



Psalms 78:2-4

I will open my mouth in a parable, I will utter dark sayings of old... We will not conceal them.

## Parables Bookshelf - Series 1.4.2

This issue of PARABLES BOOKSHELF contains chapters 2-4 of *The Mark of the Beast*.

The struggle against the mark of the beast is universal to mankind. It is not something that pertains only to one generation at the end of the age. The Bible opens with a description of this struggle, and it closes by saying that some have achieved victory over the beast nature.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds

of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."

These words are recorded in the first chapter of the Bible. Man is instructed to rule over the beasts. This is a spiritual parable. The great task assigned to mankind is to rule over the beast nature.

In the last book of the Bible we read of a remnant, called the overcomers, who have fulfilled this desire of God.

Revelation 15:2

And I saw, as it were, a sea of glass mixed with

fire, and those who had come off victorious from the beast and from his image and from the number of his name...

Everything between the first and last book of the Bible describes the struggle of man against the beast nature. Few have been the champions who ruled over it.

As you read the chapters of this book, I pray that your eyes might be opened to understand this struggle that is universal to all mankind, and the path to victory that is made possible through Jesus Christ/ Yahshua the Messiah.

## Food for Thought

*"You might as well try to hear without ears or breathe without lungs, as to try to live a Christian life without the Spirit of God in your heart."*

- D.L. Moody

*"Trials are medicines which our gracious and wise Physician prescribes because we need them; and he proportions the frequency and weight of them to what the case requires. Let us trust his skill and thank him for his prescription."*

- Isaac Newton

## Scripture Memory

Ecclesiastes 7:4

The mind of the wise is in the house of mourning, while the mind of fools is in the house of pleasure.

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# The Mark of the Beast

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## The Beast Nature

What is the beast nature that Adam and Eve submitted unto? What is it that Adam and Eve were commanded to subdue and rule over, but which they became slaves unto? A good place to begin studying this matter is to look at the creature that was the instrument of Eve's fall.

Genesis 3:1

Now the serpent was more crafty than any **beast** of the field which Yahweh God had made.

Genesis 3:14

Yahweh God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every **beast** of the field; On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life..."

The serpent is identified as a beast, and he excels all other beasts in two distinct ways which are mentioned in these verses. The serpent was more crafty than any other beast, and the serpent was cursed more than any other beast.

The serpent is identified as a beast...

We should note that in this account we have the very first appearance of Satan, and he appears as a serpent.

That the serpent and Satan are one is revealed in other passages.

Revelation 12:9

And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world...

Satan's first appearance in the form of a beast reveals much about his character. Satan is wholly given over to the beast nature. He was created as a covering cherub, perfect in beauty and the sum of wisdom (Ezekiel 28, Isaiah 14). He was flawless in his creation until the day that iniquity was found in him. He became corrupted due to his great beauty, and he began to worship the creature rather than the Creator. When Satan began to worship the creature he was given over to a beast nature. His wisdom, which was declared to be "perfect" before his transgression, became distorted, and thus we see the serpent described as "cunning." The word cunning speaks of a fallen wisdom that has been given over to the pursuit of selfish desire, no longer seeking the will of God.

There is no greater characteristic of the beast nature than its selfishness. It lives for self. It exists to satisfy the natural appetites that are found within its own being. It lusts and covets and is jealous and knows nothing of dying to self in order to live for the will and pleasure of another. While Satan was yet in heaven he determined that he would no longer live for the will and pleasure of God, but he thought it right that he should be equal with God and be able to determine his own way, being self-directed and seeking self-fulfillment. An attitude of selfishness always leads to a host of other sins such as covetousness, jealousy, selfish ambition, pride, strife, and violence.

Much is revealed about the beast nature in the curse which God spoke to the serpent.

Genesis 3:14

"On your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life..."

There is great symbolism here. The words, "On

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your belly you shall go” signifies that the beast nature will live for the fulfillment of the natural appetites. What is it that the beast nature desires, and what are its appetites? Food, sex, fame, riches, ease, pleasure, worldly goods, power and a host of other such things. None of these things are inherently evil, but they become evil when they are that which the creation pursues, hungers and thirsts for. God’s will is that mankind would seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness while allowing God to choose how and when to supply mankind’s needs. Yahshua spoke in this way:

Matthew 6:31-33

“Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

What is expressed in these words is the contentedness of those who live to do the will of the Father. Doing God’s will is the foremost priority of their lives, and they care not for the things of this world. They do not need houses and lands and cars and many material goods. They are not worried about the care of their physical body, for they understand that the One who fashioned man’s body already knows their needs and He will certainly provide according to His great wisdom, love and power. They understand that if they give themselves to the pursuit of the Kingdom of God that Yahweh will take care of their needs.

Those who are subject to the serpent do not know the contentedness of doing the Father’s will. Of the serpent we read that he was cursed to eat dust all the days of his life. The flesh of man was formed from the dust of the earth.

These words of judgment upon the serpent symbolically speak of an appetite for that from which the flesh was formed, and for all of the sins of the flesh.

Galatians 5:19-21

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these...

The serpent was cursed to be ruled by its belly and to eat of the things of the flesh. When a Christian gives himself to the things mentioned in the list above, it is certain that they are allowing the beast nature to be manifested in them. Many men, even those who name the name of Christ, are ruled by this nature.

Philippians 3:18-19

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

Paul most likely had the serpent in mind when he penned these words, for he speaks of the belly and a mind set on earthly things. The belly is a prominent feature of the beast nature, and it was singularly marked out when God cursed the serpent. The emphasis on the belly of this beast reveals that its entire life rests upon the satisfying of its earthly appetites. The belly is also emphasized when speaking of men who have given them-

*The belly is a prominent feature of the beast nature...*

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selves over to be ruled by the beast nature.

The beast nature can be summed up in one word, “selfish.” The divine nature, in stark contrast, can be summed up in the word “selfless,” or with the word “love,” for we are told that love “does not seek its own” (I Corinthians 13:5).

The perfect wisdom of God is unselfish and seeks the welfare of another. Thus we see in Scripture that among the godhead there is a great selflessness. The Father glorifies the Son, the Son lives to do the will of the Father, and the Spirit takes the things of the Father and with them glorifies the Son (John 16). The perfect wisdom of God

is such that Yahweh would send His beloved Son to die for mankind, and Yahshua would freely lay down His life for His friends. This wisdom is utterly unselfish. This wisdom is meek and gentle and humble.

James 3:17

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.

The corrupted wisdom of the beast nature is not so. It is born in selfishness and cares not about the welfare of others.

James 3:15-16

This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

I want to share something here that is difficult to convey. The reason it is difficult is that the saints have been so carnal for so long that they can only with great difficulty begin to perceive the tremendous depths to which the church has sunk. I know the majority of those reading this book will think that they are not manifesting the beast nature in any way, that they are truly selfless and to a great degree they are manifesting the Spirit of Christ, but we must remember that the serpent is cunning above all beasts and that Satan’s chief weapon is deception. Satan can convince you that you are the image of godliness when in fact you are far from it.

I ask you to really allow the Spirit to search the depths of your being as you read what follows. It will certainly sound radical and appear out of place in a world ruled by the evil one. It will appear as heretical to a harlot who wants to remain firmly seated upon the beast. It may even cause some fear to arise within your being as you “count the cost” and consider the consequences of what is being shared, but if you will not shrink back, and if you will allow the Spirit to transform you so that you are no longer conformed to a fallen, materially obsessed world, you will find the image of the divine expressed in and through your being. You will begin to manifest that for which God created man. You will appear as the very image and likeness of God.

Are you ready?

We read above where jealousy, and selfish ambition, and a slavery to the belly, or the appetites of the flesh, are all characteristics of the beast nature. The beast nature is marked by its consumption and it is never satisfied. This consumption is evident everywhere in our society, but we really do not see it. We have become so lost in this conspicuous consumption that it is no longer conspicuous to us.

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Saints are called to be conformed to the image of Christ, and Christ is called “the Light of the world.” He is totally selfless and giving. He laid down His life for the very ones who hated Him. We are told that “while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” and even when we were His enemies. We read in the first chapter of Genesis that on the fourth day that lights were created in the firmament of the heavens, and we saw how the saints correspond to these lights. Light is selfless. Light does not consume, rather it radiates outward. It goes forth and brings warmth and life and energy to all that it shines upon. All saints are called to be such selfless, giving lights, radiating the life and love of Christ in a darkened world.

It has occurred to me that even as God has given us a representation of the saints in the heavens, so too has He given us a representation of those who are marked by the beast nature. Much has been spoken in recent years about black holes. Black holes are said to be areas of super dense matter that are caused by a star collapsing in upon itself. These areas of super dense matter begin to pull all things into themselves. They are such powerful attractors that they will not even allow light to escape from them. They just suck in more and more matter.

Scientists cannot actually see black holes, for they give off no light. Rather they have determined that they exist by observing the effect that occurs on matter around them. They can observe matter being pulled powerfully to a certain location, and light being extinguished, and by observing this activity they are made aware of the existence and presence of black holes.

See now how perfectly these black holes typify those men and women who have given themselves over to the beast nature. Mankind was created like the stars to show forth the light and

life of the Creator, but many have collapsed back in upon themselves, having turned inward and begun to seek things for self. Many, even among the saints, have failed to be content to express the light of Christ and to live to do the will of the Father. Rather, they want things for self. They are attracted to the matter of this world, and they crave it, being filled with covetousness and lust and selfish ambition.

As these ones begin to work to gain the things their souls desire they cease radiating the light of God and they become as big vacuums attracting material things to themselves. They reason that it is only right and proper that they should have a fair portion of the world’s goods and they begin exerting tremendous energy to gain those things around them. They begin attracting matter to themselves. The Bible calls this activity “serving mammon” and the saints are warned that no man can serve both God and mammon.

*Mankind was created like the stars to show forth the light...*

Now here is the difficult part of what I desire to convey. Almost all saints are attempting to serve both God and mammon, though they do not recognize it. Most saints are marked by the influence of the beast nature on their lives, and a great number are even riding upon the beast with no admission of what it is they are doing. Though all saints have been called to give forth the light of Christ, an alarming number of them have turned inward and have become voracious consumers of matter. They are in peril of being cast back down to the earth as unripe figs, of being given over wholly to the pursuit of their selfish appetites.

One reason that the saints fail to recognize the influence of the beast nature upon their lives,

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the great selfishness and covetousness that is present within them, is that they compare themselves with one another rather than with God Who is the true measure of what man was created to be. I would therefore like to set Christ as the standard and reveal what His attitude was regarding consumption and the fulfillment of natural appetites. In looking at Christ we will see clearly what is of the beast nature and what is divine.

Immediately after Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan River, the Spirit led Him out to

*If you have an appetite that is clamoring to be satisfied, then it seems normal to satisfy it.*

the wilderness where He fasted for forty days. Another way to say this is that Christ consumed nothing for forty days. After these forty days we are told

that Christ was hungry, but He did not yet eat. Satan then came to tempt Yahshua and the very first temptation was related to consumption. Satan said to Christ, "If you are hungry, turn these stones to bread."

What Satan suggested seems very reasonable to the creature part of man. If you have an appetite that is clamoring to be satisfied, then it seems normal to satisfy it. After all, God created man's body to be nourished by food, and even Christ said "food is for the body," but see here a remarkable manifestation of the divine nature. Christ responded to Satan by saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'"

What Christ declared was that doing the will of the Father is more important than satisfying the natural desires of the body. The Spirit had not yet released Christ from His fast, and God had not yet manifested how He would meet His Son's need for food. Yahshua was so submitted

to the Father that He would not consider doing anything of His own initiative to satisfy His need for food. He was not worried that His Father would let Him starve to death. He knew that if He sought the Father's will above all else, that the Father would take care of the necessities of life.

Christ refused to be driven by His appetites. He refused to give Himself over to the beast's urging to consume, even when He was hungry. He subdued and ruled over the beast. He buffeted His body and kept it under subjection. We are told that after Satan left Yahshua that the angels of God came and ministered to Christ's needs. God already knew how and when He would provide sustenance for His Son, and the Son had such peace and confidence in the Father's love for Him that He was willing to wait, knowing that the Father's will is always the best and highest good for us.

Let us now look at another event in the life of Yahshua. During the entire span of His ministry Yahshua never owned a house. He never had a ministry center, and He was content to sleep wherever the Spirit led Him to sleep. Sometimes He slept in the open fields. Sometimes He slept in the stern of a boat on a pillow. At times He slept in a bed in someone's house such as in the home of Lazarus and Martha and Mary. When a man approached Yahshua and said that he desired to be His disciple, Yahshua responded in this way:

Matthew 8:20

Yahshua said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

I think it is significant that Yahshua contrasted His divine way of life to that of two beasts, the

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foxes and the birds. Beasts demand some type of home. They want a nest to live in, or a nice den in the earth. So too do many men and women demand such things. They may say to God, “I will be your disciple as long as I can have my nice home and furnishings. As long as I can have my nice bed to sleep in at night I will follow you.” But look at the words of Christ to one who would be His disciple. He said that He could promise no such thing, for one who lives to do the will of God is content with whatever God decides to provide for them. In effect Yahshua was telling this man to count the cost. If this man had to have a home, like the beasts demand a home, then he could not truly be Christ’s disciple, for Christ revealed that His life was focused upon pleasing the Father, not upon pleasing self.

Am I beginning to sound heretical yet? Are you beginning to feel fear rise up within you at what God might truly require of you if you were to surrender all to Him? You may think, “God does not really require that I be willing to give up all, and I see no one around me doing so,” but again let us allow Christ to be the measure of all things. Listen to His words:

Luke 14:33

“So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”

These words of Christ come immediately after He spoke of counting the cost of discipleship. Bearing the image of the divine nature comes at a great cost to the flesh and the natural man. This is why Christ said that all who would follow Him must take up their cross. The cross is an instrument of death, and the beast must be slain, even the beast that thinks it only normal and necessary to have its own private nest, or den.

We may ask, “How did the apostles and the early church understand this matter? Did they too give up all they possessed?” I am glad you asked. Let us look to the Scriptures to see.

Acts 4:32-35

And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them... For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales and lay them at the apostles' feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

During the first few years after Christ’s ascension, and following Pentecost, a remarkable work of grace was seen among the saints. They were extraordinarily delivered from the beast nature. They manifested the divine life to an amazing degree, and because of this they appeared as great lights in their world. Of their reputation we read, “The people held them in high esteem” (Acts 5:13).

*Yahshua was telling this man to count the cost.*

I want to urge you to consider at length the Scripture above for it reveals perhaps the most profound evidence of God’s ability to transform the lives of men than any other testimony or miracle of the New Testament. A large number of men and women who had formerly been enslaved to the beast nature, and who had lived as consumers, were transformed into givers. Before salvation it was their nature to gather material goods to themselves, and after salvation it was their nature to be free of all ownership and

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all claim that anything was their own.

Notice the scope of the words used “NOT ONE OF THEM claimed that ANYTHING belonging to him was his own.” Hallelujah, the beast nature that crawls on its belly and eats the dust of the earth was slain! I know of no greater evidence of the complete transformation of the

*“NOT ONE OF THEM claimed that ANYTHING belonging to him was his own.”*

saints by the power of the Spirit than these words. They were gloriously set free from self! No one claimed that anything they possessed was their own.

They truly began to esteem the needs of others more highly than their own needs. They began to manifest love of the brethren, and because of it all men recognized that they were Christ’s disciples. They loved God and the children of God rather than material possessions.

It can be said that these early saints were so captivated with a love of Christ and a desire to do the will of the Father that material things simply became unimportant to them. What they had formerly held onto with great tenacity, and guarded with great jealousy, was no longer precious to them. When the love of Christ and the brethren came in with such power, the love of other things died. When an immense yearning to do the will of the Father gripped them, a desire to do the will of self was put away.

The church today does not manifest this same selfless attitude, this contentment with whatever the Father would give them, at the time and in the way that He chooses. Instead the church rides upon the beast as a great harlot who has many cravings for the things of this world. She longs to be clothed in fine garments and to be adorned with many jewels. The saints are given to a pursuit of houses and lands and cars and furnishings and clothes and rich foods

and pleasure and entertainment, and they say “God wants me to have these things and to spend my days collecting whatever my heart desires, laboring for things that will perish,” for the cunning of the beast has deceived them.

Consider the words of the apostle Paul:

Philippians 4:11-13

Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I Timothy 6:8

If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.

Hebrews 13:5

Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have...

The mark of the divine nature is contentment, not coveting. Paul said, “Having food and covering, with these we shall be content.” He said he was content in whatever circumstances he was in. The bottom line is that those who bear the divine nature are satisfied with whatever provision the Father chooses to give them. They are not living to satisfy self. They are living to do the will of the Father. They are not given over to the pursuit of worldly things. They are not in debt that they might own today what they crave, but do not have the money for. They are marked by their generosity and their selfless

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giving. They do not claim that anything they possess is their own, for they have surrendered all their possessions to God.

I must add a few remarks here for the sake of clarity, for I know that some might misunderstand my words. I am NOT saying that in order to bear the divine nature that all saints must embrace poverty and get rid of their houses and lands. What I AM saying is that they must be willing to do so if it is God's will for them. Paul said that he knew how to be content with poverty (humble means), but he also knew how to be content with prosperity. The heart of the matter is just what has been stated repeatedly, the saints must be content with allowing God the Father to choose what HIS provision is for them, and to be at rest with HIS timing and HIS provision. They cannot demand their own way.

In this chapter I am focusing mostly upon the beast nature's demands to have homes and lands, etc., for this is what the majority of saints have given themselves to pursue. There are not many who go to excess in the opposite direction, demanding that they live in an impoverished way, treating their bodies very strictly and denying themselves all pleasure, but this too is error.

### Colossians 2:20-23

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with use) -- in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

There are a small minority of saints who have erred in the opposite direction of the majority. This minority glory in their self-abasement and severe treatment of the body. Paul says that such things have an "appearance of wisdom," for it appears that they are not serving self, but God. Yet Paul reveals where the error lies in these saints as well. He states that these are not truly wise for their appearance of wisdom is based in "**self**-made religion and **self**-abasement".

These ones, whom Paul equally condemns with those who give themselves over to the pursuit of pleasure, are missing the mark for they are still SELF directed. They are not content to wait upon God and to receive WHATEVER He has for them, but they will only receive poverty and self-abasement. Paul said he was content with poverty, but also with prosperity, with hunger and with being filled, with suffering need and with having an abundance. Those who are conformed to the image of the divine are content with what God chooses for them.

To be sure, most saints are erring on the side of covetousness, not self-abasement, but both are equally sinful for both originate in self. Those who are mature reflections of Christ have crucified the flesh and self and they live to do the will of God. They are content with whatever He provides and they will not stretch out their hand to satisfy their natural appetites apart from the will of God. Neither will they refuse to receive what God would provide for them in order to glory in their self-abasement.

*Discipleship is  
surrender to the will of  
another...*

Discipleship is surrender to the will of another, and this surrender of the will is where the cost

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of discipleship lies. There is a high cost to discipleship, and for this reason Yahshua urges all who would follow Him to count the cost. He promises no man or woman houses and lands,

*There is a high cost to discipleship...*

but He would urge all to be content with whatever the Father chooses for them. This then is a real sticking point. Can you be content with whatever the

Father chooses for you, or do you have certain requirements, desires, wants, or demands that are non-negotiable? Will you say to God, "I will give you a part of my life, but I reserve a portion of it?" Remember, Christ said that no man can serve both God and mammon.

Yes, these things are radical, and the early church was very radical, and they shone forth as a brilliant light for a season. The beast suffered a mortal wound, but the wound has healed and the beast has returned and has offered the church a ride on its back.

### Revelation 13:3-4

I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast; they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"

When Christ was crucified and rose again Satan received a mortal blow. The early church subdued and ruled over the beast nature. They were completely set free from a slavery to their natural appetites. They were transformed from consumers to radiators of light and life. They knew the glorious liberty of possessing nothing but Christ. However, the saints failed to continue subduing and ruling over the beast na-

ture. They began to worship the dragon, Satan, the serpent, once more. By cunning he convinced them that they could be disciples of Christ while allowing the beast to live. He convinced them that the beast would even carry them to their goal and they could live harmoniously with the beast nature.

There are many carnal interpretations of what this passage from Revelation 13 speaks. Many prophecy teachers see the beast as some political ruler who will arise and make war against Christianity, but let me declare that the beast has been present for the entire duration of Christianity and he has waged war with many saints, and few have overcome him. Many are the saints who have been defeated through great deception and cunning, as they have failed to subdue and rule over the beast nature. They have believed that they could live for self and for God, that they could offer God a portion of their lives while maintaining a sizeable piece for themselves, that they might find pleasure and satisfaction in the offerings of the world.

Are you willing to allow the Spirit to shine a light upon your life, upon your spending habits and your accumulation of the goods of this world? Are you willing to give up all your possessions should Christ require this of you as He did of the rich young ruler? Would you be content with food and covering, not even demanding that which the beasts have, your own nest, your own den? Christ admonishes all to count the cost before declaring that they will follow Him wherever He would lead. If you would bear the image of the divine, then the nature of the beast must be ruled over and subdued.

Many cling tenaciously to the things of this world, to possessions that they own, for they do not know a love of Christ and of the brethren that should make such things appear pale in comparison. If you are not wholly captivated by

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Christ, you will be captivated by lesser things. On the other hand, if your love of Christ is pure and unadulterated, then the things of this world will be as nothing to you. You will not covet them, or spend your life, your time, and energy in pursuit of accumulating matter.

Christ came to set men free, and those whom the Son sets free are free indeed.

### Nehushtan

We have seen that the serpent is the fullest representation of the beast nature, being cursed above all beasts while also being more cunning. When God proclaimed the curse that would fall upon man and the serpent for their transgression, the following was declared.

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you (the serpent) and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; he shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.

There is both a physical and a spiritual fulfillment of many of the things recorded in Scripture, and this is true of this curse. Mankind in general loathes and detests snakes. There is enmity between serpents and mankind. Where I live in the state of Georgia there are a number of poisonous snakes. Among the more prevalent are the rattlesnake and the water moccasin. There is no love lost between most Georgians and these serpents.

It is very common to see these snakes dead in the road during the warm months when they are out crawling about. It is a passion of many drivers to intentionally run over these serpents,

and even to slam on the brakes and skid across them to make sure they are dead. Some drivers will even back up and perform this action repeatedly to leave no doubt that the snake has been killed.

This enmity toward serpents is unique among the animal kingdom. There is much wildlife in Georgia and it often crosses roadways. There are signs warning drivers that turtles are present in certain areas, and I have witnessed drivers perform all sorts of maneuvers to avoid striking a dog, a deer, a rabbit, a beaver, a raccoon, or an armadillo. I have seen people stopped in the road to aid a hawk that had been injured, and my own daughter came to a screeching halt recently with a large hawk only a foot or two away from the front of our car. I would have been very saddened had the car struck the hawk, for they are magnificent, beautiful birds. If it had been a rattlesnake in the road, however, I would not have felt the same distress over hitting it.

*Christ came to set  
men free...*

It is interesting that even those who know nothing of Christ, or of God's desire for man to bear the image of the divine, have such an enmity against serpents. They intuitively know that this beast is an enemy of man. The way in which a serpent injures man is very significant. Serpents do not tear men to pieces like a lion or a bear would do. They do not trample men like an elephant or rhinoceros might. Instead, they do their harm by injecting poison into man's blood stream. This poison begins to effect man's vital organs and in many cases can cause death. With their poisons, serpents kill men from the inside.

This speaks of the way that Satan kills men and

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women. He poisons their souls and does his destruction by filling mankind with things that

*There is but one way to be saved from this fatal injury...*

result in spiritual death. All men who have been born of Adam have experienced the venom of the serpent and death is working in their members.

There is but one way to be saved from this fatal injury and this salvation is found in Yahshua, the Son of God.

There is a very symbolic story that is recorded for the saints in the book of Numbers. It presents a parable lived out by actual people, and there is a message in it for the saints today.

Numbers 21:6-9

Yahweh sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. So the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against Yahweh and you; intercede with Yahweh, that He may remove the serpents from us." And Moses interceded for the people. Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall come about, that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, he will live." And Moses made a bronze serpent and set it on a pole; and it came about, that if a serpent bit any man, when he looked to the bronze serpent, he lived.

I can imagine that before Christ was crucified there lived many godly men who desired earnestly to understand the significance of this thing that Yahweh instructed Moses to do. Why make a bronze serpent and place it on a pole? How would looking to this serpent bring healing to mankind? What was symbolized here? Yahshua revealed to His disciples that the bronze serpent on the pole actually pointed to

His own crucifixion.

John 3:14-15

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.

The saints eagerly embrace depictions of Christ as a pure and spotless lamb, but there is something within them that recoils at seeing the Son of God depicted as a serpent. Yet Yahshua testified that this serpent pointed to Himself. Moses himself recoiled when God first revealed to him an image of Christ as a serpent.

Exodus 4:2-3

Yahweh said to him, "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A staff." Then He said, "Throw it on the ground." So he threw it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

You may ask, "How do we know the serpent depicted here represents Christ?" Moses' staff was a symbol of Christ. This staff was the power of God to accomplish salvation for the Israelites. In many places in Scripture we see the staff being symbolic of Christ. When David penned Psalm 23 he wrote, "Your rod and your staff, they comfort me," it was Christ who was depicted as both the rod and staff. In Isaiah we also read:

Isaiah 11:1

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

The staff in Moses' hands is a picture of Christ, and that the staff turned into a serpent is a fur-

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ther confirmation of this divine imagery. Yet even as Moses fled from the serpent, so too do most Christians flee from the image of Christ as a serpent. It was this serpent, however, that swallowed the serpents of Pharaoh's magicians. And it is the serpent on the pole that brought healing to all those dying among the Israelites who would look to it.

Why should the Son of God be depicted as a rod that changes into a serpent, or a serpent hung upon a pole, which is a type of rod? The rod is an image of Yahweh's power. In many places in Scripture we read words such as the following:

Isaiah 11:4

And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

The rod is an instrument of power. We are told in another place that Christ will rule the nations with a rod of iron. Christ is the rod of Yahweh's mouth, for He is called the Word of God, and a Word comes forth from the mouth. Christ demonstrated great power during His ministry, raising the dead, healing the sick, making the blind to see, stilling the storm with a word, and many other amazing displays of power. Yet His greatest act, and that which crushed the head of Satan, was when He gave His body to be crucified and He bore on Himself all the sins of the world. "He made Him who knew no sin, sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (II Corinthians 5:21).

Yahshua became sin. He became as the serpent. Not only was He born in the likeness of sinful flesh (Romans 8:3), but He became sin that He might destroy the works of the Devil and set men free from the curse. Christ stood in man's place. He became a curse that men might be

freed from the curse. As it is written:

Galatians 3:13

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us-- for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree."

The serpent on the pole and the rod that turned into a serpent, both pointed to Christ who would take upon Himself the sin of the world. In this way the power of the enemy would be shattered and men could be free from the beast nature and become the image and likeness of God. Those who were infected with the venom of the serpent, which is sin, could be healed by looking to Christ who became sin on their behalf. A great exchange occurred on the cross, for Yahshua took upon Himself all the sins of man, and in return gave to man His righteousness.

Sadly, this account in Numbers of Moses creating the bronze serpent and placing it on a pole is not the last that we hear of this matter. Many years later when Israel was settled in their land and they had turned to much sin, wickedness and idolatry, a godly man named Hezekiah became king. He cleansed the land of idols, abominable images and practices and turned the people back to a pure devotion to Yahweh. While in the midst of this cleansing work we read:

*Yahshua became sin.*

II Kings 18:4

He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called

# The Mark of the Beast

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Nehushtan.

Nehushtan means “something formed of copper.” The words “copper” and “bronze” are used interchangeably in Scripture. These metals were not highly prized as were gold and silver, but rather these were considered base metals. Today if someone would desire to purchase a crucifix, an image of Christ on the cross, they

*God cannot look on sin, for He is holy...*

would most likely choose a precious metal in which to have it fashioned. It is common today to find crucifixes of gold or silver, but when God in-

structed Moses to build the first image of Christ upon the cross as depicted in the serpent upon the pole, He told Moses to use bronze, or copper, for the metal. This was to indicate the baseness of what was being depicted. This image depicted the Son of God becoming sin, and there was no reason to fashion such an image in gold, for it was to appear as something loathsome and detestable.

We are told that God cannot look on sin, for He is holy, and while His own Son hung on the cross the Father turned away from Him. For this reason Christ called out, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” Darkness covered the earth from the sixth hour to the ninth hour as Christ bore the sins of the world, and became as a detestable thing. The pure golden Son of God became as something base and worthless. Such depictions of the Son of God in the form of a serpent do make men recoil and flee away today, but it is a measure of the vastness of the love of God that He would go to such lengths to redeem man from his bondage to sin and slavery to corruption.

Romans 8:31-32

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?

Even as there is great symbolism in Yahweh instructing Moses to fashion the bronze serpent upon the pole, so there is symbolism in what the Israelites did later in idolizing this image and offering up incense before it. What the Israelites did was an act of man-made religion. Yahweh did not instruct the Israelites to worship the serpent on the pole, nor did He tell them to offer incense before it. He told them only to look to it, and this command was with the express purpose of healing them from the venom of the serpents.

In a similar incident King Saul lost the kingdom when he made an offering he was not commanded to give. It was on this occasion that Samuel spoke the words that are often quoted today:

I Samuel 15:22

So Samuel said, “Has Yahweh as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of Yahweh? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.”

A great lesson for the church today can be seen in God instructing Moses to fashion the bronze serpent on the pole for the healing of the people, and in their subsequent worship of Nehushtan which was idolatry. Yahweh sent His Son to destroy the works of Satan, to bring an end to the venomous death that was killing all mankind. Yahshua was crucified to atone for the sins of man, and He was raised again that all men might become partakers of His resur-

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rection life and walk in victory over sin, Satan and the world. Christ came to bring healing to all men.

I Peter 2:24

He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

This is the healing that Yahshua purchased for mankind, namely that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. The apostle Paul wrote that the saints should not consider the grace of God to be an opportunity to continue in sin. In the strongest of terms he condemned such a mindset as being a gross misappropriation of the sacrifice of Yahshua.

Hebrews 10:29-31

Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "Yahweh will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

The Israelites in King Hezekiah's day were not coming to the bronze serpent on the pole for healing. They were coming only to worship the image. In the same way a multitude of saints today are not coming to Christ to be healed from sin's destruction and corrupting influence. They do not truly desire to be set free from bondage to the flesh and the beast nature. They only come to worship an image of Christ. They make their offering of praise while being content to remain bound to the sinful nature. They have taken that which God intended for healing

and made it merely an object of idolatry.

As plainly as I can communicate let me say, "Many saints who worship the crucified Christ week after week, bringing an offering of praise before Him as incense that ascends to the heavens, are in truth practicing idolatry." Yahweh would declare to them:

Amos 5:21-24

"I hate, I reject your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer up to Me burnt offerings and your grain offerings, I will not accept them; and I will not even look at the peace offerings of your fatlings. Take away from Me the noise of your songs; I will not even listen to the sound of your harps. But let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

What God desires today from the saints is lives marked by righteousness. He yearns to see His children being conformed to the image of His firstborn Son. He wants to see them walking as overcomers, subduing and ruling over the beast nature. He wants them healed.

There are a vast number of Christians today who are not walking as overcomers, yet they come week after week to look upon the image of a crucified Christ and offer their incense before this image. They come into their places of worship infected with the venom of sin, and they leave with this same death coursing through their veins. They reason, "I am just a sinner saved by grace and if I continue in sin God will forgive me. I like my selfish life, and I am no different from anyone else. I will bring

*There are a vast number of Christians today who are not walking as overcomers...*

# The Mark of the Beast

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God my offering and I will trust Him to forgive me and bring me to His heaven when I die.” And all the time God says, “I hate, I reject what you are bringing before Me. Let me see righteousness in you. I have provided healing for you, yet you continue clinging to your sins. You have settled on your dregs, your scent remains in you and your flavor has not changed” (Jeremiah 48:11).

Saints, let me show you the subtlety and cunning of the serpent today. Every week multitudes go to their houses of worship and they make offerings of praise and of money to the crucified Christ. They confess the light which they have seen, but they remain unchanged. Those who witness these devoted worshipers coming week after week before their images of Christ judge them to be well pleasing to the Father. After all, they confess Christ with their mouths, and they bring their incense before Him. Yet Christ never came to call confessors, or even worshipers. He came to make disciples after the image of God.

It is of no value to worship an image of Christ week after week if you are not being conformed to His image. It is no good to call Him “Lord, Lord” if you do not do the things He commands. The church today offers salvation without transformation, but Yahweh says that true salvation is transformation, and there is no salvation without transformation. The word salvation is synonymous with the word deliverance. To be saved from sin is to be delivered from sin.

Galatians 6:7-9

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For

he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

I Corinthians 6:9

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived.

Over and over the Scriptures declare “Do not be deceived,” but the saints are deceived. They reason that it is enough to confess Christ and maintain the same scent and flavor as the unwashed world. They live for self and are filled with covetousness and a seeking after things of this world while bringing their sacrifice of praise before God week after week.

If you are not being conformed to the image and likeness of God then you are deceiving yourself concerning God’s will for you. You are in rebellion and are living in idolatry. May God raise up many men and women with the spirit of Hezekiah in this hour who will smash the idols of Christendom. May these men and women declare “Cease worshiping your images of Christ and begin being conformed to Christ. Let His image be formed in you.” This is the will of God and nothing else will satisfy His desire.

The voice of God is crying out today through the prophet Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 7:21-23

I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, “Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may

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be well with you.”

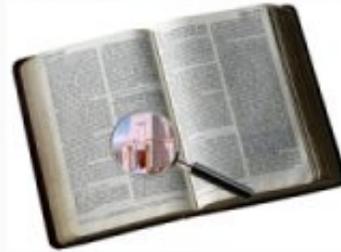
The church has repeated the error of Israel. When God called them to obedience and righteousness they preferred worship and sacrifice instead. The church says, “Let us continue to live for those things that perish. Let us devote ourselves to acquiring houses and lands and material possessions of all kinds. Let us pursue pleasure, and let us protect our flesh from the suffering of the cross. But this we will do, we will venerate Christ’s image, and we will bring our offerings of money and praise before Him. Let this be sufficient.”

Do not be deceived! Such man-made religious acts are not sufficient before God. He will only be content when He sees the image of His Son formed in the lives of those who have been called and chosen for this honor. If your church is calling people to worship before an image of the crucified Christ, but it is not bringing people to a conformity to Christ and a death to self, sin and the flesh, then flee from the midst of it. Such churches are houses of idolatry, and have constructed their own Nehushtan before which they invite the saints to present their offerings. Such churches are merely harlots riding upon the beast.

Let those who have ears to hear, hear.

*May God raise up many  
men and women with the  
spirit of Hezekiah...*

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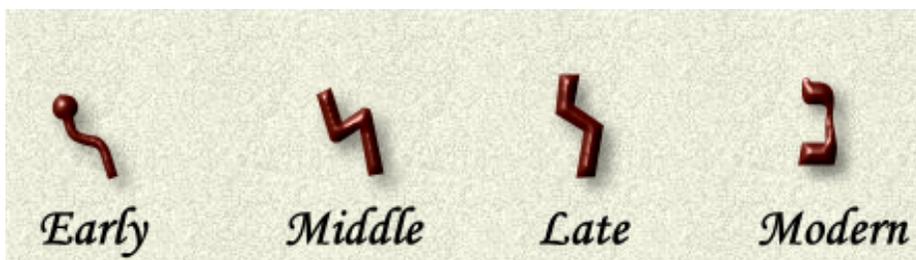
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### PARABLES PRECEPT—The Hebrew Alphabet



(Image source: Ancient Hebrew Resource Center's Website)

The Hebrew letter pictured above is Nun. It is the picture of a seed. I find it fascinating that it actually appears similar to the image of sperm, which is the seed of man.



The early letter Nun also resembles a seed that is sprouting.



The Hebrew word Nun means “continue, offspring, or heir.” If

a modern man came across this letter that looks so much like a sperm cell, and then discovered that the word Nun which is associated with this image means “heir and offspring,” they might have wondered if the early Semitic people had microscopes.

Of course, we have no evidence that they did. This appears to merely be a remarkable coincidence.

In English, the letter that corresponds to the Hebrew Nun is the letter N. It is hard to see any resemblance to the letter N and a seed. You can trace the evolution of this letter above. The Greeks adopted the Late Hebrew, and reversed it as they write in the opposite direction to Hebrew.