Other [*humans*] suffer from your sins, and the good you do helps *them*."⁶⁸

Unlike the laws of any human king, many of which are for *his* own pleasure, security, and wealth, God's laws are *for us*. His criminal laws are not to keep *Him* safe! But us! They are sensible, practical, and enlightened. His hygiene laws, like bury your poop⁶⁹ and don't eat meat from animals known to carry

thereof. 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? 14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: 67 "Sweet savour" is written 88 times in the KJV. in regard to "burnt offerings", which are in essence barbecues. The burning fat produces most of the sweet smell, a smell which draws people to modern restaurants.

68 Job 35:6-8

69 Deuteronomy 23:13

terrible diseases,⁷⁰ are for *our* health, not *His*!

Right to trial by jury. Equal protection of the laws for the poor, minorities, immigrants, and women. Blessings unknown in nations which shut out the Bible. Blessings for humans – not for God! Elections in which all citizens vote and even women may hold office⁷¹ are, again, unknown where the Bible is unknown, and are not a favor to God, Who is not a woman! Truly, as God said,

“...what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?...Now, people of Israel, listen to what the LORD your God demands of you: Worship the LORD and do all that he commands. Love him, serve him with all your heart, and obey all his laws. I am giving them to

70 Pork, for example, carries trichinosis and erysipelas, terrible, deadly diseases. Modern cooks can cook it thoroughly enough to kill that particular hazard; in ancient times, thorough cooking wasn't always possible, and nobody had never seen a germ anyway, and few were aware of the tiny worms in pork. The fact that pork and other such meat was prohibited proves that the Law was given by One who *had* seen germs and understood the danger. Are there other, less dramatic negatives in “unlean” meats that we still don't understand? Well, if we don't understand, then how can we answer?

Search “pork worms microscope” and you will find articles assuring you that although cooking pork to less than 160° may kill you, fully cooking will ensure that all the deadly worms you eat will be dead. If that fact is appetizing enough for you, enjoy. The worms are up to 3 mm long, an eighth of an inch, so they are visible without microscopes. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trichinella_spiralis

The Mayo Clinic and the CDC have more stringent pork-preparation guidelines than most of us practice: www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/trichinosis/symptoms-causes/syc-20378583 www.cdc.gov/parasites/trichinellosis/gen_info/faqs.html

Isaiah 66:16-17 warns of “judgment on all humanity”, which sounds like something the Last Days, upon “those who eat the meat of pigs, disgusting things, and rats...” (ISV translation)

71 Deborah was one of Israel's 15 elected top judges reported in the Bible. She served 40 years.

you today for *your* benefit.”⁷²

The range of emotions God shows over the behavior of humans are not because any human thought, word, or deed can affect God, but because He loves all of us, and is angry with us when we hurt *each other*, like any parent is angry with a child who hurts his sibling, even though he has not hurt his parent. Such anger, and the correction that follows, from One whom no human can hurt, can be accounted for only by love.⁷³ He asks respect and reverence, not because He needs our validation to strengthen His low self esteem, but for the same reason parents demand obedience: for the *child's* safety and success.

What human dictator acts exclusively out of love, not to mention out of superhuman wisdom? Human kings and tyrants *take* great wealth, wine, and women for themselves, and do not *have* anything of their own to *give*; to give to some, they must take from others. God only gives. God never takes anything for Himself from any human.

Birds had begun their morning symphony. He would soon have to stop thinking and start acting.

The sun peered over the horizon, and crowds gathered. Eyes screaming, stomach moaning, Sam climbed up on a platform to reason with the people as God had directed. He did not tell them what God said, or even that God spoke to him.

He simply explained to the people how stupid it will be to trade elections for dictators.

He told them, “If you have a king, this is how he will treat you...”

⁷² KJV, GNB translations. Deuteronomy 4:8, 10:12-13

⁷³ Hebrews 12 fully explains how God's correction of us proves His love, using the metaphor of parents correcting children.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

1462 BC Jethro's Solution. What a refreshing break! But the next morning, the same old lines formed. Moses asked Jethro, "why don't you come outside with me and see what I do all day?"

As the day plodded on, Moses thought, "Is this never ending work God's vision for government?" But Moses was very patient, and just assumed that whatever the cost of freedom, it must be paid, and he was willing to pay his share. As for the people, their sour disposition towards life had been subdued the day before, but it was a new day, and as the day wore on they regained their old selves.

Moses glanced frequently over at Jethro, sometimes with a smile for a case resolved to everyone's satisfaction, sometimes with a gasp of exhaustion. He noticed Jethro's demeanor changing over the course of the day. Relaxed and friendly at first, he steadily became more sullen, and even irritated. What is that about, Moses wondered? But there was no time for chatter. They had their chatter yesterday. Today, business demanded all his attention.

Finally the sun was too low for scrolls and contracts to be read, so the lines dispersed until the next day. God's pillar of fire⁷⁴ cast a light over the camp. It was bright enough to scare hostile neighbors away, but not enough to read by. It was time for sleep. Moses and Jethro disappeared into their tent.

The people had seen Jethro's demeanor, and

74 Exodus 40:36 And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: 37 But if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up. 38 For the cloud of the LORD was upon the tabernacle by day, and fire was on it by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel, throughout all their journeys.

wondered if Moses would be OK.

The next morning, thousands of Israelis got up early to get in the line again outside Moses' tent. But when they got there, there were Moses and Jethro, smiling broadly, and promising, "no more long lines! We have a new plan!"

Instead of only one court and one judge for five million people, there would be a nationwide system of district courts, appeals courts, and supreme courts, presided over by not just one judge, but by about a hundred thousand judges. The number was a guess, because the total population was a guess. There would need to be a census in order to create evenly populated districts for the lower courts.

And where would all these judges come from, the people wanted to know? "That's the best part", Moses said, bubbling with excitement. "You will *elect* them!"

"Elect'? What does 'elect' mean?" they asked.

"You will *choose* who will lead you and judge for you, men and women⁷⁵ you know and trust!"⁷⁶

75 Deborah, a woman, was one of the 15 supreme judges of Israel during its 400 years of judges. The manner in which Israel's judges rose to power is not described as people casting secret ballots in voting booths, but rather as godly people taking actions or giving speeches that inspired the people to follow them. In every case but one, the narratives portray those judges as the popular choice of the people, and not imposed on them by force. In that one case where Abimilech rose by violence contrary to the will of the people, his reign did not last very long before the people ended his reign along with his life by violence. Judges 9:50-56. Judging by the experience of the United States where we have had 44 presidents which did not include a single woman even though many women have held lesser positions in elected positions, it is reasonable to presume that in Israel while one among 15 top leaders was a woman, that the percentage of lower officers held by woman was higher than the percentage experienced in the United States.

76 Every translation of Deuteronomy 1:13 agrees that the people chose their own judges, after which Moses somehow officially installed them, presumably the way a Supreme Court judge presides over the installation of a U.S. President after he has been elected by the

New solutions land hard on old habits. Objections were at the ready. “But how will we know who is wise? We have been waiting all day for *you* to judge our case, and now you want us to accept the ruling of beginners with no experience?”

“To answer your first question, you can interview people for the positions. You can let them give

people, by having him take an oath to defend the Constitution. However, Bible commentator Matthew Henry, commenting on Exodus 18, thought the people no voice at all in the selection of their rulers.

Henry: “Moses did not leave the election of the magistrates to the people, who had already done enough to prove themselves unfit for such a trust; but he chose them, and appointed them, some for greater, others for less division, the less probably subordinate to the greater.”

But here are some of the translations of Deuteronomy 1:13:

- (ASV) Take you wise men, and understanding, and known, according to your tribes, and I will make them heads over you.
- (BBE) Take for yourselves men who are wise, far-seeing, and respected among you, from your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.
- (CEV) Each tribe must choose some experienced men who are known for their wisdom and understanding, and I will make those men the official leaders of their tribes.
- (ERV) So choose some men from each tribe, and I will make them leaders over you. Choose wise men with experience who understand people.'
- (Geneva) Bring you men of wisdom and of understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you:
- (GNB) Choose some wise, understanding, and experienced men from each tribe, and I will put them in charge of you.'
- (GW) From each of your tribes, choose some men who are wise, intelligent, and experienced, and I'll appoint them to be your leaders."
- (ISV) Choose for yourselves wise and discerning men, known to your tribes, and appoint them as your leaders.
- (JPS) Get you, from each one of your tribes, wise men, and understanding, and full of knowledge, and I will make them heads over you.'
- (JUB) Give me from among you, of your tribes, wise and understanding and expert men, and I will make them the head over you.
- (KJV) Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you.

campaign speeches⁷⁷ before you vote. Your chosen rulers must be such as the whole multitude have tested, and do approve of, as being good and righteous men.⁷⁸ You should choose some capable men and appoint them as leaders of the people: leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They must be God-fearing men who can be trusted and who cannot be bribed.⁷⁹ Wise, far-seeing, intelligent, discerning, respected among you, with experience who understand people, and I will officially install them as the official leaders of your tribes.⁸⁰

“And if you don’t like how someone is serving you, you can vote to replace him.”⁸¹

(TLV) Choose for yourselves wise and discerning men, well known to your tribes, and I will appoint them as your heads.’

(TS2009) Choose men, wise and understanding, and known to your tribes, and let me appoint them as your heads.’

(YLT) Give for yourselves men, wise and intelligent, and known to your tribes, and I set them for your heads;

77 William Whiston, who published his English translation of Josephus in 1825, added this footnote: “(8) This manner of electing the judges and officers of the Israelites by the testimonies [campaign speeches] and suffrages [votes] of the people, before they were ordained by God, or by Moses, deserves to be carefully noted, because it was the pattern of the like manner of the choice and ordination of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, in the Christian church.”

78 These are the words of Josephus, *Antiquities*, Book III, Chapter 4, section 1.

79 These are the judicial qualifications as described in Exodus 18:21, GNB version.

80 These are the judicial qualifications as described in Deuteronomy 1:13, according to a composite of the BBE, ERV, GW, ISV, and CEV translations.

81 The Bible doesn’t say if judges faced “retention” votes like state judges in the U.S., or had lifetime appointments but were subject to impeachment like U.S. federal judges, or had unconditional lifetime appointments like kings. But logic suggests that the power to choose leaders is also the power to remove leaders for good reasons. j\The only judge of Israel whose removal was reported in the Bible was Abimelech, who seized power by force and was removed by force. In 1 Samuel 8 where the people complained about Samuel’s bribe-taking sons, the *implication* is they were helpless to replace the men by

“To answer your second question, if you don’t like a particular judgment, you can appeal to a higher court, and I will still be there to review judgments which do not satisfy you.”⁸²

And so began the first government in world history that was elected by any of its citizens, in 1462 BC. And the only government over the next 3,000 years that was elected by *all* its citizens.⁸³

Moses and Jethro had lived together 40 years. Jethro had been a good father-in-law, had given Moses a good daughter, and now had given Moses a good government.

In an official sense, it was a government ruled by God. But in practice God entrusted to men and women

their votes; but their “helplessness” may have been no more than that of U.S. voters today who want to limit Congressional terms by “term limits”, removing from themselves the power to decide yes or no whether to retain a Congressman, not because they have become unable to vote a man out of office, but because that would take too much work. Easier to forfeit the freedom to keep a good person in office. Reducing choice reduces the pressure to think.

82 This story says the people had a right to appeal any ruling which either party to the case didn’t think was decided correctly, as in the U.S. But Bible commentator John Gill thinks Exodus 18:26 means the people had no right of appeal at all, but it was up to the judges to decide whether they were smart enough to judge the case. Gill: “the judges, and not the people, best knew when a case was hard or easy to determine”. The verse says “the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves.”

But the Bible doesn’t specify who decided whether a case was too “hard” for a lower judge. The Bible does *not* say the people had no right to appeal. Since it is the parties to a case who are affected by a ruling, and not any judge, and since it is generally difficult to get any human to admit he isn’t smart enough to decide about others, it would seem that leaving the appeal decision solely with judges would result in nearly zero appeals and would not make anyone happy. Surely the U.S. system of leaving appeals up to litigants is what Moses meant.

83 The elections 800 years later in Athens were for only the free men. No women. And only a small fraction of the men were free. And only half a dozen positions were elected, not tens of thousands as in Israel.

the application of His principles, and enforcement of His laws.

Of course the commitment of humans to living by the principles most beneficial to themselves varies from day to day. So it was in reality a government run by humans who, on their best days, did their best to live by God's best for them, but even their best was only human. And who, on their worst days, governed themselves as cruelly as the most atheistic governments.

But they were free. They had left slavery in Egypt behind, and had escaped enslaving each other. They were free to return to God, after they had suffered enough the natural consequences of leaving Him.

Chapter 7: Freedom's Final Warning

1065 BC Sam's Warnings. "This king you demand – this dictator – will force your sons to join his army. Some of them will ride in his chariots, some will serve in the cavalry, and others will run ahead of his own chariot. Some of them will be officers in charge of a thousand soldiers, and others will be in charge of fifty.

"Still others will have to farm the king's land and harvest his crops, or make weapons and parts for his chariots.

"Your daughters will have to make his perfume or do his cooking and baking.

“The king will take your best fields, as well as your vineyards, and olive orchards and give them to his own officials. He will also take a tenth of your grain and grapes and give it to his officers and officials. The king will take your [workers] and your best young men and your donkeys and make them do his work. He will also take a tenth of your sheep and goats.

“You will become the king’s slaves, and you will finally cry out for the LORD to save you from the king you wanted. But the LORD won’t answer your prayers.⁸⁴

“Nor will there be any thing which you will not do at the commands of your kings, as if you were slaves bought with money. (Except you will not go free after 6 years, as slaves bought with money do under Moses’ law!)

“In short, all of you will be servants to your king. You will become in no way superior to his slaves.⁸⁵

“And that is what the best of kings will do to you, because that is what ‘king’ means. Every king is a ‘tyrant’, no matter how righteous he is, because the loss of political freedom you will suffer is called ‘tyranny’. Your choice over those who rule over you will be only a memory, and that is called ‘tyranny’. That is why God has never been any kind of ‘king’ over you that any pagan ever heard of, and never will.⁸⁶ God has never

84 1 Samuel 8:11-18, CEV translation

85 These additional details, which are not reported in the Bible, are reported by Josephus. See Antiquities, Book VI, Chapter 3, Section 5

86 Satan offered Jesus tyranny over the whole world. Matthew 4:8-10. Jesus refused, quoting the commandment that one must worship the Lord God alone. This is seldom if ever recognized as equating monarchy with choosing not to worship God, because the text says Satan’s condition was that Jesus must worship Satan. But the fact is that 1 Samuel 8:7 plainly equates the choice of monarchy with the choice against worshiping God, and Satan’s condition may be accounted for as the simple recognition that the people of the world were simply not ready to choose God; if Jesus wanted to rule over

robbed you of your choice of your own rulers, even when you have chosen other leadership than His.⁸⁷

“But not every king will be righteous! And when your king is not, then added to the loss of your freedom to choose your rulers, will be the burden of a single wicked man with the power and intent to lead you straight to Hell.⁸⁸

“What human king can deliver you from the Philistines by earthquakes that knock them off their feet and knock their weapons out of their hands, by fissures opening in the earth to swallow them, while lightning strikes so close that their faces are sunburned, sending them running home naked? Can you forget that first battle I led you in after God brought back His Ark, while not a weapon was in your hands?⁸⁹

“Yet you forget God’s benefits. You do not consider that it would be most for your advantage to be presided over by the best of beings, for God is the best of beings, and you chose to have a man for your king; while kings will use their subjects as beasts, according to the violence of their own wills and inclinations, and other passions, as wholly carried away with the lust of power, but will not endeavor so to preserve the race of

them, He would either have to rule them by force, against their will, which God had told Samuel was incompatible with worshiping God, or He would have to join their worship of devils, if He wanted to rule them with their consent.

87 1 Samuel 8 is the story of Israel begging God for a different “king” than Himself, and God gave them what they thought they wanted. This proves there can be no such a thing as a “benevolent dictator”, because only God is truly benevolent, and God refused to be a dictator.

88 Again, this warning is not recorded in the Bible. But isn’t that what happened? Isn’t that why Israel wound up in Babylon? Therefore, it is not improbable that it was articulated. And if it wasn’t, it still needs to be articulated for the sake of readers today who do not grasp the evil of monarchy, or understand why God opposes it.

89 Josephus Book VI, Chapter 2, Section 2, 1 Samuel 7:10

mankind as his own workmanship and creation, as only God can.”⁹⁰

Was that not warning enough, Sam asked himself?

But no. “Freedom is too much work”, a voice cried out. “Moreover, political involvement is too...too worldly, for the people of God”, cried another.

They *said* that. The political freedom God set up, by inspiring Jethro to show Moses how to let the people select their own judges, and then by having almost every hero named in His Bible honored for either being a political leader or for interacting with a political leader,⁹¹ is too “worldly” for the people of God!⁹²

Sam tried to reason. “Power poisons the impure in any system. Only the present system allows voters to remove poisons when they build up. And even while voters remain too apathetic to remove them, the present system still allows individuals to appeal their court cases from my evil sons to me.”⁹³

“Unfortunately”, a priest spoke up, “that still means arguing a case yet again, plus traveling some distance.”

“But on the other hand”, Sam responded, “most cases are resolved in lower courts before they ever

90 Antiquities, Book VI, Chapter 4, Section 4

91 Hebrews 11 is called a “Hall of Faith”. It is a summary of God’s Bible heroes. Everyone named was either a political leader, or was in the Bible for interacting with a political leader. See <http://saltshaker.us/Salt/GodsPoliticalHeroes.pdf>.

92 Indeed, did Israelites in Samuel’s time give *that* theological excuse for their political apathy? Probably. That’s certainly a common theological excuse for political apathy that Christians give today, and the people in Samuel’s time certainly weren’t ashamed to reject God’s system of freedom, so they must have had *some* really great theological excuse to salve their consciences.

93 Bible commentator John Wesley: ...but with reservation of a right of appeals to himself. He had doubtless instructed them in a singular manner, and fitted them for the highest employments.

reached my sons.⁹⁴ So really, not a lot of people were hurt by his sons. Certainly no one in central or northern Israel. Blaming your demand for tyranny on my sons, whom you can still replace by your votes, is a fairly weak excuse”, Sam ventured.

“I myself can be removed by your votes, if voters find me unworthy of their trust. That happened with Abimelech. His short unpopular rule was ended by an armed uprising, during which a millstone was dropped on his head by a rather athletic woman.” Sam had reported that fascinating detail in Judges 9:50-56.

“But how do you remove a wicked king? The same way you remove scoundrel priests like Eli’s sons: basically, you don’t. You wait for death to remove him.

“Priests aren’t elected like judges are. Eli could have removed his sons while he was alive, but voters could not, (or at least thought they shouldn’t), so that had his sons outlived him, no one could have removed them, and one of them would have become the *High Priest*. (One of them actually started presiding as High Priest during Eli’s last years.)⁹⁵

“At least you voters *could* have removed my sons through elections; judges are not hereditary. Do you people remember Eli’s sons’ evil with such fondness

94 Exodus 18:13-26 describes the system of lower court judges and appeals courts set up by Moses. Thousands of lower court judges would have handled cases before they reached Samuel’s sons. Deuteronomy 1:13 explains that the judges were elected by the people ruled by them, and Moses officially installed them after they were elected – apparently like a Supreme Court chief justice “confirms” an American president after he is elected. 1 Samuel 22:7 says the system continued through the reign of King Saul. The entry for “hundreds” in Black’s Law Dictionary, 4th Edition, says the system even survived in England through about 1,000 AD. At that time each group of 100 families settled their own cases within their group, by consensus.

95 “...Phineas officiated already as high priest, his father having resigned his office to him, by reason of his great age.” Josephus, Book V, Chapter 11, Section 2.

that you want civil government to be hereditary too?

“Actually kings will be even more hereditary than High Priests. A son of a High Priest is presumed to inherit the position of High Priest, but the Sanhedrin can install a different relative on either of four grounds: if he is a weakling, a dummy, ugly, or poor. Piety and fear of God were valued, too, until now: it won’t be if a wicked king does the selecting.”⁹⁶

Sam reflected, by the time a population has departed far enough from the full life God offers to vote for slavery, the whole culture is ready to follow not only a wicked king, but his wicked son. What is it about freedom that has poisoned public logic?

Too much work! Reasoning with people who disagree, too much work! “Easier” to be slaves of a tyranny! What fascinating logic!

Irrationality intrigued Sam. He loved to analyze it. Well, maybe “loved” isn’t the word, but trying to figure out what drove intelligent minds off the tracks into the cerebral ditch, in order to think of what to say that might possibly pull them back on the road of reason, drove Sam. It gave him purpose.

So in what sense *is* it “easier” to be a slave than to be free?

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

626 BC Dan’s Breakfast Conference.

Abednego summarized. “Back to the four metals.

“There is a continuum from gold to stone. Silver is nearly as pretty as gold, and nearly as useless for

96 <http://www.askmoses.com/en/article/591,41052/How-was-the-High-Priest-chosen-and-what-was-the-inaugural-process.html>.

https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/994923/jewish/How-Is-a-High-Priest-Selected.htm says a son is the first choice; if he is wicked or foolish maybe the Sanhedrin can choose differently. Later, kings chose high priests.

anything other than prettiness. Brass is very useful for making things; pots, even swords. Iron is very strong, very useful for making things that need to be strong. Even very large things. And stone is used to make all kinds of things, from statues to great buildings.”

“So maybe another thing the Dream is telling us is that future generations will suffer steadily decreasing degrees of tyranny, but that will only make the lesser tyranny more secure! Because the more pure tyranny is, the weaker it is!

“That will come to an end when God does a work which will heal hearts enough to choose His government, under His laws, that will be the opposite of violent tyranny: a government of Freedom, protected by the Freedom Stone.

“Not all at once, but like a seed, growing slowly but steadily, until people over the whole world choose God.⁹⁷

“God’s government will lack the gold glitter and silver tinsel valued by the world, but it will be useful to people: it will serve the needs of its citizens. And it will be stable: to the extent a government is chosen by people under it – that is, who have actually studied government so that their choices are based on knowledge – it lasts.”

A Metaphor of Eternity. “So in some future age when the people of the world are actually ready to choose the government offered by God and previewed through Moses and Jethro, that blessed government will be eternal!”

97 Mark 4:30 And he said, Whereunto shall we liken the kingdom of God? or with what comparison shall we compare it? 31 It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown in the earth, is less than all the seeds that be in the earth: 32 But when it is sown, it groweth up, and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches; so that the fowls of the air may lodge under the shadow of it.

1065 BC Sam's Parting Shot

Sam was running out of time.

Sam prayed that for his remaining minutes, he would be given the blessing of thinking well, that very blessing which his countrymen were determined to *escape!*

Sam dreaded the eye-rolling he anticipated if he reached deep into his mental file cabinet to explain the great statue of lazy apathy grinning down at them plain as day to their spiritual eyes, which they pretended didn't exist.

But he had tried everything else.

So Sam resolved to put in words the deadly human desire to worship that tyrannical statue – the very same statue which, 400 years later, would disturb a tyrant's sleep, and which 3,000 years later, would be Hell's last stand before God crumples it up and drops the crumbs into the Lake of Fire.

“You tire of freedom. ‘Slavery’ is the word for your condition when you are not free. That is what you want. Because, you say, it is easier.

“It is certainly not *physically, financially, socially, or psychologically* easier to be a slave, than to be free!

“Nor is it easier mentally, considering all the mind games you are forced to play to assure your master that you will always work as hard as possible and never rebel even in thought.

“But I get it. I understand. There is a kind of mind-numbing that slavery enables, which alcoholics struggle to achieve through drink, and our Hindu neighbors out east struggle to achieve through their mind-emptying “meditation” in which their highest goal is to not want or care about anything (to become

free of “desire”).⁹⁸

“Slaves are under no pressure to be creative. In fact they aren’t allowed time off enough to think. To think *for themselves*, that is. Their masters – whether individuals or governments – exert every possible pressure on their slaves to *not* think for themselves, but to think only what their masters *permit* them to think.

“The most heinous punishments are devised for stating or even thinking what is real, because the right of people to own other people is not real. But people love it! People love the punishments! The censorship! Because truth is like blowing on an image made of smoke. And people are mesmerized, hypnotized by The Image. They don’t want it blown away, forcing them to think.

“What is real is the economic, technological, intellectual, moral, and spiritual devastation when people *don’t* govern their own lives or their own nations. The devastation is just as real whether people don’t govern themselves because of the threats of tyrants, or of their own votes.”

98 The highest goal of Hinduism is to stop thinking. To stop caring so much. The following quote urges us to stop caring whether we are wise or stupid, experiencing pleasure or pain, can pay our bills or are homeless, are partnering with friends or enemies. Make it your goal to never accomplish anything! To become inert!

B’hagavid Gita, Chapter 14, Verse 21. Arjuna inquired: O my Lord, by what symptoms is one known who is transcendental...? Verses 22-25: “He who **does not hate** illumination, attachment and **delusion** when they are present, **nor longs for them** when they disappear; who is seated like one unconcerned,...who regards alike pleasure and pain, and looks on a clod, a stone and a piece of gold with an equal eye; who is wise and holds praise and blame to be the same; who is unchanged in honor and dishonor, who treats friend and foe alike, **who has abandoned all fruitive undertakings** [any work that bears fruit, or accomplishes anything]--such a man is said to have transcended the modes of nature.” (See also 5:18, 6:1, 32, 3:28, 4:14, 13:8-12, 18:23-24,

Well at least there was no eye-rolling. Irritation, yes. Sam ceased speaking. He hadn't eaten or slept since yesterday's public meeting, out of his concern and torment of mind at what they had said. All night long he had laid awake and turned over these notions in his mind.⁹⁹

"Not to change the subject," said one of Israel's elders, "but when you choose a dictator for us, we would like someone who is tall to make it easier for all of us to see him. And can you also..."

Oh well. Israel had had a spectacular history, and Sam had enjoyed an interesting slice of it.

A week later. The party was over. Saul was King. All the people loved how tall he was.

Sam had managed to impose one restraint on Saul, with the people's consent, that was not on any other king in any other time or place: subjection to a law higher than his own will – a kind of Magna Carta, or Constitution, except a lot more detailed.¹⁰⁰ It was called a "Book", but it was the whole Bible to that point; especially the books of Moses.

Now, Sam unloaded on the people again.

"Now therefore stand and see this great thing, which the LORD will do before your eyes. Is it not wheat harvest to day? I will call unto the LORD, and

99 "... nor could he either think of eating or sleeping, out of his concern and torment of mind at what they had said, but all the night long did he continue awake and revolved these notions in his mind." - Josephus, Antiquities, Book VI, Chapter 3, Section 3.

100 1 Samuel 10:25 – Saul was made subject to the Laws of Moses, a requirement for which God had anticipated the need, 400 years before. Deuteronomy 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;...18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites:

he shall send thunder and rain; that ye may perceive and see that your wickedness is great, which ye have done in the sight of the LORD, in asking you a king.”

So Samuel called unto the LORD; and the LORD sent thunder and rain that day: and all the people greatly feared the LORD and Samuel. And all the people said unto Samuel, “Pray for thy servants unto the LORD thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.”

And Samuel said unto the people, “Fear not: you have done all this wickedness: yet turn not aside from following the LORD, but serve the LORD with all your heart; And turn not aside: for then should you go after vain things, which cannot profit nor deliver; for they are vain. For the LORD will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the LORD to make you his people.

“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way: Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider how great things he has done for you. But if you still do wickedly, you shall be consumed, both you and your king.”¹⁰¹

101 1 Samuel 12:16-25

Chapter 8: the Inferiority of Glory

~

626 BC Dan Finishes Breakfast. Beauty vs. utility. “Let’s see. Gold is the prettiest of the metals, in the view of just about everyone but us.”

“And the least useful, other than to be pretty. To the blind, gold is the most worthless of the metals. What can you make with it? It’s no good for silverware or dishes; too soft when it is pure – you couldn’t scrape off a dirty plate without scratching it all up, bends, too heavy. Too heavy and soft to make anything very large out of it. Thin gold plate covered Solomon’s Temple,¹⁰² to make it pretty, but cedar and stone had to support it.”

“And yet the whole world is so enchanted by

102 1 Kings 6:20-22

prettiness, that it counts gold the most precious, and makes it the basis for money.”

“So is that like tyranny? Is there something about tyranny that the world finds pretty?”

“Just think of Neb’s last parade! People thought themselves fortunate just to glimpse the tyrant’s wealthy clothes and carriage, extracted from the labors of the people along the parade route!

“Yes, even thieves are honored for their ‘success’. Being rich is the same as being wise and good, in this culture! Nowadays its a bigger crime to be dumb than dishonest!¹⁰³

“In fact,” Dan mused, “it is clear to me that the sense in which the empire following Neb’s will be as ‘inferior’¹⁰⁴ to Neb’s as silver is ‘inferior’ to gold, will be in the sense that the later empire will be less tyrannical. Consider the sense in which Neb’s power is ‘superior’: Neb is a king of kings: for the God of heaven gave him a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

103 Actually this last quip is a quote from Will Rogers, humorist, 1879-1935. The statement is nearly as true today. In America today fraud, immorality, and lies are at least scandalous enough to drive preachers out of their churches, but are just barely scandals when committed by political leaders. Just one example: Bill Clinton was elected president in 1992 after his affair with Genifer Flowers was exposed, and Democrats vigorously defend even his affair with Monica Lewinsky while in office, in the Oval Office, while even the House Republicans, in impeachment proceedings, would not touch the affair but only the fact that he lied about it. And Senate Republicans would not convict even for that. Yet this is progress over values of the past, in which the grossest immorality, fraud, and abuse of human rights was not only tolerated but widely admired.

104 JFB commentary on the Persian empire that followed Babylon’s: “Politically (which is the main point of view here) the power of the central government in which the nobles shared with the king, being weakened by the growing independence of the provinces, was inferior to that of Nebuchadnezzar, whose sole word was law throughout his empire.”

Bullinger: “third kingdom. This again was "inferior", as being less despotic.”

Wherever men live, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven has God given into Neb's hand, and has made Neb ruler over them all.¹⁰⁵ That is what I will tell him.

“And right after I acknowledge those facts, I will describe the next empire as ‘less’ than his, by which I will mean it will be less dictatorial.

“When I tell Neb that, he is going to think it is a compliment. In Neb's mind, any dictator whose wishes are at all restrained by law, by a Constitution, or by any competing branch of government, is inferior to his own absolute power.

“We know the absoluteness of his power is not a compliment but a judgment. We know God made clear to Samuel¹⁰⁶ that even Israel's limited monarchy was a rejection by the people of God's reign. There is confusion in Neb's mind whether God is someone other than himself.”

“The association of human Freedom with God's Stone is a metaphor of the longevity and durability of governments to the extent they are free and to the extent that with their freedom they choose God as their ‘king’.

“Because unlike structures made of any of the metals, stone structures can last thousands of years. One of the pyramids even survived Noah's Flood.”¹⁰⁷

105 Daniel 2:37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. 39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee,...

106 1 Samuel 8:7

107 Josephus: “And that their inventions might not be lost before they were sufficiently known, upon Adam's prediction that the world was to be destroyed at one time by the force of fire, and at another time by the violence and quantity of water, they made two pillars, (10) the one of brick, the other of stone: they inscribed their discoveries on

“That is certainly a message of the dream: the Four Kingdoms do not last. They replace each other, one by one, and then vanish without a trace, while God’s Freedom government is eternal.”

Abednego thought of God’s foundation for government, the Bible. Which by that time included the five books of Moses, the books of Samuel, David and Solomon, an ancient manuscript about Job, and several prophets.

“Of all the elements, stone is the only one useful as a foundation upon which men can build great structures. That is because stone has the greatest compressive strength. Stone can bear the weight of 18 tons per square inch without fracturing or changing its shape. That means a pyramid could stand six miles high before its foundation would fracture, if its weight rests evenly on it.¹⁰⁸ Iron can bear only 16 tons, brass 12, silver only 3, and gold only 1.5 tons.

“How appropriate that God chooses stone as a metaphor for the kind of Biblical foundation upon which cultures are well advised to build their

them both, that in case the pillar of brick should be destroyed by the flood, the pillar of stone might remain, and exhibit those discoveries to mankind; and also inform them that there was another pillar of brick erected by them. Now this remains in the land of Siriad to this day.” Antiquities, Book 1, section 3. In footnote #10, William Whiston, Josephus’ translator in 1825, doubts anything could have survived the flood: “it is no way credible that they could survive the deluge, which has buried all such pillars and edifices far under ground in the sediment of its waters”. But in some places, evidence of Noah’s flood is very near the surface. It would take a lot of sediment to bury the Great Pyramid of Giza, whose construction evidences many remarkable discoveries about our planet and our solar system. Moreover, Wikipedia dates its construction at 2560 BC – 216 years before the Flood.

108 At 165 pounds per cubic foot, 1/144th of that – a column one inch by one inch by one foot, would weigh just over a pound. Multiply that by 5,280 to see how heavy a column would be a mile long by one inch by one inch: 3 tons. So a column 6 miles high would weigh 18 tons.

governments!

“Stone is also the lightest of the materials, enabling builders to place much more of the material on a foundation without crushing the foundation. A cubic foot of stone weighs only 165 pounds, compared to 492 pounds for iron, 545 for brass, 655 for silver, and a whopping 1204 for gold.

“In other words, Neb’s absolute dictatorship, represented by gold, is the worst material for building a civilization. You can’t build very high at all. Your pyramid could stand maybe 375 feet high. Built out of silver, it would reach up a quarter of a mile before disintegrating. Out of brass, 1.2 miles. Iron, 1¾ miles. God’s building material for civilization – complete Freedom through modeling human laws after God’s principles: six miles!

“Iron shows promise as a construction material because although it is three times as heavy as stone, it has 40 times the tensile strength. But it only lasts a few centuries before rust destroys it. Which is a metaphor of the fact that it is a wise culture which builds its government on the foundation of God’s Laws and elects godly men to build.

“Wise, because an absolute dictatorship has the least strength. A council of nobles has a little more, and a vote of a portion of the population has a lot more. Of course, nothing like the strength that was once Israel’s, when *all* the men *and* the women, after reasoning with each other about it, chose their own leaders, after having chosen God as their God.”¹⁰⁹

“However,” Meshach added, “God’s laws make poor swords. God did not make His laws to destroy, but to support. The metaphor of this fact is that stone is too brittle to make a very long sword. Its tensile

109 Even God was elected. He didn’t start giving laws until after that.

See Exodus 19:8, 24:3, 7, Joshua 24:14-27

strength is only .3, compared with 7 for gold, 12 for silver, and 15 for brass and iron.”

Meshach opened his notebook to show the others a chart.

	Gold	Silver	Brass	Iron	Granite
Weight	1204	655	545	492	165~172
Tensile	7	12	15	14.5	0.3
Hardness	2.5	2.5	3	4~5	6~7
Stiffness	10	12	18	27	1~10
Temp.	1945	1760	1675	2100	2300
Comp.	1.5	3	12	16	18

“Weight” lists how many pounds each material weighs when it fills a box that is one foot high, one foot wide, and one foot long. “Tensile” is a measure of how many tons per square inch it takes to pull the material apart. “Hardness” is a measure of the force it takes to scratch the material. “Stiffness” is a measure of how far a material can bend under an amount of weight and still return to its original shape after the weight is removed. “Temp” is the melting temperature of the material. “Comp.”, for “compression”, is how many tons per square inch the material can support before it is crushed.

Shadrach pointed to the melting temperatures. “I remember that ‘the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God’, and ‘the Lord will come with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by his sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many.’¹¹⁰

“I see also that stone has the highest melting point, which would be a metaphor of the fact that building our politics and lives on the foundation of the virtues urged by God such as Love and Freedom will

¹¹⁰Deuteronomy 4:24, Isaiah 66:15-16. See also 1 Corinthians 3:12-15, Hebrews 12:29.

best shelter ourselves and our nation from the Judgment of God.”

626 BC Dan and Neb

What a loss for Israel, at first to vote against freedom against God’s urging, and later to vote, as it were, by their rejection of God’s prophets, against anything to do with God!

Dan’s attention returned to his presentation to Neb. He detailed the silver breast, brass belly, and iron legs with iron/clay feet of the statue.

Then came the part that was more clearly not complimentary. “Yet all during those coming centuries, the God of Heaven which now answers your demand is preparing a government of an entirely different nature, that will never end. It will be like a stone cut from a mountain without hands.”¹¹¹

Dan didn’t have to search his memory very hard for the significance of a “stone” in God’s metaphors. He had memorized the Bible, so he was able to tick off all the times where “rock” or “stone” was used as a metaphor of something besides a literal physical rock. 45 times.¹¹² He was able to quickly recall each verse and add up their descriptions into a single picture.

God, our Rock, is flawless and just. He lives, and speaks to us, and we can talk to Him. He saves us from our enemies. He is our father! He created us. Gave us birth. Saves us from violence. Punishment from Him is better than promotion by devils. A shield. A fortress. Our foundation. He pulls us out of quicksand and sets

111 Daniel 2:44. Some may balk at characterizing what the Stone represents as a “government”, but obviously the Stone displaces the four world empires which were governments.

112 This counts just what was written before Neb’s dream, according to the timeline at <http://biblepgs.com/Jeremiah-Daniel-Ezekiel-%20Timeline.pdf>, Daniel 2 was written before any of the references to a “stone” in Jeremiah or Ezekiel.

*us upon The Rock. Higher than we can see. Our glory is in Him. Rejected by men, yet established by God. Our haven which will not collapse during life's storms.*¹¹³

So the identity of the Freedom Stone was no mystery to Daniel. "Our Freedom Stone is God", Dan nearly said out loud. But as soon as he thought it, the question formed in his mind as he took a breath to give the next part of the dream's interpretation to Neb:

113 Deuteronomy 32:4 God, our Rock, is flawless and just. :15, the Rock who saves us from our enemies. :18 the Rock who formed us, who gave us birth. :31, even when our rock sends enemies to chase us, our Rock treats us better than theirs treats them. V. 37-39, God mocks trust in some other "rock". "I AM, and there is no other god besides me. I myself cause death and I sustain life; I wound severely and I also heal; from my power no one can deliver."

1 Samuel 2:2 There is no rock like our God. 2 Samuel 22:2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; 3 The God of my rock; in him will I trust: he is my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my high tower, and my refuge, my saviour; thou savest me from violence. 2 Samuel 22:32 ...and who is a rock, save our God? :47 our Rock Lives, is blessed, and exalted. 23:3 our Rock speaks to me.

Psalms 18:2 The LORD is my Rock, my fortress, my place of safety. He is my God, the Rock I run to for protection. He is my shield; by his power I am saved. He is my hiding place high in the hills. 18:31 For who is God save the LORD? or who is a rock save our God? 18:46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. 27:5 ...he shall set me up upon a rock. 28:1 ...Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; 31:2 ...be thou my strong rock 31:3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; 40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. 42:9 I will say unto God my rock, ...why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? 61:2... lead me to the rock that is higher than I. 62:2 He only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall not be greatly moved. :6 He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. 7 In God is my salvation and my glory: 71:3 thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress. 78:35 ...God was their rock, 89:26 Thou art my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. 92:15 ... he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. 94:22 ... the rock of my refuge. 95:1 O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. 118:22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. 23 This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.

doesn't God already fill the whole earth, with no need of further "growth" to accomplish it? None of the previous metaphors of the Rock portray a rock getting bigger. This is a new revelation from God.

All the previous metaphors about God, The Rock, are about The Rock in relation to man. In man's reliance upon The Rock, there is plenty of room for growth! When a very large structure is built, builders have to dig down to the solid rock far beneath the soil to begin their foundation. That rock is called "bedrock".

God – His love, His laws, His protection – is the bedrock of civilization. Could Neb's dream be God's promise that indeed, man's reliance upon God will indeed grow past its spotty beginnings in Israel, past Israel's borders, to heal all the world's bloody, superstitious, tyrannical, suffering nations? Dan was overwhelmed with the vision. He prayed silently that it would be so, even as he continued talking with Neb.

Dan's glimpse of future revelation:
Psalm 18:31

It is obvious, according to Psalm 18, that Jesus is the Rock described in Daniel's dream:
Psalm 18:31 For who is God save the LORD? or

Isaiah 8:14 And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, 17:10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, 28:16 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not [need to flee the storms]. 32:2 [Future rulers will] be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. 51:1 ...ye that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, [Abraham, vs. 2]

Genesis 49:24 [Joseph, the tribe] ... gets power from the Mighty One of Jacob, from the Shepherd, the Rock of Israel.

who is a rock save our God? Also 2 Samuel 22:32.

The only verses in the Bible where “rock” is a metaphor for something other than an ordinary rock, it is specified as a metaphor of God; as “God” or “Lord” 37 times in the Old Testament, and as Jesus or His Word, 9 times in the New.

73 times in the King James Version of the Bible, the word “rock” just means ordinary rocks. But five of those 73 times it was a description in the books of Moses about the time Moses struck the rock and a river gushed forth to water the five million souls; four more times that event was recalled in Psalms and Isaiah. That event also reminds us of Jesus talking to the Woman at the Well in John 4, where He tells her, John 4:10...If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. ...13 ...Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The sense in which God, in the Old Testament, is depicted as our “rock” is in God’s protection of us from *military* threats. (To the extent we trust in and obey Him.) That is, from foreign invaders. In other words, protection from political threats, since when foreign armies invade, they set up new governments. In no verse is He depicted as our rock in any other sense. Here are those verses – after that let’s look at the New Testament verses about Jesus:

A potential stumbling block, an occasion of misunderstanding, occurred to Dan as he came to the part about the Stone growing. How ironic, that some of the verses in the Bible about stones condemned the pagan idols made out of stone!¹¹⁴ Was there any danger that Neb would think Daniel was validating Neb's stone idols by suggesting the true God was also made out of stone?

Probably not, though, after hearing that Daniel's stone was "cut without hands", and that it would grow, and keep growing until it filled the whole earth.

Daniel was especially aware of how Isaiah talked about The Stone, since his were the most recent messages from God, and his prophecies about many nations were being fulfilled in Daniel's time, including the prophecy that Israel's treasures and citizens would be taken captive to Babylon, where Daniel had only recently been taken.¹¹⁵

Isaiah had died only 80 years before. He had written about The Freedom Stone 106 years before.

Isaiah had added to the growing metaphor the idea that the same stone which saves those who build on it trips those who try to go around it.¹¹⁶ What is a "corner stone" to those who build on it is a "stumbling stone" to those who avoid it.

732 BC, 106 years before Neb's Dream

"I'm tired of this old altar. How long has this same old worn out altar been here? A couple of centuries?"

"But your highness, this is the altar that your great great great great great great great great great grandfather Solomon built for the Temple of God,

114 2 Kings 19:18 Isaiah 37:19 Jeremiah 2:27

115 Isaiah 39:5-7

116 Isaiah 8:14

which was then filled with the Glory of the Lord.”

“See what I mean? Great great great great great great great great great great, in this case, means old old old old old old old old old old. And how long have our people worshiped the same old old old old old old old old old old God? What, a thousand years?”

“For God, a thousand years seems like a day.”¹¹⁷

“Well, then, maybe I’m not God after all – I didn’t mean to surprise you so – because for me, a thousand years seems like a thousand years. So don’t you think it’s time for an upgrade?”

Urijah the high priest was mortified. He had inherited the second highest office in the land, after the king, and now his status as Israel’s Second Most Important Guy was on the line. An “upgrade” from the One True Living God and His altar meant a downgrade for the *High Priest* of the One True Living God!

King Ahaz perceived the priest’s concern, and patted him on the shoulder to reassure him. “I still want you for my High Priest. Don’t worry. You’re not *that* old. Not that *great* either. You only have *grandkids*.

“Look, when I visited Damascus, capital of Assyria, I saw a brand new altar that I really like. Make me one like it, take that old brass altar out of the Temple which had been by the Temple’s main altar – a *little* bit of tradition is OK – and put it by my altar. Then transfer sacrifices from the Temple to my altar. And you can still be Israel’s Second Most Important Guy.”¹¹⁸

Ahaz ruled the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the only two tribes still ruled by a descendant of King David. Ahaz was the great great great great great

117 Psalm 90:4 For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.

118 2 Kings 16

great great great great great great grandson of King David. But there, the similarity ends.

The change was not merely from sacrifices on the altar of the true God to sacrifices on the altar of an imaginary god. The switch of altars was linked to a change from values like mercy, justice, equal rights, and love – unique to Biblical religion – to values like selfishness, perversion, violence, revelry, torture, and murder. And a switch from animal sacrifices to human sacrifices. Paganism demands human sacrifice. Paganism admires as much “equality” as the physically and/or legally powerful can seize.



Ahaz' shiny new altar

Ahaz' shiny new altar was completed and dedicated with the sacrifice of dozens of babies personally thrown by King Ahaz up into the red-hot brass arms of Baal, Judah's brand-new god. The arms were heated by sacred fires. Loud rock bands played to cover the screams of the babies. How proud the Jews were that after all those centuries of waiting, they

finally had a god respected by every nation!

But what a small step it proved, from being ruled by the imaginary Assyrian “god”, to being ruled by the very real Assyrian king! Worshiping evil sets natural consequences in motion.

Fading fast like grandfather’s worn out robe was the Jewish culture of serving others. Serving others generally creates wealth, because those served are generally motivated to compensate servers so that servers can continue serving. Service is the foundation of a strong economy.

When being paid is the only reason one serves, only the fear of being caught restrains getting money by fraud and outright stealing. Even a little stealing causes great waste in an economy; innovation is exhausted on security and protection. Much property is usually destroyed just to get at a little to steal it, and that little, once stolen, is disposed of by the thief for only a fraction of its value. Tragically, crime does not just waste property, but injures and kills people, which is a loss to whole nations not just economically.

To the extent a culture is free of greed and motivated only by service, love, and mutual respect, government does not strangle innovation and production. Wealth is not bled off by loafers or thieves, innovation is not squandered on restraining loafers or thieves, and everyone becomes wealthy beyond the comprehension of cultures full of greed.

Without Biblical morals, therefore, there can be little wealth. There can be no strong economy. Without that, there can be little capacity for national self defense.

Assyria’s future invasion of Judah became inevitable for three additional obvious reasons, Isaiah tried to explain to Ahaz.

“First, because worshiping imaginary powers

backed by zero evidence, instead of worshiping God whose power and love are proved by centuries of overwhelming evidence, is a breathtaking rejection of reality. In other words, you are willfully stupid. Being deliberately stupid is a poor way to prepare for an invasion.”

“I don’t think I like you”, Ahaz answered.

Isaiah was only warming up. “Second, because admiration of Assyrian values weakens the resolve of Judean citizens to resist Assyrian invasion, and increases the number of citizens inclined to help the enemy.”¹¹⁹

“I am quite positive that I don’t like you.”

“I never expected being liked would result from quoting God. But as I was saying, Third, your government has become like Assyria’s, so even before Assyria’s physical invasion, Assyria’s cultural invasion flushed freedom as far down the toilet as after.

“So it wasn’t that much of a surprise to me when God told me to warn the people about the invasion of Assyria, 28 years away, that would naturally result from transferring their worship from the Temple of the Living God to an Assyrian devil.”

Ahaz said “I hate you! You’re not funny any more! Go!”

Isaiah left Ahaz and went to the shiny new altar. He shouted, “The LORD of the Heavenly Armies—He’s the one you are to regard as Holy. Let Him be the one whom you fear, and let Him be the only one before whom you stand in terror! [Because to the extent we are afraid to disobey God, knowing He allows enough of

119 We need only follow today’s headlines to see how this works.

Socialism is the opposite of the Representative Democracy, or Republic, that is the United States’ form of government, yet many voters want it, and many want to subject the United States to the United Nations whose member nations are far more socialist than the U.S.

the evil consequences of our rebellion to prod us back to reality, we will fear nothing else.] Then He will be a sanctuary! But for Israel He'll also be [because you reject Him, and reject reality] a stone of trouble, a rock one stumbles over, a trap and a snare. Many will fall on the stone and be broken.”¹²⁰

Isaiah didn't say *when* the Lord would “be a stone of trouble”, but the warning fits Isaiah's time as well as 764 years later when “the Chief Corner Stone” was laid in the earth.¹²¹

Four years later Isaiah added “Because you made a contract with the devil that you imagined would keep you safe, watch out: I will lay in Jerusalem a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious corner stone: whoever builds on it will measure his foundation with a tape measure named Justice, and a level named Honesty, and he will not need to run away from a storm, while hail hammers the lies you trust and floods wash away your homes. Your contract with the devil will be canceled as disaster sweeps you away.”¹²²

The prophecy of a future stone fits the Foundation Stone laid 760 years later.

Of course Judah's “contract with the devil” in 728 BC wasn't the only reason for Jesus to come, but that general capacity of God's people, then and now, to choose the devil's culture *was* a principal reason.

Why are God's judgments against the whole nation, even though the king's actions are the only actions reported as the reason for God's judgments?

120 Isaiah 8:13-15

121 Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:6.

122 Isaiah 28:14-18

Because no government can do more evil, or more good, than its people will tolerate.¹²³

616¹²⁴ BC Neb's Daytime Statue.

Neb really, really liked having himself the “head of gold” of his dream. In fact, as a few years passed, the growth in his memory of Dan’s interpretation was not of the stone cut without hands, but of the gold covering not just the head but the whole body.

Neb couldn’t wrap his mind around Dan’s idea of Neb’s empire being displaced by any future empire. Yes! All future history must be dominated by Neb’s empire alone! Gold, over the whole body!

The other detail Neb couldn’t wrap his mind around, the more he thought about it, was the idea of the existence of a God greater than himself.

Great ideas cry out to be acted upon! So the day came when Neb commissioned a copy of the statue in his dream, except covered with gold from head to toe.

Ninety glorious feet tall! Nine feet wide! Covered with gold! And best of all, *stolen* gold!

To every important person from police, to judges, to princes, he sent a warm invitation: “Show up, or you will be toast. Literally.”

Burnt toast, specifically. Burnt in a huge oven next to the statue. The fate of anyone who refused to

123 Not only were the tyrannical Pharisees restrained from too obviously ruling unjustly, because they “feared the people”, Mark 11:32, 12:12, Luke 20:19, 22:2, but King Saul was, 1 Samuel 15:24, and even a Roman captain in a fortress holding thousands of soldiers was, Acts 5:26!

124 The time between Neb’s dream and the golden image he created is uncertain. This story takes a stab at 10 years. Albert Barnes finds evidence for a 19 year interval. Adam Clarke is uncertain whether the image was built before or after Neb’s insanity reported in chapter 4. Matthew Henry thinks it happened shortly after the dream.

bow down to the statue of Neb, Babylon's latest and greatest god.

“When the band plays, bow.”

Who wouldn't want to? What glory! People were bowing *before* the band played, so they wouldn't be blinded by the sun reflecting off all that gold!

People want to know what kind of a band it was. It was appropriate that the band playing for a 90 foot tall gold-covered god be a *heavy metal* band.

But even without the sun reflected off the gold scorching their eyes, the people were proud to have been a part of helping Neb steal all that gold. How envious the surrounding nations must be!

To all the people of the world, the statue represented all the glory of tyranny – exactly what the statue represented in Neb's dream 10 years before, and what the statue will represent that will not only glisten, but talk,¹²⁵ in the Last Days.

Nothing could have made Neb more popular! Had Neb not installed the furnace and promised to fry anyone who remained standing, the people would have replaced Neb with a dictator who would! The people loved all that gory glory and were especially proud that it was stolen!

Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego, however, would have none of it. They knew the real God, and they could tell the difference.

“Well, whether we die in that furnace of yours, God will decide, not you. So it is God we are concerned about pleasing, not you, when you order us to deny God. We don't know if God will let you carry out your threat. What we know is that we are going to praise and worship God, and that, sorry to let you down, isn't you.”

125 Revelation 13:15

As it turned out, God had other plans than Neb's. And after Neb saw them, he sent out a new order all over the world to worship God, canceling his order to bow to his statue, and explaining why – reporting what God did.

What love humans are capable of, for tyranny!
What comfort God gives, bridling evil to serve good!¹²⁶

Chapter 9: Looking Back

Viewing the ruins of the scorched, ruined Temple, after a morning reviewing his lopped-off family tree that was mostly stumps where there had been flourishing branches, Jerom asked Nehemiah, “Why does God allow so much evil in the world?”

Nehemiah answered by calling the people together for a history lesson.

“How patiently God shepherds the people of the world as far away from creating Hell on earth for themselves, as they permit!” he began. “When most of the people of Israel became more cruel to each other than the Canaanites before them, God taught them what cruelty felt like on the receiving end, by allowing the Babylonians to cruelly slaughter most of them and deport most of the rest to Babylon.”

Nehemiah wasn't finished, but a hand went up.

“Yes, Jacob?”

“Sir, surely our forefathers would have behaved differently, had they known the suffering their behavior would bring upon themselves. Do you know why God did not make that more clear?”

¹²⁶ Romans 8:28

“How do you think God could have made that more clear? God sent so many warnings! So many times Isaiah warned *in detail* of what was ahead from nearly a century before, and Jeremiah just before and during, so that when the Babylonians came the people would know it was by the permission of God, and would know God’s reasons.

“As if any of those warnings were necessary, after everyone already knew that God sees all we do, think, and say, and rewards us according to our actions.”

Jacob followed up, “But *Isaiah*? No college degree, no wealth, clothes that a homeless guy would burn!¹²⁷ The guy didn’t leave a great first impression, from what I’ve heard. I mean, granted, when his predictions came true people paid attention to him,¹²⁸

127 Isaiah 20:2, he wore haircloth, or sackcloth, just like Elijah, 2 Kings 1:8, and John the Baptist, Matthew 3:4. It was a symbol of repentance, Isaiah 22:11-12 and 1 Kings 20:27.

128 Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical

Literature: “Isaiah enjoyed an authority proportionate to his gifts. We learn from history how great this authority was during his life, especially under the reign of Hezekiah. Several of his most definite prophecies were fulfilled while he was yet alive; for instance, the overthrow of the kingdoms of Syria and Israel; the invasion of the Assyrians, and the divine deliverance from it; the prolongation of life granted to Hezekiah; and several predictions against foreign nations. Isaiah is honorably mentioned in the historical books. The later prophets, especially Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, clearly prove that his book was diligently read, and that his prophecies were attentively studied. The authority of the prophet greatly increased after the fulfillment of his prophecies by the Babylonian exile, the victories of Cyrus, and the deliverance of the covenant-people. Even Cyrus (according to the account in Josephus, *Ant.* 11:1, 1 and 2) was induced to set the Jews at liberty by the prophecies of Isaiah concerning himself. Jesus Sirach ([Sir 48:22-25](#)) bestows splendid praise upon Isaiah, and both Philo and Josephus speak of him with great veneration. He attained the highest degree of authority after the times of the

but one look at him proved it was all just coincidence and luck!

“Why, if God wanted His messages to be believed, why didn’t He send them by important, successful people who knew how to dress? Or better yet, why did He send messages by *humans*? Why not by angels? Or better yet, *by Himself?*”

Nehemiah glanced at his own worn work clothes. “You really think that would have mattered? Maybe what you are really thinking is what a poor spokesman for God *I* am?”

“Uh, no, er, I, uh....”

“Do you remember that God *did* offer to come speak to men directly? Do you remember their answer? They were terrified! They begged Moses, ‘*you go talk to God for us!*’¹²⁹

“Do you remember the earliest book of the Bible, Job, how much Job wished he could talk to God but at the same time was terrified of such a meeting?¹³⁰ Do you remember how Elihu comforted Job by answering Job himself as a representative of truth, rather than Job having to face God directly?”¹³¹

Mabl spoke up. “If God would speak to me directly, rather than through flawed people, then I would obey with precision. I would avoid the sins I commit simply because I have trusted people whose flawed grasp of God’s commandments confused and misled me. How I long to be a Robot for God!”

New Testament had proved the most important part of his prophecies, namely, the Messianic, to be divine. Christ and the apostles quote no prophecies so frequently as those of Isaiah, in order to prove that he who had appeared was one and the same with him who had been promised. The fathers of the Church abound in praises of Isaiah. — Kitto; Smith.”

129 Exodus 19:9-20:21

130 Job 9:32-35, 13:3

131 Job 33:6-7

Nehemiah set aside his suspicion of any human's commitment to obey that faithfully, that consistently.

“So the overwhelming intensity of God's presence is the first reason God doesn't speak to us directly very often. You bring up a second reason: God doesn't want us to love and respect only Him, but also each other. ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and mind’ is the first Commandment.¹³²

“But a commandment second in importance is ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’¹³³ God doesn't want us to just love and listen to the rich, famous, and good looking, but the poor, the outcasts, the ugly.

“So God picks people least expected by society to be worth listening to, to speak for Him, so that anyone who really wants to listen to God will have to make it a habit to never dismiss anyone as not worth paying attention to.

“God even speaks through liars, and even through people far from God who generally hate truth! That pressures us to not dismiss anybody as not worth listening to anything he says.

“For example, remember when Israel's most righteous king¹³⁴ died because he wouldn't listen to a message from God¹³⁵ delivered by a godless tyrant whom God's prophets had warned should not be trusted?”¹³⁶

The people remembered, but who had thought of applying it to underlining our God-assigned duty to listen to each other?”

132 Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 30:6, cited later by Jesus: Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27

133 Leviticus 19:18, cited later by Jesus: Matthew 22:39-40, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27-29. Also Romans 13:9-10, Galatians 5:14, James 2:8.

134 King Josiah. 2 Kings 23:25

135 2 Chronicles 35:29-24

136 Pharaoh-Necho, tyrant of Egypt. Isaiah 30:1-7, 31:3, Ezekiel 29:6-7

Balzar spoke up. “People would be a lot more righteous if God would punish people right away for their evil instead of waiting long enough for natural consequences to kick in.”

Nehemiah was skeptical. “Would they? If that were so, then why do people still sin well after sin’s natural consequences have begun destroying them?”

“But that brings up a third reason God speaks to us through each other.

“God wants us to love each other by choice, not from terror. What God accomplished by speaking through humble Isaiah was to give people a choice. Isaiah articulated the evil people were doing.

“Yes, he warned in detail of the terrible consequences that would follow their evil, but the important part of the message was a glimpse of how evil their treatment of each other had become. That was enough for those with hearts soft enough to care. They repented without the need of consequences.

“Those who didn’t care how evil they had become didn’t just rebel against God. They rebelled against evidence! Against reality! Even when reality included terrible painful consequences!

“Sure, if God had spoken to the nation directly, Himself, he would have terrified more wicked people into behaving, but without healing their hearts, where real evil lies. But evil hearts generally aren’t evil by accident, out of ignorance. Satan understood the consequences of his choices, but didn’t care. Many follow him.

“Consider: an important benefit of letting those with evil in their hearts be free to act out their hatred, rather than being pressured by terror to pretend to be good, is that others can more easily see who is good and who is evil. Doesn’t that count for something?”

“The people’s reaction to the lowly Isaiah was

enough for God to evaluate whether they will better fit in Heaven or Hell.¹³⁷ And what a reaction! When he hid in a hollow tree, the king's spies found him and the king had him sawed in half!

“Of course, Isaiah wan't the only witness for God. As the Babylonians swept over the land, and surrounded Jerusalem, there was Jeremiah, offering, 12 times during those years,¹³⁸ yet another last chance to save themselves, if they would finally turn from their cruelties! The people showed their gratitude by dropping him in an old well with a couple of feet of mud and water. King Zed actually believed him and took limited steps to save him, but secretly because he feared the people!

“God used Jeremiah to test the hearts of His people. Many conspired to kill him. God raised up a few who conspired to save him.

“Finally the Babylonians flooded into the city,

137 1 Corinthians 4:15

138 (1) Jeremiah 21-22, if Zedekiah would surrender to the surrounding Babylonians, God would let him still reign, in peace. (2) Jer 25:5-9, a flashback to the “second chance” God had offered long before the Babylonians invaded, if they would stop worshipping cruel idols. (3) Jer 26, repent now, even after the Babylonians had carried off their first load of people, and at least Jerusalem won't become a ghost town. (4) Jer 27, repent now, and at least the temple vessels will be left, and the temple won't be destroyed. And those remaining won't be enslaved. (5) Jer 34, free those the Jews had illegally enslaved, and you will live. Although the king will be captured, he will die in peace. (6) Jer 36:3 flashback: repent, and I will forgive. (7) Had the King not burned the scroll of warnings Jeremiah had dictated, and sent for Jeremiah's arrest, another scroll with worse warnings from God would not have been written. (8, 9, 10) Jer 38, three times, Jeremiah pleaded with the king, surrender, and the city won't be burned. (11) The second batch has been deported, but a small group remains in Jerusalem. They want to flee to Egypt, but Jeremiah tells them to stay and they will be safe, or flee and be chased and slaughtered. They flee. (12) Jer 51:5-6, after 70 years, Babylon will be destroyed for what it did to Israel and other nations. God warns His people remaining in Babylon to flee before that time.

carried off a few thousand wealthy Israelites that they hadn't killed, and left the poor in the land. And left a good man in charge of Jerusalem.

"Yes, Rachel?"

"Neb was so ruthless! Was he really better than Israel's King Zed, that God would transfer the rule over His people from Zed to Neb?"

"Interesting question", Nehemiah admitted. "Zed had little courage for good. He clearly knew Jeremiah spoke for God. He believed Jeremiah's promise that if he would simply surrender, he would save himself and most of Jerusalem,¹³⁹ it being God's will to end Zed's cruel rule.

"But besides fearing the people who wanted Jeremiah dead, Zed just couldn't let go of his wicked rule, and he just couldn't admit to the population that their sins brought all these evils upon them."¹⁴⁰

"Neb, to the contrary, upon seeing Dan's wisdom in interpreting a mere dream, acknowledged publicly to the whole known world, not just Jerusalem, that God is the only real God, who must be obeyed. He even put Dan second in command of the whole known world."¹⁴¹

"That alone was a greater witness to humankind of the source of full life than Zed had ever wanted. But that wasn't Neb's only witness.

"Neb's devotion to God was spotty. But he remained teachable. He created a 7-story¹⁴² statue of himself and commanded everyone to bow down and worship it. We don't know where Dan was at that point, but Shadrach, Meschech, and Abednego, Dan's

139 Jeremiah 21-22.

140 Jeremiah 38, especially verses 24-27.

141 Daniel 2:46-49.

142 Daniel 3:1 "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits...." A cubit is the length of the king's forearm, which is about a foot and a half. So it was 90 feet tall, 9 feet wide.

deputies, were right there not bowing. Neb threw them in a huge furnace, but when Neb looked in and saw the Son of God¹⁴³ walking with them in the fire, and all four unhurt, he reversed himself in front of the whole world, ordering the world to worship God instead of himself!¹⁴⁴

“Neb backslid again, later, this time by merely thinking about how great he was. God saw, and taught Neb, by making him insane, driven from the palace and wandering in the wilderness like a wild animal, for seven years! Yet at the end of that time when his reason returned, there was his kingdom waiting for him, preserved by Dan. Neb reported his experience in humility to the whole world in a proclamation we can still read today!¹⁴⁵

“Neb’s death didn’t end Israel’s captivity. Neb’s son had so much contempt for God that he brought the utensils of Solomon’s temple into his feast to his ignorant ‘god’. God that very night replaced Babylonian rule¹⁴⁶ with Persian rule, led by Darius whose very name had been prophesied by Isaiah. Darius made yet another proclamation to the whole world honoring God,¹⁴⁷ as he helped the surviving Israelites return to their land.¹⁴⁸

“And when the Israelites who remained in Persia were threatened by the conspiracy of Haman, God turned the threat into victory for His people, an event that brought many converts to Israel, the first time mass conversions are reported in the Bible!¹⁴⁹

“So yes, through the hard hearts of Israel, God

143 Daniel 3:25

144 Daniel 3:28-30

145 Daniel 4

146 Daniel 5

147 Daniel 6:25-27

148 Ezra 6:1-12

149 Esther 8:17, 9:27

communicated His Good News throughout the whole world, by tyrants readier to acknowledge Him than Israel's own leaders.

“And when the Greeks, and later Romans, conquered Israel, that brought a permanent end to child sacrifice in Israel, because those two cultures, for all their other sins, hated that practice.

“ ‘How could a God of Love allow so much evil in the world?’ you ask! The greater evil, in God's opinion as well as mine, would be to make us all slaves, or robots. God wants our love to be our *choice*. Choice is not meaningful if we are instantly and absolutely physically restrained from doing any evil whatsoever, or are terrified into behaving.

“But along with the power to do wrong, we are offered unlimited power to oppose evil, we read in Psalm 91.

“Yes, Nathaniel?”

“Sir, what was the main reason the people gave Isaiah and Jeremiah for not listening to them? I mean, they had to rationalize their rebellion in some way, didn't they?”

“You mean besides just not wanting to stop being cruel?”

“Yes. I mean wasn't there some rationale, some alternative theology, that made it sound righteous to leave society's cruelties alone, unchallenged?”

“Very interesting you ask that. My answer is, I don't know about before the invasion, but your question reminds me of a dream I had last night. It was the strangest dream. It described people who considered themselves righteous but who did nothing to challenge all the wickedness around them. Indeed, they developed detailed Noninvolvement Theologies to justify their inaction. I have no idea whether people ever thought up such excuses in the past, or if it

foretells what people will do in the future.

“In my dream, the people told the prophets that they should stop talking about politics all the time, there in the Temple, because politics is dirty and God doesn’t get involved in politics.¹⁵⁰ They actually wrestled down verses for their work: God wants us to be separate from the world.¹⁵¹ Be not ye unequally yoked together with unbelievers.¹⁵²

“Yet all the prophets ever seemed to talk about, the people in my dream complained, was politics! Invading armies? Foreign rulers? Politics! Justice for the poor and immigrants? Outlawing bribery? Politics!

“Why, they complained, didn’t the prophets focus on what God cares about: the doctrines people need to believe, and the worship rituals they need to perform, in order to escape God’s judgment? Not only did the prophets never talk about that, but they explicitly labeled doctrines and rituals unimportant compared to caring for the oppressed,¹⁵³ which can’t be well done without protecting their rights through laws and courts – *politics!*”

“Well isn’t that true?” Nebby piped up. “Isn’t politics dirty, and aren’t God’s people supposed to separate themselves from the filth of this world? Weren’t the prophets wrong to focus so much on politics?”

“Hmmm”, Nehemiah answered. “So in other words, you are questioning why I became your political leader, knowing as you do that the friendship of the world is enmity with God?¹⁵⁴

“Well,” Nehemiah answered himself, “I myself

150 2 Controversies 3:16 “Thou shalt not get involved in politics.” Also 1 Denominations 5:13 “Politics is dirty.”

151 Exodus 34:14-16, 1 Kings 11:2-4

152 Deuteronomy 7:2-3, 22:10, quoted in 2 Corinthians 6:14.

153 Isaiah 1:11-17, Malachi 1:10, Hosea 2:11, Isaiah 58

154 James 4:4

have told you to separate yourselves from pagan wives who want you to sacrifice your own children to the devils they worship.¹⁵⁵ But I never said that because some marriages are made in Hell, there should be no marriages. That would be stupid, wouldn't it?"

Heads nodded.

"And stupid it would be, to say that in those forums where voters decide whether to pattern our laws and judgments after the principles of Heaven or of Hell, that because some vote for Hell, no believer should vote for Heaven! That would be *very* stupid, wouldn't it?"

Two heads nodded. The rest registered confusion.

"You see, just as 'marriage' means a relationship between a man and a woman which can be good or bad, and just as 'parents' means a relationship between adults and children which can be good or bad, and 'pastor' means a relationship between a spiritual servant and those he serves which can be good or bad, 'politics' simply means a relationship between all the citizens of a nation which can be good or bad but where it is very important that believers help make it as good as we can.

"Have you noticed that God's prophecies are about what will happen to nations because of the sins of most of the citizens of nations, not about what will happen to churches because they don't believe the right doctrines or practice the right rituals? Do you remember Daniel's prophecy, based on Neb's dream, about four world governments, displaced by a very different kind of government? An empire is a political system. Did you know that? To displace emperors, a different system needs to somehow meet the needs met by emperors, but better. What will that be? Whatever

¹⁵⁵ Nehemiah 13:25.

it is, it must somehow govern. Which establishes God's interest in government, that an improved government is God's long range plan, and that His prophecies are about governments, not Sunday School classes.

"I find a fascinating clue in a prophecy by Jeremiah. Do you remember this?

Jeremiah 31:33 But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

"Pretty remarkable. If God will do that, there will be less need for courts, lawmakers, judges, police, and jails. If men will govern themselves, they will not need to be enslaved by tyrants to prevent anarchy.¹⁵⁶

"Remember God told Samuel how important it was that the people remain involved in politics, continuing to elect their own representatives to rule, rather than surrender their intelligence, their conscience, their common sense to a dictator? How did God characterize that stupid choice? As the people rebelling against God's rule over them! Remember

156 These Hebrews verses are partially fulfilled in America today, according to America's founders who often spoke of the reduced need for police and masters because God's laws are on the hearts of citizens.

that?¹⁵⁷

“And remember God’s judgment, ‘Pastors become theological dictators, spewing the lies of prophets, and the people love to surrender their spiritual discernment so they don’t have to think so hard and take so much spiritual responsibility?’¹⁵⁸

“You see, God’s vision for relationships between citizens is the same as His vision for relationships between believers. He wants everyone to participate in raising the relationship toward God’s standards. In a ‘multitude of counselors, purposes are established’, Solomon said,¹⁵⁹ in other words, when everyone participates in a goal, success is guaranteed. And everyone can participate only when everyone is *allowed* to participate, by being allowed to freely articulate what is true as well as they can, and when everyone is willing to listen to, learn from, and reason with others.¹⁶⁰

“This culture of reasoning, of robust respectful verbal interaction, is God’s Key to Success for all relationships: husband/wife, teacher/student, pastor/worshippers, elected leader/citizen.”¹⁶¹

157 1 Samuel 8:7 And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them.

158 Jeremiah 5:31 The prophets prophesy falsely, the priests rule by their own authority, and you—my own people— like it this way! But on the day of disaster, where will you turn for help? (CEV, ISV)

159 Proverbs 15:22

160 Of course this whole chapter is based on no particular Biblical event, but clearly the people in 1 Samuel 8 rebelled against the political “involvement” which elections require, while the people Jeremiah described loved surrendering their responsibility to their pastors, for which they had no more Biblical support than Christians today. So it is reasonable to suppose that the rationalizations today may have been like the rationalizations then.

161 1 Peter 2:13 in the KJV “submit yourselves to every ordinance of man” sounds like slavish obedience to the most minute demands of

Nebby followed up, “Where in the Bible do you find that God keeps His people involved in ‘politics?’”

Nehemiah laughed. “Can you think of a Bible hero who was *not* either a political leader himself, or who got in the Bible over his interaction with political leaders?”

“Let’s go over a list of Bible heroes who are our examples, to see how they avoided involvement.”¹⁶²

“Abel, Enoch, and Noah were called ‘Patriarchs’.¹⁶³ They were leaders of governments.¹⁶⁴ The form of government in that time was called ‘Patriarchal’, or ‘Tribal’. Only the leaders of governments are recorded in the Bible with accurate birth and death dates.¹⁶⁵ Even Abel, though childless, was very influential over the whole world population in his time, consisting of brothers and sisters who eventually numbered 55,¹⁶⁶ and he is influential to this

Godless tyrants, but the Greek literally calls us to “arrange our lives under” or in conformity with the human authority relationships that God has created for the benefit of man.

1 Peter 2:13-17 reviews God’s vision for the relationships of citizens/government. 2:18-25, employees/employers; 3:1-7, wives/husbands; 3:8-4:19, Christians/Christians; 5:1-4, church members/leaders; 5:5, everyone/everyone else.

162 The following list is taken from Hebrews 11, commonly called the “Hall of Faith”. It lists several Bible heroes who we should emulate.

163 Acts 2:29, 7:8-9, Hebrews 7:4 These three were the first Bible heroes listed in Hebrews 11. “Patriarch” is actually a Greek compound word, from αρχω, *to begin*, and πατρια, *a pedigree*.

164 Thus Josephus wrote that the Flood “happened in the six hundredth year of Noah’s government...” and it was only “illustrious men” whose “births and deaths” were “noted down with great accuracy”. (1.1.3) Moreover, “Seth...delivered the government to Cainan his son...” “Mathusala...had Lamech for his son...to whom he delivered the government...Lamech, when he had governed seven hundred and seventy seven years, appointed Noah, his son, to be ruler of the people...and retained the government for nine hundred and fifty years.” (1.3.4) One’s “government” was “retained” from one’s birth to death.

165 Josephus, 1.1.3.

166 Adam had 33 sons and 23 daughters, according to an “old tradition”

time.¹⁶⁷

“Abraham¹⁶⁸ was regarded as ‘a Mighty Prince’ by the nations around him.¹⁶⁹ He held regional political power, having defeated the 4 kings who had defeated the 5 kings.¹⁷⁰ King Abimilech and his court were ‘sore afraid’ of him.¹⁷¹ Pharaoh was very sorry he took his wife from him.¹⁷²

“Not that anyone was afraid of Abraham’s huge army. 318¹⁷³ servants. That was his ‘army’. What the world was afraid of was Abraham’s God, that would give a victory like that to 319 people.

“But you see, war against other nations is part of ‘politics.’

“Yes, Caleb?”

“Lots of Bible heroes weren’t involved in politics at all. Like for example Sarah, a stay-at-home housewife.”

“Sarah was Israel’s ‘First Lady’. She was the wife of a ‘mighty prince’, which makes her status equal to that of a queen.

“Sarah was the wife of a “mighty prince’. She gave birth to nations! How many stay-at-home housewives do *that*?¹⁷⁴

“What I do not see described in the Bible is a spiritual hero with no interaction with national government. People get in the Bible by being political

cited in a footnote to Josephus 1.2.3.

167 Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and **by it he being dead yet speaketh.**

168 Honored in Hebrews 11:8.

169 Genesis 23:6

170 Genesis 14

171 Genesis 20:8

172 Genesis 12:14-20

173 Genesis 14:14

174 Hebrews 11:11-12

leaders themselves, or for their interactions with political leaders.”¹⁷⁵

“How about Isaac?”¹⁷⁶ Caleb interrupted. “He led a pretty quiet life. He never voted or lobbied a Congress. He never went door to door, handing out political fliers, or raising campaign funds.”

“We don’t know that for sure, do we?”

“But Isaac was Mightier than a King! King Abimelech told him ‘...thou art *much* mightier than we.’”¹⁷⁷

“His son Jacob was no politician”, Caleb argued. “He spent all his time earning wives, begetting children, raising sheep, and tricking his brother. I’ll bet he wasn’t even registered to vote!”

“Ah, but Jacob¹⁷⁸ was a terror to ‘all the cities round about’.¹⁷⁹ He was hardly politically inert. And by the way, you don’t get that powerful, without drawing some attention to the God who made you that powerful.

“And Jacob was the father of a world ruler, Joseph, the next hero listed in the Bible.”¹⁸⁰ Caleb saw that coming, and sulked to the rear of the crowd.

“Joseph, son of Jacob, great grandson of Abraham, was the defacto world ruler! His story fills up 10 whole chapters of the Bible!”¹⁸¹

Caleb was back. “Moses was next. He wasn’t a

175 This is especially true of the Old Testament, which was all there was in Nehemiah’s time. In the New Testament, several names are honored by Paul’s mention of them, but even they interacted with Paul, who generated political fireworks with the Sanhedrin, kings Festus and Agrippa, and emperor Nero. Jesus, King of Kings, interacted even more profoundly with the Sanhedrin, King Herod, and Governor Pilate.

176 Honored as a Bible hero in Hebrews 11:20

177 Genesis 26:16

178 Honored as an example for us in Hebrews 11:21

179 Genesis 35:5

180 Honored as an example for us in Hebrews 11:22

181 Genesis 41:1-50:26

political leader. He was a religious leader. He didn't have anything to do with man-made laws. He only worked with God's laws. His government was neither a monarchy, democracy, republic, or oligarchy, but a *theocracy*. Now talk your way out of *that*."

"OK, but first, let's not forget Moses' parents.¹⁸² They are in the Bible for their defiance of evil government. They were "Not afraid of the king's commandment"; their civil disobedience to their government is an example of faith for us. They risked the wrath of the law to do right, and invaded Pharaoh's very family.

"You mention Moses.¹⁸³

Moses was the Ruler of Israel, spoiler of Egypt which had been the dominant world power, adopted grandson of Pharaoh,¹⁸⁴ and conqueror of the following nations: Amalek,¹⁸⁵ Sihon, King of the Amorites,¹⁸⁶ King Arad,¹⁸⁷ Edom,¹⁸⁸ and "Ataroth, and Dibon, and Jazer, and Nimrah, and Heshbon, and Elealeh, and Shebam, and Nebo, and Beon".¹⁸⁹

"Interesting word, 'theocracy'. It means 'Government of a state by the immediate direction of God; or the state thus governed. Of this species the Israelites furnish an illustrious example. The theocracy lasted till the time of Saul.'¹⁹⁰

"And yet God entrusted government to men, not angels. Judges who applied God's laws to the cases

182 Their faith was honored in Hebrews 11:23. Their faith nurtured the greatest human law giver of all human history.

183 Moses' faith was honored in Hebrews 11:24

184 Exodus 2:10

185 Exodus 17:8-13

186 Numbers 21:21-24

187 Numbers 21:1-3

188 Numbers 20:17-21

189 Numbers 32:3

190 As defined in Webster's 1828 dictionary.

before them creating ‘case law’, juries, the priests who helped analyze God’s laws, police, and jailers were all humans. And as we know from Bible history, humans are sometimes more careful to follow God’s laws, sometimes less. About a third of the time our ancestors departed so far from God’s laws that they no longer ruled themselves; foreigners ruled over them. Yet God never physically intervened to enforce His laws, other than allowing the natural consequence of rebelling against reality.

“So how is that different than a kingdom ruled by a king who tried hard to follow God’s laws? That familiar definition fails to explain any difference.

“1 Samuel 8:7 says a government over which God rules directly is where citizens elect human representatives to rule over them, even though humans will not consistently rule as God directs. That is the political system established by Moses at Jethro’s counsel.

“Our word for that is a ‘Republic’. God said in that verse that *that* is the system in which God ‘reigns’ as ‘king’ over the people. God’s definition doesn’t leave room for any other system to meet the definition of ‘theocracy’ better than a Republic.

“But notice that even when spiritual giants like David, Hezekiah, and Josiah ruled, as earnestly as they could by God’s principles, so that our logic could lead us to define their rule as ‘theocracy’, our definition does not count their monarchy as a ‘theocracy’, and God in 1 Samuel 8:7 does not count it as a system where God rules directly. So really, ‘Republic’ is the word we need to use to describe government by God. It specifies a form of government we all understand, which the word ‘theocracy’ does not. We probably ought to stop using the word ‘theocracy’. All it does is confuse people.

“Back to Moses. Yes, he established God’s laws. But God entrusted humans to interpret, apply, and enforce them, limited by their intelligence as well as by their devotion. Any political leader, in any political system, who loves God’s laws, can try to implement them within his ability. But a Republic is the form of government which God says will best enable true worship.

“But a Republic is not a church. It is a government. It has laws, human interpretations and applications by elected representatives, courts, police, and jails. We call that a ‘political system’, not a ‘church’.

“How am I doing, Caleb?”

No answer.

“Have I made my point?” Nehemiah asked his class. It’s getting time for dinner. Shall we adjourn?”

“Second!”

“All those in favor, say ‘aye!’”

“AYE!”

Nehemiah started walking home. Class was over, but he couldn’t stop remembering.

Rahab¹⁹¹ was a counterspy who betrayed her own government, and later married an Israeli prince.¹⁹²

He remembered later political leaders, military conquerors, and prophets to kings, otherwise called “lobbyists”: “Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets”¹⁹³ who were never reported prophesying in church, but were only reported in the Bible as prophesying to kings.

191 Presented in Hebrews 11:31 as our example of faith.

192 Eastman’s Bible Dictionary says “She afterwards became the wife of Salmon, a prince of the tribe of Judah (Ruth 4:21; 1 Chr. 2:11; Matt. 1:5).”

193 Hebrews 11:32

Nehemiah remembered Job, who was a world ruler according to Job 29. Ezra was governor of Jerusalem, with almost a blank check from the world ruler.¹⁹⁴ Esther was a world empress, placed there by God,¹⁹⁵ who lobbied her husband for relief for all the Jews in the empire.

Jonah's message¹⁹⁶ was that Ninevah would be overthrown in 40 days. Definitely a message that would reach the King. Which it did. "Word came unto the king of Ninevah". The reason the people repented was because the King proclaimed repentance. That wasn't normal. The normal reaction of any king to any message about their own overthrow, would be to quickly and cruelly kill the messenger. Most people would rather jump into a whale than jump that headlong into Assyrian politics!

Nehemiah himself was on leave from being the world emperor's cupbearer,¹⁹⁷ and now served as governor of Israel.

And now Malachi, Nehemiah's contemporary, is prophesying about "the LORD whom ye seek", how he shall "sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness."¹⁹⁸ How does this fit with Isaiah's prophecy that "the government shall be on his shoulder"?¹⁹⁹ Will He, too, like every Bible hero before, interact with the political authorities of His time? Malachi tells us He will at least interact profoundly with the Levites, whose Sanhedrin governs Israel.

How about other heroes of the future? Will they,

194 Ezra 7:21-22

195 Esther 4:14

196 Jonah 3:4-6

197 Nehemiah 1:11, 2:6

198 Malachi 3:1-3

199 Isaiah 9:6

like their ancestors, interact with authorities and be rewarded with everything from toleration to terrible persecution?²⁰⁰

Introduction to Part Two:

Forward

Nebuchadnezzar's dream, unveiled by Daniel, explained how centuries of tyranny that filled the whole world would be crushed to powder, **blown away by the Spirit (the Hebrew word for "wind" also means "spirit")** and displaced with the opposite of tyranny, symbolized by a stone "cut out without hands", which would grow to fill the whole world. Daniel 2.

That dream of the political ruler of the world was about the governments of his time, compared with those of the future. It was about politics.

600 years later, Jesus explained more about **tyranny's tombstone**. He explained what was

200 Mary and Joseph hosted "wise men", who had considerable political influence judging from their treatment by Herod. Mary and Joseph obstructed Herod's murderous intentions by fleeing the king's soldiers.

Of the seven churches in Revelation 2-3, the only two which were praised and not criticized had suffered martyrdom at the hands of their governments. (1) Smyrna had already suffered "tribulation", 2:9, and would in the future suffer more "tribulation", with some "cast into prison" and "tried" (in court), 2:10. (2) Philadelphia "hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name", which is evidence of persecution, since without persecution, acknowledging Jesus would not be worthy of God's praise. A third church, Pergamos, had not "denied my faith" even as their "martyr" was "slain", 2:13, yet received criticism, though not so scathing as other churches received.

The church so "lukewarm" that Jesus wanted to spit her out of His mouth, Laodicia, was advised to "buy gold tried in the fire", 3:18. A "fiery trial" is a metaphor of persecution by governments in 1 Peter 4:12. Revelation 3:19 continues, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous...." This is like Hebrews 12 comparing God's discipline with parental discipline and concluding "our God is a consuming fire."

irrational about politics then: it existed for its own benefit, yet somehow was believed by its victims to be for *their* benefit! He told His followers how *they* should be the ones to displace that with its opposite: with the goal of serving, rather than of being served. Luke 22:24-30.

Jesus is called the world's "chief corner stone". Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:6. He said "on whosoever this stone falls, it will grind him to powder." Matthew 21:44.

"Grind to powder" comes from the Greek word *λικμῶ*, which means to winnow, which is exactly the same image as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. To "winnow" means to separate the husk of wheat – the chaff – from the wheat by using a current of air, like a fan. In Nebuchadnezzar's dream, the broken pieces of the world empires "became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summertime." Daniel 2:35.

Later Jesus gave His "Great Commission", Mark 16:15, which has produced a steady growth in Gospel acceptance down the centuries, whose influence has slowly but steadily displaced the worst features of tyranny until today we Americans call our rulers "public servants". Which is not far from what tyranny's victims said about tyranny then, except that today we can say it without being either sarcastic or ignorant. Today the only limit to the power of voters to remove rulers who fail that standard is how little voters pay attention.

Introduction to Part Two:

To Catholics: I know you have a great loyalty to the pope. consider that the Catholic tradition has had many reformers which were accepted by popes, and which were allowed to create orders. Consider the transformation of the catholic church over the centuries: masses no longer in Latin, Protestants no longer burned at the stake. And all these reforms were belatedly justified from Scripture. So it is not against the Roman church or even against church tradition to point to Scriptures not yet embraced. And it certainly does not favor Protestants over Catholics, since the reforms proposed here hit Protestants just as hard.

Actually the unquestioning loyalty of Catholics to their pope is fairly matched by that of Protestants to their pastors. The difference I have observed is that Catholics officially believe their pope speaks infallibly under certain conditions but they actually agree with their pope only half the time, while Protestants officially believe their pastors speak infallibly under no condition, but they still agree with their pastor the other half of the time.

Jesus taught us about many things outside human experience by likening them to familiar relationships.

The form of government during Jesus' millennial reign is seldom discussed, other than to say that Jesus will reign as a king, and we saints shall reign with him. It is also said that Jesus' reign will be unlike anything in human experience.

Pulpit Bible: *By the might of meekness. See how at his nativity the shepherds were told they should see the "Saviour, Christ the Lord." And what was it that they did see? A babe, "wrapped in swaddling clothes, and lying in a manger." But in that utter humiliation and self abnegation of the Son of God lay the might that should make him, as it has made him, "King of kings, and Lord of lords." Meekness is might, sacrifice is sovereignty, losing life is gaining it; the cross creates the crown. It is no arbitrary arrangement; it lies in the constitution of our nature, to which his meekness and love appeal with such resistless force. "O Galilaeen, thou has; conquered!" said the Emperor Julian. And Constantine confessed the same, and Rome bowed to Christ.*

...5. By the grace he imparted to his people. "Their patient continuance in well doing put to silence" all their foes. Rome looked on at these Christians and wondered, and, after a while, gave way and worshipped with them. For not alone in and by himself does the Lamb overcome, but:

6. In his people. "They that are with him." The Revised Version rightly renders St. John's words, "They

also shall overcome that are with him, called, chosen, faithful." St. John does not teach that the Lamb was indebted to them for this victory, as a general is indebted to his army. That, though the Authorized Version seems to lend countenance to such idea, is very far from the truth. But what is meant is that, like their Lord, "they that are with him" overcome. "The noble army of martyrs praise thee."

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hymn_to_Proserpine

*Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey from thy breath; We have drunken of things **Lethean**, and fed on the fullness of death.*

<https://www.djameskennedy.org/devotional-detail/20171204-thou-hast-conquered-oh-thou-galilean>

600 years later, Jesus explained more about tyranny's tombstone. He explained what was irrational about politics then: it existed for its own benefit, yet somehow was believed by its victims to be for their benefit! He told His followers how they should be the ones to displace that with its opposite: with the goal of serving, rather than of being served. Luke 22:24-30.

Jesus is called the world's "chief corner stone". Ephesians 2:20, 1 Peter 2:6. He said "on whosoever this stone falls, **it will grind him to powder.**" Matthew 21:44.

"Grind to powder" comes from the Greek word likmaw, which means to winnow, which is

exactly the same image as in Nebuchadnezzar's dream. To "winnow" means to separate the husk of wheat – the chaff – from the wheat by using a current of air, like a fan. In Nubachadnezzar's dream, the broken pieces of the world empires "became like chaff on a threshing floor in the summertime." Daniel 2:35.

p. 28 Smashing tyranny to powder. 34 ...Then t

73 times in the King James Version of the Bible, the word "rock" just means ordinary rocks. But five of those 73 times it was a description in the books of Moses about the time Moses struck the rock and a river gushed forth to water the five million souls; four more times that event was recalled in Psalms and Isaiah. That event – water out of a Rock – also reminds us of Jesus talking to the Woman at the Well in John 4, where He tells her, John 4:10...If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. ...13 ...Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: 14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

Luke 6:48 He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a **rock**: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a **rock**.

Romans 9:33 As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. (Combines Isaiah 8:14 and 28:16)

1 Corinthians 10:4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.

1 Peter 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

Part Two:

The Gates of Hell

Chapter 10: The Originals

They weren't supposed to go there. Not Jews. Not there.

The trip south to Samaria was bad enough. But north, to *this* place?



This place where so many pagan temples were built into a cliff that it was called the “Rock of the gods”? These cruel “gods” with their orgies with children, slaves, and goats, producing babies which were left outside to cry until they were dead

while their parents “worshiped”?

This was where Jesus challenged His disciples to see, and say, more than most people dared even think.

“About the year Jesus was born,²⁰¹ Herod Philip named this city Caesarea Philippi, in honor of Caesar Augustus and, by the way, himself”, Matthew narrated as they walked. “Philip made this cruel city his capital.”²⁰²

“Do you know why we are even here? The others complain about how they are going to explain to their families why they took a business trip to Sin City”, Nathaniel asked.

“No, I can’t tell you why. But I can tell you that Jesus is taking more heat than the rest of us for taking us here. No *good Jew ever* comes here, according to every rabbi I know about.”²⁰³

They spoke quietly to each other. As the top of the notorious cliff came within view, Jesus turned to his murmuring assembly. “Love means serving the needs of others, even when others don’t know or refuse to admit how desperately they need your help. Love means serving, no matter the cost²⁰⁴ – the least of which is your own reputation.

“Please do me a favor. *Love* these people you see trapped in this horrible darkness. Save them. Give your lives a living sacrifice²⁰⁵ for them.

201 The city was named in 2 AD (there is much controversy over the year Jesus was born). www.fishingtheabyss.com/archives/44

202 www.wordofgodtoday.com/caesarea-philippi-place-of-confession
This source adds: “Much later, in the seventh century AD the Arabs captured the city and it reverted to its old name. Because of their difficulty in pronouncing the “P” sound, the name of the city became simply Baniyas as it is today.”

203 Source: see previous link.

204 John 15:13 Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

205 Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

“What you do for the least of these my brothers, you do for me.”²⁰⁶

Nathaniel pondered Jesus’ plea. How is loving *these* hard-to-love people doing *Jesus* a favor? Can it be that Jesus loves even *these* derelicts that much, that he thinks of them as *family*?²⁰⁷ Can it be that Jesus loves these degenerates as much as his faithful apostles?

As they walked on, and great temples could be seen lower down against the distant cliff, Nathaniel asked, “Why are these temples built against the cliff?”

“See that very large cave behind the biggest temple? I am told there is a stream flowing out of it”, Matthew answered. “The Greeks call that ‘the Gates of

unto God, which is your reasonable service.

206 Matthew 25:40. Verses 31-46 feature six examples of people in need whom Jesus charges us to help: the hungry, thirsty, outsiders (targets of prejudice for being “different”; especially immigrants, Jews, Blacks, which is the meaning of the Biblical term “strangers”), sick, and in prison.

207 Matthew 25:40. Bible commentator John Gill says although we should give “acts of charity” for everyone, Jesus calls only “saints” his “brothers”. Similarly, Adam Clarke writes “The meanest *follower of Christ* is acknowledged by him as his brother!” But Preacher’s Homiletical asks, “If He meant these words to be strictly confined to the pious, then that would be enough—we should not need to inquire further; but I am not at all satisfied that we are entitled to limit His words so narrowly. Am I to ask, “Is this poor creature a Christian?” before I relieve him for Christ’s sake? Or does Jesus not care to reward your kindness if you show it to the unbeliever?” Albert Barnes sees in the passage “the obscurest, the least known, the poorest, the most despised and afflicted. ... those who are afflicted, poor, and persecuted, who are his brethren and companions in suffering, and who suffer as he did on earth.” The doctrine that only believers count as Jesus’ “brothers” has its greatest support in Matthew 12:50 where Jesus says not just his physical mother and siblings are his family, but all who “do the will of my Father”. But *no* passage says unbelievers are *not* counted by God as “family”, while Matthew 25:40 adds all who are in need to the category. Another point lost in the doctrine that only believers are “family” is that service to unbelievers often turns them into believers. Yet another point is that we humans discern the difference rather poorly; see 1 Corinthians 4:5.

Hell' because a spring exits the cave.”

The two continued quietly as they walked. Most of the apostles already knew these facts, but Nathaniel came from farther away. He asked Matthew because Matthew was educated.

“What? What do a spring and Hell have in common, to give the Greeks *that* idea?”

“The Greeks think underground springs are portals to Hell. Besides, *this* spring is so deep that the gullible Greeks imagine it reaching all the way down to Hell.”



“How foolish! A body of water reaching all the way to Hell, indeed! Don't the Greeks consider that if all that water went all the way down to Hell, it would put out Hell Fire?”

Apostles who overheard laughed. Jesus smiled. Matthew explained, “They think Hades, as they call it, has water in it, not fire. Whole *rivers* of water – no lake of fire as Jesus teaches. The Greeks are used to hearing *Egyptians* talk about fire in the place of the dead, but it is confusing to them to hear Jesus, a Jew, saying it.”

Nathaniel was reminded of Jesus' teaching, “And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into [Jerusalem's dump], into the fire that never shall be quenched....”²⁰⁸

208 Mark 9:43. The Greek word “Gehenna” is translated “Hell” in English Bibles, although “Gehenna” is preserved in the TLV, TS2009, and YLT translations. See also <https://bible.knowing-jesus.com/search?q=gehenna&translation=all>

Nathaniel had been confused. “Who ever heard of being thrown into the fires consuming Jerusalem’s garbage as a punishment for *any* crime?” he had asked.

The apostles had reasoned among themselves²⁰⁹ and concluded that Jesus made that reference, to a real place on earth, a *metaphor* of the place of the wicked after they die.

Matthew provided a bit of history. “Earlier Jewish generations had desecrated the valley by throwing their very own babies up into the brass arms of their idol of Baal, made red hot by the ‘sacrificial’ fire under them. I think Jesus is saying that the people who did those heartless deeds will one day be similarly thrown, themselves, into the fires of Hell.

“Israel no longer worships these cruel pagan gods”, Matthew continued. “But cleansing Israel of that unspeakable cruelty took invasions of the Greeks, followed by invasions of the Romans. Human sacrifice disgusted both empires, although **not enough**²¹⁰ to *completely* stamp it out. A Roman law passed in 81 BC characterized human sacrifice as murder committed for magical purposes.”

Matthew would have appreciated Rome even more had he foreseen that Rome would later conquer Britain and end the human sacrifice of the Druids.²¹¹

The natural beauty of the cliff as God had created it, before man had perverted it, was breathtaking. “This cliff is at the foot of Mount

209 The apostles reasoned among themselves often, in an effort to understand Jesus’ meaning. See Matthew 16:7; 21:25; Mark 2:8; 8:16; 11:31; Luke 20:5,14; 24:15. Reasoning with others was also the habit of Paul: Acts 17:2; 18:4,19; 24:25.

210 <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/did-ancient-greeks-engage-human-sacrifice-180960111/>

211

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_\"Rome#Human_sacrifice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_ancient_\)

Hermon, near the sources of the Jordan, at the Northeast corner of Palestine, in the land originally possessed by the tribe of Dan”, Matthew narrated. “Mount Hermon is the highest point on the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, calculated at over 9,000 feet above sea level. It is the southern tip of the Anti-Lebanon range. At its foot the two major sources of the Jordan River begin.²¹²

“The mountain was called ‘Baal Hermon’ from the time of Moses,²¹³ because the ignorant Canaanites imagined the storm god Baal lived on it. Centuries after the Israelites took it over from the Canaanites, King Jeroboam of Israel, after most of Israel split from the kingdom of Solomon’s foolish son, showed himself more foolish than anyone’s son by erecting a golden calf right here in this city to be worshiped instead of the true God who made him king!”²¹⁴

Those overhearing winced at the memory of an Israelite capable of that much stupidity.

Nathaniel didn’t need a travelogue to know there was something evil about this place. Anyone who speaks Hebrew knows the very name of this mountain – Hermon – means “devoted to God for destruction”, the same name given the evil inhabitants of Canaan whom the Israelites destroyed with God’s miraculous help.²¹⁵

212 <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Hermon>

213 Judges 3:3 cites “the Lebanon Mountains from Mount Baal Hermon as far as Hamath Pass.” according to the GNB, ERV, CEV translations. The ASV, BBE, Geneva, GW, JPS, JUB, KJV, TS2009, and YLT make “Mount Lebanon” singular as if the one single mountain has two names.

214 1 Kings 12:25

215 The very name Hermon is derived from the Hebrew words *herem* (a thing devoted to God for destruction) or *haram* (the verb form which means to devote to destruction because it is set apart to God alone). These are the words used in the Conquest narrative (Deut.-Joshua) to describe the utter destruction of the people of Canaan. (The

Most of the apostles knew about this place from Saturday School. The city, called Baal Gad (literally “Master Luck”), was the name of a god of fortune who may later have been identified with Pan. Joshua 11:17 says Baal Gad was “in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon”. It was also listed in Joshua 12:7 and 13:5.

Not exactly the kind of place where any respectable Son of God should want to be seen!

“One of these temples here is dedicated to Caesar Augustus.”²¹⁶

“Before this city was renamed, back when we were all babies, it was called Panius, or Panium, because the cruel imaginary god Pan was worshiped here.”²¹⁷

Matthew’s travelogue was interrupted by a shocked voice of one of the apostles as they drew nearer the infamous Rock of the Gods. It was addressed to no one in particular. “Do I see what I think I see?”

Jesus led them closer, until several voices were heard. “Disgusting!” “*Absolutely* disgusting!” “Grown men actually do this?” “And they think *we Jews* are uncivilized?”

Next to the huge cave from which the stream flowed, in the center of the cliff called the Rock of the Gods, a large niche was carved out, in which was placed a statue of Pan – half goat, half human – replete with the appendage whose public display aroused their disgust.²¹⁸

Unseen Realm, by Michael Heiser, p. 201). Heiser believes that this word is particularly connected with the descendants of the Nephilim (e.g., Num. 13:33). <http://www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2016/03/aesarea-philippi-nephilim/>

216 <https://elliotritzema.com/2016/11/12/caesarea-philippi-and-the-gates-of-hell>

217 Bible Commentator Jamieson-Faussett-Brown on Matthew 16:13

218 “A large erect phallus”. www.fishingtheabyss.com/archives/44

It was not merely exposed accidentally or carelessly, but deliberately, publicly, and prominently. It was not merely tolerated, but worshiped.

It was not merely left up on a rock wall where people could look away. As the horrified apostles watched, priests of the devil in expensive, glorious, official vestments removed it and held it up high before them as they formed a parade.²¹⁹



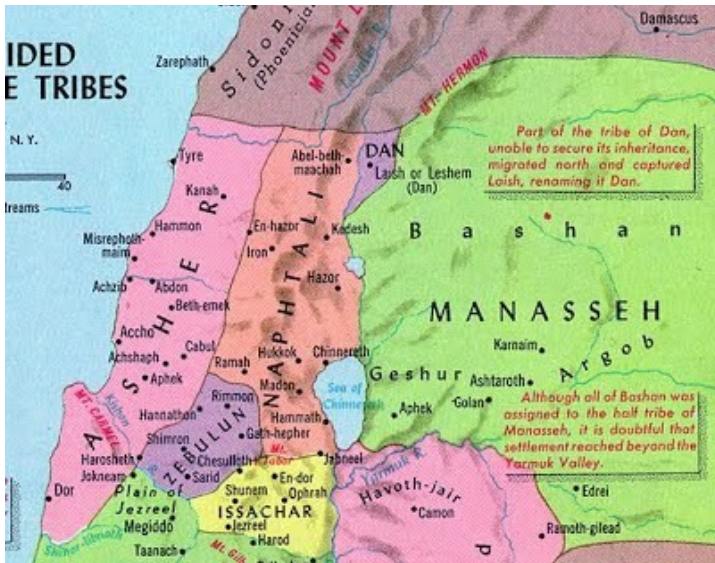
The cave called “the gates of Hell” in the cliff called “the rock of the gods”

“They imagine worshipping the imaginary ‘god’ Pan will make them fertile”, Matthew whispered.

“Why do they even *want* to be fertile?” Nathaniel whispered back, gesturing towards

the crying babies abandoned to die along the way. “So they can have more babies to murder?”

219 <https://elliotritzema.com/2016/11/12/caesarea-philippi-and-the-gates-of-hell>



Mount Hermon was on the northwest border of the tribe of Manasseh

As they watched, goats were added to the parade route for the pleasure of the ‘worshippers’.

They thought surely when Jesus spoke again, it would have something to do with this debauchery. Not that they wanted him to. They dreaded the violent reaction of everyone around them when Jesus rebuked them.

The last thing they expected him to say, as the grisly parade drew near, was “Who do people say that I am?”

Half puzzled, half surprised, and half relieved, one answered, “Some say, John the Baptist, risen from the dead.” Another: “Some say Elijah, risen from the dead.” A third: “Some say one of the Prophets, risen from the dead.”

“But who do *you* say that I am?”

Chapter 11: Parade From Hell

The parade drew near. Its noise competed with Jesus' question. It promised to cover up the apostles' answers, but the promise was not ironclad.

No one wanted to answer, in the hearing of this pagan, superstitious, cruel mob. Several apostles pleaded with Jesus with their eyes to please go somewhere quiet to finish this discussion.

Except Peter.

Not that Peter failed to grasp the evil of this place. He knew these were the "Gates of Hell" in the "Rock of the 'gods'" at the foot of the Mountain Devoted to Destruction.

He knew the whole mountain, cliff, and city were in the Northwest corner of the Land of Bashan, which

means “the Place of the Serpent”.²²⁰

Peter stepped forward to speak. Peter knew the right answer. All eyes were on Peter.

As the answer hovered before him like a lighted billboard, memory flooded in of how Moses conquered this land which was ruled by Og, king of Bashan. He remembered Joshua 12:4-5 which says “The other king was Og king of Bashan and his territory, who was of the remnant of the giants [Hebrew = Rephaim], who dwelt at Ashtaroth and at Edrei, and reigned over Mount Hermon, over Salcah, over all Bashan, as far as the border of the Geshurites and the Maachathites, and over half of Gilead to the border of Sihon king of Heshbon.”

In other words, Peter realized, Og was a descendant of the Giants, and Peter was standing in their land. Deuteronomy 3:8-11 even gives the dimensions of Og’s bed: 13-1/2 feet long and 6 feet wide!²²¹

Standing there in Bashan, “The Place of the Serpent”, ready to open his mouth to answer, Peter had a brief vision of the Serpent, still written about by the Canaanites living in the area,²²² whose grip over this

220 Although one meaning of Bashan is “fertile, stoneless piece of ground,” another meaning of this root is “Serpent” (Lete, del O. G. (1999). Bashan. In K. van der Toorn, B. Becking, & P. W. van der Horst [Eds.], Dictionary of deities and demons in the Bible [2nd extensively rev. ed., p. 161]).

221 Not only does the Bible state that King Og of Bashan is a descendant of the Nephilim, according to Heiser the designation of Og as an “Amorite” associates him with Babylon. Furthermore, the dimensions of his bed (see Deut. 3:8-11) “are precisely those of the cultic bed in the ziggurat called Entemenanki—which is the ziggurat most archaeologists identify as the Tower of Babel referred to in the Bible” (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, p. 198).

www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2016/03/caesarea-philippi-nephilim/

222 The association of Bashan with “The place of the serpent” ...also finds confirmation in the Canaanite literature discovered at Ugarit. <http://www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2016/03/caesarea-philippi->

land had been broken but not ended.

Its cruel head towered like a giant over him, except no mere 13 feet over him, but as huge as the cliff.

But surrounding this wicked serpent in his vision, was glorious light shining from Jesus, encapsulating the serpent like the leash on a dog, which still allows the dog the freedom to behave like a dog but restrains it to purposes its master can use.

Peter took a deep breath so he could speak clearly enough to make that Serpent cry. As he did, more memories flooded in.

Peter recalled that Mount Hermon is called the Mountain of Baal in the Bible. Mount Baal-Hermon,²²³ God called it, from the beginning of Joshua's administration, in Judges 3:3, through the time of King



Mount Hermon

Saul, in 1 Chronicles 5:23.

Peter remembered that the Phoenicians, living on the other side of the same mountain, still regard it as the home of their imaginary god Baal.²²⁴

nephilim/

223 Several translations of 1 Chron 5:23 make it sound like Baal-Hermon and Hermon are two separate mountains; but Bible commentator Albert Barnes explains, “ ‘Baal-Hermon,’ ‘Senir’ Deu_3:9, and ‘Mount Hermon,’ are here not so much three names of the one great snow-clad eminence in which the Anti-Lebanon terminates toward the south, as three parts of the mountain - perhaps the ‘three summits’ in which it terminates.”

224 Caesarea Philippi/Banias is located at the foot of Mount Hermon. Mount Hermon is part of a range that divided the land of Israel from ancient Syria and Phoenicia (modern Lebanon). The Phoenicians, worshipers of Baal (think Jezebel—e.g., 1 Kgs. 18:19), actually considered Mount Hermon to be the mountain of Baal. Long before Alexander the Great instituted the worship of Pan in the area, Baal

Peter remembered his talks about the Book of Enoch with Jude,²²⁵ where he learned that Mount Baal-Hermon is the very spot where fallen angels descended from Heaven to violate human women to create the evil race of giants. He remembered the passages about that in the book.

“Book of Enoch: 6:1 And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. 2 And the angels, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: ‘Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.’ 3 And Semjâzâ, who was their leader, said unto them: ‘I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.’ 4 And they all answered him and said: ‘Let us all swear an oath, and all bind ourselves by mutual imprecations not to abandon this plan but to do this thing.’ 5 Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. 6 And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it.”²²⁶

was the main attraction. - www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2016/03/caesarea-philippi-nephilim

225 The short book of Jude, the next to the last book of the Bible, quotes from the Book of Enoch in verse 14. Luke 6:16 calls Jude “Judas the brother of James, [as distinguished from] Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.” Jude was not the brother of the James who was the brother of John, the sons of Zebudee, but was actually a brother of Jesus according to Jude 1 which says Jude was a brother of James, and Galatians 1:19 which says James was “the Lord’s brother”.

226 (Charles, R. H. (Ed.). (1913). *Pseudepigrapha of the Old*

All these memories seemed to flow wordlessly from the smirking Serpent in Peter's vision. Peter clearly saw its deadliness, but he chose to trust Jesus' Light encircling the evil. Peter had observed Jesus' power over devils!

Yet even if the cost of saying the truth was great, Peter was ready to risk all for the joy of stating it.

All these memories had come in an instant. At the end of that instant, there was Peter, all eyes upon him, standing straight and tall, declaring with enthusiasm and joy, in a clear robust voice, "You are the Anointed Son of the Living God."

The crowd hadn't been listening, before. Some were startled by Peter's loud voice but the noise kept them from making out his words.

Jesus laughed at the enthusiasm Peter added to the truth. "God bless you, Peter! No human told you that. *God* told you that.

"But don't say that so loud out in public. Not yet. The time to say it, and pay for saying it, will come soon enough."²²⁷

Testament (Vol. 2, p. 191). Oxford: Clarendon Press.).

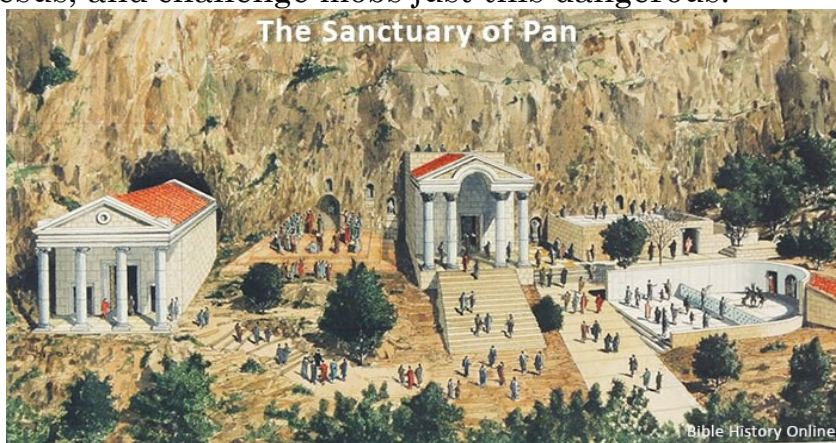
<http://www.biblestudywithrandy.com/2016/03/caesarea-philippi-nephilim>

227 Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. 19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.

The parade had come to a halt. Why weren't these strangers joining it, the pagans wondered? Why were they ignoring their praises to Pan and talking about some strange secret on some entirely different subject? Don't say *what* publicly?

Jesus pointed to the Rock of the "gods". "Peter, nicknamed 'Rocky', you see this great evil rock that you fear, thinking you are such a little rock alongside it? Yet it is against *this* rock that I will build my Congress,²²⁸ and the Gates of Hell will never defeat it."

The apostles stood with one mental foot on this glorious confidence Jesus offered them, and their other foot on their nervousness about the mob's response to such a challenge. It had not yet dawned on them that Jesus meant *they* would be the ones to spread out into pagan centers like this all over the world, *without* Jesus, and challenge mobs just this dangerous!



Reconstruction

As for this mob, it was close to eruption. Here

²²⁸ King James ordered his translators to render this word "church", from the Greek word "ἐκκλησίαν". This was the only word which he ordered his translators to translate a certain way regardless of what they considered most accurate. "Congregation", then meaning a public gathering, was the translation of all previous translations except Geneva, beginning with Tyndale, who was executed for his translation. More about this later.

was this madman insulting Greeks and Romans who had blessed Israel by ending its baby killing, upending their doctrines of Hell – claiming it is full of fire, not water – and now a rumor was spreading about what he had just claimed. That he was going to build something able to defeat Hell’s very Gates? A what? An ἐκκλησιαν, which means an assembly of all the free men of the city to discuss and vote for its political leaders?!²²⁹

So Jesus was threatening to gather all the voters of this city, this city dedicated to worshiping their great god of Hell, *against* these very Gates of Hell to which this city owed its very existence?!

The mob was making up its mind whether to scream or laugh.

There was only one thing to do with this strange Jesus: embarrass him. Embarrass him, they did, choosing to offer, right in front of him, another sacrifice to their god Hades, the god of Death. After they prepared a black sheep for slaughter, they began banging their heads on the ground to make sure Hades heard them.²³⁰ That devotion and wisdom would be sure to impress and embarrass Jesus.

But the disciples were horrified at Jesus’ reaction: disgust mixed with profound sadness at their perverted “preparations”, and when they began their head-banging, laughter! They would have laughed themselves, safe at home. But here, in this place crawling with Hades worshipers and heavily armed Romans?

229 ἐκκλησιαν (Ekklesian), the source of our word “ecclesiastic”, means a popular meeting, called out. The best known public meeting to Greeks at the time was the assemblies in Athens to choose leaders. The job of one of the leaders chosen was to organize religious events.

230 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hades#Realm_of_Hades

Jesus was going to build something that was going to defeat *this*?

What was it Jesus said He would build – a *congress*? Here in Greek territory, Jesus used the Greek word *ἐκκλησιαν*, which is where the free men of a whole Greek city meet several times a year to conduct city business. They “congregate” together, so their meeting is called a “congregation”, or “congress” for short, to indicate that their business is governing themselves.

So was Jesus saying, wondered His disciples, that He would build an organization like the *ἐκκλησιαν* in which whole populations of cities congregate to govern themselves?

That’s not going to sit well with the mobs back in Israel! Like their ancestors in 1 Samuel 8:20, they are waiting for a King who will fight their battles, killing the Roman soldiers so they won’t be under the Roman dictator any longer. They want their *very own* dictato... – uh, king. The folks back home don’t want to have to govern *themselves*.

That was pretty clear when Jesus fed crowds of thousands out of a single lunch box: the people tried to grab Jesus and make him their king.²³¹ The people of Israel didn’t want Jesus’ *Congress*. They didn’t want to have to show up and listen to each other, and argue with each other when they disagreed, and reason with each other in order to build consensus, and in short, govern themselves.

Ἐκκλησίας weren’t particularly armed. How could an unarmed Congress defeat these armed

231 John 6:14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they kept saying, "Truly this is the Prophet who was to come into the world!" 15 Then Jesus, realizing that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again to the hillside by himself.

pagans, the disciples wondered? Also, εκκλησιας consisted of free, *thinking* men. These barbarians were crazy. They lived to die. They lived to spill blood, and didn't care if it was their own. How do you defeat terrorists who think the worst that can happen to them is to be killed and taken straight to army Heaven?

Oh well, that only describes every enemy from whom God delivered Israel over the centuries. But that only worked when the people trusted God. The disciples were seeing mixed signals whether that would ever happen again.

What danger this insane "worship" brought upon these insane people!²³² Yet what greater danger Jesus placed himself in, by talking.

His voice was gentle. Pleading. Meek. He saw a man whose body was ravaged with the natural consequences of such promiscuous "worship", who should have had enough experience with pagan promises to grasp their emptiness.

"You know all this is a lie", Jesus said. "You know every promise given here is empty. I do not condemn you: how could you have known?"²³³ I am only agreeing with what you already know. But let me encourage you with what you do *not* already know: You can leave this way of death! You can experience Life! You can know the Truth! *You can be healed!*

"More important, you can leave behind this life of

232 Romans 1:27 describes the sexual diseases which are the natural result of fornication: "In the same way the men give up natural sexual relations with women and burn with passion for each other. Men do shameful things with each other, and as a result they bring upon themselves the punishment they deserve for their wrongdoing." (GNB translation)

233 Luke 23:34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. ... Acts 17:30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:

death, and then help me invite others to fully live!”²³⁴

The man wept for the hope that what Jesus offered might be real, but the mob of devil worshipers as if crouched to pounce, forcing the man to choose, and quickly, between Escape to Truth, and the cruel mercies of the mob. Mobs that trust myths are violently intolerant of “fanatics” who do not. Especially fanatics who talk publicly.

But there Jesus stood. Surrounded by his trembling disciples.

Talking.

Right there in Caesarea Phillipi, within sight of the cave called “The Gates of Hell”, in the bloody cliff that was devoted to the “god” Pan.

The man chose well! Turning from the threatening stares to Jesus, he said “May your promise be true!”

The mob nearly jumped the man and Jesus both, but were stopped dead in their tracks by a sight no one expected.

The terrible sores on the man’s arms and face faded away! His bent back straightened! His crackly voice strengthened in loud praise for *God’s* mercy! Not *Pan’s* mercy!

The mob was no less interested in destroying this turncoat and this interloper. But they couldn’t, now.



Another view of temple ruins

²³⁴ James 4:3 says a condition of answered prayer is that our goal is something greater than just ourselves. Leaving behind, or repenting of a Life of Death is a condition of *staying* healed according to John 5:14.

As if oblivious of the danger he was in, thought several of his apostles; as if throwing a torch into a hayloft, Jesus raised his voice to the crowd.²³⁵



The Temple of Pan

Chapter 12: Suffering Ahead

“There is only one way I can build my Congress. I must suffer many things. I must be rejected by the political leaders, the elected representatives of the people;²³⁶ also by the High Priest (who is elected leader

²³⁵ The report of Peter’s confession is recorded in Matthew and Mark 8.

In the latter, it is followed by talking about His coming suffering. Verse 32 says “he spake that saying openly.” The Greek word *παρησια* can mean “plainly” or “publicly”. It obviously means “publicly” in John 7:4, 13, 11:54, and 18:20. It means both words in John 10:24 and 11:14. In several other verses the translation is “boldly”, but of course what makes plain talk bold is to say it publicly, where people are ready to persecute you for stating truth.

²³⁶ Smith’s Bible Dictionary defines “Elders”: “...The earliest notice of the elders acting in concert as a political body is at the time of the Exodus. They were the representatives of the people, so much so that **elders and people are occasionally used as equivalent terms**; Compare Joshua 24:1 with verses 2, 19, 21, and 1 Samuel 8:4 with verses 7, 10, and 19.

Their authority was undefined, and extended to all matters concerning the public weal. Their number and influence may be inferred from 1 Samuel 30:26 ff. They retained their position under all the political changes which the Jews underwent. The seventy

of the Sanhedrin, which makes, judges, and enforces the laws of the land); and also by the Scribes – the elite among the priests, the ones in seats of honor.²³⁷ I must be killed by them, and three days later...”

Peter interrupted He was so troubled that he tugged at Jesus’ robe and told him, “Stop talking like that! You are the Son of God! No one can have power over you! No one can hurt you!” Peter was so busy complaining that he didn’t hear how Jesus ended His sentence: “(and three days later) rise again.”²³⁸

Peter rambled on, “How can we doubt the protection around you, when we saw with our own eyes how everyone in the synagogue, when they heard your message, were filled with rage, and rose up, and threw you out of the city, and led you to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw you down, but you just walked through the middle of them as if they were nothing more than silhouettes in sand?²³⁹ And now we are to believe you will lose your protection?!”

“I read Psalm 91, which you wrote, so we both know there is no danger for us. All who believe will be protected.”

But Jesus turned around, looked at his disciples, and rebuked Peter, almost laughing at the gulf between the generosity Peter intended and the evil he advocated. “You are talking like Satan. Satan quoted Psalm 91 to me too.

“I let him fly me to a pinnacle of the Temple in

elders mentioned in Exodus and Numbers were a sort of governing body, a parliament, and the origin of the tribunal of seventy elders called the Sanhedrin or Council. ...”

237 Luke 20:46 Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts;

238 Mark 8:31

239 Luke 4:28-30

Jerusalem. He sat me on it and said ‘If you are God’s Son, jump off. Psalm 91 says “God will give his angels orders about you. They will catch you in their arms, and you won’t hurt your feet on the stones.”’²⁴⁰

“That was stupid because My Protection is not for the deliberately reckless – I want people to grow, which includes participating with Me in avoiding danger. So when people are reckless, I let danger creep closer, to warn them to be careful.

“Psalm 91 is about someone marching against evil, knowing the physical danger to themselves but more attentive to the spiritual safety of others.

“Your reliance on My protection is wrong for a different reason: it assumes Love could never motivate anyone to willingly go among hearts dark enough to torture and kill anyone offering Heaven. The fact is, I *do* love that much, and I know that when I go among such dark hearts, I will rescue some. And when I rise from the dead, I will prove that the Cross is truly the key to full life.”

Huh? Rise from the dead? Does not compute.

“Yes, I wrote Psalm 91. It expresses the care I take for all who will accept my care. I will not allow real harm to come to any who trust me.

“But physical suffering is not the worst kind of suffering. And suffering is not a real harm. It makes joy possible.”

The look on Peter’s face, and that of several other apostles, showed that Jesus’ short response had seriously whetted their appetite for more wisdom, along with terrifying them. To which Jesus responded, “Let’s talk about this later.”

Then Jesus raised his voice to the crowds again²⁴¹

240 Matthew 4:5-6, CEV translation

241 Mark 8:34-38 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them,...

and laid clearly before them the two competing realities between which all mankind must choose: truth, life, joy, love, healing, power to take down mountains of evil with God, or the “safe slavery” of appeasement of willfully ignorant, selfish mobs who will never allow reality to stand in the way of a habit.

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.

“What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?

“If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

What was the mob to think of such a speech? Where was the trigger for them to physically attack? Had any of their number been actually attracted to such nonsense, they would have been concerned. But the loss of one old derelict didn’t alarm them. If Jesus’ idea of building a congress able to oppose the Gates of Hell was not to attack with an armed division but was only to go off and get himself killed, that must be the weirdest threat they had ever heard.

Rise again? Well yeah, when Hell catches on fire.

Chapter 13: Count it all joy!

Mt. Hermon was safely in the distance when they stopped to rest.

The apostles had mixed feelings about rest, where they anticipated the rest of Jesus' *suffering* talk. Suffering didn't appeal to them. They would all rather die in their sleep of old age.

But on the other hand they were dying of curiosity to hear what suffering is worse than physical suffering, in what way suffering is not a real harm, and by what conceivable device suffering makes joy possible!

“Let’s talk about Psalm 91”, Jesus began.²⁴²

“Psalm 91 lists every category of terrors that men fear, and promises miraculous protection from them, for all who trust God.

“When Isaiah was sawn in half, do you suppose it was because he had *stopped* trusting God, or was it because he *still* trusted God?”

“When Naboth²⁴³ and Zachariah²⁴⁴ were stoned, when the sword slew 85 priests by order of King Saul²⁴⁵ and many prophets of God by order of Jezebel,²⁴⁶ when Joseph languished in prison²⁴⁷ and Jeremiah sank into the miry clay of a dungeon,²⁴⁸ when Job was tortured by Satan, was it because they *doubted* God, or because they *trusted* God?”

The question had not occurred to the apostles. They had no answer. But suddenly they wanted one. That is, one that didn’t just raise more questions.

Obviously, all those saints still trusted God, and it was *because* of their faithfulness and obedience that they were made to suffer by the wicked. But doesn’t Psalm 91 promise that none of that will ever happen?

“The essence of Psalm 91 is that we can trust God to always give us all the protection, health, and resources we need to do His Will, and His Will is to partner with us in accomplishing far more than we could by ourselves. Indeed, mountainous evil such as

242 Author note: I am given leisure to write this chapter by an accident that keeps me home a few days. While cutting sticks with a chain saw, the blade whipped back and sliced a “Z” in the top of my foot. 15 stitches. A good lesson about being careful, but a lesson made bearable by miraculous protection from going even an eighth of an inch deeper where the tendons are.

243 1 Kings 21:13

244 2 Chronicles 24:21

245 1 Samuel 22:18

246 1 Kings 18:4

247 Genesis 39:20-41:36

248 Jeremiah 38

surrounds Hermon, God wills that you heal and baptize,²⁴⁹ which you will, if you have enough faith to not give up, to keep seeking wisdom, to keep reaching out to others.

“So then what is left after you have fulfilled your life’s purpose? Would you live forever? Well, of course you will, but in *these* bodies?”

“Which of the saints I listed did not achieve great things before they were killed? And by the violence of their deaths, they achieved still more.”

What? What is achieved by letting wicked people kill you slowly?

“Suppose the wicked were never allowed to harm the righteous? Can you see the problem with that?”

Well, no.

“When you are willing to help another, at great cost to yourself, what does that prove?”

Well, acceptance of great cost is evidence, one would suppose, of great love.

“So if no cost of any kind were possible, would love be possible?”

Pretty hard to imagine such a possibility, in a world full of such huge costs.

“Can you see that without the power to hate and destroy, there can be no power to love and heal?”

Well, no. At least we don’t *much* want to see.

“How can there be the pleasure of eating, and of a full stomach, without hunger?”

“How can there be the joy of loving another, or the relief of being loved, without the possibility of hate?”

“How can there be a sensation of physical pleasure, if there can be no sensation of pain?”

These “what ifs” were hard to process, and to link

249 Matthew 21:21 ...If ye have faith, and doubt not, ...ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

back to what they were offered to illustrate. What was it? That torture makes love possible?

“Greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends.²⁵⁰ But what if no cost were possible? What if helping another were impossible? Then how would love be possible?”

“My Father and I discussed these choices while we were alone – before we created angels. Even though we are spirit, we have consciousness like what we gave mankind. Love requires intense concentration, which can be very exhausting even though it is not physical. Even without physical bodies, My Father and I pay a cost, motivated by our love, to keep the universe together and provide the most productive circumstances possible for each person.

“Psalm 91 promises long life, but does not stop you from choosing to give your life for your friends. Which is love. Psalm 91 doesn’t stop you from accomplishing great costly things!

“The suffering of the faithful benefits both the faithful, and their persecutors. But before I explain that, let me explain more how Satan’s perversion of Psalm 91 is a little different than Peter’s misreading of it yesterday.

“Satan knows how heartbreaking it is for me to come to my very own people, whom I have made and given life, hour after hour, century after century, and so few will receive my help or my love.²⁵¹

250 Matthew 15:13

251 John 1:10 He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. 11 He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13 Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. 14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

“So many would rather take candy from a stranger than eat a wholesome meal prepared by their Divine Parent.

“They would rather titillate themselves than help each other.

“They would rather imagine cruel nightmares of torture, poverty, and stunted science focused on war, than live the dream of unlimited innovation, healing, in a paradise of peace and good will among men.

“They would rather slither in the mud, than soar in the sky.

“See now Satan’s solution for me.

“If I would jump off the very pinnacle of the temple and land as gently as a fairy before the adoring crowds, then the world, which believes in fairies but not in God, would ‘believe’ me.

“Consider the difference between that kind of miracle, and the miracles I do.

“The ability to swoop down from a great height without harm would be very useful in war. I could be catapulted over a wall and fight inside. Angelic protection would allow me to fight without danger until I had routed a whole army. The immediate crowd reaction, were I to take Satan’s suggestion, would be to make me their general to go fight the Romans.

“What do I do instead? I heal. That would be useful in battle if I would follow armies and heal their wounded, and restore their dead to life. But I heal ordinary, ‘unimportant’ people – the kind of people that armies rape and pillage.

“I deliver people from devils like the one who told me to jump off a cliff. That is the *last* thing any respectable general wants for his troops! If no soldiers were driven by devils, there could be no wars of conquest! There could be no wars just for the ‘glory’ of raping, burning, destroying and killing.

“OK, a couple of times I fed thousands out of a lunch box. They were hungry. Even that triggered a fantasy that government can give people more than they just took from them. So the people tried to make me their king; I had to get away from them.”

Matthew asked, “Please help me understand why. Don’t you want people to believe you are the Son of God? If they are ready to accept you as their dictator, isn’t that a giant step towards your goal? Why did you discourage progress towards your goal? If you accepted their commission as their World Dictator, wouldn’t that make softening hard hearts so much easier? Wouldn’t hearts be more open to your Gospel?”

Jesus smiled at the power of mental habits to obscure such simple realities. “I don’t want to be anyone’s dictator. I *am* everyone’s God. I long to be *received* as their God. The last thing any self-respecting God would want, is to be anyone’s dictator.”

Matthew was only more confused. “But...but...”

This time Jesus did not smile. “No, acceptance as a dictator is *not* progress towards acceptance as God.” Jesus looked around at them. All seemed as confused, and suddenly as curious, as Matthew.

Jesus reached into his arsenal of metaphors. “Does a good parent want to be a dictator to his child?”

Uh, well, maybe, uh, hmmm.

“Is a child who accepts his parent as a dictator half way towards the goal of honoring his father and mother?”

.....er,

“Then what is the big difference?”

“Well, in the case of a *parent*,” someone ventured, “the goal is for the child to grow into an adult able to make wise decisions. So to get to that point, there has to be the ability to make decisions, discussion of choices, education about consequences.”

“If all there is”, another offered, “is punishment for disobeying orders, without understanding, then when the parent’s dictatorial influence is gone, the grown child will be a fool.”

“The child must learn not only the logic behind the rules, but to internalize those rules. The child must learn that the rules are for his own benefit, often actually at the expense of the parents.”

“Which of course presumes parents who love their children. And although there are varying degrees of parental love, no parent can raise any child to adulthood without great cost to himself, which is the primary measure of love.”

“Parents should not dictate major life choices, like who to marry²⁵², what career to follow, what hobbies to enjoy, or which human needs to serve. Rather, rules should be about how to be safe, successful, and a blessing to others, in however he chooses.”

“And as much as can be instilled, the primary motivation for following safe, successful, charitable guidelines, will not be fear of physical punishment, but understanding the reasoning behind those guidelines, and the natural consequences of violating them”, yet

252 One might assume Jesus would approve of arranged marriages, (arranged by parents of the spouses without the spouses’ choice) since Abraham arranged the marriage for his son Isaac. But a careful reader will notice that even then, Rebekah was given a choice. By the time of Jesus, the groom asked the bride, then the parents provided a dowry, and *then* the bride was given the choice whether to accept or reject. “Before the Wrath” presents the entire betrothal and marriage ceremony at the time in order to give the context of many of Jesus’ allusions to it in his prophecies of “end times”. The choice of the bride is a metaphor of the choice before every human age, whether to accept God’s “proposal” of “marital bliss”. God has never wanted to force anyone to worship Him, unlike the devils who inspired Islam. See a review at <https://www.heavenlyperspectives.org/2020/is-the-rapture-foretold-in-the-traditional-galilean-wedding-ceremony.html>

another added.

“Does that answer your questions?” Jesus asked. Apparently so. “So you see how I have raised Israel, and the world, from a spoiled ignorant infant to readiness for, as it were, its Bar Mitzvah. To a time when rules are written on hearts,²⁵³ and knowledge of me spreads around the world.

“I could have made robots. Robots are so much easier than people! Robots would never have disappointed me. They would never have broken my heart.

“But I wanted friends. I wanted people with consciousness like my own, able to choose to love. Able to create. Able to invent. Able to soar in the heavens.

“Love that is dictated has no opportunity to be love. A robot cannot love, however much it may be programmed to sacrifice itself for others. Love is the *choice* to give your life for another. *Dictating* that you must give your life for another is tyranny.

“Without the choice to hate, and hurt, how can there be a choice to love, and help? Physical pain is the least of pain. The proof is that a ‘broken heart’ can drive a person to sicken his own healthy body and even kill it.”

What was that about taking up our own cross, Peter wanted to ask? That didn’t sound very appealing. But his question didn’t admit that his concern was for himself: “But how can *your* persecution benefit your persecutors?”

Jesus answered Peter’s *real* question. “Very few people die to save someone else, even for someone who is very good. Maybe if someone is incredibly good, you might find someone willing to die to save him.

“But I, and those who take up their cross and

253 Hebrews 8:10, 10:16

follow me, will die for the sake of people who are very bad. And this will show how much I love, and am doing all I can to help bad people become good, so they will not need to face God's correction.²⁵⁴

"I come to help those who oppose me *because* of my love. I pray for them. They reward me evil for good, and hatred for my love."²⁵⁵

"Yet I befriend them – even those ready to kill me along with every prophet and missionary I send. Those whose hearts finally melt at least are assured that if I love them that much as enemies, I will love them and save them the more as friends."²⁵⁶

Chapter 14: A Glimpse of Glory

A week later Jesus and three of his followers climbed a high mountain to pray. Of all the peaks Jesus could have chosen, He chose the highest peak of the Mount Hermon range, upon which rebelling angels had descended to mate with human women, which had produced the race of giants whose evil had necessitated the Great Flood, and which after the Flood produced the giants of Canaan whose evil became part of the reason God directed Israel to conquer in order to purify that land.

Jesus climbed into that very portal of evil to sanctify it and seal it against further incursions from

254 This paragraph is a slight rearrangement of Romans 5:7-9.

255 Psalm 109:4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

256 See Romans 5:10.

Hell.²⁵⁷

The three apostles Jesus took climbing were the same three He would later take with Him into the Garden of Gethesemane to pray: Peter, James (not Jesus' brother but a son of Zebudee), and John, James' brother who later wrote one of the Gospels and the Revelation.²⁵⁸

The sun went down. The three exhausted men had come to pray with Jesus, but they fell asleep while Jesus prayed, just as they did later in Gethsemane.

Jesus' soul stirred within Him when Peter tempted Him to turn aside from the path of the Cross the week before. On that lonely mountain top, as later in the Garden, there was in His heart the cry, "Father, if it be possible". If only the way upward were open now! Has not the kingdom of God been preached in Judea, in Samaria, in Galilee, away to the very borderlands? And has not the Ekklesia been founded? And has not authority been given to the apostles? Is it, then, absolutely necessary to go back, back to Jerusalem, not to gain a triumph, but to accept the last humiliation and defeat?

What great conflict of feeling, yet what determination to be obedient even unto death!

As later in the Garden when the response to Jesus' prayer was strength from an angel, there was a heavenly response to Jesus' mountaintop prayer that

257 The Bible doesn't say which mountain Jesus climbed. Some speculate that it was Hermon. Others, Mount Tabor. Others, that it was the mountain Moses had climbed to view the Promised Land. I theorize that Hermon was a logical choice; just as Jesus chose the setting of the Rock of the Gods to announce the target of the Ekklesia He would build, it was logical to climb that very mountain to neutralize its evil history and indeed sanctify it. But it is not for us to know for sure.

258 Bible commentator John Gill: "James was not the brother of our Lord, who was of that name, but the Son of Zebedee; as appears from John being his brother, who was the beloved disciple;"

strengthened, encouraged and prepared Jesus, and clarified His mission.²⁵⁹ The three apostles were wakened by light, bright as the sun, shining from Jesus face! And talking with Him were Moses and Elijah! They talked about Jesus' exit from human life, which would be accomplished at Jerusalem.²⁶⁰

“Oh, if only the Scribes and Pharisees of Israel, along with every pagan king around the planet, could see what I see!” thought Peter. “They would all fall down and worship Jesus! The cross will not be necessary! The world will repent and follow God! This must not be forgotten! What can we do to make sure the world learns of the greatness on display here?”

Peter spoke out loud: “Master, we should make three shrines; one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for you.”

Peter was interrupted by a sudden very bright fog covering them, and a voice: “This is my much loved son. Listen to him.”

The three fell down with their faces to the ground, terrified. Until Jesus touched them and said “don't be afraid.”

Peter opened his eyes. Moses and Elijah were gone. Jesus had become as dark as the others again, lit only by stars. Although the snow around them made starlight sufficient to see the terrain around them and each other against it, it took a while for Peter's eyes to adjust again to that gentle light so he could see

259 The content of Jesus' prayer theorized here, and most of the wording, is the speculation of the Expositor's Bible on Matthew 17. The content of Jesus' prayer here is not specified in the Bible as the main theme of His prayer that night, but Luke 9:31 says it was the main theme of Jesus' conversation with Moses and Elijah. That theme throughout the Gospels makes it reasonable to theorize that it was a major theme of His prayer, and of His yearning that pulled him up into a mountain to pray, also.

260 Luke 9:31

anything.

Jesus didn't have anything to say before they climbed back down the mountain the next morning. What would He say? Why did Peter's worshipful offer make Moses and Elijah go away? And make Jesus go dim? But Jesus would speak, the Voice promised. Will He say "great idea" and hand Peter some blueprints so he can get started?

But nothing was going right. That's not what Jesus said or did at all, when He finally spoke.

"Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

What?! This "risen" business, Peter couldn't compute. He discussed it with James and John without making sense of it.²⁶¹ Maybe Jesus means in the sense that His message will live on.

But "dead", he understood. No! No! Proclaim the vision *before* Jesus is dead, so He doesn't have to die! But...oh well, Jesus said to zip my lip, so I guess I'd better, Peter thought.

This was so different than everything the world had taught him about greatness, Peter thought. "Everybody knows" the greatest of all people are kings and Caesars. Their subjects "know" they are representatives of God, if not gods themselves. They are dictators, their every wish instantly becoming law, and any critics who doubt their majesty are publicly tortured and slowly killed. The dictators then go start a war and slaughter by the ten thousands, then have a parade where they wear their dazzling gold and silver ornaments over red royal robes, red being a rare and costly dye not available to the "common people" whose productivity was the source of all this carnage and finery.

261 Mark 9:10

Yet how plain all their finery is compared with the glimpse of glory Peter saw last night! What tyrant would not have loved to put on a light show like that!

Yet Jesus, whose greatness outshines all pretenders, keeps His glory hidden, appearing to the world like an ordinary man. He calls the very thought of ruling like a dictator the temptation of Satan! Satan himself offered it to Jesus but Jesus called it the opposite of worshiping God. Peter merely suggested not letting Jesus' enemies torture Him to death and Jesus called *that* a ploy of Satan.

Jesus doesn't want *any* personal advantage from His greatness. He doesn't even require personal pronouns referring to Him to be capitalized! He doesn't want anyone's taxes. He came to give, not to receive, or even to redistribute.

What a strange, new, incomprehensible redefinition of "greatness".

On the way down, the three wondered why Elijah appeared to them *after* Jesus' ministry began. They asked, "Why then do the scribes say that Elijah has to come first?"

Jesus answered that the spirit of Elijah was in John the Baptist. "In fact, he has already come. But the people did not recognize him and treated him just as they wanted to. They will soon make the Son of Man suffer in the same way."²⁶²

There was that glimpse of shame again, competing for attention with Peter's glimpse of glory! How could they both be true?!

Yet how impressed the three were with their glimpse of glory!

Much later, Peter wrote, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto

262 Matthew 17:10, 12, BBE and CEV translations.

you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”²⁶³

John later wrote, “We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”²⁶⁴

James was excuted by sword, ordered by King Herod, before he could do much writing.²⁶⁵

The four came down the mountain that morning to a multitude gathered over the failure of the other apostles to cast a demon out of a boy, over which a bunch of lawyers were cross examining and mocking the apostles. Peter heard Jesus grumble, “O faithless and perverse generation, will you always need my bodily presence, and never come to such maturity as to be ready to believe your Bibles? Must the child be always carried, and will it never learn to walk? How long shall I suffer your faithlessness? Will you close your hearts to evidence forever?”²⁶⁶

Peter’s hope sunk. Peter took from the complaint that maybe Jesus didn’t *want* to live in His physical body forever. Maybe He didn’t *want* to intimidate God’s enemies with a glimpse of His glory.

The father of the demon-possessed young man had enough faith in Jesus to beg His help both to heal his son and to strengthen his own faith. That was the invitation Jesus needed.

“Bring the child to Me.”

263 2 Peter 1:16-18

264 John 1:14

265 Acts 12:2

266 Matthew 17:17 and Mark 9:19, combined with the interpretation of Bible commentator Matthew Henry.

The deaf and dumb young man, tormented with seizures since he was very young, healed. The father's heart, calmed and filled with gladness. The skeptical lawyers, silenced. The multitudes, satisfied. The worn-out faith of the disciples, renewed.²⁶⁷

But why, Peter wondered, was faith a requisite before Jesus would heal the boy? Was Jesus unable to heal without the faith of the boy's father?

As Peter wondered, he stared again at the unbelieving lawyers. Suppose one of *them* had a similarly afflicted son. Would they ask Jesus for healing? No, Peter guessed; and if Jesus offered, they would probably scream at Him to leave them alone! Healing would have answered their prayer, but they didn't want any prayer answered through *Him!*

But, Peter wondered, what about others in the crowd, who did not hate Jesus but couldn't imagine that Jesus would want to bless them? Peter thought about the parent-child relationship which Jesus often used for a metaphor of the God-man relationship. He imagined a child who couldn't imagine that his parents love him enough to keep feeding him, even though they had been faithfully feeding him since he was born. There is the plate of food, placed on the table as usual, but will the child go to it and eat? If not, should the parent drag him to his chair, tie him down, and force feed him? Or should the parent respect the child's free will?

"It's enough to make me glad I'm not God!" Peter mused.

A voice within whispered, "Likewise, the glimpse of glory was not for everyone. It would not have led to worldwide revival, any more than Jesus' feeding of the

267 This paragraph borrows heavily from the Expositor's Bible on Matthew 17.

five thousand did.²⁶⁸

“That miraculous meal only moved the people to want Jesus to be their human dictator, taking care of their needs without their involvement, like the people in Samuel’s time demanded a dictator to fight all their battles for them.

“The glimpse you saw is only for those who already believe and obey God, to encourage them to obey all the way to the Cross that you don’t want to think about. Unbelievers will only scoff at your shrine, saying it never happened. Even if everyone in the world saw what you saw, most would only be moved to let God be their dictator, eliminating all their responsibility to interact with each other in order to govern themselves.

“God isn’t looking for people who will pray to Him to take care of their government without their involvement. God wants Partners.

“Different signs are given to prove God’s power and love, which cannot be refuted: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have Good News preached to them. Yet every generation will have its Pharisees and lawyers who willfully deny reality, preferring to be offended rather than enlightened.²⁶⁹ But after many infallible proofs,²⁷⁰ then your glimpse of glory can be shared.”

268 John 6:5-15

269 Matthew 11:5-6

270 Acts 1:3

Chapter 15: Lessons about Glory

In the days after the epileptic young man was healed, Jesus told His disciples again that he would be killed and would rise again. The disciples' sorrow indicated they grasped only the first part.²⁷¹ Which seemed to them pretty much the opposite of the behavior of any kind of "king" they had ever heard about.

After that, a tax collector showed up. He found Peter, and asked "Does this Jesus of yours pay taxes like everyone else?" Peter said "of course".

²⁷¹ Matthew 17:22-23

But when Peter came to Jesus for the money, which was about a week's wage, Jesus ridiculed the idea of taxing God to support the Temple of worship of God. Nevertheless Jesus did a miracle for Peter rivaling his previous glimpse of glory, telling Peter to go fishing. The tax they need for both of them would be in the mouth of the first fish he catches.²⁷²

Yet even this testament to His greatness was a sign only for Peter, not done in public in order to place Jesus on His rightful throne. The fact that it was done for Peter started to make Peter feel pretty special, until he reflected, "I wonder if God does miracles for everyone, letting people choose whether to acknowledge Him or dismiss them as 'coincidences'?"

"Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" the disciples asked Jesus later. Where did that come from? Was the secret shared by Peter, James and John making their heads swell?

Jesus called a child to sit among them and answered, "See if you can be this great. Be this humble. Welcome him into your heart as you do me. Don't turn any child away from the straight and narrow path – better to jump in the sea with concrete boots!"

What? Everyone is equally important? *Even children?!!* I suppose next Jesus is going to say everyone has equal, God-given rights. Oh wait, that's already in Exodus 12:49. But *children? Even children are important?* What kind of "king" can Jesus ever be, giving *equal rights to children?!!!* These ideas were scattered among the apostles' brain cells. But Jesus wasn't done.

"Don't look down on even the least of humans. Angels who stand before God are assigned even to tiny

272 Matthew 17:24-27

babies. It isn't God's will for even one person to perish. That's why I am here: to find and offer to save every last lost soul.

"When you have a problem with someone, don't give up on your relationship. Talk to him. If that doesn't work, get a mediator. If that doesn't work, ask your whole assembly to mediate."

Wait, isn't Jesus supposed to be a king? Kings don't reason with people. Kings don't use mediators. Kings *certainly* don't subject their decisions to the consensus of groups!!

Jesus continued, "Only after your whole assembly is unable to reason with him may you consider him hard to reason with.²⁷³ In fact, you may then publicly classify him along with tax collectors."

There was nothing lower than a tax collector. In those days Romans employed Jews and demanded a certain amount for Rome, which they could extract by any means possible with the help of Roman soldiers, and whatever they collected over that amount they got to keep for themselves.

As Jesus said that, he winked at Matthew, whom Jesus had just called out of that profession. Later Matthew wrote the first Gospel. His was the only Gospel to report Jesus' comparison of the most unreasonable people with his own former profession.

Matthew understood, and desires that we understand, that even this "lowest of the low" designation does not indicate someone beyond hope, not worth trying to save. Even the "lowest of the low" can be restored and transformed, even into an Apostle of Jesus Christ.

Jesus next offered those who follow Him

²⁷³ These paragraphs summarize Matthew 18. Verses 15-17 are the classic formula of excommunication, except notice physical restraint, much less torture and execution, is not in view.

unlimited power: “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”²⁷⁴

Ah, finally! Power! The nectar of kings! But wait, power to *everyone*? How is any kind of king, that anyone ever heard of, going to rule people who have the same infinite power that *he* does?

Another anti-kingly matter was this business about forgiving. Kings don’t need that. In fact, forgiving is a sign of weakness.

Peter complained to Jesus about someone he was tired of forgiving. Jesus didn’t answer at all like a king. He said we need to forgive others as much as we want God to forgive us, because that’s how much God will forgive us. He said how much others owe us compares to how much we owe God as 100 pennies compares to 10,000 talents. 100 pennies then was the value of 100 days’ wages. That’s the most other humans might owe us, in Jesus’ metaphor. One talent was 98 pounds of either silver or gold. 10,000 talents calculates to about 500,000 years’ wages. That’s how much we owe God.

Jesus said how we forgive others who owe us 100 pennies, is how God will forgive us who owe Him one million pounds of gold.

So, was all that teaching enough to humble the apostles – to neutralize their lust for glory?

A little later children were brought to Him for His blessing, but the Apostles, unmindful of the lessons they had just been taught, told the parents to not bother Jesus. Jesus is too important, while the children aren’t important at all.

Jesus heard. Jesus repeated, “Bring them to me.

274 Mat 18:19-20

For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to people like these.”

What?! We are more saintly than mere children! What are these strange words!?

Jesus was doing nothing to encourage lust for glory.

Why, when a rich young ruler came to Him for a spiritual Masters Degree, Jesus told him to sell all he has and give to the poor, and then follow Him in poverty. That was quite a pill for the apostles to swallow, not to mention for the rich young ruler!

Jesus kept talking about this “Kingdom of Heaven”. Nathaniel had recognized Him as a king right away when they first met.²⁷⁵ Thousands later tried to crown Him the King of Israel.²⁷⁶ But this was sounding more and more like a kingdom of paupers.

But Peter was ready to seize the moment. “We have given all to follow You. What shall WE have in heaven, therefore?”

Peter’s lust for glory was rewarded with almost more than he had craved. He even felt a little bit embarrassed for having daydreamed about such honors. Jesus’ answer satisfied all of them: “You will sit on 12 thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel. And everyone who has given up anything for me will be rewarded with 100 times that much, and everlasting Life.”²⁷⁷

Ha! Jesus didn’t promise *that* to any mere child!

But meanwhile, Jesus said, He would be betrayed in Jerusalem, condemned to death, mocked, whipped, and crucified, and on the third day rise again.²⁷⁸

275 John 2:49

276 John 6:15

277 Matthew 19:28-29

278 Matthew 20:17-19

Extremely unkingly.

“What is *that* a parable of?” James asked John. But they knew better, from watching Peter, not to rile Jesus about it.

Then came a parable about a boss who paid everyone the same whether they had worked one hour or all day. Laborers paid equally? Weird, but James and John were sure they would be paid more equally than others.

The two decided it was time to pop the question.

Chapter 16: The Rock Cut Without Hands: Greatness Redefined

James and John, the sons of Zebudee, had trouble reconciling the idea of being as humble as a child with the idea of sitting on thrones judging the tribes of Israel.

They were two of the favored three to guard their secret Glimpse of Glory. James knew they were on the ground floor of something big, and if they played their cards right, they could go right to the top. Mother was

very proud of them.²⁷⁹

But Peter was becoming their competition. James knew about the seats of honor on the right and left of kings. He didn't know about a third seat of honor, so "Two are company, three are a crowd".

Much later, John learned about a third seat of honor, and a fourth, and a fifth, all the way up to infinity: all who "overcome" will sit *with Jesus in His throne, just as Jesus sits with God in His throne!*²⁸⁰ But John didn't know it then.

John wasn't attracted to the idea so much for the honor, as for the idea of being that near Jesus!

Peter *was* trying to compete. Not to get "a name for himself". He didn't care so much about that. He wasn't the calculating, scheming type.

But he cared about being bold.

And in a game like this, James told himself, you've got to be bold.

The two, James and John, decided that at their next lunch break, they were going to figure out this whatisit that Jesus was going to build on some kind of "rock", and what Peter had to do with it.

So what's the deal? they asked each other with their mouths full. Did Jesus say that upon *Peter* he would build his whatisit? Pretty scary. But right afterwards Jesus called Peter "Satan", so hope still lives, James thought.

So it was worth figuring out. Just what did Jesus mean by "this rock"?

"Let's go over Jesus' exact words again", James suggested.

279 Matthew 16 tells .. of the Rock of the Gods and Peter's confession.

By chapter 20, the mother of James and John ask Jesus to make her sons the most honored two people in the whole universe after Jesus. She was very proud of her sons.

280 Revelation 3:21

“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my εκκλησιαν; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”²⁸¹

“Like I said,” John said with a heavy heart, “this can only mean Peter will be the first of a long line of high priests who will inherit their position from their fathers. Jesus chose Peter probably because he is the only one of us who is married, and Jesus wanted to make sure all the high priests after Peter would also be married.”²⁸² I told you we shouldn’t have put our engagements on hold.”

“You give up too easily”, James responded. “I’ve been thinking of an alternative interpretation which I find equally credible.

“What if the ‘rock’ Jesus referenced was not Peter himself, but his declaration? What if Jesus meant he will build his whatisit on our readiness to say out loud that Jesus is The Christ, the Son of the Living God?”

“I sure hope you’re right. But frankly, Peter is a leader. I won’t be surprised at all if Peter becomes Jesus’ lieutenant in the Jerusalem organization. He is also a fair writer, like myself. And with this favor shown by Jesus (up until Jesus called him “Satan”) I won’t be surprised if some of his writing ends up part of the Bible.

“Let’s just face facts: there is a third feature

281 Matthew 16:17-18

282 1 Corinthians 9:5 “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas [Peter]? “ Mark 1:30 “Now Simon’s [Peter’s] mother-in-law was lying in bed, sick with a fever, so they promptly told Jesus about her.” How ironic is it, that 2,000 years of celibate priests, who do not permit a married man to be a priest, found their legitimacy on a married apostle?!

about Peter. He is interesting to talk about.²⁸³ Frankly if he were more righteous he might be more boring. But his very missteps make the stories about him spread. Like walking on water a few steps, then doubting, then sinking, then rescued by Jesus. That captures the imagination. What have we ever done to compete with that? I'm not at all sure this is a profitable topic of discussion."

James was far from ready to give up. "I just can't picture Peter in the role you fear. What is your scenario: that as head of a line of hereditary high priests, he and his descendants will have the final word on theological questions?"

John only shuddered at the possibility.

"My theory," James said, "that Jesus will build simply on the declaration which just *happened* to first be made by Peter, is supported by the common sense principle that if you want many people to join you, you make joining as easy as possible." James peered into the future with all the foresight his human brain could muster. "I foresee membership in Jesus' whatisit sealed by this simple intellectual statement of fact made in the safety of one's home, or one's Christian gathering in which everyone smiles at you for saying it. I foresee millions of Christians saying these simple words in order to join the community made wealthy by Jesus' miracles."²⁸⁴

283 John considered Peter interesting to write about, too. He wrote Peter's name 31 times in his Gospel. By contrast, Matthew wrote it 24 times, while Mark and Luke wrote it 19 times.

284 This mistaking of mere intellectual belief for "faith" is the opposite of the message of chapter 2 of the Bible book of James. But that James was the half-brother of Jesus. The James here is the son of Zebudee, brother of the Gospel writer John, who was the first apostle martyred. Now remember, this whole book is based on the Bible as far as I can find the Bible speaking on a detail, fleshed out by Bible commentators, and the rest is fiction. But the whole purpose of this book is to apply God's Word to issues which people in my own time

John was aghast. “Jesus indeed talks about faith as if it is supremely important. Even feeble faith, if it be genuine, and in true relation to the power of the Father, becomes a receptacle of a force which in the end nothing can resist.

“But genuine *living* faith it must be: there must be the real opening up of the soul to the Spirit of the living God, so that the man’s nature becomes a channel through which unobstructed the grace and power of God shall flow.

“The notion which mistakes faith for mere belief of certain doctrines is utterly misleading. In nothing is the perversity of a faithless generation more conspicuous than in the persistency with which this absurd and unscriptural notion of faith holds its ground, even with those who are supposed to be leaders of thought in certain directions.

“If only that mountain of folly could be cleared away, there would be a decided brightening of the spiritual outlook; for then men everywhere would see that the faith which Christ expects of them, and without which nothing can be accomplished, is no mere intellectual belief, but the laying open and leaving open of the entire nature to the Spirit of Christ.

“Which, though small as a grain of mustard seed, would have in it such vitality and power that by-and-by it would become mighty and all-pervading, so that before it mountains would disappear.”²⁸⁵

James said, after he woke up, “I don’t like it when my little brother wanders off into his world of platitudes. It gets in the way of practical thinking.

need to understand. In other words, my prayer is for a book faithful to deliver God’s message, though arranged in a new order designed to break through the fog from centuries of mistaken tradition.

285 John’s response here is mostly borrowed from the Expositors Bible on Matthew 17.

“Now here’s a practical idea. You know, as we discuss these theories, we should give them names, to fix their differences in our minds, and to abbreviate our references to them.”

“OK.”

“Your theory is that Peter’s authority will be universal. Over all who follow Jesus, over the whole world. So how about we call it ‘the Catholic view’, since ‘Catholic’ means ‘universal’?”

“OK, but that isn’t my only theory. I see another possibility. What if the ‘rock’ upon which Jesus will build His Ekklesia is neither Peter himself, nor Peter’s confession, but that towering Rock of the Gods in whose shadow we stood? What if Jesus will build His Ekklesia, not ‘upon’ that evil rock, but ‘against’ it? The Greek preposition translates either way. And what if all three senses are true: Peter will help build, the confession of genuine active Faith will be the building material, and the Ekklesia will displace all the evil cruel superstition attached to that cliff?”

“Fine. We’ll get to that. And since my theory is a protest against your view, why not call mine ‘the Protestant view’?”

“Agreed. Now let me again tell you what’s wrong with your Protestant view.

“It trivializes Peter’s confession. I don’t want to go out of my way to give Peter credit, but he did more than merely intellectually know and say a fact. He stood for a truth in exactly the most dangerous place in the world to stand for it.

“Peter wasn’t just smart. He may not even have been the smartest apostle, to know that. Others likely knew that. I was kind of thinking along the same lines myself. But if anyone else knew that, no one else dared say it. Especially not there!

“Peter’s statement was not in a safe place. Jesus

had taken Peter and the the rest of us into the spiritually darkest place on earth, the most dangerous place on earth for a believer, a crowded place, and had drawn the attention of very evil people who were watching and listening.

“So your theory”, James asked, “is that Jesus expects his disciples to not only grasp facts intellectually, but to state those truths even in the hearing of people who will kill you slowly for them?”

“I don’t know. I certainly hope not, because that does not paint a rosy future for you and me. But did you hear Jesus describe what people will do to *him*?”

“And do you remember when He told us, ‘If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you.’²⁸⁶

“Don’t get me wrong. I am still clinging to the hope that our future will not be as scary as Jesus said. But whenever I entertain the daydream of glory for you as the chiefest of Jesus’ apostles, and me getting to sit right next to Him, those words of Jesus interrupt my reveries. I don’t feel safe *assuming* Jesus has a comfortable future for us.”

James’ concern at his brother’s warning ended with a new opportunity that suddenly occurred to him. “Interesting. So let’s say you are right. Great suffering is ahead for those who would follow Jesus to the end, *along with* the glory.

“Can you see this is the break we need? That knocks Peter out of our way! Do you remember how Peter corrected Jesus for talking about suffering, for

286 John 15:19-20

which Jesus called him ‘Satan’? So that means if we can mentally prepare ourselves for whatever the Devil might throw at us, that will shoot us up ahead of Peter!

“Suffering stinks, but think of the glory! It will be worth it! In fact, the more suffering we accept, the more others will admire us! *Especially* pagans, who routinely brag about their readiness to endure torture as evidence of their greatness.”

The logic seemed reasonable to John, but it didn’t agree very well with what he had observed. The Romans didn’t seem to admire the people they crucified. As for the pagan ticket to greatness, it seemed to work only when devotees tortured *themselves*.

Yet something seemed right about James’ logic. Maybe not that acceptance of suffering would trigger the *admiration* of others, but maybe something else. Something closer to healing, than to admiration.

“Suppose our future holds as much pain as Jesus says. Are we ready? Do you have some ideas about how we can prepare ourselves? Peter seemed ready enough to accept any cost when he declared Jesus’ greatness, but then when Jesus explicitly laid out his costs, Peter balked. Have you thought about that?”

“I have. I have seen that faith is relative. Peter has much faith, but not perfect faith – he is as human as ourselves, after all.

“But the greater our faith, the greater our peace.

“When you really know the Son of the Living God is with you, not just intellectually but you think about how that impacts all the reality around you, it hits you that for all the danger there may be in saying what you know, that is a lot safer than *denying* what you know. It hits you that no danger can touch you without the consent of God, and that God will not burden you with more than will help you grow, because God loves you a

lot more than you love yourself.”

“Uh, OK. Uh, I’ll be back soon.” James left John, to go talk to his mother.

“Hi, Aunt Salome.” Jesus extended his hand in welcome.

But Salome kneeled.

Jesus smiled. “Methinks my dear aunt wanteth something.” He glanced over at James and John, noted the expectancy on their faces, and laughed tenderly, full of warmth for the love he had for the three.

Salome, wife of Zebudee, was the sister of Joseph, Jesus’ earthly father, and mother of James and John.²⁸⁷

Salome’s tongue suddenly glued itself to the roof of her mouth. She struggled to work it free. “Uh, uh...”

“What do you want?”

“Pr...pr...promise me...that my two sons...”

Jesus, still smiling, looked over at James and John, as if beckoning them to come help their poor mother.

They came near. Not kneeling, they said “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask you.”

“I see. And before I say if I will, do I get to know what you will ask? What do you want me to do for you?”

It was a serious matter. Very serious.

There was pride at the bottom of it, a proud conceit of their own merit, a proud contempt of their brethren, and a proud desire of honour and preferment; pride is a sin that most easily besets us, and which it is hard to get clear of. It is a holy ambition to strive to excel others in grace and holiness; but it is a sinful ambition to covet to exceed others in pomp and

287 See Bible commentator John Gill on Matthew 20:20.

grandeur.²⁸⁸

But Jesus grinned. What made Jesus grin was the seriousness with which they pursued a goal that was such a big fat nothing, like kittens stalking a string which they can neither kill nor eat – a performance that makes children giggle. Jesus wasn't worried about them though. They would turn out OK.

The three helped each other get out the words. The goal was as James and John had discussed: to sit next to Jesus when He sits on His throne in Heaven.

Jesus' smile disappeared, but not into a frown. Rather, into a look that seemed a balance of every possible emotion. Love, judgment. Hope, concern. Anticipation, dread. Encouragement, warning. Joy over how they had grown, sorrow that they are this close to throwing it all away.

There was a choice before the two, and whatever they chose, Jesus' countenance showed He would honor it. He would love them. He would wait for them to choose wisely. He was used to waiting.

Jesus addressed James and John. "Will you accept the cost, before you know it? I've told you what I must endure. Are you indeed ready for that?"

"We are."

Many years later a hymn was written about that answer.

"Are ye able?" said the Master

"to be crucified with me?"

"Yea", the sturdy dreamers answered,

"To the death we follow thee!"

"Lord we are able! Our spirits are thine!

Remold them, make us, like thee, divine!

Thy guiding radiance above us shall be

A beacon to God, to love and loyalty!"

288 This paragraph is borrowed from Matthew Henry.

“Then that is the cost you will be given.”

The two were spared crucifixion. But James was executed by sword at the order of King Herod. John was exiled to the Island called Patmos.²⁸⁹

“But the concept of sitting at my right hand and left doesn’t quite correspond to anything in Heaven. Your talk is like that of a man born blind trying to describe colors.²⁹⁰ Or like someone trying to see through muddy glass.²⁹¹ You will both receive what you have been prepared to receive, but it will not be what you expect. It will be better than anything you can imagine.”²⁹²

Later, after Jesus had returned to Heaven and after most of the Apostles had been martyred, Jesus appeared again to John and explained to him what is better than two people getting to sit a couple of feet from Jesus in glory: “To him that overcometh will I grant to **sit with me IN my throne**, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”!!!!²⁹³

Not just two lucky guys two feet away, but millions – billions – right there IN Jesus’ throne! Judging, ruling WITH JESUS!

Jesus never was, nor ever will be, any kind of “king” that anybody ever heard of!

James learned about all this before John did. But before either learned, back when they asked their big question with their mommy’s help, James and John were satisfied.

But the other apostles weren’t! They were

289 Acts 12:2, Revelation 1:9.

290 This metaphor is borrowed from Matthew Henry.

291 This metaphor is given in 1 Corinthians 13:12.

292 1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written, (in Isaiah 64:4) Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

293 Revelation 3:21

furious! Furious that the two were trying to squeeze in line ahead of *them!* That arrogant duo must never again be trusted! Indeed, trying to trick Jesus into making them kings over the other ten!

Jesus just had to laugh out loud, for two reasons.

First, at the spectacle of jealousy over such a big fat zero. It was like watching kittens trying to outsmart a string.

Second, out of joy that the Time had finally come, *to cut, without hands, the stone which would grow over the centuries to displace every last dust bunny of human tyranny from the world.*

“Kings and those with great authority in this world rule oppressively over their subjects, like tyrants, claiming to do it for the good of the people! They are given names of honor both by themselves, and by their court flatterers, to cover their ambition, tyranny, and cruelty. They are obsessed with how others see them. But this is not your calling. You will lead by a completely different model. The greatest one among you will live as the one who is called to serve others, because the greatest honor and authority is reserved for the one with the heart of a servant. For even the Son of Man did not come expecting to be served by everyone, but to serve everyone, and to give his life in exchange for the salvation of many.”²⁹⁴

Crack! The Freedom Stone snapped away from the top of the mountain and rolled down, growing as it rolled, towards the great statue of tyranny half hidden by distant clouds below. Tremors ran through the ground ahead of the Stone with each bounce, shaking the statue, generating spreading stress fractures.

294 Matthew 20:25-28, combined with Luke 22:25-27, TPT version, with a phrase from Bible commentator John Gill thrown in.

Jesus had offered the keys to Freedom, and it would only be a matter of time before the whole world would want it.

Would choose it.

Would elect it.

Even though freedom for all has a price that is high for a few when many won't pay.

Not a higher price than the innocent and helpless pay every day under tyranny. But the price of freedom must be paid by choice. Readiness to face persecution is a hard choice.

But sacrifice is the seed of Paradise, growing out of Love.

Chapter 17: The Bereans

place with the story of the Bereans, after the stories of Jesus:

Warning: this information may challenge you to think differently, live differently, prioritize your time and money differently, and worship differently. But the risk is not tremendous. Long experience has shown that Christians will not do this just because their Bibles tell them to. There is always a cost to trading in what you are used to for God's Next Step Up.

And even for Christians willing to accept any cost to obeying God, what their Bibles call them to do, which they are not

doing, even if it is the opposite of what they are doing, must make sense. Before we can obey, we need a glimpse of how to obey in a way that is likely to produce results consistent with Biblical values; otherwise we may reasonably conclude those commands made sense in another time but were not intended for ours.

This book seeks to make sense of some of those verses which you may have already noticed aren't being followed much by God's people today.

But logic and confusion about Scripture are only the minor obstacles to obedience. They are the excuses. The real obstacle is that God's ways are not man's ways. Isaiah 55:8-9. They are different. We have created customs with no precedent in the Bible, to displace commands of the Bible. Mark 7:6-9.

We are today accustomed to the many freedoms which our ancestors secured for us. But they were not free for them! The people of the world, including many of God's people, such as the Jews listening to Jesus, were quite used to the tyranny that preceded our freedoms, and were quite unwilling to give it up peacefully. Which made it costly for the minorities agitating for change. **Different ideas cannot spontaneously occur to masses of people at the same time, but must always begin with minorities.**

But that is another clue to the culture of the future under Jesus: the Bereans were called "noble" by God because they listened patiently to a radical new idea and

judged it on its merits, rather than persecuting Paul for the unthinkable crime of being different, it being irrelevant whether he was correct. Acts 17:10-13. We may presume that all that God calls good will be a feature of Jesus' rule.

Meanwhile, "Long experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. ." - The Declaration of Independence, 1776.

What will finally motivate God's People to act, to secure the rest of the blessings God offers us?

"But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security." - The Declaration of Independence, 1776.

Therefore, that God may bless us despite how accustomed we are to misery, "a long train of abuses and usurpations" lies ahead for us. Our human nature makes progress towards God without any suffering at all impossible. However, the severity of the sufferings ahead will depend partly on the readiness of you and I to be blessed without the pressure of suffering.

Hmmm. The consequences for the Bereans was to continue the suffering experienced by everybody under tyranny. The consequences for us today is the reversion to suffering under tyranny experienced by our ancestors before they rebelled and reformed Government after Jesus' principles. But the "point of the spear" suffered most, but by choice.

John Gill: and stirred up the people; the common people, the natives of the place, against the apostles; suggesting that they were wicked men, and enemies to all laws, human or divine, civil or religious.

Albert Barnes: Stirred up the people - The word used

here σαλεύειν saleuein denotes properly “to agitate” or “excite,” as the waves of the sea are agitated by the wind. It is with great beauty used to denote the “agitation and excitement of a popular tumult,” from its resemblance to the troubled waves of the ocean. The figure is often employed by the Classic writers, and also occurs in the Scriptures. See Psa_65:7; Isa_17:12-13; Jer_46:7-8.

F. B. Meyer: Persecuted and rejected today, he is at his favorite work tomorrow. How different this intense earnestness from the trifling of the so-called philosophers of Athens! The Epicurean made the pursuit of pleasure the main object of life. The Stoic, on the other hand, believed in the stern repression of nature. All Greece was absorbed in the cultivation of art, architecture, eloquence, and intellectual brilliance. But here, as everywhere, Paul had but one message—Jesus and the Resurrection. Oh, to be pressed in spirit, as he was, till our earnestness should compel our opponents to give us a serious hearing!

Matthew Henry: The Jews in the synagogue at Berea were better disposed to receive the gospel than the Jews in the synagogue at Thessalonica; they were not so bigoted and prejudiced against it, not so peevish and ill-natured; they were more noble, eugenesteroi - better bred.

... (“Noble” means “well bred”) Herein they were more noble than the Jews in Thessalonica, but walked in the same spirit, and in the same steps, with the Gentiles there, of whom it is said that they received the word with joy of the Holy Ghost, and turned to God from idols, 1Th_1:6-9. This was true nobility. The Jews gloried much in their being Abraham's seed, thought themselves well-born and that they could not be better

born. But they are here told who among them were the most noble and the best-bred men - those that were most disposed to receive the gospel, and had the high and conceited thoughts in them subdued, and brought into obedience to Christ. They were the most noble, and, if I may so say, the most gentleman-like men. *Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus* - Virtue and piety are true nobility, true honour; and, without these, *Stemmata quid prosunt?* - What are pedigrees and pompous titles worth?

(2.) They searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so. Their readiness of mind to receive the word was not such as that they took things upon trust, swallowed them upon an implicit faith: no; but since Paul reasoned out of the scriptures, and referred them to the Old Testament for the proof of what he said, they had recourse to their Bibles, turned to the places to which he referred them, read the context, considered the scope and drift of them, compared them with other places of scripture, examined whether Paul's inferences from them were natural and genuine and his arguments upon them cogent, and determined accordingly. Observe, [1.] The doctrine of Christ does not fear a scrutiny. We that are advocates for his cause desire no more than that people will not say, These things are not so, till they have first, without prejudice and partiality, examined whether they be so or no. [2.] The New Testament is to be examined by the Old. The Jews received the Old Testament, and those that did so, if they considered things aright, could not but see cause sufficient to receive the New, because in it they see all the prophecies and promises of the Old fully and exactly accomplished. [3.] Those that read and receive the scriptures must search them (*Joh_5:39*), must study them, and take pains in considering them, both that they may find out the truth contained in them,

and may not mistake the sense of them and so run into error, or remain in it; and that they may find out the whole truth contained in them, and may not rest in a superficial knowledge, in the outward court of the scriptures, but may have an intimate acquaintance with the mind of God revealed in them. [4.] Searching the scriptures must be our daily work. Those that heard the word in the synagogue on the sabbath day did not think this enough, but were searching it every day in the week, that they might improve what they had heard the sabbath before, and prepare for what they were to hear the sabbath after. [5.] Those are truly noble, and are in a fair way to be more and more so, that make the scriptures their oracle and touchstone, and consult them accordingly. Those that rightly study the scriptures, and meditate therein day and night, have their minds filled with noble thoughts, fixed to noble principles, and formed for noble aims and designs. These are more noble.

...By seeking to extinguish this divine fire which Christ had already kindled, they did but spread it the further and the faster; so long Paul staid at Berea, and such success he had there, that there were brethren there, and sensible active men too, which appeared by the care they took of Paul, Act_14:14. They were aware of the coming of the persecuting Jews from Thessalonica, and that they were busy in irritating the people against Paul; and, fearing what it would come to, they lost no time, but immediately sent Paul away, against whom they were most prejudiced and enraged, hoping that this would pacify them, while they retained Silas and Timothy there still, who, now that Paul had broken the ice, might be sufficient to carry on the work without exposing him. They sent Paul to go even to the sea, so some; to go as it were to the sea, so we read it; hōs epi tēn thalassan□ He

went out from Berea, in that road which went to the sea, that the Jews, if they enquired after him, might think he had gone to a great distance; but he went by land to Athens, in which there was no culpable dissimulation at all. Those that conducted Paul (as his guides and guards, he being both a stranger in the country and one that had many enemies) brought him to Athens. The Spirit of God, influencing his spirit, directed him to that famous city, - famous of old for its power and dominion, when the Athenian commonwealth coped with the Spartan, - famous afterwards for learning; it was the rendezvous of scholars. Those who wanted learning went thither to show it. It was a great university, much resorted to from all parts, and therefore, for the better diffusing of gospel light, Paul is sent thither, and is not ashamed nor afraid to show his face among the philosophers there, and there to preach Christ crucified, though he knew it would be as much foolishness to the Greeks as it was to the Jews a stumbling-block.

Chapter 19: The Corinthians

Put in narrative form, with verses in footnotes. Interweave references to Neb's Freedom Stone for perspective. And Jesus cutting that stone without hands.

Where did Paul go first? Corinth or Berea?

Act 17:10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These

were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few. 13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed. ...

Act 18:1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to **Corinth**;

Act 19:1

Chapter 20: The Last Days

fff John brainstorming his vision with followers

Rev 17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

But is it a military conquest? Certainly

What will be so different in the future? *Who* will change? Jesus, or the people of the world?

There is a general assumption that Jesus will be a “benevolent dictator”. Certainly had Jesus agreed to be a world dictator 2,000 years ago He would have been as

“benevolent” as a dictator can be! Why did He reject that opportunity then? He avoided the people who wanted to make Him their dictator, John 6:15. **Dare we wish for that today?** To the extent we do, **has He not similarly left us alone**, waiting for us to choose the opportunities and responsibilities of Freedom which He desires for us?

The only difference in the meaning of the words “king” and “dictator” or “tyrant” is that a “king” is a dictator whose tyranny is so unchallenged, so secure, that he can pass his power over others down to his sons. Kings David, Solomon, Josiah, and Hezekiah were “benevolent dictators”, though with flaws that caused much harm to many people. But they were dictators.

God made clear His objection to that *form of government* in 1 Samuel 8, where he equated the people’s rejection of political freedom with rejection of God, even though God has surely heard of “benevolent dictators”! Likewise the kind of government that displaces world empires in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is depicted as hardly another dictatorship, but as a form of government so radically different as to leave dictatorships and kings as footnotes in history books.

When has God ever dictated to anyone how they must live? When has God ever physically forced anyone to be good? Who has God dragged into Heaven against their will? God has always given mankind freedom. God has always waited for people to *choose* Him. Will the change in the future be in the readiness of the people of the world to *choose* Jesus’ rule, which the people 2,000 years ago were unwilling to do unless Jesus would worship Satan like they did?

When Satan offered, “All these things [all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them] will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me”, Matthew 4, Satan was not offering anything that he had the power to “give” Jesus. If Jesus wanted them, He didn’t need Satan’s permission to take them. So what else could Satan have meant?

We may reasonably presume he meant only to remind Jesus of what Jesus already had thought about, just as Jesus had obviously also thought about turning stones into bread, which was true without any involvement of Satan: **that the nations of the world loved to worship Satan. They were not ready to give up the joy of sacrificing their children in the flaming fires of their “gods” any more than mothers today are ready to give up cruel legal abortion. They did not want to give up their freedom to destroy each other through cruel crimes. Nor did they want the responsibilities of freedom – of governing themselves, but preferred tyranny, as Israel did in 1 Samuel 8. Had Jesus gone along with that evil, then of course the nations of the world would have gladly made Him their dictator. See also John 6:15.**

But managing us by fear and violence is never God’s desire. Jesus came to save us from sin. Meaning among other things, not only to get us to Heaven, but to replace the hate and violence in our hearts with love for God and each other, and longing to help each other, so that in Heaven, accusations, lies, and fear won’t turn Heaven into Hell.

What will Jesus’ government be like? After we dismiss the nonsense that it will be any manner of dictatorship, we can notice the flood of clues. What kind of tyrant has huge crowds of people sitting in his throne with him, ruling and judging? Revelation 1:6, 2:26-27, 3:21, 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, 2 Timothy 2:12. A political system governed by everyone who is subject to its laws doesn’t describe a dictatorship! That describes a representative democracy, ie. a republic.

Daniel foresaw only the effect of the Freedom Stone on government/citizen relationships. But a look back over the centuries makes clear how **the principle “cut out without hands”** by Jesus has steadily displaced tyranny in every other human relationship as well.

To the extent of Christian influence in today’s nations, **we no longer have masters and slaves. Pastors no longer execute church members over theological**

disagreement. Husbands are no longer ruthless dictators over their wives. (That is, not legally.)

And for the benefit of all human relationships, we have broad freedom of speech. There are few limits on our freedom to say what we believe. But this is another clue to the society of the future, because although we talk a lot, we don't listen so well. God challenges us to be wise, and explains that it is wise to love scrutiny. But we would rather not be wise, than listen to very much scrutiny.

God teaches us humility, to not feel anyone is so far below us that we needn't listen to him. We are that far below God and yet God listens to us, setting an example for us. But we don't want to give up our superior position over our neighbor who dares disagree with us.

God teaches us how to reason with each other even when we disagree. God even makes this exercise **central to our worship of Him, 1 Corinthians 14**, and states that to the extent we neglect our relationships to others, letting our pastor deal with others so we don't have to, or voting for our government to figure out society's problems so we don't need to think about it, we refuse to worship God. 1 Samuel 8.

But what *we* call a “worship” service doesn't even *allow* controversy like that! If Jesus came to today's pastors and asked for volunteers to get involved in ruling with Him, He would be told “We don't get involved in politics! Politics is dirty! You may *not* make your request *on church premises!*”

What will happen between now and then to suddenly make God's people willing to shine their Gospel Light outside their Matthew 5:13-16 “bushel”? Will American Christians “turn from their wicked ways” 2 Chronicles 7:14, by any less prodding than the destruction of the United States?

The Book of Revelation describes tyranny like the world has never seen, and how it will fall by the Sword in Jesus' mouth. Revelation 1:16, 2:16, 19:15, 21. These verses are commonly quoted without clarifying that a physical sword that kills physical bodies is surely not meant. As Bible commentators like Matthew, Barnes, and Clarke point out, the sharpest sword in the universe, according to Hebrews 4:12, is not a sword made out of steel, which is very dull by comparison: but the Word of God. See also Isaiah 49:2, 11:4, Acts 5:33, Ephesians 6:17. This is commonly called the "Sword of Truth". We read in the Four Gospels how Jesus wielded that Sword In Jesus' Mouth (His words) to neutralize tyrants and protect their victims more effectively than any physical army could have done. There is no reason to imagine that in the Last Days, Jesus will downsize to a much less effective merely *physical* "sword".

Translations of Revelation say Jesus will rule as a "king". Revelation 15:13, 17:14, 19:16. But Jesus' descriptions of His rule are of a King like nobody had ever heard of. The "kings" at the time those verses were written were absolute dictators. It is only due to Christian influence that, in Christian nations down the centuries, kings came to be more and more restrained by laws and elected representatives until few traces of them are now left. Jesus was offered the position of King Of The World in Matthew 4:8-9, but He turned it down.

Why did He turn down, then, what He will accept in the future, if they are the same thing? They must not be the same thing.

But the Greek was used in Athens to describe an elected leader.

has divided Christians for centuries, at times occasioning as much cruel, unreasoning terror as

proceeds from the Gates of Hell themselves. But what if Jesus meant both alternatives plus a third: this Rock of the “gods”?

Seldom explored clues are in the meaning of “gates”, and of “upon”.

Even the word “church”, the common translation today of ἐκκλησιαν, translated “congress” above, was the booty of enough of a translation war that King James made that the one single word where his translators were ordered not to follow the Greek text but the king’s command.

Well, Jesus didn’t use the word “Congress”. But neither did He quite use the word “church”. Matthew quotes Jesus as using the word “ekklesian”. What did that Greek word mean to Matthew, if not “church”, which virtually every translation since the King James version renders it? Tyndale’s New Testament, published in 1526, translated the word “congregation”. King Henry VIII executed Tyndale 10 years later for translating the New Testament. “The Word Church not to be translated Congregation” was the order handed down 78 years later by Henry VIII’s great grand-nephew, King James.

[Henry VIII’s sister was Margaret Tudor, mother of James V of Scotland, father of Mary Queen of Scots, mother of King James I of England]

Why did Tyndale reject the translation “church” by Wycliff 142 years before? Doesn’t

“congregation” mean “the people who listen to sermons at church”, so that both terms refer to the same institution? So then why did King James make such a royal fuss over the word, ordering his translators to render it “church” rather than whatever they thought ἐκκλησιαν meant? Could the word “congregation” have meant, then, something enough different than the “church” which the king ruled, to explain his surprising concern?

Despite King James’ instruction to copy the Bishop’s Bible authorized by Queen Elizabeth “as little altered as the Truth of the original will permit”, his translators copied 80% of Tyndale’s New Testament verbatim into their New Testament. But not, in the context of a Christian gathering, the word “congregation”.

What exactly did Jesus say He would build, upon (or “against”?) exactly what manner of “rock”?

The King James translation reads:

Matthew 16:13 When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? 14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

“Upon”, “rock”, “church”, “Gates”. What did

their Greek words mean to Greeks?

The Three “Rocks”

Jesus pointed verbally to “this rock”, but the Bible doesn’t tell us where He was pointing. Protestants say it was Peter’s rock-solid confession. Catholics say it was Peter himself. Recent Bible commentators have noticed He was standing near the “Rock of the Gods”. Could Jesus have meant all three?

Whether Peter ever presumed to have the final word on all theological questions, much less whether he ever imagined that his authority would be institutionalized into a succession of humans holding the final word on all theological questions, is vigorously disputed; but surely there is no disagreement that his was a critical role in the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ. Which makes Peter a reasonable theory about what “rock” Jesus meant.

John Gill on Matthew 17:1

Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother: Peter is taken, though he had so lately offended his master; Christ did not bear the offence in mind, but freely forgave him, and still loved him: James was not the brother of our Lord, who was of that name, but the Son of Zebedee; as appears from John being his brother, who was the beloved disciple; these

three were all favourite disciples, and were at other times admitted to be with him, when others were not, Mat_26:37. Such a number was taken, as being proper and sufficient to bear witness of the truth of the following account of Christ's transfiguration;

Peter was bold. He said what he saw, where the violent blind were listening.

There were whole centuries after Peter's time when not only would everyone smile at you for saying what Peter said, but people would torture you to death if you didn't say that, along with several more statements not particularly in the Bible but required by men who called themselves God's representatives.

But where Peter spoke, people were destroyed for saying a lot less than Peter did.

It was a mental struggle for several Apostles to care how it would benefit *them*. But they tried to care. They tried to soften their hearts towards their enemies. They tried to muster at least a little of the great love God had for them, for their enemies, who had hurt them less than they had hurt God.

~~~~~

Love is happiness. Love feels like happiness.

not robots their god, not king

To trust God is to trust that every challenge before us is God's will or at least consent to help us grow. **Rom 8:28** And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to *his* purpose.

mh And this is not purely a New Testament paradox, but even in Job's time it was said, *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth.* ...When we bear all that God appoints, and as long as he appoints, and with a humble obedient eye to him, and when we not only bear troubles, but rejoice in them, then patience hath its perfect work....*If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God.* We should not pray so much for the removal of an affliction as for wisdom to make a right use of it. ...Yea, it is expressly promised that *it shall be given, Jas 1:5.* ...If you should say you want a great deal of wisdom, a small portion will not serve your turn, the apostle affirms, he *gives liberally;* and lest you should be afraid of going to him unseasonably, or being put to shame for your folly, it is added, he *upbraideth not.* Ask when you will, and as often as you will, you will meet with no upbraidings....

Heb 10:36

Proves love source of joy being loved is restful;  
loving is joy, happiness

The trying of your faith worketh patience. James  
1:3, Romans 5:3

as 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into  
divers temptations;

**Jas 1:3** Knowing *this*, that the trying of your faith  
worketh patience.

**Jas 1:4** But let patience have *her* perfect work, that  
ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

(GW) You know that such testing of your faith  
produces endurance. ISV, TLV, TS2009, YLT

Ex 17:7 Num 14:22 Ps 78:18 asking meat vs 41  
LIMITED God vs 56 and STILL didn't obey Acts  
5:9 seeing what they could get away with 1 cor 10:9  
tempted, were destroyed of serpents

Get away from me, Satan," he said. "Your thoughts  
don't come from God but from human nature!"<sup>295</sup>

"Psalm 91 promises protection from all  
dangers, yes. But part of love is cost. Choice.  
Depriving the wicked of choice is not love.

Suppose I made people with no ability to help  
or hurt each other. Then love would not be  
possible.

## 27 AD

Jesus didn't give uninterrupted sermons; six

---

295 Mark 8:32-33, GNB version for v. 33.

sevenths of His teachings came about through verbal interaction, which He never discouraged. But it was as He concluded a teaching where no interaction was recorded, that He identified His teachings as a Rock.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord Jesus’ but don’t do what I say? If you hear what I say to do, and do it, you are wise. You are building your life on a Rock. The storms of life will not make you fall. But if your foundation is not on Me, you will fall hard.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, Jesus identifies what He says we should do as The Rock. At the same time, Jesus *Himself* is The Rock.<sup>2</sup> As if Jesus’ Words are so much the essence of Jesus Himself, that faith in Jesus and obedience to His commands are the same thing. It is impossible to earnestly “believe on” Jesus and only haphazardly try to obey Him or even read and try to understand what He said. The Apostle John wrote something like that 68 years later. John wrote that Jesus, Who was with God from the beginning, and *is* God, is also called The Word.<sup>3</sup>

*One* year later, Jesus told His apostles what He was going to build on that Rock. It was after Peter had acknowledged that Jesus was God’s Anointed Son. Jesus responded that it was fitting that a man *named* “rock” (the Greek name “Petros” means “rock”) should be the first to realize that, because Jesus *was* The Rock that would be the foundation for what Jesus would build.

It turned into more than an ironic coincidence. Peter, “the rock”, became the first to announce the Good News to the Jews,<sup>4</sup> and later to the Gentiles<sup>5</sup> (non-Jews).

To describe what He was going to build on The Rock, Jesus used the Greek word “ekklesia”.<sup>6</sup> “Ekklesia” is the Greek word for the form of government in Athens in which voters gathered to elect their leaders. In English Bibles today, the word “ekklesia” is normally translated “church”.

### Introduction to Part 3:

This dream describes a profound change in world government after the first four world empires.

Jesus' Kingdom will replace not just the last one, but *all* the others, according to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The whole statue is smashed to dust, not just the latest tyranny represented by the legs. In what possible sense could the stone cut not with hands destroy all four kingdoms equally, when the first three kingdoms were already vanquished by Rome by the time the stone was cut? But this makes perfect sense if the *form* of government of all four empires is what is being crushed to powder and blown away by the "wind".

Churches from the Reformation through the American Revolution saw enough spiritual importance of their forms of government to change them, from monarchies to republics. But churches today are politically inert by policy, neither expanding nor even preserving our freedoms, assuming God has little interest in whether we are any more free politically than we are spiritually.

This is the story of centuries of struggle between God's Freedom Verses and human traditions.

This is the story of verses gradually embraced by God's people over the centuries, and of verses not yet embraced – of blessings in proportion to obedience, and blessings not yet accepted.

This is the story of "Long experience...that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms [habits,

customs, traditions] to which they are accustomed.” - *The Declaration of Independence, 1776.*

The logical consequences of some of those Biblical things God calls Christians to do which Christians still resist doing provide a window to the Church and State of the Millennium. Glimpses of the future are entertaining and popular. They make a lot of money. Especially when they do not challenge us to costly action.

Which is why this glimpse of the future will never make much money. It shows you what *could* be yours *now* – to some degree, and how you could get on a better track with God to prepare a better world for your grandchildren. It shows you the work that must be done, and how costly it is: you will have to give up your unbiblical traditions. There may be much more you must give up, depending on the depth of your love.

### Part 3

#### **1604 AD, January**

“There are going to be some rules.”

He hadn't been king of England a year, and already a delegation of Puritans had come demanding reform of the Church of England which he also ruled.

*Demanding!*

Did they think they were talking to a novice king? Maybe he had been king of England and Scotland only a year, but he had reigned over Scotland since he was one!

What a system, monarchy! What other form of government lets you give orders to a whole country before you even learn to talk?!

Well, OK, so he was technically under “governors”, and the land was governed temporarily under “regents” until he *could* learn to talk, *but he was king!*

Let's see, how far back was that? Born June 19, 1566. King in 1567. Started really giving orders when he was 12, and took full control at 17.<sup>7</sup> 20 years in full control. What

happened to respect? The Presbyterians in Scotland (over which he ruled for the past 20 years) were easier to manage.

Most of the Puritan demands were ridiculous, and James told them so. Imagine, dispensing with the requirement of wedding rings in marriage ceremonies! Bad for business! And right after he had paid off a bunch of debt by selling a monopoly to London's richest jeweler! How else is the king supposed to pay his debts? Would the Puritans rather he raise taxes?!

Or making the sign of the cross during baptism! Take ceremony out of church, and what is left?!

Or the rite of confirmation for children after they have been taught the doctrines which they are required to believe. What kinder way to motivate children to learn what the law requires them to believe, than to reward them with a beautiful certificate they can hang on their wall to prove they are grownups? Would the Puritans rather he use whips?

To top that off, the Puritans didn't want priests to have to wear surplices – those knee-length robes with the wide sleeves, over their other clothes, and caps. How would the people recognize who is supposed to give the sermon, without uniforms?! Or recognize who is the priest?

“Oh, I forgot”, James reminded himself. “They don't want anyone to be called ‘priests’, either!”

All these demands were in the Millenary Petition<sup>8</sup> presented to him last April, so named because, the Puritans claimed, it was signed by 1,000 Puritan ministers.

So now it's January. It's snowing outside but the fires are roaring inside.

James is ready to preside over the Hampton Court Conference.<sup>9</sup> The bishops of the Church of England, along with the Puritan leaders, are here by order of the king, to address the demands of the Millenary Petition.

James explains to the assemblage why it is unthinkable to diminish the ceremonies, doctrines, or distinctions, between clergy and laity, of *his* church: “No



bishop, no king!”

In other words, his dictatorial power over all the land depends on his authority to tell people what to think, which has to include what to think about God. If there were no Bishop with dictatorial control over what all English citizens believe about God, who in turn is controlled by, and chosen by, the king, all his authority would unravel. Let people draw their own conclusions about God from their own Bible reading, and people might get the idea that there is a moral authority higher than the king’s, which might sometimes *conflict* with the king’s. Dangerous. Chaotic. Disorderly.

“If everybody is thinking alike, then somebody isn’t thinking”,<sup>10</sup> one of the Puritans told him. Bah! Stable government requires everybody to think alike, and to *stop* so much thinking.

James had not only thought about this, he had written two books about it. “The Divine Right of Kings” was his theological baby. He even gave it a title in New Testament Greek: *Basilikon Doron* [“Royal Donor/Giver”] (1599)

But there was one demand James was inclined to grant. He smiled at the opportunity it gave him to correct something which deeply annoyed him, and to do it with everyone’s blessing. Any time a tyrant can increase his power over how people think in a way that fills every heart with gratitude, that is like golden geese flying down out of Heaven.

But it wasn’t just removal of an obstacle to his power over the minds of the English that motivated him. He was also an accomplished scholar and author himself, and salivated over the prospect of presiding over writing and scholarship of this magnitude.

So yes, this was one request – er, demand – that he would grant.

The Puritans “demanded” a new Bible translation!  
This would be the eighth English Bible translation,

counting that first translation by Wycliffe two centuries before. But Wycliffe could only translate from the Catholic Church's Latin translation. Erasmus, the contemporary of Martin Luther, had not yet compiled all the known surviving Greek manuscripts into a single Greek New Testament that could be printed and distributed to scholars.

Not counting that one, King James' translation would be the seventh translated directly from the original Greek and Hebrew languages.

And what an opportunity that the Puritans had come to King James to subsidize the project, rather than just do it themselves whether the king liked it or not, the way all previous translations were done. When government subsidizes anything, it gets to put strings on it! And did King James have a couple of strings!

"Here are my 15 rules",<sup>11</sup> he commanded the Conference.

Most of the rules were not about content. They were very sensible guidelines to enable scholars to work together with the maximum input from everybody and the greatest freedom to discern God's meaning.

There were 47 qualified scholars in groups of about eight. Each group was given a section of the Bible to translate individually, after which they would meet to discuss and agree on a translation.

Where there was disagreement, the final version would be decided by vote of the whole group at the end of the translation process.

Rule 11 told the groups to solicit input from other scholars in the land when a passage seems unclear. Rule 12 invited everyone in the land skillful in the languages to send their observations to the groups.

Two rules were about content.

James hated the Geneva Bible margin notes. One in particular,<sup>12</sup> he took personally. It was on Exodus 1:22, which says, in the Geneva translation, "And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye

shall (i) cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.”

The Geneva note: “(i) When tyrants cannot prevail by deceit, they burst into open rage.”

“Tyrant”? Calling a legitimate ruler, authorized by God, a “tyrant” just because he exercised a little of his God-given authority? King James was concerned that talk like that, applied to Pharaoh, might incite citizens with less stable minds to usurp the power to think for himself about whether James/ *own* exercise of authority might qualify him for such a label!

That wasn’t the only margin note that irritated James. So now that the translators had not just put him in charge, but *demand*ed that he be in charge, he had a rule to fix that problem: “6. No marginal notes at all to be affixed....”

The rest of the rule was an exception for a brief explanation of Hebrew or Greek words when, without a margin note, too many words would have to be added to the translation to make the meaning clear.

The second rule about content was Rule 3.

3. The old ecclesiastical words to be kept; as the word church, not to be translated congregation, &c.

4. When any word hath divers significations, that to be kept which has been most commonly used by the most eminent fathers, being agreeable to the propriety of the place, and the analogy of the faith.

Propriety: 1. Peculiarity of possession; exclusive right. “*You that have promised to yourselves propriety in love, Know women’s hearts like straws do move.*” *Suckling*. “*Benefit of peace, and vacation for piety, render it necessary by laws to secure propriety.*” *Hammersed*. “*Hail, wedded love! mysterious law, true source of human offspring, sole propriety in Paradise! of all things comes on else.*” *Milton*. “*They secure propriety and peace.*” *Dryden*. “*To that we owe not only safety of our persons and the propriety of our*

*possessions, but our improvement in the several arts.”*  
*Atterbury.*

2. Accuracy; justness. *“Common use, that is the rule of propriety, affords some aid to settle the signification of language.”* *Locke*

*Johnston’s Dictionary, Part 2, 411 of 1104 pages.*  
*1785, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition.*

<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/approved-rules-for-the-new-translation/>

James wanted a popular translation that supported standard Church of England usages. So he insisted that the translation use old familiar terms and names. Rules 2 – 5 focused on this. About 90 percent of the actual translation used solid Anglo- Saxon words. Further, the whole was made readable (if formal) in the idiom of the day. Consistent with his conservative religious views against the radical ideas of the Puritans, James desired “the Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c.” The Translators were instructed, “When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith.” rule 4

With the six English translations of the Bible consulted (**Tyndale’s** Bible [1526], **Coverdale’s** Bible [1535], **Matthew’s** Bible [1537], **Great Bible** [1539], **Geneva** Bible [1560], **Bishop’s** Bible [1568]), the King James Bible became the seventh and final purification of the English Bible. "The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. Thou

shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation for ever." (Psalm 12:6-7)

1595 Geneva: church. Also 1569.

### **Matthew's Bible**

Great Bible <https://www.originalbibles.com/the-great-bible-1540-original-pdf/> oops

<https://archive.org/details/GreatBible1540/page/n435> p, 436

<http://www.bible-researcher.com/greatbible1.html> Great Bible 1539-1541 (1540 my image)

The fact that Taverner was invited to revise Matthew's Bible almost immediately after its publication shows that it was not universally regarded as successful; but there were in addition other reasons why those who had promoted the circulation and authorization of Matthew's Bible should be anxious to see it superseded. As stated above, it was highly controversial in character, and bore plentiful evidence of its origin from Tyndale....

Coverdale, though without the force and originality, or even the scholarship, of Tyndale, had some of the more valuable gifts of a translator, and was well qualified to make the best use of the labors of his predecessors. He had scholarship enough to choose and follow the best authorities, he had a happy gift of smooth and effective phraseology, and his whole heart was in his work. As the basis of his revision he had Tyndale's work and his own previous version; and these he revised with reference to the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, with special assistance in the Old Testament from the Latin translation by Sebastian Münster published in 1534-35 (a work decidedly superior to the Zurich Bible, which had been his principal guide in 1534), while in the New Testament he made considerable use of Erasmus. With regard to the use of ecclesiastical terms, he followed his own previous example, against Tyndale, in retaining the familiar Latin phrases; and he introduced a considerable number of words and sentences from the Vulgate, which do not appear in the Hebrew or Greek.

....Another circumstance which may have contributed to the same result was the reaction of Henry in his latter years against Protestantism. There was talk in Convocation about a translation to be made by the bishops, which anticipated the plan of the Bible of 1568 [the Bishops' Bible]; and Cranmer prompted Henry to transfer the work to the universities, which anticipated a vital part of the plan of the Bible of 1611; but nothing came of either project. The only practical steps taken were in the direction of the destruction of the earlier versions. In 1543 a proclamation was issued against Tyndale's versions, and requiring the obliteration of all notes; in 1546 Coverdale's New Testament was likewise prohibited. The anti-Protestant reaction, however, was soon terminated by Henry's death (January 1547); and during the reign of Edward VI, though no new translation (except a small part of the Gospels by Sir J. Cheke) was attempted, many new editions of Tyndale, Coverdale, Matthew, and the Great Bible issued from the press. The accession of Mary naturally put a stop to the printing and circulation of vernacular Bibles in England; and, during the attempt to put the clock back by force, Rogers and Cranmer followed Tyndale to the stake, while Coverdale was imprisoned, but was released, and took refuge at Geneva.

Tyndale:

[<https://www.biblestudytools.com/tyn/matthew/16.html>]

Matthew 16:18 And I saye also vnto the yt thou arte Peter: and apou this rocke I wyll bylde my **congregacion**. And the gates of hell shall not prevayle ageynst it.

**Wycliffe:** (More than two centuries before the King James Version came into existence, Oxford professor and theologian John Wycliffe undertook the first-ever English translation of Scripture. The hand-printed "Early Version" of the Wycliffe Bible, which first appeared in 1382, offered a literal translation of the Latin Vulgate. It was the first

time the common people had access to Scripture in their language in more than 1,300 years. By 1395, Wycliffe's friend John Purvey had amended the often-unwieldy translation into a "Later Version," which was easier to read but kept much of the poetry of the Early Version. This version, known today as the Wycliffe Bible, was widely distributed throughout England – all more than half a century before Gutenberg invented his printing press. )  
Matthew 18:16 And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and on this stone I shall build my church, and the gates of hell shall not have power against it. [And I say to thee, for thou art Peter, and upon this stone I shall build my **church**, and the gates of hell shall not have might, or strength, against it.]

Coverdale: <https://www.originalbibles.com/coverdale-bible-1535-pdf/> p. 464

<https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/magazine/article/approved-rules-for-the-new-translation/>

James wanted a popular translation that supported standard Church of England usages. So he insisted that the translation use old familiar terms and names. Rules 2 – 5 focused on this. About 90 percent of the actual translation used solid Anglo- Saxon words. Further, the whole was made readable (if formal) in the idiom of the day. Consistent with his conservative religious views against the radical ideas of the Puritans, James desired "the Old Ecclesiastical Words to be kept, viz. the Word Church not to be translated Congregation &c." The Translators were instructed, "When a Word hath divers Significations, that to be kept which hath been most commonly used by the most of the Ancient Fathers, being agreeable to the Propriety of the Place, and the Analogy of the Faith." rule 4

<http://www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/kingjames.htm> "When tyrants cannot prevail by craft they burst forth into open rage" (Note i, Exodus 1:22) really bothered King James.

The Dutch declared religious freedom for everybody. Amsterdam became an open city. English Puritans arrived by the boatload. The 1599 Edition of the Geneva Bible was printed in Amsterdam and London in large quantities until well into the 17th century.

King James, before he became James I of England, made it plain that he had no use for the "Dutch rebels" who had rebelled against their Spanish King. Another irony left to us from the 16th century is that the freedom of religion and freedom of the press did not originate in England, as many people commonly assume today. Those freedoms were first given to Protestants by the Dutch, as the records of that era plainly show. England today does not have freedom of the press the way we understand it. (There are things in

England such as the Official Secrets Act that often land journalists in jail.)

England was relatively peaceful in the time of Elizabeth I. There was the problem of the Spanish Armada, but that was brief. Elizabeth later became known as "Good Queen Bess," not because she was so good, but because her successor was so bad. Elizabeth died in 1603 and her cousin, James Stuart, son of Mary Stuart, who up until that time had been King James VI of Scotland ascended the throne and became known as King James I of England. James ascended the throne of England with the "divine right of kings" firmly embedded in his mind. Unfortunately, that wasn't his only mental problem.

King James I, among his many other faults, preferred young boys to adult women. He was a flaming homosexual. His activities in that regard have been recorded in numerous books and public records; so much so, that there is no room for debate on the subject. The King was queer.

James was a sadist as well as a sodomite: he enjoyed torturing people. While King of Scotland in 1591, he personally supervised the torture of poor wretches caught up in the witchcraft trials of Scotland. James would even suggest new tortures to the examiners. One "witch," Barbara Napier, was acquitted. That event so angered James that he wrote personally to the court on May 10, 1551, ordering a sentence of death, and had the jury called into custody. To make sure they understood their particular offense, the King himself presided at a new hearing — and was gracious enough to release them without punishment when they reversed their verdict.

History has it that James was also a great coward. On January 7, 1591, the king was in Edinburgh and emerged from the toll booth. A retinue followed that included the Duke of Lennox and Lord Hume. They fell into an argument with the laird of Logie and pulled their swords. James looked behind, saw the steel flashing, and fled into the nearest refuge which turned out to be a skinner's booth. There to his shame, he "fouled his breeches in fear."

In short, King James I was the kind of despicable creature honorable men loathed, Christians would not associate with, and the Bible itself orders to be put to death (Leviticus 20:13). Knowing what King James was we can easily discern his motives.

James ascended the English throne in 1603. He wasted no time in ordering a new edition of the Bible in order to deny the common people the marginal notes they so valued in the Geneva Bible. That James I wasn't going to have any marginal notes to annoy him and lead English citizens away from what he wanted them to think is a matter of public record. In an account corrected with his own hand dated February 10, 1604, he ordained:

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-I-king-of-England-and-Scotland>

James I, (born June 19, 1566, Edinburgh Castle, Edinburgh, Scotland—died March 27, 1625, Theobalds, Hertfordshire, England), king of Scotland (as James VI) from 1567 to 1625 and first Stuart king of England from 1603 to 1625, who styled himself "king of Great Britain." James was a strong advocate



of royal absolutism, and his conflicts with an increasingly self-assertive Parliament set the stage for the rebellion against his successor, Charles I. James had been tutored by Presbyterians and publicly professed his support for Puritanism while sitting on the Scottish throne, but English Catholics hoped that he would also act tolerantly toward them, given his mother's religious beliefs. Instead, James continued the Elizabethan program of Catholic suppression after a group of Catholics orchestrated the Gunpowder Plot to seize control of the government in 1605. James also attempted to weed out nonconformity among the Puritans by calling the Hampton Court Conference and prosecuted Protestants who refused to adhere to the revised canons. In short, James I was more apt to pursue his own absolutist policies than to side with any particular faith, and he suppressed all who tried to undermine his total authority.

James, one year old, became king of Scotland on July 24, 1567. Mary left the kingdom on May 16, 1568, and never saw her son again. During his minority James was surrounded by a small band of the great Scottish lords, from whom emerged the four successive regents, the earls of Moray, Lennox, Mar, and Morton. **There did not exist in Scotland the great gulf between rulers and ruled that separated the Tudors and their subjects in England. For nine generations the Stuarts had in fact been merely the ruling family among many equals, and James all his life retained a feeling for those of the great Scottish lords who gained his confidence.**

After falling under the influence of the duke of Lennox, a Roman Catholic who schemed to win back Scotland for the imprisoned Queen Mary, James was kidnapped by William Ruthven, 1st earl of Gowrie, in 1582 and was forced to denounce Lennox. The following year James escaped from his Protestant captors and began to pursue his own policies as king. His chief purposes were to escape from subservience to Scottish factions and to establish his claim to succeed the childless Elizabeth I upon the throne of England. Realizing that more was to be gained by cultivating Elizabeth's goodwill than by allying himself with her enemies, James in 1585–86 concluded an alliance with England. Thenceforward, in his own unsteady fashion, he remained true to this policy, and even Elizabeth's execution of his mother in 1587 drew from him only formal protests.

In 1589 James was married to Anne, the daughter of Frederick II of Denmark, who in 1594 gave birth to their first son, Prince Henry. James's rule of Scotland was basically successful. He was able to play off Protestant and Roman Catholic factions of Scottish nobles against each other, and, through a group of commissioners known as the Octavians (1596–97), he was able to rule Scotland almost as absolutely as Elizabeth ruled England. The king was a convinced Presbyterian, but in 1584 he secured a series of acts that made him the head of the Presbyterian church in Scotland, with the power to appoint the church's bishops.

There was admittedly much that was sensible in his policies, and the opening years of his reign as king of Great Britain were a time of material prosperity for both England and Scotland. For one thing, he established peace by speedily ending England's war with Spain in 1604. But the true test of his statesmanship lay in his handling of Parliament, which was claiming ever-wider rights to criticize and shape public policy. Moreover, Parliament's established monopoly of granting taxes made its assent necessary for the

improvement of the crown's finances, which had been seriously undermined by the expense of the long war with Spain.

His fondness for lecturing both houses of Parliament about his royal prerogatives offended them and drew forth such counterclaims as the Apology of the Commons (1604). To parliamentary statesmen used to Tudor dignity, James's shambling gait, restless garrulity, and dribbling mouth ill befitted his exalted claims to power and privilege.

Definition of garrulity - excessive talkativeness, especially on trivial matters  
Who walks while dragging or shuffling the feet. An awkward, irregular gait.

When Parliament refused to grant him a special fund to pay for his extravagances, James placed new customs duties on merchants without Parliament's consent, thereby threatening its control of governmental finance. Moreover, by getting the law courts to proclaim these actions as law (1608) after Parliament had refused to enact them, James struck at the houses' legislative supremacy. In four years of peace, James practically doubled the debt left by Elizabeth, and it was hardly surprising that when his chief minister, Robert Cecil, earl of Salisbury, tried in 1610–11 to exchange the king's feudal revenues for a fixed annual sum from Parliament, the negotiations over this so-called Great Contract came to nothing. James dissolved Parliament in 1611.

The abortive Great Contract, and the death of Cecil in 1612, marked the turning point of James's reign;

James left a body of writings which, though of mediocre quality as literature, entitle him to a unique place among English kings since the time of Alfred. Chief among these writings are two political treatises, *The True Lawe of Free Monarchies* (1598) and *Basilikon Doron* (1599), in which he expounded his own views on the divine right of kings.

<http://www.lorenzburg.org/en/2016/03/19/basilikon-doron-1599-written-by-king-james-i/>

<https://www.christianheritagemins.org/articles/Basilikon%20Doron.pdf>

Of Plimoth Plantation

[https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted\\_hildebrandt/nereligious/history/bradford-plimoth/bradford-plymouthplantation.pdf](https://faculty.gordon.edu/hu/bi/ted_hildebrandt/nereligious/history/bradford-plimoth/bradford-plymouthplantation.pdf)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilikon\\_Doron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Basilikon_Doron)



The Basilikon Doron repeats the argument for the divine right of kings, as set out in *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, which was also written by James. It too warns against "Papists" and derides Puritans. It advocates removing the Apocrypha from the Bible. The published Basilikon Doron may well have been intended to portray the king in a favorable light. James Sempill assisted James in composing it. Robert Waldegrave, who was bound to secrecy, printed seven copies at the king's behest. Henry Taylor said that he printed it on Waldegrave's press. Richard Royston, and later William Dugard, printed further copies.

The Basilikon Doron criticises both Roman Catholics and Puritans. This is in keeping with the king's philosophy of following a "middle path", as reflected in the preface to the 1611 King James Bible.

<https://www.britannica.com/event/Hampton-Court-Conference>

Hampton Court Conference, meeting held at Hampton Court Palace, near London, in January 1604, in response to the Millenary Petition (q.v.), in which the Puritans set forth their demands for reform of the Church of England. The conference was presided over by King James I and attended by the bishops and the Puritan leaders. Among the reforms discussed were changes in church

government, changes in The Book of Common Prayer, and a new translation of the Bible.

James rejected most of the Puritans' demands and was firm in his rejection of any change in the episcopal form of church government. When confronted with the issue, he said that he had learned in Scotland "No bishop, no king." He accepted the Puritans' request for a new translation of the Bible,

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Millenary-Petition>  
Millenary Petition, moderate request for changes in certain practices within the Church of England, presented to King James I of England in April 1603 by Puritan ministers. It received its name from the claim by the authors that it had been signed by 1,000 (Latin millenarius, "of a thousand") Puritan ministers. Some practices objected to were ceremonial, such as the priest's making the sign of the cross during Baptism, use of the ring for marriage, the rite of confirmation, and ministers' wearing of surplices. The petition caused the King to call the Hampton Court Conference (q.v.), where most of the Puritans' requests were rejected.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James\\_VI\\_and\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_VI_and_I)

In his reign, the Plantation of Ulster and British colonisation of the Americas began.

Under James, the "Golden Age" of Elizabethan literature and drama continued, with writers such as William Shakespeare, John Donne, Ben Jonson, and Sir Francis Bacon contributing to a flourishing literary culture.[1] James himself was a talented scholar, the author of works such as *Daemonologie* (1597), *The True Law of Free Monarchies* (1598), and *Basilikon Doron* (1599).

He was strongly committed to a peace policy, and tried to avoid involvement in religious wars, especially the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) that devastated much of Central Europe. He tried but failed to prevent the rise of hawkish elements in the English Parliament who wanted war with Spain.

In June 1567, Protestant rebels arrested Mary and imprisoned her in Loch Leven Castle; she never saw her son again. She was forced to abdicate on 24 July 1567 in favour of the infant James and to appoint her illegitimate half-brother, James Stewart, Earl of Moray, as regent.[13]

James was anointed King of Scots at the age of thirteen months at the Church of the Holy Rude, Stirling, by Adam Bothwell, Bishop of Orkney, on 29 July 1567.[16] The sermon at the coronation was preached by John Knox.

On 8 August, James made Lennox the only duke in Scotland.[27] The king, then fifteen years old, remained under the influence of Lennox for about one more year.[28]

Rule in Scotland

James in 1586, age 20

Lennox was a Protestant convert, but he was distrusted by Scottish Calvinists who noticed the physical displays of affection between him and the king and alleged that Lennox "went about to draw the King to carnal lust".[24] In August 1582, in what became known as the Ruthven Raid, the Protestant earls of Gowrie and Angus lured James into Ruthven Castle, imprisoned him, [c] and forced Lennox to leave Scotland. During James's imprisonment (19 September 1582),

In 1586, James signed the Treaty of Berwick with England. That and the execution of his mother in 1587, which he denounced as a "preposterous and strange procedure",

the Spanish Armada crisis of 1588,

Throughout his youth, James was praised for his chastity, since **he showed little interest in women. After the loss of Lennox, he continued to prefer male company.**

A suitable marriage, however, was necessary to reinforce his monarchy, and the choice fell on fourteen-year-old Anne of Denmark,

James became obsessed with the threat posed by witches and wrote *Daemonologie* in 1597, a tract inspired by his personal involvement that opposed the practice of witchcraft and that provided background material for Shakespeare's *Tragedy of Macbeth*. [45] James **personally supervised the torture of women accused of being witches.** [46] After 1599, his views **became more sceptical.** [47] In a later letter written in England to his son Henry,

James congratulates the prince on "the discovery of yon little counterfeit wench. I pray God ye may be my heir in such discoveries ... **most miracles now-a-days prove but illusions, and ye may see by this how wary judges should be in trusting accusations.**" [48]

In 1597–98, James wrote *The True Law of Free Monarchies and Basilikon Doron (Royal Gift)*, in which he argues a theological basis for monarchy. In the *True Law*, he sets out the divine right of kings, explaining that kings are higher beings than other men for Biblical reasons, **though "the highest bench is the slidriest to sit upon."** [58]

In the *True Law*, James maintains that the king owns his realm as a feudal lord owns his fief, because kings arose "before any estates or ranks of men, before any parliaments were holden, or laws made, and by them was the land distributed, which at first was wholly theirs. And so it follows of necessity that kings were the authors and makers of the laws, and not the laws of the kings." [63]

certain English politicians—notably her chief minister Sir Robert Cecil [g]—maintained a secret correspondence with James to prepare in advance for a smooth succession. [74] With the Queen clearly dying, Cecil sent James a draft proclamation of his accession to the English throne in March 1603. Elizabeth died in the early hours of 24 March, and James was proclaimed king in London later the same day. [75]

arriving in the capital on 7 May, nine days after Elizabeth's funeral. [76] **His new subjects flocked to see him, relieved that the succession had triggered neither unrest nor invasion.** [77] On arrival at London, he was mobbed by a crowd of spectators. [78]

The kingdom to which James succeeded, however, had its problems.

Monopolies and taxation had engendered a widespread sense of grievance, and

the costs of war in Ireland had become a heavy burden on the government,[81] which had debts of £400,000.

On ascending the English throne, James suspected that he might need the support of Catholics in England, so he assured the Earl of Northumberland, a prominent sympathiser of the old religion, that he would not persecute "any that will be quiet and give but an outward obedience to the law".[121]

In the Millenary Petition of 1603, the Puritan clergy demanded the abolition of confirmation, wedding rings, and the term "priest", among other things, and that the wearing of cap and surplice become optional.[122] James was strict in enforcing conformity at first, inducing a sense of persecution amongst many Puritans;[123] but ejections and suspensions from livings became rarer as the reign continued.[124] As a result of the Hampton Court Conference of 1604, a new translation

James's sexuality is a matter of dispute. Throughout his life James had close relationships with male courtiers, which has caused debate among historians about their exact nature.[130] In Scotland Anne Murray was known as the king's mistress.[131] After his accession in England, his peaceful and scholarly attitude contrasted strikingly with the bellicose and flirtatious behaviour of Elizabeth,[130] as indicated by the contemporary epigram *Rex fuit Elizabeth, nunc est regina Iacobus* (Elizabeth was King, now James is Queen).[132]

Some of James's biographers conclude that Esmé Stewart (later Duke of Lennox), Robert Carr (later Earl of Somerset), and George Villiers (later Duke of Buckingham) were his lovers.[133][134] Sir John Oglander observed that he "never yet saw any fond husband make so much or so great dalliance over his beautiful spouse as I have seen King James over his favourites, especially the Duke of Buckingham"[135] whom the King would, recalled Sir Edward Peyton, "tumble and kiss as a mistress." [136] Restoration of Apethorpe Palace undertaken in 2004–08 revealed a previously unknown passage linking the bedchambers of James and Villiers.[137]

Some biographers of James argue that the relationships were not sexual.[138] James's Basilikon Doron lists sodomy among crimes "ye are bound in conscience never to forgive", and James's wife Anne gave birth to seven live children, as well as suffering two stillbirths and at least three other miscarriages.[139] Contemporary Huguenot poet Théophile de Viau observed that "it is well known that the king of England / has union with the Duke of Buckingham".[140][m] Buckingham himself provides evidence that he slept in the same bed as the King, writing to James many years later that he had pondered "whether you loved me now ... better than at the time which I shall never forget at Farnham, where the bed's head could not be found between the master and his dog".[142] Buckingham's words may be interpreted as non-sexual, in the context of seventeenth-century court life,[143] and remain ambiguous.[144]

James was widely mourned. For all his flaws, he had largely retained the affection of his people, who had enjoyed uninterrupted peace and comparatively low taxation during the Jacobean era.

Under James, the Plantation of Ulster by English and Scots Protestants began, and the English colonisation of North America started its course with the foundation of Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607,[171] and Cuper's Cove,

**Newfoundland, in 1610.** During the next 150 years, England would fight with Spain, the Netherlands, and France for control of the continent, while religious division in Ireland between Protestant and Catholic has lasted for 400 years. By actively pursuing more than just a personal union of his realms, he helped lay the foundations for a unitary British state.[172]

According to a tradition originating with anti-Stuart historians of the mid-17th-century, James's taste for political absolutism, his financial irresponsibility, and his cultivation of unpopular favourites established the foundations of the English Civil War. **James bequeathed Charles a fatal belief in the divine right of kings, combined with a disdain for Parliament, which culminated in the execution of Charles I and the abolition of the monarchy.** Over the last three hundred years, the king's reputation has suffered from the acid description of him by Sir Anthony Weldon, whom James had sacked and who wrote treatises on James in the 1650s.[173]

Ah, so the very articulation of “Divine Right of Kings” brought it to the forefront of national consciousness where it could be considered and finally rejected. Not abolition of monarchy, but certainly limitation. lost control over churches?

Henry, Prince of Wales (19 February 1594 – 6 November 1612). Died, probably of typhoid fever, aged 18.[186]

Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia (19 August 1596 – 13 February 1662). Married 1613, Frederick V, Elector Palatine. Died aged 65.

Margaret (24 December 1598 – March 1600). Died aged 1.

Charles I, King of England, Scotland and Ireland (19 November 1600 – 30 January 1649). Married 1625, Henrietta Maria. Succeeded James I & VI. Executed aged 48.

Robert, Duke of Kintyre (18 January 1602 – 27 May 1602). Died aged 4 months.[187]

Mary (8 April 1605 – 16 December 1607). Died aged 2.

Sophia (June 1607). Died within 48 hours of birth.[188]

<http://www.luminarium.org/sevenlit/james/jamesbio.htm>

James had to face difficulties from his earliest years—his mother was an incompetent ruler who quarrelled with politicians and churchmen such as John Knox,

**In lively style and with considerable learning he defended the Oath of Allegiance which Catholics were required to take, disputed it with the great [Cardinal Bellarmine](#), wrote two books on Divine Right, one, *Basilikon Doron*, for the edification of his son [Prince Henry](#) (1594-1612) and the other, *The True Law of Free Monarchies*, was a simple explanation of his theories for the general literate public. D.H. Willson, one of James's biographers, calls the first book "entertaining and quotable" (133) and also cites [Francis Bacon](#) as finding that it "filled the whole realm as with a good perfume or incense, being excellently written and having nothing of affectation" (166). James's comment on Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* was "it was like the peace of God, which passeth all understanding"**

(Ashton 142). James also wrote some rather moving "Meditations on the Lord's Prayer" and a justly famous essay, "[A Counterblast to Tobacco](#)" (1604), one of the first, and surely one of the best attacks on smoking ever written. Smoking, James tells us, is "a custom loathsome to the eye, hateful to the nose, harmful to the brain, dangerous to the lungs, and in the black, stinking fume thereof, nearest resembling the horrible Stygian smoke of the pit that is bottomless."

<https://brandplucked.webs.com/kingjamesahomo.htm>

statements about the importance of sexual purity:

"But the principal blessing is in your marrying of a godly and virtuous wife? being flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone? Marriage is the greatest earthly felicity" (p. 43).

"Keep your body clean and unpolluted while you give it to your wife whom to only it belongs for how can you justly crave to be joined with a Virgin if your body be polluted?" (p. 44).

"When you are married, keep inviolably your promise made to God in your marriage" (p. 45).

"Abstain from the filthy vice of adultery; remember only what solemn promise ye made to God at your marriage" (p. 54).

The king wrote plainly against the sin of homosexuality.

"Especially eschew to be effeminate" (Basilikon Doron, p. 46).

"There are some horrible crimes that ye are bound in conscience never to forgive: such as witchcraft, willful murder, incest, and sodomy" (p. 48).

The charge of homosexuality was made by the king's enemies and only after his death. Stephen Coston's book *King James the VI of Scotland and the I of England Unjustly Accused?* (St. Petersburg, FL: Konigswort, 1996) makes the case that the charge was slanderous and untrue. The charge was first made by Anthony Weldon, who had been expelled from his office by James for political reasons and had sworn that he would have his day of vengeance. Weldon not only hated James, he hated the entire Scottish race.

but The first English translations, by Tyndale and Wycliff, translated the word as "assembly", with no connotation of ritual worship services, formal doctrines whose acceptance was a condition of membership, or

He said the "Gates of Hell" would not survive the collision.<sup>13</sup> The city gates, where the crowds were largest, was where government was conducted in those days. So in other words, Jesus was saying the tyrannical governments



run by demons which dominated history – the “Gates of Hell” – would be displaced by a new kind of government – an Ekklesia – based on His teachings.

64 AD

# INTRODUCTION to Part 4

By projecting how society would be impacted by our obedience to annoying verses like these, we can get a clearer glimpse of Jesus’ government of the future, and better understand what Jesus has been waiting for all these centuries.

This is the story of many steps forward, and a few backwards, of God’s Freedom Stone. It is the story of healing of all human relationships, from friends to families to churches to nations. It is a review of past progress and future prophecies. It is a review of God’s promised blessings to the extent we accept His priority on developing our relationship skills in all our relationships, and a warning of the cruel, tragic, *avoidable* consequences for our families, our churches, our schools, and our nations, to the extent we don’t.

This is a story not just of speculations about the future for your entertainment, but is an offer of the greater blessings God wants for you *right now*, and how you can accept them.

How can the United States be such a dominant force

in the world today, which seems so near the time of “End Times Prophecy”, and be absent enough from Bible prophecy that radio prophets debate whether the United States is in prophecy at all?

A popular theory to account for so little prophetic mention is that before the final End Times battle scenes, the United States will no longer exist. Since those final scenes seem so imminent, this theory predicts that the United States is about to be totally destroyed.

This debate overlooks Daniel 2. Daniel doesn't specify the United States, but he gives details about the growth of the Freedom Stone that, combined with statements of Jesus, match basic features of the United States.

“What a preposterous statement!” you say. “Jesus is not the one passing U.S. laws and ordering U.S. armies! Fallen humans are at the helm, including quite a number who have no time for Jesus. It is hard enough to find politicians who think Jesus is even relevant enough to quote, much less the One signing bills and issuing executive orders and directing troops on battle fronts. It is difficult to imagine Jesus even *associating* with a nation stained with the blood of 60 million of its own infants, which lets men in girls' bathrooms, whose schools teach children to be Moslem terrorists, and which revels in being a ‘Bad Samaritan’ by ‘walking by on the other side’ as millions die at our gates begging for safety from violence and starvation. How could any of these or a thousand more abominations occur were Jesus in charge?”

But Jesus is not a “king” like any human king that anybody ever heard of. He rules willing hearts. Jesus doesn't rule by physical force. The growth of the Freedom Stone in Daniel 2 is not a growth in Jesus' dictatorial power backed up by armies armed with weapons of destruction.

The growth of His rule is a growth in the willingness of “His” people to accept more and more of His commands. By that standard, the government of the United States is definitely shaped by *more* of Jesus' principles than other governments – perhaps more than any other government in

all of human history other than the righteousness which was Israel's from time to time.

Of course the United States desperately needs more spiritual growth! And of course, the need for it, so far in excess of the supply of it, threatens America's survival to the extent that it may indeed cease to exist in a short time.

An 1892 "Holy Trinity v. U.S." Supreme Court case called ours a "Christian nation" not because it is perfect Biblically, a standard by which no individual could ever be properly called a "Christian", but because of several practices in our national life which show our nation has been shaped more by the Bible than by any other religion.

Neither "Christian" nor "Christian nation" implies perfect faithfulness.

This isn't just about politics. The government/citizen relationships (1 Peter 2:13) of the United States are not the only relationships in the United States that fit the profile of the Freedom Stone. The husband/wife relationships (1 Peter 3:1-7), church leaders/congregation relationships (1 Peter 5:1-4), younger/older relationships, and finally the subjection that all of us owe to each other (1 Peter 5:1-5) have all progressed over the centuries from really barbaric, brutal experiences to kinder, happier relationships, and a dramatic share of the progress has been the history of the United States.

Not that the growing Freedom Stone is a metaphor of the United States only: its growth manifests in other places, and her abominations may well lead to her total destruction as Freedom moves elsewhere, without interrupting Freedom's steady growth.

And not that the Freedom Stone wasn't "cut out without hands" until the Pilgrims landed. That "stumbling stone", that "stone which the builders rejected", (Romans 9:32, Psalms 118:22; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7) is the rule of Jesus Christ.

But for the past 400 years, the United States has been "the point of the spear" of Jesus' growing, maturing rule on Earth.

**Glorify not the USA, but the principles of Jesus that *made* the USA  
Those principles will last. We don't know about the USA.**

This book will expand on how that commission is the core of the United States, despite the evil around the core. It will glance back over the centuries before the United States to note the ever-expanding adoption of Biblical principles by an ever-widening portion of the world's population, and of the role the United States has played in toppling monarchies and other dictatorships over the past 400 years. It is ironic and wonderful that the United States, with its drive to bless other nations generally much greater than the drive of individuals for conquest, has been made so physically powerful by its service-based economy that it has been in the position of judging between warring nations, identifying the innocent, and defending them.

Our Republic is the outgrowth of Jesus' commission. Not that we are the end of that growth. Not that other places are not part of the same world-filling growing Freedom Stone. Not that we will never turn far enough from God for God to utterly abandon us and allow our complete destruction.

This book is more about elevating those principles of Jesus, than about elevating the United States. There is little awareness among American Christians that God cares anything about our political freedoms. God cares very much. But not just about our political freedoms. Our religious freedom, more.

Here's where this book gets uncomfortable. It feels good to reflect on "In God We Trust", the statements of our founders about God, and the miracles God has done to save our nation.

But what about freedom of religious expression in our churches?

Let me conclude with two questions:

1. If you found in the Bible that God's idea of a

worship service is where anyone may share on Biblical subjects, and that Jesus condemns the sermon system where no verbal interaction is allowed, and that America is sliding towards Hell because worship of God disobeys God and distances “church” from any shining of our Matthew 5:13-16 Bible Light outside our “church bushel”, would you pray for, look for, and support God’s kind of fellowship?

2. OK, you have just heard me insinuate that the pastor/sermon system that has dominated churches of the past 1700 years is against the Bible and needs to change. Nearly 2,000 years ago, Paul told the Bereans that the way they had been worshipping for the past 1,500 years needed to change. Their response was to search the Scriptures daily, to see if he was right. For that readiness to double check the foundations of their faith against even the most improbable claims, God called the Bereans “noble”. Do you feel very noble?

How long will the United States hold a prominent place in this growth of Freedom? That’s up to us.

It is popularly assumed that Nebuchadnezzar’s dream does *not* prophesy a change in the *form* of government to a Representative Democracy like what governs America today, but only a change from flawed, bloody *human* kings, to King Jesus. Bible translations say Jesus will be a “king”. The word “King” describes the most entrenched, unchallenged kind of absolute dictatorship.

There were “good kings” in Bible history, like David, Solomon at first, Josiah, Hezekiah. But the form of government they ruled was a monarchy. In 1 Samuel 8, God said to prefer monarchy over a system of elected leaders is to reject God from ruling over the people.

There was no other branch of government with any coercive power to restrain Israel’s “good kings”, had they not chosen to be “good”. Under Moses’ system, Israel’s judges had been chosen by the people; Deuteronomy 1:13. The power to choose is usually accompanied by some ability to unchoose leaders who turn evil.

Prophets restrained kings, as Christians restrain tyranny today, by speaking the truth despite the consequences; but they had no *physical* defense against a king's decision to torture them to death. Israel's kings were subject to a Constitution – the laws of Moses<sup>296</sup> – but Moses' laws could not force kings to obey when a king chose not to, like our legislatures can restrain presidents and courts can restrain legislatures.

---

296Moses' law was like a "Constitution" in that it was an authority superior to that of every government authority, and it had been ratified by all the people.

The first king of Israel was subject to such a body of laws: "1 *Samuel 10:25 Then Samuel told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the LORD. And Samuel sent all the people away, every man to his house.*"

This requirement was given by Moses: "*Deuteronomy 17:14 When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me;...18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites: 19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them: 20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*"

God did not unilaterally impose His Will on Israel, but four times during Moses' time "all the people" ratified God's "constitution": "*Exodus 19:8 And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD. | Exodus 24:3 And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. | Exodus 24:7 And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. | Deuteronomy 26:17 Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:*"

"All the people" rededicated themselves to obeying God's "constitution" at least three more times – under Joshua, Nehemiah,

So far the timeline of history shows ruthless dictatorial empires of the past increasingly restrained by laws and elections through Biblical influence until hardly any king remains. The strongest governments today are chosen through free elections.

In other words, the timeline of history is well described by Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, in Daniel 2, where a succession of brutal world empires is crushed and ground to dust by a political system as much more solid as a mountain is than a statue.

Will Jesus reverse that trend, eliminate all those free governments, and rule as a dictator, though a dictator so perfect that everyone will be happy and it will be like Heaven on Earth? That seems to be the predominant impression among Christians today, although I do not find it articulated. Rather, I hear the terminology of monarchy used, but at the first collision of rhetoric with the Bible's description of a rule unlike any monarchy than anybody ever heard of, we fall back to "it will be unlike anything in human experience."

Certainly a monarchy, in which millions of people sit together with the king in his throne,<sup>297</sup> judging everyone (which includes judging each other)<sup>298</sup> along with the king,

---

and King Asa: *"Joshua 24:24 And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. | Nehemiah 10:29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; | 2 Chronicles 15:12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;"*

297 Revelation 3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

298 1 Corinthians 6:1 Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? 2 Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? 3 Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

is unlike anything in human experience. However, simply by changing the word “monarchy” into “republic” and “king” into “president”, then it is our familiar modern American experience that millions of people participate with our President in adopting the standards under which we live. Again, not that we see God’s government fully mature. But the very progressive growth described of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream tells us that the longer time rolls on, the more of a glimpse we should expect of God’s vision for government.

Bible believers should not so easily give up trying to understand what the Bible means. We should dig for truth with the excitement of digging for buried treasure.<sup>299</sup> Jesus explains things farther from human experience than a future political system, such as His relationship with God, with simple analogies using familiar relationships.

Therefore when we find an English translation of a word that clashes with all of the Bible’s contexts of that word, it is worth reexamining the translation before we give up understanding the verses.

We may forgive translators who presented Jesus as King when monarchies were virtually the only form of government that anyone had ever heard of. But tradition is a poor reason to keep using the word when other forms of government within human experience are worlds closer to what the Bible describes.

Jesus ridiculed royalty, calling it the opposite of real greatness and commissioning us to displace it with its opposite.

Luke 22:25 And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. 26 But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth

---

299 Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. ....13:44 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.



serve. 27 For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth. 28 Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations. 29 And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; 30 That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Monarchies like what Jesus ridiculed are a form of government which Daniel said would be displaced by its opposite.

Daniel 2:34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth....44 And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Greek just says foundation of power – a monarchy is not specified, and several verses describe the government of the future in terms that are farthest from any monarchy.

# INTRODUCTION

## N to Part 4

The heart has been sucked out of American Christianity by Politiphobia.

Those whose hearts cry for all the evil in the world are told our churches can't have anything to do with that, because most of the evil in the world is involved with politics and we can't have any discussions, or strategy meetings, about tackling that, on church property or through church communication mediums. No pulpit announcements, no bulletin inserts, no church web page, no fliers.

The word "compassion" is used a lot in some churches, and there are some good works it is good to see, distributing a little food, occasionally a little medical care, a little legal assistance for immigrants. Does that make a dent in the harm caused by government meddling in our food supply and medicine?

"Compassion" is a word used a lot in some churches as the reason to vote for champions of certain government policies. But what if a church member wonders if certain policies actually work? What if they result in the opposite of their purpose? How are we ever going to know in our churches which censor discussion with members who try to offer scrutiny, which is another way of saying they are "people who disagree", which conversations can't be allowed because that is the definition of "controversial", and it is "politics" to boot?

Many Old Testament verses challenge all citizens to put a stop to oppression of widows, orphans, and strangers. Not just to stop mere failure to give them assistance, but to stop people taking advantage of them in court and through

law. In other words, to stop politics that exploit them. Jesus repeated that theme, accusing the Pharisees of making long prayers as a pretense for seizing widows' houses. (The Pharisees were the rulers of the Sanhedrin, whose laws were enforced by Sanhedrin police. Lawmakers whose laws are enforced by police are politicians in every sense. Jesus was heavily involved in "politics".)

Hideous tortures overseas, torturing to death our own unborn, seizing children from good parents, all of which people tolerate and even vote for, are justified by good intentions which pave the road to Hell. Wise policy could stop these but wisdom is censored in American churches. One man or woman may contribute wisdom, **up to the point where the board considers it controversial; the Multitude of Counsellors which Proverbs says ensures success is cut off at the knees, in American churches.**

Jesus said it is virtually impossible for very rich people to enter the Kingdom of God. American church members are very rich. Over the centuries God has restored very rich, very apathetic people by bringing in invaders who made them very poor, at best, and persecuted, tortured and enslaved them, at worst. The question for our time is, can we give our resources, material and intellectual, to those in desperate need, without the necessity of having God strip us of our resources in order **to spare our hearts from turning completely to stone?**

Jesus' answer is that with God all things are possible. Indeed, Heaven is a place of wealth. The natural consequence of living for Jesus is generally an increase of resources, according to promises like Luke 6:38. Which is why America is wealthy today, because that is a general promise, which makes groups wealthy on average, although to get and keep groups following Jesus' principles, individuals must voluntarily sacrifice much for presenting God's opportunities to people who hate change. We have grown as a species. We can be a lot richer than our ancestors, and still love sacrificially. But as rich as we are now? That is our challenge.



- 1 Matthew 7:24-25, Luke 6:46-48
- 2 1 Corinthians 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ.**
- 3 John 1:1-5
- 4 Acts 2:14-36
- 5 Acts 10
- 6 That is, of course, our earliest record of the word Jesus used was the Greek word “Ekklesia”. Jesus spoke in Hebrew and Aramaic, but we have no record of what Hebrew or Aramaic words He used. Greek was the language of choice for New Testament writers because Greek, then, was the most widely spoken language in the world, like English is today. There is a robust theory that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Aramaic, and there is a 5<sup>th</sup> Century manuscript of Matthew in Aramaic, but it was most likely translated from Greek. A summary of the discussion is posted at <https://www.neverthirsty.org/bible-qa/qa-archives/question/was-the-gospel-of-matthew-originally-written-in-aramaic/>.
- 7 <https://www.britannica.com/biography/James-I-king-of-England-and-Scotland>
- 8 <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Millenary-Petition>. See the text at <https://history.hanover.edu/texts/ENGref/er88.html>
- 9 <https://www.britannica.com/event/Hampton-Court-Conference>
- 10 Actually that was a quote from General George S. Patton, but I couldn’t resist slapping it in here.
- 11 <http://kjv.landmarkbiblebaptist.net/kjv-instructions.html>
- 12 <http://www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/kingjames.htm>
- 13 Matthew 16:18. “Gates” of cities were where government was conducted. It is where tyrants persecuted Christians.