

SEVEN ACCUSATIONS EXAMINED...

Seven times the people of God *have* acted like it!

Exodus 16:28:

And the LORD said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?

Sadly, more times than not, this has been the sentiment that best describes Israelites from the past - to the present.

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

...And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;

Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. Genesis 26:4-5

The promise God made to Abraham - was *because* Abraham kept God's Statutes. Forty five times God caused the writers of His Word to record the words "My Statutes." The majority of the passages that contain these words are exhortations for those who are not following God's Statutes and are following some other set of statutes - in an attempt to have them return to the Statutes of God.

The title of this message is **Seven Accusations Examined...**Seven times the people of God *have* acted like it!

The purpose is to examine what the world, or what those who follow statutes other than God's, say about those who ARE trying to live according to God's Statutes. I want us to look at seven examples.

EXAMPLE ONE

The first instance to examine is found in Ezra 4. This is what was said of the Israelites when they were making plans to build the temple:

Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto [Yahweh] the LORD God of Israel;

Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esarhaddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto [Yahweh] the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the beginning of his reign, wrote they unto him an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter was written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort:

Then wrote Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharsathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Susanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites,

And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Asnappar brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest that are on this side the river, and at such a time.

This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

Now because we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

We certify the king that, if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

Then sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and unto the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and that rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.

Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

Then ceased the work of the house of God which is at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

ACCUSATION ONE:

Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

From the text of this passage, is there anything here that would lead an honest reader to conclude these accusations were *false*?

Or could it be that when God's people are attempting to live according to His Statutes, this is what it looks like to those who walk after their own statutes and reject the Statutes of God?

EXAMPLE TWO

The next example of Israel acting like Israel, is found in Esther 3:

After these things did king Ahasuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

And all the king's servants, that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

Then the king's servants, which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he was a Jew.

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahasuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

And Haman said unto king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

Haman was a high ranking official in the government of Ahasuerus - and everyone - *almost everyone* - paid honor and reverence to Haman - BECAUSE IT WAS A STATUTE. Mordecai was an exception. He would not bow. As a result, Haman, conspired to bring evil against Mordecai - and to actually destroy the entire race of Mordecai. The Greek Septuagint offers a very interesting translation of Esther 3:13. Notice the additional details and language used.

GREEK SEPTUAGINT - ESTHER 3:13

...And was sent by posts throughout the kingdom of Artaxerxes, to destroy utterly the race of the Jews on the first day of the twelfth month, which is Adar, and to plunder their goods. [And the following is the copy of the letter; The great king Artaxerxes writes thus to the rulers and inferior governors of a hundred and twenty-seven provinces, from India even to Ethiopia, who hold authority under . Ruling over many nations and having obtained dominion over the whole world, I was minded (not elated by the confidence of power, but ever conducting with great moderation and gentleness) to make the lives of subjects continually tranquil, desiring both to maintain the kingdom quiet and orderly to utmost limits, and to restore the peace desired by all men. But when I had enquired of my counsellors how this should be brought to pass. Aman, who excels in soundness of judgment among us, and has been manifestly well inclined without wavering and with unshaken fidelity, and had obtained the second post in the kingdom, informed us that a certain ill-disposed people is mixed up with all the tribes throughout the world, opposed in their law to every nation, and continually neglecting the commands of the king, so that the united government blamelessly administered by us is not quietly established. Having then conceived that this nation is continually set in opposition to every man, introducing as a change a foreign code of laws, and injuriously plotting to accomplish the worst of evils against our interests, and against the happy establishment of the monarchy; we signified to you in the letter written by Aman, who is set over affairs and is our second governor, to destroy them all utterly with their wives and children by the swords of the enemies, without pitying or sparing any, on the fourteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, of the present year; that the people aforesaid and now ill-disposed having been violently consigned to death in one day...

Why are the people of God accused - *in every nation* - of opposing the laws? Obedience to:

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me..."

...will produce accusations of "criminal" behaviour, treason, sedition - *every time*. It knows no boundaries, it respects none of man's statutes. Is obedience to God and recognizing His Statutes only,

criminal behaviour? Of course it isn't. Followers of Christ *should be* the most peaceful, harmless people in any society. And, when left alone to serve their God, that is exactly what they are. The enemies of God and His Son ALWAYS seem to be the ones who initiate attacks on the peaceful, harmless people of God. They will do or say anything about them in order to turn others against them.

It was so in Mordecai's day - it is the same today.

And the following accusation was brought against Mordecai and the Israelites.

ACCUSATION TWO:

There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

Is there anything in this passage that would lead an honest reader to conclude that Haman's accusations were *false*? Is there anything in the passage that would lead someone to believe that Mordecai actually DID bow and give reference to Haman? No. Mordecai DID NOT bow to Haman. I do not believe the act of Mordecai was rebellion to Haman or to king Ahasuerus. Mordecai's obedience to His God, was taken as an act of rebellion, but it was not.

Were the "*certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom*" being rebellious to Ahasuerus - or were they being obedient to their God? Obedience to God - *His Statutes* - is taken as rebellion by those who choose their laws over God's Laws. So far, it seems a pattern or characteristic may be developing with those who do not acknowledge God.

Some Bible teachers have said they believe that Mordecai was a type of Christ in the Old Covenant.

EXAMPLES THREE AND FOUR

The stories of Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishrael are other examples of accusations that were disparaging against people who were obeying their God.

Did Daniel pray - in defiance of the king's statutes - or did he not? I believe that in the case of Daniel, not only was he obeying His God - but I believe He went a step further and actually *DID* openly rebel against the king's statutes in an attempt to alert others as to the injustice and unlawfulness of the king's statute.

Did Hananiah, Azariah and Mishrael bow down or not? The accusation was that they would NOT bow when the music was played - ACCORDING TO THE STATUTE. Was this a *false* accusation or was it true? No honest reader of these accounts in Daniel could say that these accusations were *false*.

Daniel openly defied the king's statute. Further, there is no Statute of God that says when you pray, open up your windows and pray so that everyone can see you. In fact, Jesus instructed His followers to do the exact OPPOSITE of what Daniel did. Jesus said to close the door and pray in your closet.

Daniel's actions were open, notorious and public because he was drawing attention to the *king's* rebellion against God.

I have often wondered why the three Hebrew young men were the only ones criminally charged with violating the king's statute. Where were their parents? Where were the "leaders" of the children of Israel? Why only three?

Maybe, the rest of them had convinced themselves either that the Laws of God had been done away with, or it wasn't really a violation of the First Commandment because God knew their hearts - that they were just bowing down so as not to offend anyone. Or maybe because God had commanded them to "obey the laws of the land, or submit to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake." Yes! The biggest segment of the population *was* bowing down because God commanded them to.

If this was happening today, there would be some who would say Hananiah, Azariah and Mishrael were thrown into the fiery furnace as a punishment by God because of their rebellion to an earthly king! Or, is it true that when God's people actually DO ACT like God's people, they get arrested, harassed and persecuted by those who place their statutes over God's Statutes?

ACCUSATION THREE (Daniel 3:1-3)

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Was this accusation true or *false*? Were these sons of God *rebellious* to Nebuchadnezzar - or *obedient* to their God? Or maybe even, both?

Some say, I would never "bow down to an idol." The accusation here is more than "bowing down to an idol." The accusation was that they would not serve his gods. The idol that Nebuchadnezzar had made was the image of his "authority" - or his power to control others by his statutes.

Today, most people would never bow down when the music is played. But I've seen thousands and even hundreds of thousands of people jump to their feet and put their hands over their hearts when the music is played.

In June 2017, a statute passed in the lower house in the Philipines that would make it a criminal offense if, when their national anthem is played, those in attendance either sing with "sufficient energy" or face criminal penalties. The bill states, "The singing shall be mandatory and must be done with fervor."

In November 2016, the Supreme Court in India ruled that movie theaters would be required to play the national anthem before screenings, and that moviegoers would be required to stand. According to The Los Angeles Times, nineteen people were arrested in December after failing to stand in two separate incidents. (*This makes me wonder if there are at least 19 Israelites in India.*)

I have told my sons and daughters that I believe, in their lifetime, it will become a criminal offense to not stand when the national anthem of the United States is played. Try not standing now - and watch

the response of those around you. Refusing to stand is nearly the death penalty now, and it's not even a statute - *yet*.

A CLOSER LOOK AT DANIEL

There were certain rebellious men in the government of Darius who wanted their statutes instead of God's Statutes. So, they devised an evil statute they knew Daniel would not obey. Their conspiracy was fully set on evil - to pass an evil and openly anti-God statute - in order to turn Daniel into a criminal.

This is why Daniel had such an open and notorious reaction to their evil.

Some have incorrectly surmised that the kingdom of Darius was altogether evil and that Daniel was a willing participant in that kingdom. But the truth is, Daniel was ranked third in the kingdom. He was a big part of the leadership of that kingdom. From Daniel's days with Nebuchadnezzar, ***I believe Daniel was charged with implementing the Laws of God in those kingdoms.*** Exactly what wisdom did Daniel possess that caused Nebuchadnezzar to put him in such high regard? What Laws do you think were being implemented by Daniel? What wisdom did Daniel possess that Nebuchadnezzar wanted so badly? At the end of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, this is what he had to say:

And at the end of the days **I Nebuchadnezzar** lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation:

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase. Daniel 4:34-37

No wonder it was said of Daniel:

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. Daniel 6:3-4

Daniel was "ruling" in a government where the king had made the proclamation:

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

THIS IS WHY THEY COULDN'T FIND DANIEL COMMITTING CRIMES according to their statutes.

This is why they had to create one! And when they did, Daniel OPENLY defied and REBELLED against them.

Daniel was exalted in the kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar and Darius. Why? Because Daniel taught and lived the Laws and Statutes of God and helped those people institute them. This is an excellent example of how everyone - *not just Israelites* - can benefit from the implementation of the Laws and Statutes of God.

ACCUSATION FOUR:

Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

EXAMPLE FIVE - *The ultimate example of an Israelite - truly acting like one!*

Let's move on to the birth of Christ. At His birth, He was announced as the King of the Jews.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king (small "k"), behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews (capital "K")? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. Matthew 2:1-2

Jesus was born into a time when the government was openly defying the Statutes of God and fully accepted their own traditions and doctrines - *and taught for them* - as if they were the commandments of God. They made their OWN statutes which were not the Statutes of God. (Mark 7) And, of course, the "government" who had refused to implement and obey the statutes of God, was upset with the birth of Christ.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
Matthew 2:3

Regardless, the King had come!

When His future disciples found Him, they proclaimed:

We have found Him of Whom Moses and the prophets did write....Jesus of Nazareth, the King of Israel. John 1:45, 49 (capital "K")

During His ministry, many times those who preferred their statutes to God's statutes, conspired against our Lord. Here is one example:

Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles.

If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: **and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.**

And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all,

Nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not.

And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation;

And not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.

Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death. John 11:47-53.

Why would people want to kill someone who did so much good? News of Christ's good works spread throughout the entire world. This man did nothing but good. He healed the sick, made the lame walk, gave sight to the blind, fed the hungry and preached the Good News of salvation!

His own words, not His good deeds, would ultimately lead to His death.

If ye love me, keep **my commandments**.

He that hath **my commandments**, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

John 14:15, 21

The King was commanding obedience to His Father's Statutes. Some argue that His Commandments were not His Father's Statutes.

Jesus' own words:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. Matthew 7:21-22

In regards to *their* statutes that openly defied God's Statutes:

He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.

For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do.

And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death:

But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free.

And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother;

Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. Mark 7:6-13

LEVI THE TAX COLLECTOR GETS CONVERTED AND CHANGES OCCUPATIONS

Early on in the ministry of Christ, He is found calling His disciples. Look closely from Matthew 9:9-13, the choosing of Levi.

And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.

And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.

But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Mark 2:13-17, but from the New Living Translation:

Then Jesus went out to the lakeshore again and taught the crowds that were coming to him. As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at his tax collector's booth. "Follow me and be my disciple," Jesus said to him. So Levi got up and followed him.

Later, Levi invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners. (There were many people of this kind among Jesus' followers.) But when the teachers of religious law who were Pharisees saw him eating with tax collectors and other sinners, they asked his disciples, "Why does he eat with such scum?"

When Jesus heard this, he told them, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do. I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners."

This is the first notable instance of Jesus' converting a TAX COLLECTOR and it begins a pattern where the New Testament Scriptures identify tax collectors as "*sinners*." Levi was not collecting tithes for the temple. He was sitting in Caesar's gate collecting Caesar's taxes. He was called a publican (tax collector) and a sinner and apparently from the clear wording of the text - Levi was ONE of MANY tax collectors and sinners that Jesus was converting.

You will see this over and over throughout the ministry of Christ. Of all the types of people Jesus is seen converting, you will find no group of people more singled out for conversion, than *tax collectors*.

ZACCHEUS THE CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR

The story of Zaccheus provides great insight into the ministry, teachings and nature of Christ. It shows that Christ preached obedience to His Father's Laws and Statutes - *the same ones that Abraham obeyed*. It further reveals His Kingship and provides *evidence* that would be used against Christ in court at His trial.

In the winter of 2017, while spending 47 days in jail for preaching the Kingdom of Christ, I picked up a copy of the Good News Translation - *the only Bible available to me at that moment*. For the first 54 years of my life, I would have looked at that book with disdain and would only have considered reading it for the purpose of *correcting* the translators.

What I read from Luke 19, in one specific way, was a remarkably *better* reading than the KJV. (My emphasis added below):

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a **chief tax collector** there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, "Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today."

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, "**This man has gone as a guest to the home of a sinner!**"

Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much."

Jesus said to him, "**Salvation** has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Who's idea was it that Zaccheus restore those he stole from? Note:

- 1) Zaccheus was the CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR.
- 2) He was known as a sinner.
- 3) When he met with Jesus - JESUS PREACHED TO HIM THE STATUTES OF GOD.

How do I know this? Because Zaccheus reveals the conversation he had with Jesus when he cites Exodus 22:1-4. Zaccheus did not just pull out the numbers "half" and "four-fold" out of the air. Jesus explained to Zaccheus the restitution clause in the Statutes of God regarding theft found in Exodus 22:1-4. Exodus 22:1-4 provides restitution for theft in the amounts of two-fold, *four-fold* and five-fold.

Zaccheus repented of his sin, his transgression of the Law, and when he did, Jesus said of Zaccheus:

"Salvation has come to this house today, for this man, also, is a descendant of Abraham. The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

In verse 5, Jesus said, "I *must* stay in your house today." The Greek text says "it is necessary" that I come to your house today.

Of all the types of "sinners" Jesus could have gone to and saved, He chose a TAX COLLECTOR to show his violation of the Statutes of God and to bring that man to repentance. Why not an adulterer? Or a liar? Instead, he - *out of necessity* - went to the house of the CHIEF TAX COLLECTOR.

What's the obvious? When Zaccheus was told of his transgression of the Law, he repented, acknowledged his need for restitution, and was revealed to be a descendant of Abraham...

...Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws... Genesis 26:5

The Statutes of God reveal to man his sin. When his sin is revealed to him, his need for a Saviour becomes evident. Without the Statutes of God, there is no knowledge of sin. Without the knowledge of sin, there is no knowledge of the punishment for sin. Without the knowledge of the punishment for sin, there is no fear of God. Without the fear of God, there is no need for a Saviour. This is precisely where we find ourselves today.

Whoever replaces the Statutes of God, with the statutes of men, removes the knowledge of God and consequently, the fear of God, from that society. Woe to that civilization that requires God to step back in and reveal those things against a rebellious people.

Jesus visit to Zaccheus' house caused the CHIEF TAX COLLECTING SINNER TO REPENT AND MAKE RESTITUTION.

We'll soon see how this was used against our Lord at His trial.

While reading the Good News Translation, I came across another passage that reads a little different from the KJV. Don't misunderstand me, I came to my conclusions LONG AGO while reading the KJV. The KJV says exactly the same thing the GNT says, but it says it in more of the vernacular of today.

Another Bible available in the jail was the New Living Translation. I took a look at that one and opened to Luke 15:1:

Tax collectors and other notorious sinners often came to listen to Jesus teach. This made the Pharisees and teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such sinful people—even eating with them!

Why do the Scriptures say this? ...TAX COLLECTORS and OTHER NOTORIOUS SINNERS?

If Jesus converted Zaccheus who was a sinner and a chief tax collector, was He doing the same thing here, in Luke 15? Did Jesus make a habit of converting the tax collectors of His day? Did all the tax collectors that He saved, do the same thing Zaccheus did? Hmm. Was Jesus' preaching damaging to the king's treasury?

Let's go to the trial of our Lord, first from the KJV.

Luke 23:

And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate.

And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

Luke 23 (Good News Translation)

The whole group rose up and took Jesus before Pilate, where they began to accuse him: "We caught this man misleading our people, telling them not to pay taxes to the Emperor and claiming that he himself is the Messiah, a king."

Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"So you say," answered Jesus.

Luke 23 (New Living Translation)

Then the entire council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor.

They began to state their case: "This man has been leading our people astray by telling them not to pay their taxes to the Roman government and by claiming he is the Messiah, a king."

So Pilate asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

Jesus replied, "You have said it."

During my last stay in jail, I shared this passage with most of the other men in jail. Not one of them had ever heard this passage of Scripture. (*I quoted the passage above from the GNT and the NLT because at that particular time, I did not have access to a KJV.*)

This is the opening statement from the prosecution in the most famous death penalty trial in the history of mankind - *yet not one of those men had ever heard of this passage*. I'd say that not many church-goers in this country can recall this passage, either.

Was this accusation a *false* accusation? Nearly every preacher and teacher I have read from or spoken to concerning this passage say this was a *false* accusation. But let's look closer, because I do not believe this was a *false* accusation, but it follows the same pattern as the other accusations we have examined so far.

The first thing to note is the word *accuse* in the second verse. From Strong's Concordance, 2723:

κατηγορέω katēgorēō, kat-ay-gor-eh'-o; from G2725; to be a plaintiff, i.e. to charge with some offence:—accuse, object.

From Thayer's:

κατηγορέω (katēgorēō) 1.) to accuse 1.a.) before a judge: to make an accusation 1.b.) of an extra-judicial accusation

A Christian brother recently sent me an article entitled, "The Trial," written by former trial judge Harry Fogle. Fogle's article deals with the trial of Christ, not from a theological perspective, but from a trial

judge's perspective. Fogle presents a very compelling argument that every single aspect of the trial of Christ, from his accusers, to the priests, to Pilate and Herod - was "illegal." According to Fogle, every step of the way, was in some form a violation of Rabbinical law and Roman law. I found his article to be forthright and honest, credible and convincing in several aspects.

However, Fogle asserts that the accusation of Christ that he was "*perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King*" was false.

Fogle also states that under the law at that time, the penalty for perjury in a capital case, was the death penalty.

With all the illegalities that Fogle describes concerning the proceedings, it seems reasonable that the accusers would not concern themselves with the penalties for perjury - *even though in this instance* - the perjury penalty would have been death.

But was this really a *false* accusation?

The accusation "*saying that he himself is Christ is a King*" is not *false*. From His birth, through His ministry, from the Law of Moses, through the prophets, from the genealogy of Adam, through Abraham, Isaac, Israel, David to Joseph - EVERYTHING anoints Jesus Christ as the King of Israel. THIS CANNOT BE REFUTED.

What then do we make of "*perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar..*"?

I submit to you that the accusation of Him being King and perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar - are one and the same. They cannot be separated. They are not three separate accusations - but one. And if any aspect of the accusation is *false*, the whole accusation is *false*.

In response to this accusation, Pilate asked Him:

Art thou the King of the Jews?

Pilate understood all aspects of the accusation were one and the same.

Couldn't the accusation of "*forbidding to give tribute to Caesar*" be easily disproved? Wasn't Jesus heard in Luke 20 by many people as saying, "*Render unto Caesar, the things which are Caesar's?*" **In fact, the EXACT SAME people who were saying in Luke 23 - Jesus was FORBIDDING TO GIVE TO TRIBUTE TO CAESAR - were the ones He said RENDER UNTO CAESAR to!!!**

If this could be so easily proven by many witnesses, why would Jesus' accusers - KNOWING THE PENALTY FOR PERJURY IN A CAPITAL CASE **IS DEATH** - accuse Jesus of *forbidding to give tribute to Caesar*?

Remember the story of Zaccheus? He was the CHIEF TAX collector, a notorious SINNER who, after meeting with Jesus, was convicted of his sin, and paid restitution. What about the other tax collectors and sinners found in Luke 15? Did they continue in their sin? Or, did Jesus say to them what He said to the woman taken in adultery - "*Go and sin no more.*" John 8:11 Did they respond to Jesus the same way Zaccheus did?

Did the repentance of these tax collectors cause "harm" or potential harm, to the treasury of Caesar?

The facts are: Jesus IS King. Jesus DID forbid to give tribute to Caesar and Jesus DID *pervert* the nation (men calling good evil, and evil good - He was turning the world upside down) simply because Jesus was trying to do the Will of His Father - which is the same Will God gave to Adam, Abraham, Nathan, David, and to all who claim His name.

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying,
Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, I am the Lord your God.

After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances.

Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I [am] the Lord your God.

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I [am] the Lord. Leviticus 18:1-4

The accusation against Christ was the same accusation against those Israelites from Ezra 4:13:

Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and so thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings."

If the Luke 23 accusation concerning Christ was not *false*, then what exactly did Jesus say in Luke 20?

Is truth in the Bible always easy to uncover? Think about it. For every doctrine that man has developed from the Scripture - someone, somewhere - will have a different opinion. If someone said the sky was black in one passage of Scripture, some other "scholar" will state the exact opposite. Isn't this why there's about ten thousand different "sects" of Christianity?

I am presenting something that is not unique at all to modern or historical Christianity. In Luke 20, I am saying that Jesus did NOT tell ANY *of His followers* to render unto Caesar!

What is shown in Luke 20 is a mirror image of a Biblical event that occurred centuries before and described in I Kings 18.

I KINGS 18

When Elijah reveals himself to Ahab the king, the first thing Ahab says is,

...Art thou he that troubleth Israel? I Kings 18:17

The Greek Septuagint says:

...Art thou he that PERVERTS Israel?..."

LUKE 20

Just ahead in Luke 19, Jerusalem is in a state of unrest and the "leaders" are blaming Christ and His disciples.

And when he was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen;

Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.

And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto him, Master, rebuke thy disciples.

And he answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,

Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side,

And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.

And he went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought; Saying unto them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer: but ye have made it a den of thieves.

And he taught daily in the temple. **But the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him,**

And could not find what they might do: for all the people were very attentive to hear him.
Luke 19:37-48

I KINGS 18

At this time, the prophets in Israel were in hiding because the king, influenced by Jezebel, had killed many prophets and was desiring to kill more.

Elijah's response to Ahab:

And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim. (verse 18)

Ahab was trying to blame the unrest in Israel on Elijah - but Elijah turned it right back around and laid the blame squarely where it belonged - on Ahab the king - *because they had forsaken the*

commandments of Yahweh.

LUKE 20

Though the chief priests and rulers were trying to lay blame on Christ, to the extent of killing Him, Christ turned it right back around and laid the blame squarely where it belonged.

In verses 9-18 Jesus told the parable of the man who planted a vineyard, then went away. He leased his vineyard to husbandmen to bring the vineyard to harvest. He sent servants to check on the vineyard and the wicked husbandmen abused the first servant, wounded the next, then, when the vineyard owner sent his own son, they killed him.

Then said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him.

But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.

So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them?

He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. And when they heard it, they said, God forbid.

And he beheld them, and said, What is this then that is written, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner?

Whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: **for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.** Luke 20:14-19

Jesus is saying, "I'm not the One troubling Israel, YOU ARE."

I KINGS 18 - The great showdown!

Elijah rained down fire from heaven and consumed his altar that had been drenched with water in a display whereby God once again revealed His power to the Israelites in an effort to get them to turn from the false god Baal, and serve Him.

At the beginning of this story, Elijah had the children of Israel gathered together in which he asked the following:

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. **And the people answered him not a word.** (verse 21)

LUKE 20 - The great showdown!

And the chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power and authority of the governor.

And they asked him, saying, Master, we know that thou sayest and teachest rightly, neither acceptest thou the person of any, but teachest the way of God truly:

Is it lawful for us to give tribute unto Caesar, or no?

But he perceived their craftiness, and said unto them, Why tempt ye me? Luke 20:19-23

Christ now gives an object lesson. NOTE: Who is this interaction between? Is it Christ and His followers? Or it Christ and His opponents? Or is it both? Who gave Him the penny? The text is clear. Those evil men who were conspiring to kill Jesus asked Him, "Is it lawful for US to give tribute to Caesar?" Christ was answering THEM - *not His disciples*.

Matthew records this verse like this:

But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?

Matthew 22:18

The word "their" - *again I ask* - who is He speaking to? Is He talking to His disciples?

Shew me a penny. Whose image and superscription hath it? THEY answered and said, Caesar's.

Now His response.

And he said unto THEM, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

And they could not take hold of his words before the people: **and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.** Luke 20:25-26

I KINGS 18

And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. **And the people answered him not a word.**

LUKE 20

And he said unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.

And they could not take hold of his words before the people: **and they marvelled at his answer, and held their peace.**

These chief priests and scribes immediately realized that Jesus had just told them that the showdown *they had instigated* - was exactly the same thing that had occurred between Elijah, Ahab and the false prophets.

If God is your God, serve God. If Baal is your god, serve Baal. If Caesar is your god, render to Caesar. If God is your God, render to God.

Those that were following Jesus understood exactly what He was saying. And the people that were not following God knew exactly what He was saying.

Go back and read the end of the story in I Kings 18 to see what happened to the false prophets of Baal.

This Luke 20 showdown is what kicked the chief priests into high gear for the purpose of killing Christ. I believe they realized that if Jesus truly was Who He said He was, then quite possibly, the same thing that happened to the false prophets of Baal, was going to happen to them. (*Didn't Jesus just tell them that they would be ground into powder? ...They perceived He was speaking about them...*) I also believe they were reminded what happened to Haman when he conspired to kill Mordecai.

It was now an "us" or "Him" scenario and they would do everything they could to make sure they would not end up like Haman, or the prophets of Baal, or the wicked husbandmen who would be ground into pieces by the stone they rejected.

I do not believe that anyone who looks at the totality of the Scriptures and the birth, life and ministry of Christ should be able to come to the conclusion that Jesus was telling HIS followers to submit to another king's statutes.

This showdown in Luke 20 is the exact reason why Christ's prosecutors brought forth the accusation that *He was forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying He himself is Christ a King* - and they did it without the fear of being charged with perjury.

Having examined this to the extent we have, let's go back again and revisit the word "accuse" as it is found in Luke 23:2. As noted earlier, there is nothing in the Greek definition of the word "accuse" that would give us any indication that the accusation is *false*.

Compare the word "accuse" here in Luke 23, with another time in Luke, the word is translated into English as "accuse." Luke 3:14

And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither **accuse** any falsely; and be content with your wages.

The Greek word for "accuse" here is NOT the same Greek word that is used in Luke 23. It is:

συκοφαντέω (sukophanteō) 1.) to accuse wrongfully, to calumniate, to attack by malicious devices 2.) to exact money wrongfully 2.a.) to extort from, defraud

In the Luke 3 text, the Scriptures tell us that the accusation IS *false*. And, the Greek word used here is a word that means to *accuse wrongfully*.

Calumniate

In all English dictionaries today, the word calumniate means *to make false accusations*.

My question is: If Luke 23 was a malicious, *false* accusation against Christ, why is this Greek word not used instead of the word that IS used?

Looking further into Luke 23, why do so many preachers and teachers so quickly pass the criminal indictment of Jesus as *false*? Verse 4, Pilate is quoted as saying,

And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it.

Then said Pilate to the chief priests and to the people, I find no fault in this man.

That's the cross examination of Jesus? From Jesus' three words - "*Thou sayest it*" - Pilate decides in favor of Jesus determining that the indictment was *false*?

Look at Matthew's record from chapter 26 beginning in verse 59.

Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;

But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,

And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.

Surely one can see the obvious here. Verse 59, the Scriptures declare - clearly - they sought *false* witnesses against Christ - to put Him to death. Apparently, they found no false witnesses they could pass on as credible enough to do their evil work. Many *false* witnesses came - but they found none.

What is meant from verses 60 and 61? Finally, they were able to come up with 2 witnesses that would attempt to impugn Christ. These *false* witnesses would testify that Jesus was a terrorist - and that Jesus threatened to blow up the temple, or tear it down.

This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.

Why would I insert such a statement - "blow up the temple, tear it down...?"

Modern day Christians say that when *they* tell me to bow down and worship an idol, that's when I'll stand for Jesus. Or, when *they* tell me to do something that is against God's Word, that's when I'll make my stand. Friends, that's not how it works.

In my own life now, I have been "accused" of committing "forgery" 9 times. Those that prefer their statutes to God's Statutes are calling the Gospel of Jesus Christ - *the crime of forgery* - punishable - in this instance - by 63 years in prison - ultimately - the death penalty for someone who is almost 55 years old. The "crime" of forgery is attempting to steal someone else's property or money through trickery or deceit. I have not stolen anything from anyone. I have never written another man's name anywhere - for the purpose of taking something that did not belong to me. "Thou shalt not steal" is a Statute of my God - and in following that Statute, it is impossible for me to be guilty of man's "forgery" statutes.

Jesus was not a terrorist. Jesus was not the Unibomber - but that's what they were trying to portray Him as, so as to convince Pilate and Herod that Jesus was worthy of death.

Today, anyone that says anything against the statutes of men - WILL BE labeled a terrorist, or a hater. It's NO different today, than it was in Bible days.

Jesus' response to these false witnesses?

And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.

What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death. Matthew 26:62-66

Back to Luke 23.

The chief priests response to Pilate finding no crime worthy of death:

And they were the more fierce, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place. Verse 5

Other Bible translations say

..."he causes riots in the streets..." (...throwing down palm branches and saying, Hosanna to the King!)

Ridiculous.

When Jesus was brought before Herod in verse 9:

Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing.

The accusations brought against Jesus WERE NOT FALSE. To me, it's clear from the texts that the wicked priests conspired with wicked men to be *false* witnesses - in other words - to attempt to frame Christ for actual *crimes* He did not commit. These were attempts to twist His words into something they were not.

So, if Christ' defense to Pilate was a mere three words - "Thou sayest it." And to Herod, "he answered him not a word." What happened?

Pilate and Herod had no choice in this matter. The prophecy concerning Christ had to be fulfilled. They BOTH wanted to free Jesus - but it could not be.

Look at John 15:10-14. You would do well to read the entire chapter, but here, I'll highlight a few verses.

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you.

If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also.

But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

(My emphasis added in italics)

If I had not come and spoken unto them (*the commands of His Father*), they had not had sin (*sin is the transgression of the Law*): but now they have no cloke for their sin (*to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin*).

He that hateth me hateth my Father also.

If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.

But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated me without a cause.

What is the foundation of the persecution that Jesus said He would endure and His disciples would

come under?

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Genesis 26;5

Why did He say the world hated Him and would hate them?

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Genesis 26;5

Why did He say that if men hated Jesus, they hated God also?

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. Genesis 26;5

There is NO crime in forsaking man's statutes and following God's!

ACCUSATION FIVE:

And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a King.

THE CASE OF STEPHEN

In the case of Stephen, notice the word "*false*" in the text. Acts 6:10-15

And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.

Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.

And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,

And set up **false** witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.

And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.

The reason it is used here, is because when something *is* false in the Scriptures, the text tells us so. It needs to be pointed out that in this passage, I am only indicating that the word *false* is included in the text to show that these *witnesses were false*. If Luke 23 was a *false* accusation, the Scriptures should be consistent and the text should have read:

...and they began to *falsely* accuse Him saying...

But it wasn't so.

In Stephen's case, here's **another example where an Israelite was acting like an Israelite**, accusations were brought against him, that eventually led to his death.

Notice what *is* said in this passage. The WITNESSES were *false* - but nothing is said about the accusation. The accusations were not *false*, but the witnesses were. These "accusations" are almost identical to the charges laid against Christ, particularly Christ's prophecy concerning the temple (Matthew 24...not one stone left upon another that shall not be thrown down...) The change of the sacrificial Law system was perceived as one speaking against Moses and God. But it was not. This was an Israelite who had determined to live like one and his preaching led to his persecution.

ACCUSATION SIX:

...And set up **false** witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:

EXAMPLE SEVEN - Acts 17:1-7

Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews:

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures,

Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.

And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.

But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

Most people in the world today will never physically be in the presence of their "president" or their "king" - but they have no problem whatsoever obeying their "statutes."

Why is it that people refuse to accept the fact that Christ is King now - because He is not physically touchable or visible on earth? In Bible times, how many people stood in the presence of Yahweh? How many had audible conversations with Him? Yet His expectations of obedience extended to all. Why is it different today?

THOMPSON CHAIN REFERENCE BIBLE

In Bible college, almost 40 years ago, I purchased a Thompson Chain Reference Bible from the college bookstore after losing the Bible I had for almost my whole life, in a fire. I had always wanted a "Thompson Chain" because of how he linked subjects together and then listed other passages of Scripture where the same subjects were discussed. It didn't take too long to see that the "chains" and "notes" - in my opinion - were biased and unreliable.

"Biased" and "unreliable" - yes - through the eyes of **my** "bias." I am biased - I admit it. I believe - for as long as I can remember - that **Jesus Christ is King**. I do not believe He is a coming King. I believe He is King - *right now*. I believe it is the responsibility of every living, breathing creature to conform to His Kingship - *right now*. Jesus Christ does not have to be in physical form on this earth - to be King.

So when I read passages of Scripture such as Acts 17, I have no problem believing this is an accurate description of the message and life of the apostles.

But in the margin notes of the Thompson Chain Reference Bible, he calls this passage "False Accusations." And he calls the accusers "False Witnesses." He links Luke 23 with this passage as another "False Accusation" in the "chain." *One "Christian teacher" says it's daylight, the other says it's nighttime.*

The Thompson Chain Reference Bible, at least my 1980s model, is printed by the B.B. KIRKBRIDE BIBLE CO., INC(orporated). A "corporation," by definition, **is a creature of the state**. That being the case, I have to question where the corporation's loyalties lie. There's an old phrase that says a "dog will not bite the hand that feeds it." "Corporations" - including "church corporations" receive certain special privileges from the state - *their creator*. We ALL have "biases" and we all have our own perspectives that mold and shape our beliefs.

With all the overwhelming evidence in Scripture that anoints Christ as King, I'll just keep my "bias." And if I'm wrong when I stand before God, I'll be guilty of preaching that Christ is King now. Which way do you want to be judged?

How is the Acts 17 passage any different from any of the other accusations that we have examined? Is there anything in the text that would lead an honest reader to believe the accusation was *false*?

In studying for this message, I picked up a couple other reference Bibles to see what they said. Jerry Falwell's "Open Bible" linked the phrase, "*saying there is another King, One Jesus*" to - MY SHOCK - I Peter 2:13. So did the Scofield Reference Bible. They also referenced John 19:12 - which surprised me also. (John 19:12-15)

And from thenceforth Pilate sought to release him: but the Jews cried out, saying, If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus forth, and sat down in the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.

And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King!

But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priest answered, We have no king but Caesar.

Most "preachers" today are teaching unquestioned obedience to men's statutes and in doing so, will use Luke 19 - "*Render unto Caesar*" as one of their supporting passages. They will also claim the Bible says, "*Obey all the laws of the land*" - even though those words are not there. They are referring to I Peter 2:13,17 which is referring to Jesus as King - not man! As sad as it is to say this, I believe that the largest majority of "preachers" today - if they were alive during the time of Christ holding to the same theology they do today - would be in the crowd of "preachers" that said,

"We have no king but Caesar,"

and,

"Whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Caesar."

ACCUSATION SEVEN

And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;

Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

WORDS FROM THE ACCUSED

Paul and Peter were two of the most "accused" followers of Christ in the Bible. Look at what they said about being "accused."

Paul

In I Corinthians 15:15 Paul, *an Israelite who was acting like one*, had this to say about himself concerning what others were saying about him:

Yea, and we are found *false* witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.

Peter - I Peter 3:13-18

And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

Having a good conscience; that, **whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers**, they may be ashamed that *falsely accuse* your good conversation in Christ.

For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Reminder: Who defines good and evil? That is something reserved to God Himself and woe to any man who redefines good or evil. When sons and daughters of God are found obeying the Statutes of the God - it is perceived by the world as evil. Man has determined anyone who does not conform to their statutes - *is evil*.

Peter tells his readers that they also, might suffer for righteousness sake. In other words, "if you will act like Israelites are supposed to, you might find yourself at the end of *false* accusations."

...they might speak evil of you, as of evildoers...

Why? Because this is what people who do not want to follow God's Laws do to people who DO want to follow God's Laws. Throughout the entire history of Israel - in the few instances where Israelites have acted like true Israelites - they have been attacked. This is the pattern that was shown in Old Covenant Israel, the ultimate example shown by our Lord, and further examples shown by those on this side of the Cross.

Those Israelites who choose to live as Christ did and taught, according to the original promise to Abraham - have been maligned by the opposers of God throughout all history - and it continues today.

Evangelist Ted Weiland has been using the phrase,

...Idolatry is not so much about statues as it is statutes...

The foundation of the promise to Abraham is about Statutes.

The problems that face all who claim Christ - whether one understands Israel, Christian Israel, the church, the ecclesia, the Kingdom, or whatever label one uses, can be found in II Kings 17:7-19

For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

And the children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree:

And there they burnt incense in all the high places, as [*did*] the heathen whom the Lord carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger:

For they served idols, whereof the Lord had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

Yet the Lord testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the Lord their God.

And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them, that they should not do like them.

And they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger.

Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

Also Judah kept not the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

...Idolatry is not so much about statues as it is statutes...

As stated above, for every single argument or opinion someone can make from the Scriptures, there will be a hundred other viewpoints presenting a different or even opposite opinion.

Because so much has been made in our generation concerning "*the Law of God has been done away with*" - we have lost the understanding of how the Law of God should be applied in our lives.

Jesus said Salvation had come to the house of Zaccheus BECAUSE HE IDENTIFIED WITH THE FAITH OF ABRAHAM - who obeyed the Laws, Commandments and Statutes of God. There is no argument that the sacrificial Laws of God have been removed. But what remains?

I admit that I may not know or understand everything about which Laws, Statutes and Commandments are in effect - but I can tell you this - I ABSOLUTELY KNOW WHAT STATUTES ARE **NOT** THE STATUTES OF GOD.

I ABSOLUTELY know that what is implemented world-wide is MAN'S STATUTES. Again. I may not know or understand all of what God's Statutes ARE - but I can absolutely identify what they are not!

We, as Christian Israelites, the church, the ecclesia, or whatever label you have, find ourselves in our present condition because we have been as guilty as those described in the Scripture as people that have

replaced the Statutes of God with the statutes of men.

We have come up with every imaginable excuse as to why God no longer expects His people to live according to His Statutes - even to the point where supposed men of God speak *against* the Laws of God as if they were something evil.

Men who have chosen to try to live according to the Statutes of God - *as best they understand them* - are ridiculed and called evil because they choose the Statutes of God instead of the statutes of men. Today is no different than it has ever been for a son of God *who is trying to act like one*.

Scriptures are twisted into meanings that they do not now - nor ever have had. The truth of God has been changed into a lie. The God of Abraham has been reduced to a servant of the systems of men who operate in blatant disregard to His existence - all the while giving lip service to Him in a ridiculous attempt to pacify Him.

The God of Abraham has become a mockery among the lost because the salt has no savour. Those who claim the name of Christ are many times the leading advocate for promoting man's statutes over God's Statutes. And, while a few men try to steer others back to the Statutes of God, they are held in ridicule.

When persecution comes to those who refuse man's statutes, others are quick to say that the "*persecution*" is punishment by God for their refusal to adopt men's statutes in place of God's.

How shameful to hold people like George Washington - a man who owned and operated the largest whiskey distillery in North America, Thomas Jefferson - who owned slaves and had at least one sex-slave as young as 16 years old - in greater esteem than Peter, James and John. But I see it all the time. Not just from those who do not claim Christ - but from those who claim Christ.

CONCLUSION

Do not misunderstand me. When I am talking about the Laws of God - I am not talking about salvation by works - *though I have been accused of that*. To be clear. I believe in salvation by grace through faith - not of works, lest any man should boast. There is nothing a man can do to *save himself*. It is by faith in the finished work of and being fully immersed into King Jesus that atones for sin and brings man into a condition where he can stand before a Holy God.

It is the Law of God that defines sin. Where there is sin, there is death. Where there is death, there is a need for a Saviour. I say again, remove God's Law from society - and you remove the need for a Saviour. There is no knowledge of God in the land today because the Law of God has been replaced by the law of man.

Finding the world in the sad situation it is in - most people seek to put the blame in many places - *other than where it should be*. First and foremost in the blame game - "*Signs of the times...*" which ultimately is putting the blame on God Himself because all that's happening is "*according to His plan: it's all the fulfillment of Bible prophecy...*" Many do nothing because they are waiting for that white horse in the sky to come and make things straight.

We blame man's secular "government" for bad laws, bad fiscal policy, bad moral policy, etc. We don't

have the insight to see those things as purely logical. What should we expect from those who exempt God from themselves - and have the audacity to claim it is a Godly thing to do so? (*No religious test shall be required to hold office in the U.S... - this is GOOD!?!*) What should we expect from a people so blatantly rebellious as to say?:

This Constitution, and the Laws of the United States which shall be made in Pursuance thereof; and all Treaties made, or which shall be made, under the Authority of the United States, **SHALL BE THE SUPREME LAW OF THE LAND**; and the Judges in every State shall be bound thereby, any Thing in the Constitution or Laws of any State to the Contrary notwithstanding.

We blame foreign "governments" for attacking us because of our "freedoms."

We manage to find good in evil - *and thank God for it.*

We have taken to ourselves to define what is good and what is evil. This is robbing God. It is God alone Who has taken on Himself the authority to establish what is good and what is evil.

We boldly and recklessly say that Romans 13 gives man the authority to establish good and evil and dispense praise or punishment based on their definitions - *their statutes* - of what is good and what is evil.

Today, whatever man says is "Good," *the people accept it as so.* Whatever man says is "Evil," *the people accept it as so.* Most have no idea there is a vast difference between Lawful (God's Law) and legal (man's statutes) - and Unlawful (God's Law) and illegal (man's statutes).

There is a huge difference between God ordained Civil Government and man established secular government. The two are total opposite domains. One is the Kingdom of Christ - the other is the domain of darkness. If we were honest - we'd easily see whose domain man's established secular government represents.

By their fruits you shall know them. Matthew 7:20

Man's secular governments - *all around the world* - proudly take their fruit to the local market every single day and lay it on the table for everyone to see. AND ALMOST EVERYONE BUYS IT!

The blame can no longer be passed onto anything or anyone - *except ourselves.* It is not a collective decision that should be made - because the collective will always choose the wrong path.

It is up to each one of us, the same way it was up to Joshua when he said, Joshua 24:14-15:

Now therefore fear Yahweh, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye Yahweh.

And if it seem evil unto you to serve Yahweh, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve Yahweh.

In the world we live in, I have often told my sons and daughters that when hearing what the world is saying, look to the exact opposite, and you will probably be closer to the truth.

When someone - *anyone* - is being accused by people who follow their own statutes in place of Yahweh's - one should never be quick to assign guilt or come to conclusions regarding the accused.

If a man is being accused of a "victimless crime" or a "crime" against *man's* statutes - you *might* find the accused is really a true Israelite. If you look close enough, you might find that people accused of so-called "crimes" against the "state" might be Israelites - *trying to act like Israelites. They might be followers of Christ, simply trying to follow Christ.*

The Biblical history of the people of God - *when those people are acting like the people of God* - shows that those who make their own statutes will always accuse evil - then persecute those who attempt to live according to the faith of Abraham.

...Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws. Genesis 26:5