

A man was thinking and he wondered,

with world conditions going from bad to worse,

what should we do to give ourselves ...

the best possible chance going forward?

How can we anchor ourselves?

What Now?

By

Job S. Friend

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To The Faithful

Introduction

Watching the world news these days is not for the faint of heart. World conditions seem to be steadily deteriorating, either through natural disasters, self-inflicted economic problems, poor political leadership, or a general decline in the character and thinking ability of people in general. It has been observed that ethical infants have their hands on the levers of political, military, and scientific power. Almost nothing could be scarier. Caring people are almost living in fear of what might happen next, which would negatively impact their lives. They are worried not just for themselves, but for their children and grandchildren, too. What kind of lives will they have?

In the pages that follow I offer a take as to what is really happening and why. How can one be anchored to something solid, while the world deteriorates around us? And, in particular, I would like to offer a suggestion that **the way out of our problems is to obtain divine favor**. How to do so is not often thought about, or taught. It is pretty obvious that humans, acting alone, are not going to resolve their problems. Human leaders, at all levels, have shown themselves to be failures and they cannot

be trusted. Obtaining divine favor is our best chance going forward. In the pages that follow I share with you my reasons for so believing. Some of the reasons are Biblical, some are historical, and some are based on logical reasoning and life experiences.

As a housekeeping point, the scriptural references, herein, are from the King James Version, KJV, unless denoted otherwise. Any emphasis, in the scriptural quotations, or in quotations from Josephus, is mine throughout this book. In this book I will also be quoting from, *Antiquities Of The Jews*, by Flavius Josephus. The quotes will simply reference the Book number, Chapter number, and Paragraph number as all such quotations are from, *Antiquities Of The Jews*, unless otherwise noted.

As an additional important note, I have chosen to write the pages that follow mainly in a conversational style. Having said that, let's get started. I offer for your serious consideration and hopeful edification what I have learned below.

Divine Favor

The heroic men and women of the Bible have, at times, obtained victory – even against all odds. Sometimes they did so when they were seemingly the only person fighting on the side of right, when no one else seemed to care. And when the world as they knew it was falling down around them. Or, when they felt all alone. It took courage and faith for them to see through the darkness and to hear above the silence of their day and to take effective action at just the right time. Like us, they never knew in advance whether their actions would carry the day, or not. But they trusted God and then did the best they could. It is all any of us can do.

In my opinion they had a reason for trusting God, a secret weapon as it were. And that secret weapon was they had God as their ally. They had the **divine favor**, which made all the difference.

Today, as world conditions seem to be going from bad to worse, it would seem to be all the more important to obtain the divine favor. Whether these are the Biblical end times, when much anguish is prophesied to come upon the earth, or whether we, as individual Christians,

are simply growing older toward the end of our physical life, we give ourselves the best chance of success and happiness, going forward, by obtaining the divine favor. The title of this book is *What Now?* What should we do now? And the answer is: to do what is necessary to obtain the divine favor. Without it we will lose.

Without the divine favor we are on our own. And in this world being on our own means that we are hopelessly outnumbered and surrounded by people lacking in character and lacking in the ability to think clearly. Their values are not the same as ours and such people will have no compunction, if they think they can get away with it, with using you and me as human fuel for their fire (a means to their ends, even if it hurts us). It is sad, but that is the way it is. We must have the favor of God as we go forward. We also need wisdom, love, faith, and courage, but without the favor of God, our wisdom, love, faith, and courage will likely only result in a moral victory - not an actual victory. And when I say "a moral victory and not an actual victory," I am not demeaning moral victories, I am just hopeful we can have both a moral victory and an actual victory, too.

While not spoken of, or taught in the modern era, I think there is a pretty simple formula for obtaining the favor of God, i.e., the divine favor. When I say "formula" I am not saying God has to respond with divine favor. But I am seeing that, both in the Bible and delineated in historical accounts, obtaining the divine favor seems to involve certain things men can do if they want to.

I am more than a little bit nervous as I look out across the world. I see what seems like a lot of bad dominoes being set up, all in a row, on a rickety old card table. And this sets up the scenario whereby if some fool comes along and bumps the rickety old card table it will knock over the dominoes, representing a negative chain reaction the likes of which this world has not before seen. I really think we are going to need the favor of God going forward.

How do we obtain the favor of God? We must:

- 1. Observe the laws of his worship and**
- 2. Keep his laws.**

To begin with the laws of his worship I am going to use both the Bible and Josephus and his account of some famous Bible heroes. The historical record of Josephus is interesting and adds some information not necessarily found in the Bible. The reader, of course, is free to discount this non-Biblical information to whatever value you want to give it. The main point is to go back through history and to show some examples as to how God's favor has been gained and lost and what the consequences were.

We will begin with a New Testament account of Noah.

"But as the days of Noe [Noah] were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39, KJV

Josephus has some interesting things to say about Noah.

“When Noah had made these supplications, God, who loved the man for his righteousness, **granted entire success to his prayers,** and said, that it was not he who brought the destruction on a polluted world, but that they underwent that vengeance on account of their own wickedness; and that he had not brought men into the world if he had himself determined to destroy them, it being an instance of greater wisdom not to have granted them life at all, than, after it was granted, to procure their destruction; “But the injuries,” said he, “they offered to my holiness and virtue, forced me to bring this punishment upon them.” Book 1, Chapter 3, Paragraph 8.

It is interesting to note that the injuries mankind offered to God’s holiness and virtue forced him to bring the punishment. In other words, the people of the world, other than Noah, not only did not have the divine favor, they incurred the divine wrath.

Next is the historical account of Amram, who is the father of Moses. This account is at the time when Amram’s wife was pregnant and Pharaoh had ordered that all of the male Hebrew babies should be slain. It is a time of great distress to Amram and the Israelites.

"A man whose name was Amram, one of the nobler sort of the Hebrews, was afraid for his whole nation, lest it should fail, by the want of young men to be brought up hereafter, and was very uneasy at it, his wife being then with child, and **he knew not what to do**. Hereupon he betook himself to prayer to God; and entreated him to have compassion on those men who had nowise transgressed the laws of his worship, and to afford them deliverance from the miseries they at that time endured, and to render abortive their enemies' hopes of the destruction of their nation. Accordingly God had mercy on him, and was moved by his supplication. He stood by him in his sleep, and exhorted him not to despair of his **future favors**. He said further, that he did not forget their piety towards him, and would always reward them for it, **as he had formerly granted his favor to their forefathers**, and made them increase from a few to so great a multitude." Book 2, Chapter 9, Paragraph 3.

It is very clear that not transgressing the laws of God's worship and piety toward God are both important factors in obtaining God's favor. And it is very interesting that, even as slaves in Egypt, before God had given the laws of worship

to Moses, these laws of worship had been carried down and handed down to some of the nobler men and, hopefully even, to all of the men. At a minimum some of the men knew what those laws of worship were. And they did not transgress those laws of worship. It made all the difference in obtaining God's favor at a critical time. Moses was born, not killed, grew up, and with God's help, ultimately led the Israelites out of Egypt. To put it into American football terms, Amram, an unsung hero, threw a critical block to spring Moses. The rest is history. Just like evil people can set in motion a chain of events that are bad, righteous people can set in motion a chain of events that are good. Good job, Amram.

Later, Moses was experiencing difficulties with the Israelites murmuring when the people were facing one of their great trials. In fact they were determined to stone him because they did not have enough water. Josephus recounts the story as follows:

"But as for Moses himself, while the multitude were irritated and bitterly set against him, he cheerfully relied upon God, and upon his consciousness of the care he had taken of these his own people; and he came into the midst of

them, even while they clamored against him, and had stones in their hands in order to despatch him [kill him]. Now he was of an agreeable presence, and very able to persuade the people by his speeches; accordingly he began to mitigate their anger, and exhorted them not to be over-mindful of their present adversities, lest they should thereby suffer the benefits that had formerly been bestowed on them to slip out of their memories; and he desired them by no means, on account of their present uneasiness, to cast those great and wonderful favors and gifts, which they had obtained of God, out of their minds, but to expect deliverance out of those their present troubles which they could not free themselves from, and this by the means of that Divine Providence [favor] which watched over them. Seeing it is probable that God tries their virtue, and exercises their patience by these adversities, that it may appear what fortitude they have, and what memory they retain of his former wonderful works in their favor, and whether they will not think of them upon occasion of the miseries they now feel." Book 3, Chapter 1, Paragraph 4.

Later in the same paragraph it speaks of Moses reminding the people, "... and so he

recounted all the particular instances, how when they were, in appearance, just going to be destroyed, God had saved them in a surprising manner; that he had still the same power, and that they ought not even now to despair of his providence over them ... and to consider that help would not come too late, though it not come immediately."

Moses was saying, in so many words, "Don't despair. Remember we have the favor of God. Accept and persevere through the test and God will work it out."

In Josephus's *Wars Of The Jews, Book 1, Chapter 7, Paragraph 4*, it details that Pompey could not help but admire that even when Jerusalem was under siege, and the priests were being slain about the altar, the priests did not leave off of the daily sacrifices and purifications and the other aspects of their religious worship toward God. These faithful priests kept the laws of divine worship to the end, even while soldiers were slaughtering them. Even in a losing heroic effort the priests did all they could and then they left the rest up to God.

Next let's take notice of and break into the middle of a speech by Joshua, who is

admonishing the Israelites what to do and what not to do.

“... and it is the same God who brought our forefathers and yours into the world, whose worship and form of government we are to take care of, which he has ordained, and are most carefully to observe; because, while you continue in those laws, God will also show himself merciful and assisting to you; but if you imitate the other nations, and forsake those laws, he will reject your nation.” Book 5, Chapter 1, Paragraph 25.

Later in Paragraph 28 Joshua further said as follows, “ ... since from a low estate they [the Israelites] were advanced to so greater degree of glory and plenty; and exhorted them to take notice of the intentions of God, who had been so gracious towards them; and told them that the Deity would continue their friend by nothing else but their piety.”

Joshua and Moses, both of whom had direct contact with God, are both saying the same basic thing: **Piety toward God and observing the laws of God’s worship are critical to having his favor.** And without his favor we are at the mercy of the world, which has very little

mercy. This is something we should take very seriously. It could be crucial in our efforts going forward.

During the period of the Judges Israel lost their freedom to the Assyrians. The description as to why it happened is quite telling and could easily apply to many nations today. See if it does not sound familiar.

“The Israelites grew so indolent [lazy], and unready of taking pains, that misfortunes came heavier upon them, which also proceeded in part from their contempt of the divine worship; for when they had once fallen off from the regularity of their political government [they did not keep God’s laws], they indulged themselves further in living according to their own pleasure, and according to their own will, till they were full of the evil doings that were common among the Canaanites. God therefore was angry with them, and they lost that their happy state which they had obtained by their innumerable labors, by their luxury.” Book 5, Chapter 3, Paragraph 2.

Another account Josephus details pertains to the Israelites coming under the dominion of the Ammonites and the Philistines.

“And now all the affairs of the Hebrews were managed uncertainly, and tended to disorder, and to the contempt of God and of the laws. So the Ammonites and Philistines had them in contempt, and laid waste the country with a great army; and when they had taken all Perea, they were so insolent as to attempt to gain the possession of all the rest: but the Hebrews [who actually learned something this time] being now amended by the calamities they had undergone, betook themselves to supplications to God; and brought sacrifices to him, beseeching him not to be too severe upon them, but to be moved by their prayers to leave off his anger against them. So God became more merciful to them, and was ready to assist them.” Book 5, Chapter 7, Paragraph 7

Even Samson got it wrong and had to learn the hard way.

“However, he [Samson] at length transgressed the laws of his country, and altered his own regular way of living, and imitated the strange customs of foreigners, which thing was the beginning of his miseries...” Book 5, Chapter 8, Paragraph 11

Josephus has almost no end of these accounts where over and over again, in the history of Israel, they left off the keeping of the laws of God, left off their efforts to become righteous men and women, left off the laws of the worship of God, and then God became angry with them and dealt with them, either directly, or by allowing their enemies to gain rule over them.

Sometimes we might fail to realize how serious God is about prescribing exactly what it is we are supposed to do. When most people think about God giving exacting details to his people, most people think of God speaking to Moses and the Israelites at Mount Sinai. There was a great deal of detail concerning both God's laws and also how to worship God. An additional event, where God gave exacting details, does not necessarily come to mind. And that place and time was when David was preparing to have God's Temple built. Sometimes it is called Solomon's Temple because Solomon was king when the Temple was actually built from materials and plans that his father, David, had prepared. However, it is actually God's Temple, as we shall read below.

“Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: As for me, I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building: But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou hast been a man of war, and hast shed blood. ... And he said unto me [God spoke directly to David], Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts [which is why it is commonly referred to as Solomon’s Temple]: for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father. Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day. Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance for your children after you for ever. And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever. Take heed now;

for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do it.

Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy seat, **And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit,** of the courts of the house of the LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things: Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD [the pattern of the services in worshipping God], and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD. He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service: Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick, and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of every candlestick. And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shewbread, for every table; and

likewise silver for the tables of silver: Also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basons he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver by weight for every bason of silver: And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD. **All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.** [God gave the entire set of details about the Temple and the worship service directly to David. It came directly from God himself.] And David said to Solomon his son, Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD." 1 Chronicles 28:2-3, 6-20, KJV

God inspired all of the details of the Temple, its implements, its structure, and the details of the worship services to be performed therein. God prescribed it to his congregation, the nation of Israel. God was and is serious about the respect he is due and the laws of his worship.

Further evidence of divine inspiration and direction for the Temple and its services are found in 2 Chronicles 29:25:

“And he [Hezekiah] set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.”
2 Chronicles 29:25, KJV

God told David, and also evidently Nathan and Gad, his prophets, exactly what he wanted for his worship service in the Temple.

There is an interesting passage of scripture, in 2 Chronicles 15, that reads a lot like the world we live in today. And it is interesting to take note that it identifies God as vexing them with adversity. If God, his laws, and his worship are neglected, why should he bless the nations of the world?

“ ... The LORD is with you, while ye be with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and

without law. But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries. And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city: for God did vex them with all adversity. Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak: for your work shall be rewarded.”
2 Chronicles 15:2-7, KJV

In 2 Chronicles 16:9, it says:

“For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9, KJV

Whether we live out our Christian lives to the end of our life and then die in the faith, or whether the world comes into great calamity, we need to make sure that when God is looking around that, at the least, he can spot us. He needs to spot us so that he can show us how strong he is on our behalf. We have to have that favor from God to make it through our personal difficulties and also our worldly difficulties.

Another interesting scripture pertaining to the Temple is found in 2 Samuel 22:7, and it is David talking:

“In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and **he did hear my voice out of his temple**, and my cry did enter into his ears.” 2 Samuel 22:7, KJV

“The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness: according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me. **For I have kept the ways of the LORD**, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me: and as for his statutes, I did not depart from them. [These days, with the nation of Israel in exile and the Temple destroyed, we would look to apply the principles behind the statutes and judgments in our daily lives.]” 2 Samuel 22:21-23, KJV

God heard David’s voice out of his Temple. But, since this was David talking, this is before “Solomon’s Temple” was built. There is a Temple in heaven. The Temple that was on the earth was a pattern of what is in heaven.

As a human being, after you have lived for many years and have grown mature, you learn what you like as a unique person and you also learn what you don't like. For example, in terms of wine, you like merlot, but not sauvignon blanc, or whatever. You like lemon pie, but not peach pie, etc. God has lived a very long time. He is very smart and he knows what he wants. And he evidently has a Temple in heaven that he resides in. And when it came to building a physical Temple on this earth he made sure to give David exact instructions for how it was to be built and also for the divine worship services that were to be conducted in it. God, having lived a long time, evidently likes his architect, likes his interior decorator, and he is very adamant that he has things the way he wants them. It is his prerogative.

We should consider how precise all of the details were that God gave to Moses for the construction of the Tabernacle and the worship services to be conducted in it. Then we should further consider all of the details that God gave to David, Gad, and Nathan for the construction of the Temple and the worship services to be conducted in it, as referenced above. If this were not enough, we should further consider that there are nine chapters in the Bible, Ezekiel

40-48, which give in painstaking detail elaboration of various things including the construction of another Temple, in the future, upon Christ's return to this earth. God knows what he wants and he is going to get it. When Christ comes back, one of the first things that is going to happen is he is going to have the Temple rebuilt and he is going to have the priests be the sons of Zadok and they are going to reinstitute all of the worship services again.

God is so serious about it he promises that if people do not come up to Jerusalem to worship him they will not get any rain.

"And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." Zechariah 14:16-18, KJV

Isaiah 2 sort of sums up our current situation and tells that the Temple will become the most important place on earth and that people from all over the world will go there to worship God and to learn of his ways:

"In the last days, the Temple of the LORD in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship. Many nations will come and say, **"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the LORD's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem. The LORD will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end. Come, people of Israel, let us walk in the light of the LORD!**

The LORD has rejected the people of Israel because they have made alliances with foreigners from the East who practice magic and divination, just like the Philistines. Israel has vast treasures of silver and gold and many horses and chariots. The land is filled with idols.

The people bow down and worship these things they have made. So now everyone will be humbled and brought low. The LORD cannot simply ignore their sins!

Crawl into caves in the rocks. Hide from the terror of the LORD and the glory of his majesty. The day is coming when your pride will be brought low and the LORD alone will be exalted." Isaiah 2:2-11, NLT

God is going to enforce the laws of his worship and he is going to enforce the keeping of his laws because this is what is necessary in order to gain his favor. And without God's favor we have bad leadership, wars, false religious systems, false philosophic systems, bad legal systems and laws, bad economic systems, etc., which lead to pain, suffering, and death on the earth. In order to gain God's favor we need to observe the laws of his worship and to keep his laws.

Principles Of Divine Worship

Knowing that we should obey God and observe the rules of his worship creates certain problems for us today. I personally believe that Christians are "Spiritual Israelites" because,

whether we are of Israelite stock or not, we have been grafted into the promises of old (Romans 11).

For the reasons of ignoring the laws of God's worship and for not keeping God's laws the ancient Israelites were thrown off of the land and the Temple was destroyed. So we are not in the land today and there is no physical Temple. Further, the tribe of Judah was supposed to provide leadership to the Israelites (1 Chronicles 28:4) and they rejected the Messiah and were complicit in his crucifixion. To further complicate things the vast majority of the priests and Levites rejected the Messiah. Some did accept him, but most did not. So we are not in the land, have no physical Temple, the physical and spiritual leadership that was supposed to be there is not only not there, but leading in the wrong direction. What a mess!

So then, *What Now?* We desperately need God's favor in order to make it through the minefield of this world. The problem is how to obtain God's favor when the traditional method of so doing is in a complete shambles. My best answer, at this moment in time, is to follow the principles we can glean from what we would have done, had we been able to do it, and then

hope for God's grace in granting us his favor.
What else can we do?

One further problem is that we do not even understand what all the symbols mean – not precisely anyway. And we don't have David, Nathan, and Gad to tell us what they mean and exactly how the divine worship service takes place in a certain order and why. We have some historical and Biblical information. And we have some scholars' opinions, but I would have to honestly say they are just that, opinions – educated guesses – perhaps correct and perhaps not. I appreciate honest men trying to obtain and share information, but we are trying to obtain the favor of God here and God was so precise in what he wanted. And now some of the information has been lost. It is a tough situation – almost like the blind leading the blind.

To make matters worse, for me personally, I don't tend to be very ceremonial. When in London, once, I could have waited 30 minutes to see the changing of the guard and didn't. I hopped back on the subway and went to the next place I wanted to see. When I graduated from college I did not go to my own graduation ceremony. Parades bore me. When I got

baptized the only people in attendance were the minister and I. But all of this is my own personal problem because God evidently likes a fair amount of ceremony. Not everyone is like the English, who tend to love ceremonies.

On the website teachingthelaw.org there is a six lesson series entitled "The Divine Service," which is free to download and listen to. This is a place where some detailed information is provided on the divine worship service.

For our purposes I think that we can at least glean some of the basic principles that God was looking for and then we can think about how to apply as many of them as possible in our own lives. Perhaps Christ anticipated the demise of the physical Temple and gave us these basic principles in the structure of what is known as, "The Lord's Prayer." Please note that I am not saying the primary purpose of The Lord's Prayer was to give us such a structural blueprint. However, while I was listing out the principles in this section of the book, below, I realized that I could use much of the entire Lord's Prayer, as detailed in Mathew 6, to illustrate principles of divine worship and that it would suffice.

There is an aspect of acknowledging God as the only God and we should have humility and respect before him. I think most readers of this book believe that God created the universe and rules it. That part is pretty easy. Instead of comparing ourselves to other men, we can compare ourselves to God and his perfection and then it becomes quite a bit easier to be humble. As Christ said in Mathew 6:9: "Our Father, who is in heaven, Hallowed be your name." The solemnity of the sacrifices and the divine worship service showed acknowledgement and respect for God and so we should have respect for God in our daily lives.

There is an aspect of repentance and paying for sin through the sacrifices and we can certainly be mindful of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that he made possible. We should ask God for forgiveness for our sins and we should forgive and be reconciled to others (Mathew 6:12,14-15). And we should forgive ourselves and move onward and upward as best we can. The divine worship depicted forgiveness and a fresh start once the penalty was paid. Reconciliation with God and others is important for social harmony.

There is an attitude and an aspect of gratefulness and thankfulness to God for being the Creator and for sustaining us in our lives. We can also ask for our daily bread (Mathew 6:11). This includes both physical sustenance (bread) and spiritual living bread (John 6:33).

There is an aspect of cleanliness, which can be applied both physically and spiritually. The Temple was kept clean and there were ritual washings and a requirement to wear clean garments. We should be clean and well kempt for the physical part. And the harder part is to be clean spiritually. Spiritual Israelites know that we should think good thoughts, speak good words, and do good things and this should be our lifetime practice. Mathew 6:9 says, " ... Hallowed [holy] be your name. I Peter 1:15 says, " ... Be ye holy for I am holy." Further, Spritual Israelites now compose the Temple of God:

"If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." 1 Corinthians 3:17, KJV

We can pray for God's kingdom to come and for his will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. The ancient Israelites were placed in a

prime position in the middle of Africa, Asia, and Europe and with an additional gateway via the Mediterranean Sea. They were to be a light to the world, but failed. God originally wanted ancient Israel to succeed and for the surrounding nations and eventually the world to learn about the true God and his ways. Because of ancient Israel's failure there is a void. To help fill the void, Spiritual Israelites are to set such examples as to be children of light (Ephesians 5:8). And Christ himself told us to pray for God's kingdom to come and for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mathew 6:10). We are worshipping God by how we live and by asking that the void be fixed and by providing light to others by how we live our lives now.

The presence of God in the Holy of Holies showed God was with the ancient Israelites. Even when traveling through the wilderness, God led them and protected them through the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21). We can ask God to be with us, to protect us, and to lead us not into temptation, but to deliver us from evil (Mathew 6:13).

Respect for God was an aspect of the divine worship service and we can acknowledge, as it also says in Mathew 6:13, that "Yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen."

We do not have a physical Temple, or all of the worship ceremonies that the ancient Israelites used to have, but we can still follow the principles of divine worship, as outlined above, and we can do what Jesus said to do in John 4:

"But the hour cometh, and now is, **when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth:** for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." John 4:23-24, KJV

"Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.**" John 14:6, KJV

"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." John 17:17, KJV

"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.” John 1:14, KJV

We can go to the Father and worship the Father through Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. And it would also be a good idea to let God know that if we could do exactly what he said, we would. Right now, however, our situation is that there is no physical Temple, the priests have rejected the Messiah, we don't perfectly understand or know what the symbols mean, and we find ourselves living as strangers in a strange land.

Notwithstanding the above problems we can at least glean the principles of divine worship and then try to apply them in our lives. I think God will appreciate someone with that kind of attitude. And it is important to do the best we can because if we don't keep the laws of his worship, we won't truly have his favor as a people. And without his favor I think we are in big trouble. We might as well at least attempt to obtain the divine favor. What else can we do?

Obeying God's Laws

In this section of the book I am going to write about being obedient to God's laws and also about having a good attitude toward them. To begin, I will again go back and reference a few more examples out of Josephus, beginning with what is recorded about Abel.

"... for Abel, the younger, was **a lover of righteousness**, and, believing that God was present at all his actions, he excelled in virtue."
Book 1, Chapter 2, Paragraph 1.

Abel loved righteousness and he believed God was ever watching what he did. And so he cared very much about integrity. Integrity is much more important than how much money we make, or what clothes we wear, or what we look like, etc. Ultimately, we are defined by our integrity.

Taking a look at the dark side of integrity, or lack thereof, Josephus records the following about Nimrod:

"... but supposing that their own power [the people of the earth after the Flood] was the proper cause of the plentiful condition they were

in, did not obey him [him being God]." Book 1, Chapter 4, Paragraph 1

"He [Nimrod] also gradually changed the government into tyranny, - seeing no other way of turning men from the fear of God, but to bring them into a constant dependence upon his power." Book 1, Chapter 4, Paragraph 2

We see the same thing has happened with human government today. Governments almost make children out of their citizens. If you lose a job, the government has unemployment insurance. You have a child, the government mandates public education. And on it goes. It is very similar to conditioning people to look to the government as their god, just like Nimrod did a long time ago. There is nothing new under the sun (Ecclesiastes 1:9). In addition, take the case of ancient Sodom, recited by Josephus:

"About this time the Sodomites grew proud, on account of their riches and great wealth: they became unjust towards men, and impious [sinful] towards God, insomuch that they did not call to mind the advantages they received from him: they hated strangers and abused themselves with Sodomitical practices. God was therefore much displeased at them, and

determined to punish them for their pride...”
Book 1, Chapter 11, Paragraph 1

Pride is a really lethal sin, which I see a lot of, particularly in America right now. And this is troubling because of how God views pride and how determined he is to punish it.

Going back to the good historical side, Josephus records the following about Abraham:

“Now Abraham thought that it was not right to disobey God in anything, but that he was obliged to serve him in every circumstance of life, since all creatures that live enjoy their life by his providence, and the kindness he bestows on them. Accordingly, [referring now to the time when God tested Abraham by telling him to sacrifice Isaac] he concealed this command of God, and his own intentions about the slaughter of his son, from his wife, as also from every one of his servants, otherwise he should have been hindered from his obedience to God.”

Book 1, Chapter 13, Paragraph 2

Josephus records that Abraham was so serious about obeying God that he didn't even tell his wife what God had commanded him to do. He didn't tell his servants either. He kept it

to himself. It was going to be hard enough for him to go on that journey and walk up that mountain and sacrifice his son, whom he loved. He didn't want anything, or anyone, pulling him in the wrong direction. He was determined to obey God and that is why he is the father of the faithful (Romans 4:16, Galatians 3:29).

Josephus also records a lengthy speech, given by Moses, admonishing the children of Israel about what they need to do going forward:

"O children of Israel! there is but one source of happiness for all mankind, the favor of God for he alone is able to give good things to those that deserve them, and to deprive those of them that sin against him; towards whom, if you behave yourselves according to his will, and according to what I, who well understand his mind, do exhort you to, you will both be esteemed blessed, and will be admired by all men; and will never come into misfortunes, nor cease to be happy: you will then preserve the possession of the good things you already have, and will quickly obtain those that you are at present in want of, - only do you be obedient to those whom God would have you to follow. Nor do you prefer any other constitution of

government before the laws now given you; neither do you disregard that way of Divine worship which you now have, nor change it for any other form: and if you do this, you will be the most courageous of all men, in undergoing the fatigues of war, and will not be easily conquered by any of your enemies; for while God is present with you to assist you, it is to be expected that you will be able to despise the opposition of all mankind; and great rewards of virtue are proposed for you, if you preserve that virtue through your whole lives. Virtue itself is indeed the principal and the first reward, and after that it bestows abundance of others; so that your exercise of virtue towards other men will make your own lives happy, and render you more glorious than foreigners can be, and procure you an undisputed reputation with posterity. These blessings you will be able to obtain, in case you hearken to and observe those laws which, by Divine revelation, I have ordained for you; that is, in case you withal **meditate upon the wisdom that is in them.** I am going from you myself, rejoicing in the good things you enjoy; and I recommend you to the wise conduct of your law, to the becoming order of your polity, and to the virtues of your commanders, who will take care of what is for your advantage. And that God, who has been

till now your Leader, and by whose goodwill I have myself been useful to you, will not put a period now to his providence over you, but as long as you desire to have him your Protector in your pursuits after virtue, so long will you enjoy his care over you." Book 4, Chapter 8, Paragraph 2.

Moses, who understood the mind of God very well and who received the above information face-to-face from God, pleaded with the Israelites, before his death, that they would make their principal goal in life to be virtuous men and to keep the laws of God's worship. Then they would have God's blessings and providence over them, with virtue itself being the chief reward and also a generator of many other good things.

To further make the point Moses said the following, as recorded by Josephus:

"Certainly a human legislator is a terrible enemy when his laws are affronted, and are made to no purpose. And may you never experience that displeasure of God, which will be the consequence of the neglect of these his laws, which he, who is your Creator, has given you!" Book 4, Chapter 13, Paragraph 47.

The above is a pretty stern warning. Josephus also records an interesting sentence about mankind when God was calling Gideon to be a judge.

“But God stood by Gideon in his sleep, and told him that mankind were too fond of themselves, and were enemies to such as excelled in virtue.” Book 5, Chapter 6, Paragraph 3.

I am pretty sure most of us, at one time or another, have experienced being opposed by men who were enemies to those caring about and practicing virtue.

When the Philistines had taken over Southern Israel, because they were not keeping God’s laws, Samuel saw that they were ready to repent and to change and to attempt to regain their freedom from the Philistines. To that end he gave one of the greatest speeches ever, which was recorded by Josephus:

“... the whole body of the people betook themselves all that time to offer prayers and sacrifices to God, and appeared greatly concerned and zealous about his worship. So

Samuel the prophet, seeing how ready they were to do their duty, thought this a proper time to speak to them, while they were in this good disposition, about the recovery of their liberty, and of the blessings that accompanied the same. Accordingly he used such words to them as he thought were most likely to excite that inclination, and to persuade them to attempt it: "O you Israelites," said he, "to whom the Philistines are still grievous enemies, but to whom God begins to be gracious, **it behooves you not only to be desirous of liberty, but to take the proper methods to obtain it.** Nor are you to be contented with an inclination to get clear of your lords and masters, while you still do what will procure your continuance under them. **Be righteous then, and cast wickedness out of your souls, and by your worship supplicate the Divine Majesty with all your hearts, and persevere in the honor you pay to him; for if you act thus, you will enjoy prosperity; you will be freed from your slavery, and will get the victory over your enemies:** which blessings it is not possible you should attain, either by weapons of war, or by the strength of your bodies, or by the multitude of your assistants; **for God has not promised to grant these blessings by those means, but by being good and righteous**

men; and if you will be such, I will be security to you for the performance of God's promises." Book 6, Chapter 2, Paragraph 1.

That's a pretty powerful speech. What's even more remarkable is Samuel pledging his life that if the Israelites would worship God correctly and keep his laws that Samuel himself would be the security God would keep his promises and give them the victory. The end result, recorded later in Josephus, was that there was a great earthquake where the earth literally opened up and swallowed large parts of the Philistine army. Lightning also came down and blinded the Philistines. Evidently something caused the Philistines to drop their weapons of war from their hands and they took off and ran home. God backed the Israelites and gave them the victory.

Going back to the dark side, Josephus records how Jeroboam led the Israelites in the wrong direction, away from God:

"When Jeroboam ... **deluded the people, and made them to revolt from the worship of their forefathers, and to transgress their laws.** This was the beginning of miseries to the Hebrews, and the cause why they were

overcome in war by foreigners, and so fell into captivity.” Book 8, Chapter 8, Paragraph 4.

Integrity is so important that God gives each of us a personal and interesting warning in Ezekiel 14:

“Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it: Though these three men, Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness, saith the Lord GOD.” Ezekiel 14:13, 14, KJV

It is our own integrity, from God’s point of view, that matters. And God defines integrity in his own way by the keeping of his laws and by the keeping of the laws of his worship.

The Ministry Of Reconciliation

The Bible indicates that there is a ministry of reconciliation for the people of God. Ancient Israel failed to be the light to the nations and citizens of the world that it could have been. But God does not give up and so God has been

engaged in a ministry of reconciliation, both to nations and to individuals, using different ways and methods, throughout history.

Yet to come is God using the two witnesses, as outlined in Revelation 11. There is evidently going to be two witnesses who go around and preach a reconciliation and warning message. And, via God's Spirit, they do all kinds of miracles to back that message up.

The Apostle Paul's ministry was a ministry of reconciliation, both to the Jews and to the Gentiles. In fact, in Acts 26, Paul explains exactly why Christ called him and what his job was.

"Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, At midday, O king [Agrippa], I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet:

for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people [the Jews as the then current representation of Israel], and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." Acts 26:12-18, KJV

"Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people [Israel], and to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:19-23, KJV

Paul was sent to both Jerusalem to the people of God and to the Gentiles to encourage them to reconcile with God, through Christ. He wanted people to open their eyes and to turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God. It was a ministry of reconciliation.

When the nations, including Israelite nations, set up their own legal systems, they are really worshiping Satan and they are following darkness. When individual human beings repent, and when nations repent as a whole [widespread individual repentance in a country], they are going to have to turn from the authority of Satan to the authority of God, from the darkness to the light, and from the keeping of Satan's laws to the keeping of God's laws, including God's laws and principles of divine worship.

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:"
Ephesians 2:12, KJV

Psalm 2 is an interesting Psalm and I believe it forms at least part of the two witnesses' message of reconciliation and warning. They are likely to go to the nations and to tell them as follows:

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. ...

Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."
Psalms 2:1-4, 10-12, KJV

Basically the two witnesses are going to explain that there is still time to reconcile, but the people and the nations need to repent of not acknowledging God as God, to repent of not keeping God's laws, and to repent of not following the laws of his divine worship. In

other (loosely paraphrased) words, "You need to kiss the Son while you still can, before it is too late. You need to change your system of government and you need to quit following Satan, quit following idols, start following God's laws, and start obeying the laws of God's worship." I believe it will be something along those lines, amongst other things. It is, in reality, a message of reconciliation, i.e., "kiss the Son."

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."
Matthew 24:14, KJV

God will likely preach the gospel to all nations in a variety of ways. Some of these ways include, or will include: through the two witnesses, through the efforts of the called out ones [ekklesia], through miracles, etc. The ministry of reconciliation has been ongoing for thousands of years and has used a lot of different people and a lot of different methods.

Individually, we have a part in this, as shown in Philippians 2:

“Do all things without murmurings [be at peace within yourself] and disputings [be at peace with others]: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”
Philippians 2:14, 15, KJV

By being a light we make it possible for others, walking in relative darkness, to see. We perform a useful function and so we have a responsibility to be a light. Part of the reason for this is so that when someone walking in darkness gets disgusted with it all, and starts to look for a way out of the darkness, they will have some light with which to see their way clear out of that darkness. For this to work, however, they have to be able to see that we are living our lives in a different way. And that maybe we have some answers and there are some reasons for the joy, hope, peace, or the patience they find within us. That would be a form of light doing great service because it's not fun to be in the dark, which all of us are to one extent or another. We can perform a ministry of reconciliation by lighting the path for each other.

“In whom the god of this world [Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not,

lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. ... For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. ... that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6,7, part of 10, KJV

In Ephesians 5:6-8 and then also in verses 13-14 it talks about being a light again.

"Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"
Ephesians 5:6-8, KJV

"But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."
Ephesians 5:13, 14, KJV

God actually wants individuals and the nations to reconcile with him and so he has sent prophets, given his Holy Bible, worked miracles, sent Jesus Christ to the earth, will send the two witnesses, and has given those of us so inclined the responsibility of being children of light. And he has probably done many other things we don't even know about – at least not at this time. Though our individual light might be small, it can be of inestimable value to someone else who sees it. We should not diminish our part of the effort, nor limit God as he attempts to work through us to affect others. We do have a ministry of reconciliation ourselves, including in our own family, but the family part is beyond the scope of this book.

Watching

This next section of the book has to do with watching. The Bible's bellwether scripture on watching, for most people, is found in Luke 21:36. This scripture is found in the middle of where Christ is reciting, to his disciples, what will happen prior to the end of this age.

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these

things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." Luke 21:36, KJV

Watching means different things to different people. In the above context, the default meaning is to watch world events and see prophecy being fulfilled through the unfolding of those world events. And that is certainly one meaning of watching.

There is another aspect of watching, however, which fits into this book about obtaining the divine favor through keeping God's commandments and observing the laws of his divine worship and being part of a ministry of reconciliation via letting God's light shine through us. And that aspect is for watching to mean watching our own attitude and watching our own mind. And it means for us to watch to keep the faith regarding our own salvation. In other words, watching means to watch our self.

As an example, two of the scarier scriptures in the Bible read as follows:

"I [Christ] tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, **shall he find faith on the earth?**"
Luke 18:8, KJV

“And because iniquity shall abound, **the love of many shall wax cold**. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”
Matthew 24:12, 13, KJV

In light of the above, we need to watch that we do not lose our faith and become hard and cold. Life tends to beat each of us up and it would be easy to become skeptical, negative, and cold-hearted. Christ knew this and so warned against it. The meaning of “watch” is much broader than to simply look at world events to see prophecy being fulfilled. We need to keep the faith, stay warm and loving, be a light, and not give up.

Part of watching, too, is to understand what is going on in the world and in our own personal lives and to be willing to be flexible regarding our physical circumstances. We might have to change where we live, or where we work.

There are further watching instructions given in Ephesians 6:18:

“Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all (manner of) prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and

watch with strong purpose and perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people)." Ephesians 6:18, Amplified Bible

A wise person, as part of watching his or her own mind, should constantly think about what is really valuable. We should not have to be scared into keeping our priorities straight because this or that world event has shocked everyone and now everyone is scared, including us. And we should not have to be shocked, by some personal event, into keeping our priorities straight. Part of watching our own mind is to keep firmly fixed in mind what is valuable and to safeguard it. And having the divine favor should be one of those things we count as most valuable.

Testing The Two Witnesses

Revelation 11 speaks of God sending his "two witnesses" who will deliver what some would say is a warning message to the nations of the world and to individuals. I would say their message is going to be a ministry of reconciliation, which will, evidently, mostly be rejected, with resulting consequences.

“And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days [42 months], clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God

entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven." Revelation 11:3-13, KJV

Many Christians believe that the body of Christ, (the ekklesia), will be divided into denominations and factions and small groups until God sends the two witnesses. But once God sends these two witnesses, we will finally have a direct pipeline of clear communication from God, through these two witnesses. And once the two witnesses start witnessing to the world and explaining God's will directly to the body of Christ, that some of the ambiguities, or other problems we seem to be having as a body, can finally be resolved. Perhaps this is true. We will have to wait and see how it all works out.

Satan, the adversary, has counterfeited a lot of God's teachings and methods. And I would not be surprised if he counterfeited the two

witnesses, too, in some way, which is a speculation on my part. If Satan does counterfeit the two witnesses he will probably do so by having his agents work satanic miracles coupled with false teachings and some type of emotional appeal.

“And they worshipped the dragon [Satan, Revelation 12] which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped **the beast**, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him [the beast] **a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.** And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” Revelation 13:4-8, KJV

“And I beheld **another beast** coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb,

and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. **And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do** in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.”
Revelation 13:11-14, KJV

The first beast, commonly referred to as the Antichrist, will be given 42 months to “teach great things.” These great things taught, to God, are blasphemy. This is the same concurrent time period as God’s two witnesses are given. Another second beast, commonly referred to as the false prophet, spoke as Satan, will also teach mankind wrong things. And this second beast will also back his evil message by miracles that deceive, which he will have the power to do, via Satan, his master.

The real two witnesses, God’s two witnesses, will teach mankind the truth and offer a ministry

of reconciliation, which if rejected, becomes a warning message from God to mankind. They will work miracles from God to back their teaching and message. They will be encountered by Satan's two beasts, which effectively function as Satan's two witnesses, who will also teach great things and back their message by evil miracles from Satan. Notice one of the evil miracles they will be able to perform is to call fire down from heaven, the same miracle as God's two witnesses will have the power to do. Further, God will ultimately allow Satan's two beasts to kill God's two witnesses, which will further confuse people who are trying to make up their mind as to who is right and who should be followed. For a few days it will look like Satan has won. It will look like Satan is stronger than God. But, looks can be deceiving, and often are.

This will create what seems like quite a dilemma. Fortunately, God knew, long ago, that false prophets would come. And he gave us guidelines we can follow to know who is really from God and who is a pretender working for Satan. These guidelines can be found in the last part of Deuteronomy 12 and the first part of Deuteronomy 13 and also in Deuteronomy 18.

“Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God. When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou **enquire not after their gods**, saying, **How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.** Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God

proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. **And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God**, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and

afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you." Deuteronomy 12:28-13:11, KJV

"But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." Deuteronomy 18:20-22, KJV

All of the above is important to consider, because if you've got a charismatic leader, the beast, backed by evil miracles, and teachings that sound good, many can and will be deceived. I say evil miracles and not false miracles because the miracles actually happen. So I will classify the miracles by the beast, or

false prophet, as evil miracles. I personally believe these two beasts will be masters of manipulating human psychology and human nature and they will no doubt use clever emotional appeals, pseudo-logic, scientific breakthroughs, and anything else at their disposal to gain control of mankind and lead them to Satan and destruction.

We therefore need a benchmark and a reality check to keep ourselves from being caught up in it all. Fortunately God gave us such a reality check in Deuteronomy 12, 13, and 18, quoted above. The three major checkpoints, or criteria to be considered and used, are as follows:

1. If the prophet predicts something that does not come true, he is not from God and the prophet has shown himself as a false prophet who should not be followed, or feared. Deuteronomy 18:20-22.
2. If the prophet predicts something, which comes true, or works a miracle, but then teaches against the God of the Bible, or teaches against the program of God as outlined in the Bible, that prophet is not from God and should not be followed. Deuteronomy 12:28-13:11.

3. And since God repeatedly gave ancient Israel clear instructions to not add to, nor diminish from, his program (Deuteronomy 12:32 as one instance) this means that the written word of God is itself the benchmark for the people of God to follow. In other words, oral traditions or teachings are not part of the false prophet test because they cannot be used to know whether someone claiming to be a prophet is really sent by God, or not. Oral traditions move the goalpost, so to speak. Oral traditions modify the word of God. It would not have made sense for God to give ancient Israel this "follow the program of God as outlined in the word of God" test for a false prophet if the false prophet could claim he has new teaching that must now be followed and that teaching deviated from what was in the written word of God. Or, that his teaching now modified the written program of God to make it "more complete," or "relevant for the modern times in which we now live," etc. God headed this one "off at the pass" and said, "No way." Even though our understanding of God's values and program may improve over time, his values and program do not change and so the people of God can use his written word

as a benchmark. God says we must. If a prophet says anyone other than the God of the Bible is God, or says anything other than what is in the program of God as contained in the Bible, he is not from the real God and is a false prophet. End of discussion.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, **Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son**, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds;” Hebrews 1:1, 2, KJV

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:1-3, KJV

“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.” John 1:14, KJV

Jesus Christ is and was the Word who God the Father used to create the universe, the earth, and mankind. Hebrews 1:2 makes plain

that God has spoken to us by his Son, the Word of God, in these last days. The written word of God, the Bible, is our benchmark now and ever. It is our anchor in the coming storm. If someone says different, they are not from the real God and cannot be trusted.

To summarize, if someone claims to be a prophet, sent by God, and makes a prediction that does not come true, they are not from God. If they make a prediction and it comes true, or they work a miracle, but then teach that some other god, besides the God of the Bible is god, they are not from God. Or, if they make a prediction that comes true, or they work a miracle, but then say something that contradicts what is in the written word of God, they are not from God. I can see a situation arising where a false prophet proposes something as follows: "These are tough times and God sent me to tell you that, based on our very difficult current situation, there needs to be a change of plan." God has already told us the plan is the written word of God, the Bible. **There is not going to be a change of plan.** And so we can now judge accordingly and wisely.

We can and must conclude two very important things about all this. One, God's

written word has precedence, because it's the benchmark he gave us to measure the message by. Two, there can be no change of plans, because the written word is not fluid. There is not going to be any change of plan. Ergo, if someone comes along and says anything different, they are a false prophet.

The Elijah To Comes Message

Many believe that Malachi 4 identifies one of God's two witnesses as an Elijah who is yet to come.

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:4-6, KJV

Because of the above scripture many believe that one of the two witnesses will be named Elijah, or function as an Elijah. It is also possible that there will be this Elijah to come and also the two witnesses. It remains to be

seen. In any case, this Elijah to come is obviously a very important figure, with a very important ministry, and he will be bringing a very important message. What will that message be? What does it mean to “turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers?”

Some people think that when this Elijah talks about turning the heart of the fathers to the children and the heart of the children to the fathers, it will be a message something along the lines of the importance of family ministry. There is nothing wrong with family ministry, because having a healthy family is a good thing, but that is not what he is going to be talking about. That is not what the Bible means in Malachi 4. Elijah’s message will be important to the end-time ekklesia so we should try to understand what the Bible means here and not be confused about it. Revealing what this message will be is the main purpose for this section of this book.

There are some hints about what God wants this Elijah to say a few verses earlier in Malachi 3:7:

“Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return?” Malachi 3:7, KJV

This question, in reality, gets comprehensively answered only one verse before it is prophesied that the Elijah to come, would come, and that is in Malachi 4:4:

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments.” Malachi 4:4, KJV

Of course part of the message of the Bible is that the ancient Israelites were present at Mount Sinai and they promised to obey God. And they promised to teach their children and their children’s children, etc. And in that sense “the fathers” means those ancient Israelites, present at Mount Sinai, who confirmed the covenant with God and agreed to obey him, which they never did very well. The real “fathers,” that the Bible is actually talking about, are Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The ancient Israelites being present at Mount Sinai was in part due to the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Only in that sense, and because of the ancient history involved, were the ancient Israelites present at Mount Sinai regarded as fathers – not because they actually followed God’s program like they were supposed to, because they did not. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did follow God and it is because of God’s graciousness to them and because they exhibited faith and righteousness that they are “the fathers” from the Bible point of view. This will be made plain as we go through some scriptures.

“Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son’s son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, **as the LORD God of thy fathers** hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.”
Deuteronomy 6:1-3, KJV

“And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware **unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob**, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,”
Deuteronomy 6:5-10, KJV

“He [God] made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.” Psalms 103:7, KJV

God made known to us his ways through Moses and he wants us to follow him the way Abraham, Isaac and Jacob followed him. God codified what he wanted them to do, through Moses, and he did it face to face and he dictated every word. And then he said to not add to

what he said and to not take away from what he said. God also identified, in Deuteronomy 6:10, who the fathers were, i.e., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And he told the Israelites to teach their children and their children after them. Who God is, what his program is, who "the fathers" are, (which the Israelites are to emulate), was made very clear. There is no doubt whatsoever who "the fathers" are.

"And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers," Deuteronomy 6:18, KJV

"And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers." Deuteronomy 6:22, 23, KJV

Hearkening back to Malachi 4, could the curse that God is going to smite the earth with be avoided just because various religions' members taught their children to love their physical fathers and their physical fathers to love their children? No, it could not. Physical

fathers loving their children and vice versa is not what the Bible is speaking of in Malachi 4.

The message of Malachi 4 is a reminder that God has a program that he gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He codified this program through Moses and it was then amplified by how Jesus Christ lived his life. It is the same program, which is taught and prophesied throughout both the Old Testament and also throughout the New Testament. When Jesus Christ returns to the earth, one of the first things the Bible says he will do is explained in Ezekiel 40-48, which is beyond the scope of this book. You can read it for yourself. The program is the program.

If a pagan taught his son to be a good pagan, and the pagan's son taught his grandson to be a good pagan, can that keep God from coming to smite the earth with a curse? No, of course not. The fathers God is talking about are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will

multiply thee exceedingly. And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying,

As for me [God], behold, my covenant is with thee [Abraham], and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations."
Genesis 17:1-9, KJV

"And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the LORD, for because thou [Abraham] hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the

stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”
Genesis 22:16-18, KJV

“And the LORD appeared unto him [Isaac] the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham thy father: fear not, for I am with thee, and will bless thee, and multiply thy seed for my servant Abraham’s sake.”
Genesis 26:24, KJV

In Genesis 28, God shows up and covenants with Jacob.

“And, behold, the LORD stood above it [the ladder in Jacob’s famous dream], and said, I am the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not

leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Genesis 28:13-15, KJV

In 1 Chronicles, 29:18 David has gathered the materials for the building of the temple and was praying about the temple that is to be built:

"O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, **our fathers**, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:"
1 Chronicles 29:18, KJV

Basically, amongst other things, David was praying that the people would follow God the way Abraham did, the way Isaac did, and the way Jacob [Israel] did.

God himself appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the Bible makes clear that they are the fathers referred to in Malachi 4. And this is important to understand in case some false prophet comes along and says there is a new program. There is no new program, as the following New Testament scriptures make plain:

"Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;) ... " John 7:22, KJV

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,” Romans 4:16, KJV

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.” Galatians 3:7, KJV

Now the Bible does use fathers and sons in the normal familial sense. I am not saying the Bible does not do that because it does sometimes do just that. As previously mentioned, and affirmed in Acts 3:22, the Bible does sometimes refer to the ancient Israelites, who were present at Mount Sinai, as the fathers. And this is because those ancient Israelite fathers covenanted with God directly as well. They just did not follow through the way that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did.

“For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.” Acts 3:22, KJV

“As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.” Luke 1:55, KJV

“To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,” Luke 1:72, 73, KJV

When Peter and John were praying in the Temple, in Acts 3, the scripture has it thus:

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go.” Acts 3:13, KJV

In Acts 7, Stephen was giving his final sermon, before he was martyred, and he recounted Moses meeting God at the burning bush, where God identified himself as the God of our fathers, as follows:

“And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, Saying, I am

the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold." Acts 7:30-32, KJV

"And we preach to you the **good news of the promise made to the fathers,**" Acts 13:32, NASB.

The gospel (good news) was preached to the fathers, and promised through them, per the New Testament book of Acts. There is no change of plan. Why would there be? There is no inconsistency between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The covenant relationship started with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God's ways, (Psalm 103:7), were codified by Moses and made manifest by how Jesus Christ lived his life and taught.

"I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day." Acts 22:3, KJV

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, **who**

prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:" 1 Peter 1:10, KJV

Per the New Testament, the gospel was preached to the fathers, promised through them, and included a message of grace, as well as prescribed rules of conduct, rules of worship, and rules pertaining to civil society.

There is an amazing statement about Israel in Romans 11:26-28. This statement shows just how much God cares about Israel because he really loves the fathers of Israel - Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God has a program and he is going to succeed.

"And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob [Israel]: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes: but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes." Romans 11:26-28, KJV

Because Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were men who God loved and God covenanted with them, God is going to stick to it until he gets

Israel going in the right direction. The ultimate end result is that all Israel shall be saved. And all Israel will be saved when they finally quit fighting what the fathers believed in, when they finally quit fighting God, when they humble themselves before God, when they give God his proper worship, when they keep God's laws, and when they give God proper thankfulness as the Creator and Provider. Then Israel is going to be healed and saved. It is going to happen since God's word is good and he is a smart and hard worker. God is not going to lose to a bunch of human beings, nor to fallen angels. It is not going to happen.

Romans 15:8 is an interesting verse.

“Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers:”
Romans 15:8, KJV

Some people think if they were born to a privileged class they can do whatever they want for the rest of their life, but they cannot. Pedigree is not enough. Some foolish men think that if they are children of Abraham this means they are all right with God, no matter what. Not so, as follows:

“And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” Matthew 3:9, 10, KJV

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob pleased God because they believed God and they did what he said to do. Hebrews 11 details their admission into God’s Hall Of Fame. James 2 speaks of Abraham believing God and being called the friend of God and his belief in God was imputed to him for righteousness. “The fathers” have their place in the book of life secure and are waiting the resurrection of the dead. From God’s point of view they are as good as still alive.

“I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**”
Matthew 22:32, KJV

In Luke 16 there is an interesting parable about Lazarus and the rich man, which uses Abraham in the parable.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom [from God’s point of view Abraham is as good as alive, but just waiting the resurrection]: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that

would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead [having been resurrected from the dead, like Abraham, in this parable], they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Luke 16:19-31, KJV

Abraham, representing all of the fathers, is alive in the above parable. From God's point of view, as mentioned previously in Mathew 22:32, he is as good as alive, but currently just awaiting the resurrection. The Mathew 22:32 statement and the Luke 16 parable, about Lazarus and rich man, help provide an answer to a puzzling part of Malachi 4:6.

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse." Malachi 4:6, KJV

It is easy to understand "turning the heart of the children to the fathers." We have to understand God's program and to cooperate with him in achieving it. In other words we all need to go back to the faith and obedience the fathers exhibited and to both believe God and to do what he said. This part of Malachi 4:6 poses no special problem, once we understand who "the fathers" are and what God's program is.

The harder part of Malachi 4:6 to understand is: how is this Elijah to come going to get the fathers, who are currently physically dead and awaiting the resurrection, to "turn their hearts to the children," if the fathers are dead? And the second question is: why should the fathers turn their hearts toward the children if the children are disobedient to God and disregard the laws of his worship?

Let us handle the second question first. Abraham, in the Luke 16 parable, could not turn his heart to the rich man sinner. He could not because the sinner never repented and followed God and so the sinner himself made it impossible for Abraham, who is aligned with God, to turn his (Abraham's) heart toward him. All the sinner would have had to do was to repent of his past attitudes and actions and to

go God's way. Then Abraham would have been happy to love him as he loved Lazarus in the parable and to, as it were, turn his heart to him. All of this was up to the rich man sinner, who did not do what he should have.

Now let's consider the answer to the first question, which is how is it possible for a dead father, Abraham, to do anything, much less to turn his heart to his children? The answer to this particular question is in understanding the "problem" from God's point of view. And the answer is that, from God's point of view, Abraham is alive, or as good as alive right now. This was the purpose of God's point blank statement in Mathew 22:32:

"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? **God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.**"
Matthew 22:32, KJV

God views Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, aka the fathers, as alive and most certainly aligned with him. And when a sinner repents and changes and now follows God's program, God accepts that sinner. So, metaphorically speaking, do the fathers, who from God's point of view are both alive and aligned with God. Ergo, the Elijah to

come is not being sent on a fool's errand. It is possible for this Elijah to come to succeed and to turn the heart of the children to the fathers (to God and his program) and to turn the heart of the fathers (alive and aligned with God) to the children (who repent and now do what God says in his word). In other words, from God's point of view, in Malachi 4:6 the fathers are representative of God and his values. God's program is not going to change. God wants us to follow him like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did.

This is further confirmed, by Jesus Christ, in John 8:

"They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." John 8:39, KJV

God gives each human being so much freedom and so much time and then we have to account for how we spend that freedom and how we spend that time. God is patient, but at some point, God has to basically say, "Time is up." Before this happens I think God is going to send this Elijah to come and his message is going to be to do what God said to do in his written

word. And to follow God the way Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did and the way Jesus Christ, the Word of God, did.

If mankind is not willing to acknowledge God, observe the laws of his divine worship, and to keep his commandments, then mankind will not have the divine favor so essential to success. But, it is worse than that because mankind will also incur the divine curses (Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28) and punishment (Revelation). At some point, God has to deal with the rebellion and lack of gratitude. He cannot let it go on forever.

A problem stays a problem until the correct solution is applied. My conclusion is that God's two witnesses, (one of whom might very well be the Elijah to come), are going to be very important to the ekklesia, the people of God. Knowing how to identify counterfeits, and knowing what their message is likely to be, is also very important. Fortunately, God gave clear guidelines. One of these guidelines is that the written word of God has precedence and will not be contradicted by a true prophet of God. Worshipping the true God and keeping his laws are critical. We cannot and we should not be deceived by either evil miracles, or false

teachings. God has a plan and he is not going to change it.

A Possible Final Test

In Luke 21 there is a tough passage of scripture where Christ warned the disciples about the time of the end and about the possible need to give a final witness to a corrupt world:

“And they asked him, saying, Master, but when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass? And he said, Take heed that ye be not deceived: for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and the time draweth near: go ye not therefore after them. But when ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by. Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: And great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony.

Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake. But there shall not an hair of your head perish. In your patience possess ye your souls." Luke 21:7-19, KJV

In Revelation 12:17 the Bible warns that, at the time of the end, Satan the dragon is enraged with the people of God:

"And the dragon [Satan] was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which **keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.**" Revelation 12:17, KJV

In Revelation 12:11 the Bible speaks of overcoming the dragon as follows:

"And they overcame him [the accuser, Satan] by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and **they loved not their lives unto the death.**"

Revelation 12:11, KJV

Considering that we might be called upon to give a witness to the world, per Luke 21, and that the blood of the Lamb will give us the final victory, our resurrection to eternal life (I Corinthians 15), some of us might somehow also miraculously escape to a place of safety - even with our physical lives. And I personally believe Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 12:11 contain the most likely and perhaps the only way out, and certainly our best chance, (the core elements are also found in Revelation 14:12-13), which is to obtain the necessary divine favor by:

1. Having the testimony of Jesus Christ and
2. Keeping the commandments of God and
3. Loving not our lives to the death.

In our patience we possess our souls (Luke 21:19). Amen.