



ACM BIBLE STUDIES

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

The Record of the Beginning of Jesus' Reign

Chapter Five

INTRODUCTION

“States, by their very nature, are perpetually at war – not always against foreign foes, but always against their own subjects”

—Robert Higgs

THIS CHAPTER continues the theme of Christian Separatism as we found it in chapter four. It focuses upon the struggle between freedom and slavery in the events surrounding Peter, the apostles, and the rulers of Jerusalem.

But, this struggle also represents a larger battle ... one involving an international “beast” which we must analyze from a larger geopolitical and historical viewpoint – illustrated symbolically in Revelation 12.

This struggle relates to Christians of all ages. Unfortunately, however, the history of this struggle has gotten mixed up and forgotten because churches through the ages have reduced it to a myth about a supernatural “devil” and his demons fighting supernatural battles against God and his angels.

To understand Biblical symbols we first must not see them as literal things. Symbols only represent real things. But, churches have tried to literalize the symbols. Symbolic “beasts” are not literal animals of fantastic proportions. For instance, the multi-headed “dragon” of Revelation 12 represents kingdoms and governments.

The terms “beast” and “dragon” symbolize systems ... sometimes labeled “Babylon” and “Egypt.” These are international combines of central banking, central politics, and central religion. Central Banking, Central Politics and Central Religion control the lives of people – including the military, commerce, banking, schools, entertainment, taxation, the media, civil agencies, and churches. Together they cover it all, demonstrating the vast powers of the Beast System.

Valuable insight is derived from examining Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-40) – the consummate politician. You will see that politicians have not changed much since the time of the apostles. In fact central government, then and now, has always operated on the same principle – namely, *deceive the people, conquer them, and keep them enslaved*. It’s still the same old tyranny with a few new twists to try and deceive people into believing government is necessary and sovereign.

But, by far the most important aspect of this lesson is the concept of Eonian Life. Here is the earliest mention of the subject in Acts. It will be expanded as we study through the remainder of the book. If you can grasp what is meant by Eonian Life, then you will succeed in throwing off much of the delusion affecting our people from centuries of religious confusion.

If “eonian life” is a new concept to you, this will have special significance. Studying the Bible and History is an on-going re-examination and re-learning. We do not come to an educational halt after we learn one set of truths, or read one historian's view of past events.

We must keep learning.

ACTS 5:1-11 PLOTTING TO DECEIVE GOD

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession,

And kept for himself part of the price, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet.

But Peter said, Ananias, how has the adversary filled your heart to deceive the holy spirit, and to separate for yourself part of the price of the land?

While it remained yours, was it not your own? and having been sold, was it (the money) not still in your own authority? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You acted false, not to men, but to God.

And Ananias hearing these words fell down cold (i.e., dead): and great fear came on all them that heard these things.

And the young men arose, wrapped him, and carried him out, and buried him.

After an interval of three hours, his wife, not knowing what had occurred, came in.

And Peter said to her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, Yes, for so much.

Then Peter said to her, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried your husband are at the door, and shall carry you out.

Then, immediately, she fell down cold (i.e., dead) at his feet: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carried her forth and buried her by her husband.

And great fear came upon all the ecclesia, and upon all hearing these things.

THIS strange account has caused much speculation among theologians. Ananias and Sapphira were seemingly doing the same thing that other converts to the gospel of the kingdom had done in chapter four: they were selling their property and investing the proceeds in the new kingdom of Jesus Christ by donating to the work of the apostles. But what was their sin?

At first glance these verses might suggest that Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was in not giving 100% of all they received from the land sale ... as if they were practicing Communism. But, if this had been the case Peter should have been condemning all who didn't give all to the ministry. In other words, everyone who didn't give all should have dropped dead like Ananias and Sapphira. But, the

fact is that there were some who gave part or NOTHING – and they weren't struck dead.

If “Christian Communism” is the principle we are to learn from this incident, then we must surmise that Jesus was no different from any other central tyrant ... demanding control of all property. Peter would then be saying to the people, “*You have to bring all your property and give it to me or else you will die!*” But, this is not the lesson of these verses. Peter was neither Communist nor tyrant!

Ananias' and Sapphira's sin was DEFRAUDING GOD. The problem was not that they kept some of the price back for themselves ... but that they lied about it. Peter tells them, in verse four, that while the proceeds from the sale of their property remained with them, it was in their

own power to do with as they wanted. They didn't have to give all, or any, of their proceeds to the apostles – or to anyone. But, they lied about it and proved they were deceitful.

The apostles were leading the way in spreading the good news of liberty (from central slavery) by doing the work of Christ in His kingdom. Their ministry was being funded by a cadre of sincere people who were donating liberally of their own free will. Being less sincere than these, Ananias and Sapphira sought to appear equally pious by claiming to have invested everything – meanwhile secretly holding part of their proceeds back for themselves.

Ananias lied, and Sapphira repeated the same lie. Peter told them, “*You haven't just lied to men but you've lied to God.*” Lying was the

sin. It wasn't that he didn't give all of his property. He could have kept all of his property and nobody would have said anything.

Jesus Christ's government is not just another form of man's tyranny – taking freedom away from the people. If Ananias and Sapphira hadn't tried to defraud the ecclesia, they wouldn't have died.

This is a sample of the kind of events that occurred at the beginning of Christ's reign. These things made people aware that judgment was coming first upon the House of God (I Pet. 4:17). It was the kind of thing that kept people aware of a higher Power. These kind of events tended to make the kings of the earth keep hands off. It makes congresses, or legislatures, less sure that they are totally sovereign ... as they openly claim today. It gives the common man the power to stand up and say, "Thus says the Lord!" and people pay attention. This doesn't happen much today. But they paid attention to Peter when Ananias and Sapphira were carried out.

Now, if God killed Ananias and Sapphira for attempting to defraud the ecclesia, just think what God's

judgment is upon modern churches and their preachers and fund raisers. What is He doing to the con artist preachers who lie – not just once – but day, after day, after day, demanding more and more funds under false pretenses? These are the preachers who live a lie, and con their listeners to support them in their schemes.

Marketing advertisers take lessons from evangelists and preachers – the best salesmen in the world with their false advertising techniques. They demand money in God's name, and then threaten the people with Hell and damnation if they don't send it in. These con artists thrive in churches – where they seem to enjoy a particularly accommodating climate. Religious charlatans practise varying techniques, but they are all cut from the same cloth.

How will God judge these preachers? Must they die, like Ananias and Sapphira? Actually, they are already dead – not physically, but spiritually. The judgments are not always readily apparent to those who don't have eyes to see. Nevertheless, dishonesty is being exposed via the ecclesia.

QUESTION: What about those preachers we know today who are dishonest but haven't been struck down dead? Shouldn't we overlook their problems? After all, they do hold a position of spiritual authority.

QUESTION: What about the lying preachers today who seem to be prospering?

ACTS 5:12-16 WITNESSING CHRIST'S REIGN

And through the hands of the apostles many signs and proofs were occurring among the people; and they were all like-minded at the Colonnade of Solomon.

But, none of the rest dared to join himself to them: but the people magnified them.

And believers were being added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.

Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and cots, in order that as the shadow of Peter passed by it might overshadow some of them.

There came also a multitude out of the cities round about to Jerusalem, carrying the sick, and those disturbed with unclean spirits: and they were all being cured.

VERSE 13 says there were some who feared what they were seeing. Perhaps they saw what happened to Ananias and Sapphira and realized that Jesus wasn't playing games. This new movement was serious business. So, it says that some avoided the apostles at that point.

Verse 14, in light of what we studied in chapter four, reveals that there were two different categories of people involved. First, there was this cadre or group who joined forces to follow the apostles. Secondly, there were the passive believers. Even though people quit joining the cadre (as it says in verse 13), more "believers" were added. But notice, the believers were not added to a "church." It says they were "added to the Lord." If we could ever get that

straight in our minds it might help deprogram us from church mythology. Churchgoers tend to break up into bickering factions which are then consumed by petty competition. They lose track of their REAL mission. The members of one Church are worried about another Church "winning over" more people. Churches don't help people. They divide, confuse, and neutralize people. They distract people from reality.

It is obvious by this great stirring of events, miracles, and signs, that Jesus was actively working and reigning – showing the power of His kingdom through the apostles by granting them grace and authority to speak, to heal, and to work miracles. Those were not the results of an absentee king retreating into outer space to wait to establish a future kingdom – as the churches teach.

QUESTION: What is the difference between that group of people who joined themselves to the apostles in their kingdom work, and most of the people in modern-day churches?

QUESTION: Why is it that Christians of eras gone by were always being thrown into jail, murdered, or in some other way persecuted by central government, but in modern times people called "Christians" seem to always pay their taxes, never get thrown into jail, and generally fit right in with centralized society?

ACTS 5:17-20 PRISON

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation,

And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison.

But the messenger of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said,

Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.

THE high priest and the sect of the Sadducees, in effect, said, "We have not been successful in stopping this movement. We must try something else. The situation is getting out of hand." So, here again the apostles found themselves the target of the Church-and-State gang.

In chapter four, they had escaped because the priests and elders were unable to invent charges to discredit the good works and the miracle they were involved in. But this time the priests and the Sadducees were

getting tougher and actually threw them into prison.

But, again, the Lord was with them and delivered them from prison. Take note: verse 19 doesn't say that the messenger God sent was a supernatural one. (The Greek word for "angel" simply means messenger – not necessarily supernatural.) God could have simply caused one of those guards to open the door. Or maybe the guards fell asleep and some other man could have walked into the prison to free the apostles.

Whatever kind of messenger he was, he successfully set the apostles free without the enemy knowing it.

The messenger said, "*Go stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life*." Think about that phrase for a moment. This messenger understood the words of life. What do you think he meant by "the words of this life?"

What words?

What life?

Did he mean physical, biological life? Did he mean the future after-life? What kind of "life" did he mean?

Understanding "that life" is the key to understanding New Testament theology. "That life" is mentioned repeatedly throughout the New Testament, and as we shall see, it referred neither to physical life, nor to the future afterlife.

Let's study some other verses that help explain "the words of this life":

We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.

1 John 3:14:

It is evident from this verse that men can abide "in life," or abide "in death." In other words, men can exist with life, or exist with death. John says that he had been dead and now had become alive. Others were still abiding in death.

Was John talking about being

physically, biologically dead, and then raising up again to physical, biological life? No, obviously not. He is talking about a spiritual death and spiritual life. That spiritual life was so important that these apostles risked their lives to stand in the temple, facing the enemies of Jesus Christ, to speak "the words of this life."

12. He that has the Son has the life; and he that has not the Son of God has not the life.

1 John 5:12

Notice that there are two classes of people: 1. those who have life, and 2. those who have not life. Both classes of people are physically, biologically alive ... but one class is spiritually dead while the other class is spiritually alive.

13. These things I wrote to you who

believe in the name of the Son of God so that you would know that you are having eonian life.

20. And we know that the Son of God is come, and He has given us discernment, so that we are knowing Him who is true, and we are in Him that is true, by means of His Son, Jesus Christ. This one (The Father) is the true God and life eonian.

1 John 5:13,20

Yahweh is "the true God, and eonian life." John told his people that they could know they have eonian life by the fact that they knew Jesus and His Father. "We are in Him" was an idiomatic phrase referring to the source of that new life. The source of their new life was in God.

Eonian life, as 1 John 5:20 states, is the ability to know (mentally

perceive) the true God and his Son, Jesus Christ. In other words, we are "alive" if we have that awareness, knowledge, and understanding. And, we are "dead" if we don't have that awareness, knowledge and understanding. That is what is meant by the distinction between "alive in Jesus," or "dead in sin." Many people are walking around without eonian life. They are spiritually dead although they are physically (biologically) alive.

People have understood these verses wrongly ... as the churches taught them. They relegated all such verses to a future raising. They have missed the entire point.

When Lazarus died and Jesus arrived four days later, Lazarus' sister came to Jesus:

21. Then Martha said to Jesus, Lord,

"EONIAN" & "ETERNAL"

We cannot begin to understand these early "Acts" of Christ and his Apostles unless we first understand the Greek word "aionian" ... also spelled "eonian." This word has been rendered "eternal" and "everlasting" in the King James Version. But it should have been left as it was: "eonian." "Eonian" is also an English word.

An "eon" is an "age." "Eonian," the adjective form, means "of an age," or "pertaining to an age."

Some translators have rendered it "age-lasting," or "age-during." Some rendered it "age-abiding." However, since "eonian" was used in the English language, and meant the same as in the Greek, the obvious correct thing to do would have been to simply leave it "eonian" ... as it was listed in the older English dictionaries before the churches changed its definition.

An eon is an age. "Eonian life" is "life of the eon" or "life of the age." When used in the New Testament it simply meant "**the new life in Christ given to us in this age.**"

The KJV translators often rendered this word "eternal" ... which worked at one time. But "eternal" has become confusing to modern generations

because the churches have changed its definition as well. Originally "eternal" meant "age long" or "life long": (Latin: *aeviternus* – *aevi* = age; *ternus* = duration, or term). It was shortened to *aeternus* ... and then to "eternal" in English. Thus, "eternal" means "term or duration of an age." An "eternity" is literally "an age" ... and an age always has a beginning and an end. "Eternal" did not originally mean "timeless" or "without beginning or end" as modern dictionaries define it.

"Eternal life" is correctly understood to mean "life that endures for an age." By the same token, "eonian life" means "life of the age," or "life of the eon." In the New Testament it refers to the NEW LIFE JESUS GIVES US IN THIS AGE.

Eonian life is the "new birth" life Christ gives to Christians, transforming us with "holy spirit." It is the "life" that makes us new creatures. It is not to be confused with *immortal life* which only Christ has received thus far (1 Tim. 6:16).

Please keep this in mind during the remainder of this study. We will continue to study the subject of eonian life because it continues to pop up throughout the book of Acts.

if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

22. But I know, that even now, whatsoever you will ask of God, God will grant it.

23. Jesus said to her, Your bother will raise up.

24. Martha said to him, I know that he will rise in the raising in the last day.

25. Jesus said to her, I am the raising, and the life: the one believing in Me, if ever he should die, he will live:

John 11: 21-25

Jesus said, "I am the raising," "I am the life." He did not say "I will be the raising and the life." He said "I am the raising and the life." His words were clear and meaningful. He was not speaking in the future tense. The words were present tense ... intended to counter Mary's inference that "the raising" would be in the future. Jesus stated it that way to place emphasis upon the present life He offered.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from his tomb that was a physical raising. But, that was not the "raising" Jesus emphasized to Mary. He emphasized THE PRESENT EONIAN LIFE. Jesus was "the life" RIGHT THEN.

God has glorious things for us in the future, but let's not overlook the eonian life of today. The future does not diminish the present!

Jesus also said:

24. Truly, I tell you, He that hears my word (i.e., my words of this life") and believes on Him that sent me IS HAVING eonian life (not "will have," but "IS HAVING" – right then), and is not coming into judgment; but HAS passed out of death into life.

25. Truly, I tell you, The hour is coming, and NOW IS (presently), when the dead shall hear the voice (i.e., the words) of the Son of God: and they that hear will live.

John 5:24-25

"Eonian life" was already upon them ... and this was nearly 2,000 years ago. Now, if "eonian life" had meant "immortality" then this scripture would have proven false ... because all those men died. Obviously, it does not mean that.

Eonian life comes by hearing the words of Christ.

51. Truly, I tell you, If a man observes my words into the eon, he will not see death.

John 8:51

What shall we do with these scriptures that seem to contradict all major theologies of the churches? These scriptures can be hard, or they can be easy – depending upon how we approach them.

How many times have we read them in the past ... and dismissed them as awkward or mysterious? Have we the courage to admit that we haven't understood the "life" and the "death" in these scriptures?

You see, "this life" has always been relegated to the distant future by the pagan theologians of the churches. However, the apostles were talking about a present spiritual life, and they were expressing it in the present tense.

If you keep the words of God you are not spiritually dead. Eonian life abides in you. That doesn't mean you are immortal. Rather, it means that spiritual life abides in you right now ... accompanying and guiding your mortal existence.

The topic is spiritual life and spiritual death. Adam died a spiritual death when he disobeyed God. That explains how he could die "the very day" he committed the sin ... and still live biologically for 900 years.

But, the good news is that the new life in Christ abides in us as when we accept His grace and believe in Him.

It is important for us to be spiritually alive. We can't teach, witness, or be useful if we're spiritually dead. We must be "alive in Christ" to be useful in His present Kingdom.

1. Jesus spoke these words, and

lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you:

2. As you have given him authority over all flesh, that he should give eonian life to as many as you have given him.

3. And **this is life eonian**: that they are knowing you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you send.

John 17:1-3

Verse 3 verifies 1 John 5:20, which we read earlier. Awareness of The Father and His Son Jesus Christ is the evidence of Eonian Life.

The words of this life are repeated in scripture many times. In his letter to the Galatians Paul says:

20. I am crucified with Christ, but I live: yet not I, but Christ is living in me.

Galatians 2:20

In Romans six, Paul talks about "death" and "raising up":

8. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we also will live with him:

9. Knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, He is dying no more; death is no longer master over him.

10. For in that he died, he died to sin once but in that he lives, he lives to God.

11. Likewise reckon you also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but **ALIVE** to God through Christ Jesus our Lord.

Notice that immortality is not the subject here. We are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, and reckon ourselves to be alive in Christ ... ALIVE with "the new birth" or "new life in Jesus" (i.e., eonian life).

12. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts.

13. *Neither yield you your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin: but make yourselves stand beside God, as if alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Romans 6:8-13

In Acts 12 & 16 the apostles were miraculously freed from prisons by messengers sent by God. These

messengers instructed them to go and tell the rest of the people about “**the life**” and “**the kingdom**,” “**the raising**,” or “**eonian life**.” Only a person who understood the real meaning of “eonian life” would have said: “Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people **all the words of THIS LIFE**.”

QUESTION: Why haven't other Bible scholars, clergymen, or churches figured out this definition of “eonian” life and “eternal” life? If hundreds of scholars over hundreds of years all agree that the Bible is talking about everlasting life in a future kingdom, why should we suddenly change our beliefs to this concept of “eonian life?”

ACTS 5:21-26 THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

After hearing this they entered into the temple before daybreak, and were teaching. But the high priest and they that were with him called the Sanhedrin together, and all the elders of the sons of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought.

But when the officers came, and found them not in the prison, they returned and reported,

Saying, We found the prison locked in all security, and the guards standing at the doors: but when we opened, we found no one within.

And as they heard these words the captain of the temple and the chief priests were in a quandary as to what might become of this.

Then someone came and reported to them, saying, Behold, the men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people.

Then the captain and the guards went and brought them without violence: for they feared the people, lest they should have been stoned.

IT is absolutely vital that we understand eonian life! This term, this concept, represents the most profound event to ever impact mankind – especially in light of what follows in the book of Acts.

After the apostles escaped from prison, they did just as God's messenger told them. They went to the temple to speak the words of Eonian Life. Those "words of this life" (as the messenger put it) were so powerful they caused a great stir among the people. That "life" was

causing change – social and political change. It was turning lives around and tearing at the foundation of the Beast System.

The chief priests and the elders of the children of Israel did not like it. They were losing control again. Also notice that it wasn't only Edomite Jews who were opposing the apostles. Israelites were involved as well. Verse 21 identifies them as “the elders of the sons of Israel.” Just as we found that some Israelites also were involved in crucifying Jesus

(Acts 2), some of those opposing Christ's Reign were Israelites as well. Thus it was then, and thus it continues today.

Nonetheless, the message was beginning to take hold among the people, and the rulers were wondering what to do about this revolution.

Thousands of people were waking up, and the government hirelings had to be careful not to upset the public by using violence upon the apostles when they found them again in the temple. They carefully re-arrested them and took them back before the Sanhedrin.

It is interesting to note the public's mentality then as compared to the public's mentality today. Today, the public uniformly worships government. Modern government henchmen have not the slightest inhibition against roughing people up publicly. They have no fear of the public because modern men, generally, cannot think independently of church and state. They're ignorant, blind, and will usually fight against the innocent victim instead of for him. But, back in the days of the apostles, something was happening that opened people's eyes. The result was that the chief priests and elders in central government had to be more careful with the apostles – at least in public.

QUESTION: Can we count on help from God today to keep us from harm when confronted by the enemy?

ACTS 5:27-28 POLITICIANS DODGE RESPONSIBILITY

And when they had brought them, they stood them before the Sanhedrin: and the high priest asked them,

Saying, Did not we command you to not teach in this name (in Jesus' authority)? and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your teachings, and you intend to bring upon us the blood of this man.

IN chapter four we discussed the problem of the chief priests and "authority." Remember, it was not just the apostles' doctrine of "life" that was bothering the chief priests. That was only part of the problem. The other part of the problem was that the apostles were teaching without the state's permission. They were teaching in the name of Jesus (i.e., with Jesus' authority). Moreover, they claimed they didn't need the state's approval to say the things they had to say. Thus, they were teaching without state certificates, without state licenses, without state approval.

Think of this scenario happening today – someone claiming that a private individual could have more authority than the state. You begin to see, just as it would be today, their actions back then amounted to

rebellion and sedition against the state. They were making an end run around Big Brother ... and incurring his wrath.

Another part of the problem was that the chief priests' did not like the idea of having their guilt in the murder of Christ exposed. In verse 28, they accuse the apostles of trying to bring Jesus' blood upon them.

Now, these priests were typical politicians; typical bureaucrats; typical liars. Putting on a front of innocence, they acted "shocked" that these radicals would blame them for the death of Jesus, even though they WERE responsible for Jesus' death. In typical politician's form they simply made up an excuse or story to cover-up their crime. Like modern politicians, they lied without conscience and with seeming impunity.

In this case, their cover-up lies were just the opposite of what they had actually said a short time earlier, as recorded in Matthew 27:

11. And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Are you the King of the Judeans? And Jesus said to him, You are saying.

12. And while he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.

13. Then said Pilate to him, Do you not hear how many things they witness against you?

14. Yet he answered him not a word; insomuch that the governor wondered greatly.

15. Now at the festival the governor was accustomed to release to the crowd a prisoner, whom they wished.

16. And they had then a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

17. Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said to them, Whom do you wish me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

18. For he knew that through envy they

had delivered him.

19. But, as he sat on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, Have nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of him.

20. But the chief priests and elders persuaded the crowd that they should ask for Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.

21. The governor answered and said to them, Which of the two do you wish me to release to you? They said, Barabbas.

22. Pilate said to them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all said to him, Let him be crucified.

23. And the governor said, What evil has he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.

24. When Pilate saw that nothing helped, but rather an uproar was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this person: you see to it.

25. THEN ANSWERED ALL THE PEOPLE, AND SAID, LET HIS BLOOD BE ON US, AND ON OUR CHILDREN!

Matthew 27:11-25

Considering this confession of guilt by their own mouths only a few weeks earlier, this same gang of devils had a lot of gall to turn around and deny it by claiming innocence in Acts 5. Further, they then had the audacity to accuse the apostles of unjustly trying to bring Jesus' blood upon them. Isn't that the way politicians work? It's the exact behavior! Politicians are never responsible for their actions. They are never responsible for the promises they make. The chief priests and the elders were the politicians in that day, and they were having to deal with the perennial problem of TRUTH – their worst fear. The apostles were telling the people the truth. The politicians knew their lies were being exposed, and they had to make every effort to stop it. That meant stopping the apostles.

QUESTION: Isn't it possible to elect good, honest men into government positions, and have them turn government towards righteousness? If we were able to get enough good men elected, wouldn't they "throw all the bums out?"

ACTS 5:29-32: GODLY RESISTANCE

Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We must obey God rather than men.

The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you slew and hanged on a cross.

It was He that God exalted to his right hand to be Chief and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

And we are witnesses of these words and the holy spirit which God gives to them that are obeying him.

WE must honor God's Law rather than man's law. The apostles chose to obey God rather than men.

Yes! Rebellion against the Beast System is Godly. There are other examples in Scripture of godly rebellion against man's law systems. In these examples God not only allowed the rebellion, He encouraged it! For instance, notice Hebrews 11:

23. Through faith Moses, at his birth, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they did not respect the king's ordinance.

Hebrews 11:23

The "king's ordinance" was to kill all Hebrew children two years of age and younger. Baby Moses fell into that category. But his parents had faith to resist ungodly commands from the government. It was man's law, not Yahweh's law. Moses' parents saved him because they were not afraid of the king's ordinance. They chose to rebel against man's law, and God blessed them for it.

After Peter's hard-core anti-government statement – one of the greatest statements of rebellion that has ever been spoken by man – he continued in the next few verses to explain the simple truth about the Reign of Christ. He explained that the Reign of Christ (the Kingdom of Heaven) had superseded all other governments. It had, in effect, canceled any government that was not under Christ's authority. God had placed Jesus above all earthly kings. He exalted Him to His right hand to be Chief and Savior, and He had raised Him above all.

Let's pose a question based upon this scripture. Which came first – the spirit of resistance, or the obedience? Did God give them the spirit after they obeyed?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS NOT A PERSON

The pronoun in verse 32 is of the neuter gender in Greek – correctly rendered "which." It is interesting to note, however, that the KJV wrongly has it "whom" (as if masculine or feminine gender). We learned in lesson one that holy spirit is not a person even though the King James translators wrongly used the term "the Holy Ghost." The capital letters and the word "ghost" evoke a mental image of an actual personality. But holy spirit is not a person. It is God's inspiration/motivation.

Because of doctrinal prejudice, the King James translators arbitrarily chose "whom" rather than "which." "Whom" suggests a person. But the correct translation is "which." This example of improper translation illustrates the bias of the 17th-century government of King James. They were propagandists of church mythology and they have led millions of people astray from the truth.

Incorrect translation:

And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. (KJV)

Correct translation:

And we are witnesses of these words and the holy spirit which God gives to them that are obeying him.

Or, did God first give them the spirit of resistance which then led them to obey?

Think about it. Some people say we must continually seek after the holy spirit ... until "signs" ("prophecy," "tongues," etc.) are received to prove we finally "got the spirit." Some say we can do things to obligate God to give us gifts.

But, let's put this matter into proper perspective. Do we choose to obey God BEFORE we receive holy spirit?

The fact is, WE HAVE NO MOTIVE TO OBEY GOD BEFORE HE GIVES US HOLY SPIRIT! We couldn't even discern right from wrong without holy spirit. If we are obeying God, or even seeking truth, it's only because He has already INSPIRED us.

QUESTION: How is everyone going to be saved if God only selects certain people to receive holy spirit?

QUESTION: Isn't it unfair of God to do the choosing and not give everyone a chance to get the holy spirit?

ACTS 5:33 TRUTH -VS- GOVERNMENT

When they heard that, they were cut to the heart and wanted to do away with them.

HERE is a typical government reaction to truth. When the runner brings bad news, they kill the runner. When truth hurts, kill the truth.

These tyrants had power over Jerusalem ... and truth was cutting them to the heart, or as it says in the Greek: "*sawing them in two.*" In other words, it was not just a political inconvenience. Rather, it was striking at the heart of their tyranny. Truth was threatening the power of the government.

So, how did these politicians respond? Did they investigate to see if there was validity to the apostles' words? Did they care whether these men were good or bad? Or, did they just summarily decide to kill them and get them out of the way?

Obviously, the truth was causing them embarrassment ... so, they did

what all politicians do. They killed the truth. This is a politician's typical response to truth. Get rid of whoever is speaking truth. Put them in jail. Do something to cover up the truth so government won't be exposed.

Roman government, and Judean government, ruled Jerusalem through fear and lies. But now someone had begun a movement of truth: something which does away with fear and exposes liars. When people hear truth they can develop sound minds. Sound minds are not fearful or easily duped.

Truth poses a real danger to tyrants. In Judea it was breaking down the mental and spiritual walls of slavery that the politicians and priests had used to rule over the people for centuries. Suddenly, something new came along to turn their world system "upside down." It

was TRUTH. And the truth was that Jesus was King. It came through the apostles who were carrying out their commission to tell the good news.

The natural conflict between slavery and freedom was obvious in these early events of Christ's Reign. This conflict was between government-by-man and government-by-Christ.

It was inevitable. Tyranny cannot permit truth to co-exist with it. The political profiteers must destroy any man, or group of men, who offer truth to the public. In the Book of Acts, we are seeing a cause and effect process: God caused truth to appear, and the Beast (man's central government) reacted to it. It perceived truth as an invasion and a threat.

The apostles' message of freedom was undermining the Beast's foundation. Piece by piece, the

illusion of the Beast system was being eroded. It began in little Judea, but the Beast in Rome soon realized the ramifications. If this movement were allowed to continue in Judea it could soon be in Rome and Asia Minor.

Nowadays, the Beast uses guns and twentieth-century technical warfare. But the use of bullets and force requires some pre-conditioning brainwash to get the public to go along with it. But, since the apostles' message was dissolving the effects of government brainwashing, the Sanhedrin opted to resort to violence without the usual cautions.

"Beast Government" is the type of government with which we are familiar. It is not new. Government back in that day was no different in principle than the government of today ... in terms of brainwashing and tyranny. The principle of enslavement was the same, but they lacked the technical means that modern governments enjoy.

One of the Bible's terms for Beast government is "Dragon." If you can think of the dragon in Revelation 12 as "dragon government," instead of a mythical devil, then you will have a much more practical view of world events.

In the symbolic vision of Revelation 12, John describes the dragon's reaction to truth and liberty.

Here, just as in Acts five, the dragon saw that it was being threatened. It then attempted to destroy this new way of life that was appearing.

1. And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: and she was with child.

Revelation 12:1

Israel is often referred to as "the woman" or "the wife." But this woman is not old Israel as she was in that day. This woman was clothed in light (the sun), and darkness (the moon) was under her feet, and she wore a crown on her head. This woman represented a righteous Israel

– not the contemporary Israel, for Israel of that day was lost and in a state of idolatry. Indeed, that was why Jesus was sent to Israel ... to rescue them from their lost condition.

So the woman depicted a righteous remnant of Israel reborn ... with a crown of 12 stars (depicting the 12 Apostles in the Reign of Christ). She was giving birth to a new system! Her child was not an individual, but a SYSTEM. That "manchild" was the New Covenant System of Christ.

2. And she cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3. And there appeared another sign in heaven; and behold a great fiery dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

Revelation 12:2,3

The two main entities depicted in these verses were: **1.** the New Covenant Ecclesia as manifest through the 12 apostles, and **2.** the Babylonian system of man manifested in the Jewish Sanhedrin and the Roman Empire. The scene is set "in heaven," which ties in with our study in Acts Five. "Heaven" symbolically depicts government or authority. Heights have always been analogous to "top" offices in any kingdom's ruling framework.

The dragon depicts man's rule or government. So we see that these events were staged "in heaven."

This great fiery dragon had seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns. In other words, it represented several governments. It was multinational.

4. And his tail dragged a third part of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

5. And she (the remnant) brought forth a son, a man child, who was to shepherd the nations with a staff of iron: and her child was caught up to God, and to his throne.

Revelation 12:4,5

This multinational dragon had overpowered approximately a third of the known governments of the world. The "stars of heaven" depict other governments or rulers.

A child – a new system – was being born, and the international dragon intended to devour it.

Notice, this is not about Jesus only, it is about his Reign. This "manchild," born of a system, was itself a system. It was a new Reign. Notice, in verse five, the manchild is caught up to God's Throne (given God's authority). This depicts the New Covenant Eon: Christ's System as manifested through New Jerusalem!

Revelation 12 depicts the conflict between two great powers: the manchild represents Christ's System. The fiery dragon represents man's system. Man's system is at war with Christ's system.

John continues in Revelation 12:

7. And there was war in heaven: Michael and his messengers fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his messengers,

Revelation 12:7

Man's system was fighting against something called "Michael and his messengers." These were not exploits of mythical flocks of angels fighting supernatural demons up above the clouds. No, what we are reading about is much closer to home. "Michael and his messengers" is a symbolic depiction of Christ's system and its messengers. The word "Michael" in scripture means "to stand for God." In Revelation 12 it represents Jesus and his ecclesia spreading the Kingdom message. "Michael and his messengers" represent Christ's system.

8. And it (the dragon and his messengers) prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

9. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and the adversary, which makes the whole land to err: he was cast out into

the earth, and his messengers were cast out with him.

Revelation 12:8,9

In these verses we see a battle between the Ecclesia (Christ's Reign) and the world system (man's reign). The good news is that the dragon system does not prevail over Christ's System.

The woman (a righteous remnant) fled to the wilderness where the earth hid her and preserved her from the onslaught of the dragon system.

Now, remember this illustration as we return to the conflict related in Acts Five. The book of Acts is telling us, in narrative, what Revelation 12 also describes in symbolism. The dragon was waiting to devour the manchild as soon as it was born. If you understand that, then the Gospel of the Kingdom becomes understandable! Hopefully, as we study through Acts, you can continue to share the excitement and the glory of these early days of Jesus' Reign. You will witness the glory of the King of kings and his followers as they demonstrate to mankind how to defeat the Beast.

QUESTION: If the apostles were beginning to successfully destroy the foundations of the "Beast" system, then why have governments grown progressively stronger and why has government oppression grown worse since that time?

QUESTION: Can't the dragon still symbolize a supernatural Devil? Even though the various heads and crowns on the dragon represent various governments and rulers, couldn't they all still be supernaturally influenced by the Devil?

QUESTION: With all the terrible wars, crime, political corruption, rampant immorality and diseases going on in the world today, how can Jesus Christ's righteous Kingdom co-exist in the same world? Isn't it true that there can only be one system in power at a time: either the Beast system or God's system?

ACTS 5:34-39 THE WISE SERPENT

Then one stood up in the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, esteemed among all the people, and ordered the apostles to be put outside a little while;

And he said to them, Men, Israelites, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do about these men.

For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: but he was done away with; and all, as many as followed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also destroyed himself; and all those who followed him were dispersed.

And now I say to you, Stand away from these men, and let them alone: for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; otherwise you may be found to fight against God.

MOST of what we've heard about Gamaliel is that he was a good man; that he was smart; that he was a doctor of the law; and that Paul learned at his feet. Gamaliel was a Pharisee and he was a doctor of Pharisaic law. He was in the Sanhedrin which was an antichrist government.

What do we call a doctor of Jewish law these days? We could call him a "rabbi" or a "lawyer." Either title would work, because both professions are branches of Babylon. In those days he would probably have been called a "rabbi." As we study these verses, you will notice that Gamaliel wasn't quite the nice guy that we've been led to believe.

Gamaliel was saying, "This situation is a hot potato. Let's carefully consider what's happening here so we don't make political mistakes."

Here is a politician at work: "political science" in action. It is the art of protecting your office. The experienced Gamaliel was skilled at holding on to his position of power and not doing anything stupid which could cause him to lose it. He was an intelligent politician. He was not a good guy, but he was clever. Good guys can't make a career in the beast system. They get kicked out or killed.

Of course, there are some who would say that maybe Gamaliel was trying to help the people by being a go-between or a diplomat. God deliver us from diplomats! They work on the basis of compromise and manipulation. Their expertise is in forcing things upon us and then convincing us it was our idea.

Truth is not achieved by compromise. Differences of opinion can be recognized and used to

advance understanding – but that is not "compromise." Compromise trades truth for consensus. Truth is not achieved by consensus or a vote of the majority. Let the diplomats compromise and manipulate themselves. We've had enough of people wanting to compromise "for the good of the people." They say we must accept the system because it's there for our own good. But, let me be clear ... working with the system it is not for our good. Rather it is because we have no choice.

Gamaliel was not there for the good of the people. He was there because he was a system man; because he was smart enough to trick people; and because they admired him. He was a clever devil.

In verses 38 and 39, Gamaliel made a politically astute statement: "for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to naught: But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; otherwise you may be found to fight against God." Gamaliel was smart enough to know that you can't overthrow something if it is of God. Here was a politician who had the ability to recognize something of God. That brings to mind the following verse:

19. You believe that there is one God; you do well: the demons also believe, and tremble.

James 2:19

Here, the word "demons" comes from a Greek word meaning "demigods" (small gods). In those days, people who were insane or notably wicked were thought, by superstitious people, to have "spirits" (demons) dwelling in their bodies. However, the real demons were the people, themselves, and not invisible entities invented to take the blame for

QUESTION: How can you infer that all lawyers are bad people? Aren't lawyers necessary to civilized society because of the law's inherent difficulty to be understood?

man's own aberrant behavior. So when the Bible uses the terms "devils" or "demons" it refers to people who are afflicted or have evil intentions.

The "devils" (evil people) may realize they can't overthrow the works of God. That's why they prefer government that is MAN-made. They know they can manipulate and control man-made systems, but not GOD's system.

Speaking of motivation, notice how verse 39 gives insight into Gamaliel's motivation: "But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it; otherwise you may be found (EXPOSED) fighting against God."

Now, what did Gamaliel say? Did he say, "We don't want to fight against God because it's wrong"? No, he said, "We don't want to be exposed as fighting against God." In other words the public might see that you are fighting against God. You may lose your place in the government due to the exposure.

Being a consummate politician, Gamaliel was smart enough not to expose himself. He wasn't worried about ethics. Rather, he was worried that it might damage his image if he killed someone openly. He didn't want the public to learn that he was fighting against God.

QUESTION: Shouldn't we try to resolve our differences with other men peacefully? Are you saying any kind of arbitration or discussion is wrong?

ACTS 5:40-42 HOW THE ESTABLISHMENT REACTS TO GODLY MEN

And they were persuaded by him: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they charged them not to speak in the

name of Jesus, and released them.

And they departed from the presence of the Sanhedrin, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And daily in the temple, and in every house (wherever they went), they ceased not to teach and declare the good news about Christ, Jesus.

HERE we see a politician's typical attitude toward people's freedoms. And generally the public ignores and/or indulges the government. In this case the Sanhedrin, after concluding the apostles had done nothing punishable by law, beat and threatened them, and ordered them to stop speaking truth!

No, Gamaliel wasn't interested in being fair. Rather, he was interested in expediency. That's the way politicians and bureaucrats work – then, as well as today. They have no honor or integrity.

These apostles had been abused. They had been beaten. They had been belittled and threatened, and yet they walked away feeling happy that they were labeled “followers of Jesus.” They counted it an honor to suffer for the name of Jesus.

Men who are abused for the name of Christ exist in every generation. The spirit of Christ motivates some men to withstand mediocrity. The Beast System abuses them ... but they stand. The following verses offer a further description of abuse of Christians by the beast system:

11. If any man speak, let him speak the words of God; if any man minister, let him do it by the strength which God supplies: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the strength into the ages of the ages. Amen.

12. Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though it were some strange coincidence:

13. But rejoice, inasmuch as you are sharing in Christ's sufferings; that,

also in the revealing of his glory you may rejoice and be glad.

14. If you are reproached for the name of Christ, be happy; for the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

15. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a holder of other men's property.

16. But, if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

17. For the time is come for judgment to start at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that disobey the gospel of God?

1 Peter 4:11-17

The judgment of God was upon the land ... and it had to start in God's house: i.e., in his ecclesia. Then it would come upon the rest of Israel ... including those who rejected the gospel. The Israel people had participated in the persecution of Jesus, and now they were complicit in the persecution of the apostles. Judgment was needed in Israel.

Israel has always persecuted its own ... and it still does. As a consequence, judgment fell upon Israel and upon the system of religion and government they had chosen.

This is a serious warning to all of us. Anyone that hears the message of the gospel of the kingdom of Christ, beware! Reject it at your own risk! If you reject the gospel, you are bringing judgment upon yourself because you are rejecting the Kingdom of God. You are rejecting the Reign of Christ. You will be judged as these men who came

against the apostles. So, we should all consider this warning well ... lest any of us fall into condemnation.

The Futurists and the Judeo-Christians should look more closely at I Peter 4 and Acts 5. They claim judgment hasn't happened yet – that it will someday come “when Christ returns.” They are rejecting Jesus Christ's reign upon the earth right now by claiming this! Judgment is upon Israel, NOW! It has been from the time of Acts up until this very day. Anyone who took the gospel of the kingdom lightly received judgment. As an example we have seen that Ananias and Sapphira took it lightly ... and they were judged. Moreover, when the people in the land take the gospel of the kingdom lightly, the entire land is judged.

Let's understand that the Reign of Jesus is not just a detached, hypothetical debate between men. It's not just a contest of preachers' rhetoric, or to see who can build the biggest churches. That isn't the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is a practical, working system that functions based upon the law of nature and nature's God. Not only is Jesus' Kingship the very essence of the New Covenant, it's the foundation of this age. The Kingdom of God is the foundation of the ecclesia. In the final analysis it's the only thing that really makes sense among men.

We aren't discussing a vague doctrine about a future Utopia, or a judgment in the distant future. This is not a word game. We need to get in touch with the present reality of the Kingdom of God. Without that reality, everything we see in the world is disjointed. Until we see that reality, our problems will remain unsolved, and our questions will remain unanswered.

PONDER THIS: Think of how the religious establishment reacted to Godly men historically as well as today. Think of how churchgoers react today. Many people who call themselves Christians today are the first to persecute godly men.

QUESTION: Should the debate over which words are correct — “church” or “ecclesia” — be considered a “petty difference” that Christians should avoid discussing in order to preserve unity among the brethren? What about other debates such as: Is Jesus Yahweh?, Is there a Supernatural Devil? And who are God’s chosen people? Should these be considered “petty differences” and avoided to preserve peace?

END OF LESSON FIVE.

FOR ANSWERS AND NOTES, SEE ENCLOSED "ANSWER SECTION."

ANSWERS & COMMENTS

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES LESSON FIVE:

POINTS TO REMEMBER:

1. Early in life, most of us are taught that God's judgment is a one-time event in the distant future – after death. However, the Book of Acts shows us that God's judgment falls whenever it is needed. It may not be manifested exactly as we expect, but it is there.

2. Jesus gives us EONIAN LIFE – also called “the new birth.” Eonian life was the element that separated the followers of Christ from the followers of men.

3. The great adversary (the state) was the power that put the apostles in prison, and made it possible for the Sanhedrin to persecute them. The state still persecutes Christians. It sanctions those who fight against God to destroy freedom.

4. God's word is powerful. When it is preached correctly, our society is blessed. When it is ignored or twisted, our society suffers. The fact that America is suffering under the worst anti-Christ elements that ever existed on the face of the earth proves that God's Word HAS NOT BEEN TAUGHT IN AMERICA.

(Whose word then, if not God's, have the churches been teaching?)

5. In most places where “the Holy Ghost” appears in the KJV, it should read “holy spirit” (without the article, and without capitalization). Spirit is motivation, not invisible beings.

6. The motive of central government is to enslave citizens for its own use. The “Beast” of prophecy is man's government. The great idolatry our people have participated in, in the past, was that of honoring and seeking man's government – i.e., beast worship.

7. Gamaliel was a Pharisee lawyer who had gone into politics.

8. Always expect politicians to lie, cheat, steal, and murder. Never give them the benefit of the doubt. They are the foxes guarding the hen house.

9. The battle between man's government and the Kingdom of God has been raging for centuries. Stop looking to the future for the Kingdom, and start looking in history and today. Instead of waiting for Utopia, start figuring out how our people have lost touch with God's Kingdom to the point that Babylon is the only kingdom they can see.

ANSWERS:

pg.3

a) Not all false prophets suffer lawful judgment because they are not within Christ's Reign. The judgment of Annanias and Sapphira was within Christ's ecclesia. Such judgment was not demonstrated outside that parameter. This could, however, indicate that judgment would appear again if a similar situation were realized today (i.e., in a true ecclesia scenario).

Preachers are con men. Their titles confer credibility only within their own organizations and among their own programmed members. Authority conferred by a church is not from God. God never authorized any church or their preachers.

b) The lying preachers who prosper do so under the auspices of Babylon, by whom they are also sponsored. Their prosperity is limited, temporal and empty.

“I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.”

... When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God: then understood I their end.

Surely you have set them in slippery places: you cast them down into destruction. They are brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.

Psalm 73:3, 13, 16-19

The ungodly sell themselves for money or power. They forfeit eonian life and Christ's heritage.

True prosperity and liberty are found only by following Christ and His laws for godly society.

pg.4

a) The difference between the apostles' message and the message heard in most churches (cults) today is that one supports the system of Christ, and one supports the system of men. One supports freedom, and one supports government control.

b) The question is evidence that something has changed over the years. Since the Beast system has not changed ... apparently the people who call themselves “Christians” have changed. When the term “Christian” came to be defined as “one who joins a government-accepted church,” the meaning changed. Churchgoers are politically correct and fit in with the system ... therefore they are not persecuted by the Beast System.

pg. 7

There have been other scholars and researchers who have known, and taught, the correct meaning of “eonian life.” We are certainly not the first to reveal it.

There is a false assumption that Bible scholars agree on a set of doctrines that appear to be “standard.” The truth is that Bible scholars do NOT agree on a good many things. The problem is that

most people never speak to Bible scholars – they only speak to their preachers at their churches ... who care only about keeping their illusion of viability, and keeping the paying members in their churches.

pg. 8

God blesses and protects his children in ways that often go unnoticed. He also shows us how to protect ourselves and our loved ones by giving us “eyes to see and ears to hear,” thus giving us better perception and vigilance to spot the wolves before they come in our back doors.

pg. 9

Good guys cannot fit in with politicians. And, if all the “bums” were kicked out of government, there would be no government left.

There is an impossible hope to which many of our people cling. It is that the Dragon is a Lamb at heart, and can be converted. If people would stop wasting so much time, money and effort in trying to find something worthwhile about the Dragon, they might be able to work and develop a real Christian society with real Christian blessings.

pg. 10

a) Holy spirit affects the direction of our present mortal lives. This does not necessarily account for our status in the future raising to immortality. The selection of people to receive holy spirit, and thus eonian life, in this present age is God’s gift. We don’t know why, or when, but we should be able to discern who ... (1Jn. 4:1). And His gifts are fair and righteous.

It is not for us to determine, or judge, the will of God as He determines who is saved and who will have immortality.

b) (See “a” above)

pg. 12

a) The immediate impact of Jesus and his Reign created a huge wave of change that swept the Roman Empire in the first century. It began changing the way people looked at the Beast System. But the Beast System responded by becoming more aggressive and expansive. It expanded as per the metal image vision in Daniel 2 which shows each successive world empire degraded but larger than the previous one.

In today’s international political climate, the Beast is still raging – and Christ’s Reign is developing in ways most people do not recognize. Both systems (the Dragon system, and Christ’s system) must grow side by side until Christ’s enemies are put under his feet (I Cor. 15:25).

b) Questions which pose baseless speculation are useless and irrelevant. Why speculate on whether it is possible for myth to become reality?

The Bible gives NO evidence, indication, or reason to suspect a supernatural devil exists, so why speculate about its possibility?

c) No, it is not true that only one kingdom can be in power a time. History shows MANY kingdoms in power simultaneously at any given time. Indeed, that is the stuff wars are made of. History is replete with wars.

With regard to Christ’s Kingship, it is senseless to question its existence. Scripture clearly tells us that Jesus ascended the Throne, and is the Reigning King of New Jerusalem. It is not sensible, then, to second guess His kingship.

Those who argue that the Kingdom cannot exist until all sin is done away should read and explain Revelation 22:15. In this description of New Jerusalem (which the Futurists declare, by their own theology, cannot exist until Christ’s Kingdom begins) John lists dogs (sodomites), sorcerers, whoremongers, murderers, idolaters, and liars ... ALL coexisting with New Jerusalem (i.e., the Kingdom).

pg. 13

a) Not all differences are bad or have a need to be resolved. But, differences that do need to be settled should be settled peacefully, with reason and a spirit of brotherly love. Arbitration by a third party is fine, providing it is requested by the two primary parties, and is done honestly and in good faith.

Government diplomats, however, are a different breed. They have their own reasons and agenda for arbitration – they have ulterior motives that do not serve the two primary parties.

b) The Lawyer business is a criminal profession that preys upon the victims of criminal government. Lawyers owe their existence to that system.

The fact is that law is NOT hard to understand. Rather, it is the talmudic writings of lawyers and judges that is hard to understand.

pg. 15

As stated above, not all differences require resolution. Petty differences are usually best left alone – because they are petty (i.e., very small).

However, differences in understanding of scriptures should not be considered “petty.” Scripture is important, and a correct understanding of it is important.

By the same token, brethren should not allow honest and well-considered differences of opinion to come between them. Rather, they should be encouraged by each other in that they have a desire to seek truth. THAT is the point upon which they can rejoice, research, and learn in unity.