

## **AWAKENED WITHOUT BEING “WOKE”<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Are you awake? If you are reading these words, then we can assume that you are physically awake. However, being awake or awakened can also refer to something spiritual or a stirring to action. Today, many people discuss the importance of being “woke.” But what do they mean; should we defend against it; and how do we tactfully engage that thinking? Tactfully engaging those adhering to “woke” ideology serves as an important ambassadorial responsibility. Therefore we must first have a basic understanding of “wokeness.” Although this paper does not include a full critique of “wokeness,” a basic grasp of the concept will provide the needed understanding to know what it means and where it differs with Scripture. Secondly, the Scripture provides the method of defense to take every thought captive in obedience to Christ and to tactically engage the “woke” pagan thinking influencing the culture. Finally, three expositional examples from the Biblical narrative of 2 Kings will enhance our ability to engage the culture with the Truth of Scripture. The “woke” attack on the absolute Truth of Scripture must be defended, but in such a way as to help those spiritually asleep, to awaken to the understanding of reality as defined in the Word of God.

### **WHAT IS MEANT BY THE TERM “WOKE” OR “WOKENESS”**

Although many people are espousing the “wokeness” ideology, Dr. Eric Mason, pastor of Epiphany Fellowship in Philadelphia has become the spokesman for “wokeness” within the church.<sup>2</sup> “Mason is a prominent evangelical leader with seemingly one foot in historic, biblical Christianity and the other in ideological social justice.”<sup>3</sup> According to Mason, “(W)oke is a

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<sup>1</sup> Modified title inspired by John Eidsmoe lecture at Tullahoma Bible Church, on July 31, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> See Eric Mason’s website <https://www.pastoremase.com/>

<sup>3</sup> Scott David Allen, Why Social Justice is not Biblical Justice, pg. 163.

word commonly used by the those in the black community as a term for being socially aware of issues that have systemic impact....Being woke has to do with seeing all of the issues and being able to connect cultural, socio-economic, philosophical, historical, and ethical dots. A similar term is conscious.”<sup>4</sup> Such a definition implies that “being woke” is a complete worldview by which to evaluate reality.<sup>5</sup>

Since a worldview forms the grid through which we evaluate everything to understand reality, being aware “of our worldview is one of the most important things we can do.”<sup>6</sup> Failing to be aware of our worldview means failing to understand the norms and standards by which we evaluate reality. We choose norms and standards from our presuppositional starting point based on our accepted authority. These “worldview assumptions are faith commitments.”<sup>7</sup> If the object of faith is wrong, then the conclusions and applications of that faith commitment will be wrong.

Interestingly, the “woke” worldview calls for the confrontation of racism and injustice through a redistribution of wealth and resources (reparations). Preaching at Epiphany Fellowship Church in Philadelphia in August of 2020, Pastor Mason taught a sermon that demanded 200 years of reparations for black people, and followed it with a second sermon claiming that “whiteness” produces blindness of the heart.

“Every last one of us lives under a curse, and Christ comes to be the cure for the curse. And that’s why we place our confidence in him who bore our sins on the cross. But the question someone is asking is, oh don’t oversimplify this by just trust Jesus, what about the black people that aren’t saved, are they under a curse? No. They’re under white foolishness. That’s what they’re under. What’s going on with black people and why are black people suffering everywhere? There’s something called the Noetic effects of sin.

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Mason, Woke Church, pg. 25.

<sup>5</sup> “A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.” James W. Sire, The Universe Next Door, pg. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Ronald H. Nash, Worldviews in Conflict, pg. 16

<sup>7</sup> J. Mark Bertrand, Rethinking Worldview, pg. 200.

The noetic effects of sin is the negative effect of sin in the minds and thinking of humankind, causing the reasoning ability of fallen humanity to be corrupted, especially degrading the understanding of spiritual things, also called the Noetic effects of the fall. Where do we find this in the Bible? Ephesians 4:18. It says ‘having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.’ Whiteness, has caused blindness of heart. Whiteness, has caused blindness of heart! The Noetic effects of the fall have made you create and brand black people globally, everybody, no matter where you go, view black people in a particular way.”<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to Mason’s black power stance, Heisman Trophy winner and former NFL star, Herschel Walker testified before Congress that black power is used to create white guilt.

Speaking from the Biblical perspective on the reparations proposal, Walker said, “it continues to let us know we’re still African American, rather than just American. Reparation atonement is outside the teaching of Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Holding to the Biblical understanding, Herschel Walker recognizes the dangers of the “woke” movement.

While Mason and others may correctly identify a failure in the church to always love your neighbor as yourself, their proposed solution of “wokeness” is built on a wrong identity fueled more by Critical Race Theory, Liberation Theology, and W.E.B. DuBois Marxist philosophy rather than Biblical understanding. Candidly referring to the “woke Church” as “blame it and claim it,” Jon Harris identifies Mason’s primary influences as those coming from a Marxist background<sup>10</sup>. Mason himself admits to being drawn to black mystery cults and ideologies because of their commitment to black dignity.<sup>11</sup> A fair question would be, “how much do those ideologies influence the reading of Scripture?” It seems something other than Scripture serves as the reason for Dr. Mason praising self-announced Marxists organizations like Black Lives

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<sup>8</sup> <https://pulpitandpen.org/2020/09/01/pastor-eric-mason-blames-white-foolishness-for-black-people-not-being-saved-says-whiteness-has-caused-blindness-of-heart/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://thenewamerican.com/herschel-walker-makes-case-against-reparations-for-slavery/>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.truthdispatch.com/eric-masons-blame-it-claim-it-gospel/>

<sup>11</sup> Eric Mason, Woke Church, pg. 91.

Matter<sup>12</sup>. A norm built apart from Scripture embraces Critical Race Theory which “is another facet of Fabian Democratic Socialism dressed in a cheap suit of anti-whiteness, preached to those blacks gullible enough to believe the lies despite all evidence to the contrary.”<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the “woke church” as defined by Mason, is not built from Scripture but constructed from the man-made Marxist philosophical system which is imposed upon the Scripture to push a Marxist agenda.

As typical of false worldviews, Mason removed Ephesians 4:18 from the historical-grammatical context to support an already determined agenda, i.e. “whiteness has caused blindness of heart.”

“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.”<sup>14</sup>

Granted, we all have blind spots and tendencies to read what we want into the Scripture.

However, a conscious effort to consistently apply a literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic to all Scripture guards against unbiblical conclusions.<sup>15</sup> Applying the literal-grammatical-historical hermeneutic to Ephesians 4 recognizes that Paul did not address “whiteness” but the false teacher lie that freedom provides a license to indulge the flesh in its lustful desires. Paul identified the cause-and-effect relationship between willful ignorance and the ongoing action of a calloused

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<sup>12</sup> Patrisse Cullors admitted her Marxist training in an interview on the Real News Network July 22, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCghDx5qN4s&feature=youtu.be>

<sup>13</sup> Michal Massie, *Critical Race Theory is based upon Lies*, October 26, 2020, <https://www.worldviewweekend.com/news/article/critical-race-theory-based-upon-lies>

<sup>14</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ephesians 4:17-19.

<sup>15</sup> More information to understand the importance of hermeneutics can be attained from the 2009 Chafer Theological Seminary conference, <https://www.deanbibleministries.org/conferences-menuitem/messages/series/2009-chafer-theological-seminary-bible-conference>

heart. Through the willful ignorance, the thought process fueled by the flesh distorts the human heart, creating unstable and irrational thinking. The Gospel was the answer then; the Gospel is the answer now.

As sincere as Mason may be in his attempt to establish black dignity, his use of “phrases like ‘whiteness’ and ‘white church’ are racist terms indicative of a heretical ideology.”<sup>16</sup> The narrative being spun by Mason seeks a scapegoat to project guilt onto a group in order to create shame for the establishment of new political and social orders.<sup>17</sup> Thus, he claims the “woke” sin of “white privilege” is the greatest sin within the “woke church,” and is being used to oppress another group within the church. Since such a view is built on the Marxist ideology of Critical Race Theory, those following the “woke” movement believe an oppressor is always present oppressing a particular group. The forgone conclusion is that the oppressed group must rise up to overthrow the oppressor. Regrettably, those holding to “woke theology” have brought the Marxist oppressor and oppressed into the Church to change the purpose of the Church from equipping the saints for service (Ephesians 4:12), to a training ground to overthrow the oppressing group. Sadly, the result is simply a change of who is oppressing and who is being oppressed.

Since whites are seen as the oppressors, they need to awaken to their “white privilege” and atone for it by using that privilege to assist the oppressed. Such action serves as an outworking of the cultural assault on personal responsibility as laid out by the Lord’s words to Adam in Genesis 2:16-17:

“The LORD God commanded the man, saying ‘From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.’”<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> A. Casteitto, *A Closer Look at the Church of Woke*, May 7, 2019

<sup>17</sup> Rousas J. Rushdoony, *Politics of Guilt and Pity*, pg. 15.

<sup>18</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Genesis 2:16-17.

Contrary to the “woke theology” of victimization, God holds each individual responsible for the choices made in life. That responsibility means each of us can make decisions based on our own character rather than blaming the oppressor for the environment in which we live.<sup>19</sup> God created man in His image for the purpose of serving Him in loving obedience, but God has also given man a choice in that service. Thus, man is ultimately accountable to God for the choices made, and the fact that all men will face a judgment indicates those choices have consequences.

“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without *reference to sin*, to those who eagerly await Him.”<sup>20</sup>

Those within the “woke” movement and “woke church” practice the cultural Marxist tactic of guilting “white” people into accepting the identity of skin pigment as the foundation of identity. Such unbiblical thinking devalues man being in the image of God, and dishonors God who personally provided salvation for all image bearers regardless of skin pigment through the once and for all sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Our task as ambassadors for Christ is to consider from Scripture how to defend and effectively communicate the Truth of God’s grace salvation to those asleep in the false “woke” ideology.

## **FORMULATING A TACTICAL DEFENSE FROM SCRIPTURE**

Since the Marxist “woke” ideology constitutes a worldview that aggressively contradicts the Biblical worldview, we need to recognize the spiritual battle involving these opposing worldviews. We must recognize this battle because much of the culture, and sadly, even the Church, chases after the false worldview of “wokeness.” The evil Marxist squid possesses many different tentacles of which “woke” or “wokeness” is one. “Wokeness” constitutes the spiritual

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<sup>19</sup> James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, pg. 31

<sup>20</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Hebrews 9:27-28.

side of Marxism, misusing Scripture to support the preconceived evil agenda. Since Marxist thought is antithetical to Biblical Christianity, the demand for awakening to “whiteness” and reparation atonement is impossible to fulfill. Commenting on the worldview differences, Kennon Holder wisely observed, “Because we as Christians have a different worldview, we cannot satisfy those in the woke camp.”<sup>21</sup> As a result of being expected to do the impossible, Biblicists now face persecution much the same way John Wycliffe, Jon Hus, William Tyndale, and others faced persecution at the hands of Roman Catholicism. We must think critically within the Biblical framework and formulate a tactical defense of the faith to avoid being taken captive by this empty philosophy.

Interestingly, Scripture says a great deal about being awake (Isaiah 51:17; 52:1; 60:1-2). The Apostle Paul, quoting from Isaiah, commanded the Ephesians to awaken so they could walk in a manner worthy of the calling in Christ:

“For this reason I say, ‘Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.’ Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.”<sup>22</sup>

Clearly in the above passage, Paul conveyed the need for spiritual alertness rather than a physical awakening. The reason for the spiritual alertness is because the days are evil, and we need to understand the will of the Lord. In our own evil days, we have an ideology that uses the term “woke” to identify being socially aware by adopting an anti-Biblical social justice platform<sup>23</sup>. To walk correctly in God’s will, we must understand this ideology to avoid its entrapment lest we find ourselves “woke” but spiritually snoozing.

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<sup>21</sup>Interview with Kennon Holder about Eric Mason’s book Woke Church. Kennon is a young black man who serves as a deacon at Tullahoma Bible Church.

<sup>22</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Ephesians 5:14-17.

<sup>23</sup> Unpublished notes of John Eidsmoe.

The thinking of God revealed in Scripture is sufficient for equipping the believer for everything in life as Paul emphasized to Timothy.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17<sup>24</sup>

The sufficiency of Scripture forms the groundwork for a Biblical worldview by which we can evaluate everything in life. Every worldview begins with presuppositions that must be accepted by faith. “By presuppositions we mean the basic way an individual looks at life, his basic world view, the grid through which he sees the world.... presuppositions also provide the basis for values and therefore the basis for decisions.”<sup>25</sup> As Biblicists, our presuppositional starting point includes God exists, God has communicated through Scripture, and God’s Word is sufficient to evaluate reality as God has created it.

As Paul indicated in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, the Scripture provides the sufficient means to evaluate an ideology, formulate a strategy of defense, and prepare tactics for engagement with others. The “woke” ideology constitutes a contemporary problem in which we must engage, armed with the entire counsel of God and not with mere isolated fragments of Truth. We need the complete Biblical worldview built on the sufficiency of Scripture to be good ambassadors and defend against the “woke” ideology that attacks the Scripture as well as the character of God.

Arguably the most concise passage of Scripture focused on providing a defense for our confidence in God is 1 Peter 3:15:

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<sup>24</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NASB95

<sup>25</sup> Francis Schaffer, How Shall We Then Live, pg. 19.

“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.”<sup>26</sup>

Part of our ambassadorial responsibilities as believers in Christ includes being ever ready to provide a defense of the faith in which we confidently stand. Our defense of the faith involves tactically defeating false ideas while displaying the gentle characteristic of a disciple of Jesus Christ. We need to think about compassionate ways to point out a person’s wrong thinking and help guide them to the truth while remaining gracious in our attitude and demeanor.<sup>27</sup>

As believers holding to the sufficiency of Scripture, we must learn to be Men of Issachar, understanding our times and knowing what to do. (1 Chronicles 12:32) Engaging in the defense of the faith does not require a tremendous amount of knowledge regarding the false worldview, but simply the ability to recognize its inconsistencies and pose questions that challenge those inconsistencies. Since Christianity is true, “no matter how convincing the other side sounds at first, there will always be a fly in the ointment somewhere – a mistake in thinking, a wayward ‘fact,’ and an unjustified conclusion.”<sup>28</sup> Consequently, after tactfully exposing faulty thinking we will be in position to propose the Biblical alternative.

In Colossians, the Apostle Paul provides a tactical plan to accomplish Peter’s call for defending the faith:

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, *as though* seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”<sup>29</sup>

As an ambassador, we need to be armed with knowledge but also with the ability to skillfully use that knowledge so we can take advantage of the opportunities given to us to respond to those

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<sup>26</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 1 Peter 1:15.

<sup>27</sup> Gregory Koukl, *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*, pg. 35

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>29</sup> Colossians 4:5-6 NASB 95

critical of the Biblical worldview. Furthermore, we need to watch our lifestyle conduct. The wise use of knowledge should match our character and reflect the grace of God. “Our apologetic is not merely a defense of the biblical worldview, but an application of it. Knowing that a reverential submission to God is the beginning of knowledge, we can expose the absurdity of rejecting the biblical God... This should never be done in a harsh or mocking way, but always with a reverential respect for our critic. After all, the critic is also made in God’s image and therefore deserves to be treated with dignity.”<sup>30</sup>

One way to formulate a strategy to engage the Marxist “woke” ideology involves examining certain Biblical narrative passages. Biblical narrative provides a divine commentary on the events of history with carefully selected details that meet the author’s didactic purpose. Consequently, Biblical narrative places the significance on what happened, to teach the reader something specific about God’s actions in history. Biblical narrative gives us insights for our own time when we think about the similarities in the narrative situations. This reflection exercise sharpens our understanding of Scripture as well as our understanding of our own time.<sup>31</sup> That enhanced understanding can be applied to our present time to effectively engage the “woke” culture with gentleness and reverence.

Seeing how Old Testament believers refuted the false ideology of their time helps us develop a tactical approach for the false systems of today. Therefore, examining these passages provides a means of understanding how to properly confront the false worldview to assist the person holding that false ideology in recognizing the inconsistencies within the false system. Some Biblical narratives use the literary art of polemics, “the aggressive refutation of another

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<sup>30</sup> Jason Lyle, The Ultimate Proof of Creation: Resolving the Origins Debate, pg. 183

<sup>31</sup> Leland Ryken, How Bible Stories Work, A Guided Study of Narrative Literature, pg. 22.

position or principle,”<sup>32</sup> to teach an understanding of God by contrasting Him to the false religion or ideology of the day. We can learn from such narratives how to better engage in refuting the false ideologies of today, including Marxist “wokeness.”

In Scripture, narrative passages highlighting God as the Creator aggressively refute the false gods accepted in the surrounding pagan cultures.”<sup>33</sup> Perhaps the most famous Biblical narrative use of polemics in this manner is found in 1 Kings 17-18 where the events leading up to the Mt. Carmel showdown contrast the true characteristics of Creator/God with the false claims regarding the fertility idol, Baal. The drought declared by Elijah was according to God’s promise in His Word, specifically Deuteronomy:

“But it shall come about, if you do not obey the Lord your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you....The heaven which is over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you, iron. The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed.”  
Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24<sup>34</sup>

The judgment of drought on Israel was according to God’s standard, but also “the form of judgment was appropriate because the fertility god Baal promised his worshipers agricultural prosperity.”<sup>35</sup> This is also seen in the Exodus, the time of Judges, as well as the Elijah and Elisha narratives which directly confront the powerlessness of the false gods in light of God’s power to deliver. The Lord’s personal actions during those events demonstrate to Israel the futility of trusting in false gods and the need to worship the Lord exclusively.<sup>36</sup> The artful use of

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<sup>32</sup> Stanley Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 92.

<sup>33</sup> Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 613.

<sup>34</sup> Deuteronomy 28:15, 23-24 NASB 95

<sup>35</sup> Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “The Polemic against Baalism in Israel’s Early History and Literature,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (1994): 267-283.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

these arguments in the Biblical narratives defends the Truth of Creator/God in a culture hostile to Him, and also provides examples for us to apply in defending the Truth today.

### **THREE EXPOSITIONAL EXAMPLES FROM 2 KINGS**

Three Biblical narratives that provide examples for us on how to confront false ideologies come from the life of the prophet Elisha who refuted the false system of Baalism during the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Elisha's ministry of grace and mercy followed the ministry of Elijah that focused on judgment. The balance of grace and judgment reflect the gentleness we should have when condemning false ideology. Therefore, the aggressive refutation against Baalism found in the Elijah and Elisha narratives gives insights on how to tactically defend the Truth in our own pagan culture. First, the Biblical understanding of personal responsibility stands in contrast to Marxist "woke" teaching of the victimization of the oppressed in the floating axe-head miracle in 2 Kings 6:1-7. Second, the Biblical teaching of absolute Truth as opposed to the Marxist "woke" view of relative truth is made clear by the poisoned stew miracle in 2 Kings 4:38-41. Third, the Biblical practice of responsible capitalism serves as a better economic practice than the oppressive economics of Marxism as shown by the oil miracle in 2 Kings 4:1-7. These narratives give Biblical tactics in confronting false ideologies aiding our Christian ambassadorial responsibilities.

First, the Biblical concept of personal responsibility stands against the Marxist teaching of the victimization of the oppressed in the axe-head miracle. The "woke" ideology pushes an agenda that requires victims to blame systemic oppression rather than encouraging them to take responsibility for their own individual actions.<sup>37</sup> However, the episode found in 2 Kings 6:1-7

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<sup>37</sup> Allen, pg. 77.

refutes this agenda and demonstrates the Biblical understanding of personal responsibility in several ways.

Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, “Behold now, the place before you where we are living is too limited for us. “Please let us go to the Jordan and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live.” So he said, “Go.” Then one said, “Please be willing to go with your servants.” And he answered, “I shall go.” So he went with them; and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees. But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water; and he cried out and said, “Alas, my master! For it was borrowed.” Then the man of God said, “Where did it fall?” And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick and threw *it* in there, and made the iron float. He said, “Take it up for yourself.” So he put out his hand and took it.<sup>38</sup>

One of the examples of personal responsibility is seen in the men’s handling of their needed facility. The students attending the school for the prophets had outgrown their building needed to carry on the training in God’s Word. Recognizing the need and being willing to contribute to taking care of the need, they rested in the resources God had supplied without taking the victim role of sitting around and waiting for someone else to do the job for them. The Biblical character of these men desiring to be heralds of the Truth stands out by their actions of personal responsibility. Elisha’s willingness to accompany them, showed concern for the men and perhaps the desire to encourage them in the work which runs contrary to the Marxist “woke” concept of victimization.

A second example of personal responsibility in this narrative, as well as God’s concern about the everyday things of life is seen in the fact that the axe head had to be borrowed, indicating the poverty level of the man. Exodus 22:14-15 provides the necessary background to understanding the gravity of the problem the man faced when the axe head flew off the handle:

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<sup>38</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 2 Ki 6:1–7.

If a man borrows *anything* from his neighbor, and it is injured or dies while its owner is not with it, he shall make full restitution. If its owner is with it, he shall not make restitution; if it is hired, it came for its hire.<sup>39</sup>

This passage indicates that a borrower assumes responsibility for the item borrowed, and if the item borrowed is damaged, then the borrower has the personal responsibility to pay for it.

Interestingly, the man was not doing anything wrong to cause the loss of the axe head and was simply using the tool as it was designed. The problem was not his fault, but he still took personal responsibility for the situation, showing his integrity. Biblical Christianity places an emphasis on the character of the individual rather than encouraging excuses victimization by the one owning the axe head, as seen in Marxism.

The climatic conclusion of this narrative finds the almighty power of God causing the axe head to float, providing an aggressive refutation against the false Baal system dominating the surrounding culture. Creator/God controls the creation, suspending the natural laws that sunk the axe head, causing the iron axe head to float to the surface, and enabling it to be retrieved, Baal, the anti-Biblical worldview of the time, did not have the power to do anything for the man, being a powerless false god.

In contrast to the Biblical teaching of personal responsibility, the victimization of the oppressed within “woke” theology would blame the property owner for the loss of the axe head. The oppressing property owner would be at fault for having money and would be expected to provide a new axe for the oppressed poor man. If God supports the “woke” idea of social justice for the oppressed, then it seems the man of God should promote that concept in this episode. However, the integrity of the son of the prophet seeking to take responsibility for the lost axe head is highlighted in the text and reflects an understanding of God’s standards of loving your

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<sup>39</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), Exodus 22:14-15.

neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). The Lord honored this man's integrity by solving the problem of locating and floating the axe head to be returned to the rightful owner.

The second expositional example of defending the Truth against the false ideology is the poisonous stew narrative which highlights the reality of absolute Truth. The absoluteness of Biblical Truth, which Marxist "wokeness" rejects, is true without exception because Truth is grounded in God's character (Psalm 89:14; John 17:17). Since Marxism rejects the existence of God, everything is relative resulting in truth being a social construct whereby each identity group creates its own truth based on experience or perception.<sup>40</sup> However, God's created world functions on absolutes rather than relativism as the events in 2 Kings 4:38-41 demonstrate.

When Elisha returned to Gilgal, *there was* a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, "Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets." Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know *what they were*. So they poured *it* out for the men to eat. And as they were eating of the stew, they cried out and said, "O man of God, there is death in the pot." And they were unable to eat. But he said, "Now bring meal." He threw it into the pot and said, "Pour *it* out for the people that the may eat." Then there was no harm in the pot.<sup>41</sup>

This situation in which the sons of the prophets found themselves provides another opportunity for God to demonstrate His power against the impotent ability of Baal, thus refuting the false ideology of the day.

The fact that the Land was experiencing famine indicates the Nation was rejecting God's Truth and under discipline from the Lord for their rebellion (Leviticus 26:1-4, 14, 19). The spiritual cause of the physical famine was the abundance of false teaching which proposed the

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<sup>40</sup> Allen, pg. 82.

<sup>41</sup> *New American Standard Bible: 1995 Update* (La Habra, CA: The Lockman Foundation, 1995), 2 Kings 4:38-41

idea of making life work independently of Creator/God. The physical famine made finding food a challenging task which forms the backdrop for Elisha's command for a stew to feed the men.<sup>42</sup>

The stew consisted of many different food items boiled together, in this case a mixing of edible and deadly food items, reflecting the spiritual problem in the Nation: God's Word being mixed with false teaching. The ignorant actions of the student placed the entire group in jeopardy because the plants poisoned the entire stew. Like false teaching, the gourds did not have an ominous appearance, as false teaching comes in an attractive package (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). The toxins in the gourds turned the good food into a deadly stew, just as the Truth mixed with the lie establishes a poison for the soul. The fact that the prophets did not know what these plants were, provides a detail that speaks to the fact that the rise of false teaching occurs when discernment from the Truth is missing.<sup>43</sup>

When the men recognized the danger, they cried out to the man of God for help. The first step in correcting error is recognizing the error and then being willing to expose the error. Had the men simply realized the poison, but refused to say anything, then they would have died. However, having exposed it, Elisha gave specific instructions that solved the problem for the men, much like the Word of God is the cleansing agent that corrects our errant path (Psalm 119:9). The men believed what Elisha said and ate the life-giving stew to continue physically living.

This poisoned stew narrative demonstrates the inconsistency of relativism because the poisonous gourds made a stew that would bring absolute death, not a relative situation. It shows that the "woke" idea of truth, whereby every community relatively forms its own view from experience or perception, does not work in God's world of absolutes. God's Word provides the

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<sup>42</sup> Richard I. McNeely, First and Second Kings, pg. 101.

<sup>43</sup> John G. Butler, Elisha: The Miracle Prophet, pg. 161.

only objective basis for understanding the world as God has made it. As the aggressive contrast of this stew episode shows the bankruptcy of Baalism, we as ambassadors can use similar things in life to at least cast doubt on the “woke” ideology that serves as the idolatry of our day.

Finally, the third expositional example to arm believers in defending Truth is the miracle of plentiful oil for the widow. The Biblical concept of sensible capitalism contrasts strongly with the Marxist oppressive socialism undergirding the “woke” ideology seeking to solve a societal problem of oppression. The narrative in 2 Kings 4:1-7 provides a personal example of God’s grace solution to a societal problem that Biblically undermines the economic system underlying Marxism.

Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha, “Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves.” Elisha said to her, “What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?” And she said, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.” Then he said, “Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, *even* empty vessels; do not get a few. And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels, and you shall set aside what is full.” So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons: they were bringing the *vessels* to her and she poured. When the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me another vessel.” And he said to her, “There is not one vessel more.” And the oil stopped. Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, “Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.”

God provided protection from oppression in the Mosaic Law (Exodus 22:25-27), but when man chooses to disobey God’s Word, as does the creditor in this narrative, man oppresses other men.<sup>44</sup> However, if God supported the removal of freedom and volitional responsibility to establish equal outcomes, this episode would serve as a great time to establish that principle. Yet, this event reinforces the principles of volitional responsibility and absolute Truth discussed with the floating axe head and poisonous stew events, as well as demonstrating caring capitalism.

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<sup>44</sup> John J. Davis and John C. Whitcomb, Israel from Conquest to Exile: A Commentary on Joshua-2 Kings, pg. 409.

The plentiful oil miracle shows the need for compassion but also the impotence of Baal to assist. The oppressive creditor did not adhere to the Lord's commands to treat widows with compassion and took advantage of the widow's helpless situation.<sup>45</sup> Although helpless, the widow recognized the source of help was not from Baal, but from the Creator/God of Israel. The Marxist ideology along with the "woke" application would call for the widow to rise up against her oppressor shouting about her victimization of the oppressive society. However, Elisha who represents the Lord, provides a way for the widow to have capital to pay the oppressive creditor and practice stewardship of the left-over resources. Thus, this event reinforces the concept of personal responsibility seen in the axe head example.

Since Marxism promotes the idea that the poor lack resources because the rich capitalists oppress the poor victims<sup>46</sup>, then the widow's problem provides the perfect backdrop for God to instruct on removing the oppressing rich against the oppressed poor. Granted, capitalism can be perverted into an oppressive action, but capitalism tempered with compassion provides the freedom to assist the poor with God's provisions. The Marxist underpinnings of "woke theology" call for the redistribution of wealth through "intervening justice" and "preventative justice" which would require government funds.<sup>47</sup> However, the Biblical worldview on government and economics, instructs government to protect the good by punishing evil lawbreakers. The proper function of human government should encourage integrity instead of creating equality of wealth. Furthermore, equalizing outcomes violates the personal responsibility of the individual and requires stealing from some to give to others leading to all resources under government ownership and control."<sup>48</sup> All such actions violate the clear

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<sup>45</sup> Butler, pg. 113.

<sup>46</sup> Erwin W. Lutzer, We will Not be Silenced, pg. 180.

<sup>47</sup> Mason, pgs. 133ff.

<sup>48</sup> Allen, pg. 111-112.

teaching of Scripture regarding Truth, personal responsibility and compassionate concern applied toward others.

As ambassadors for Christ seeking to proclaim God's redemption solution in Christ, we can point out that capitalism is not the problem. The problem is sin. Even though the oppressor in this event was disobeying the Law of God, he had the freedom to make that decision. The fact that greedy people use capitalism to oppress others verifies the sin problem providing the opportunity to discuss the sin issue with others. Such is the aim of our ambassadorial responsibility, to point people to God's solution for sin, the once and for all substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Truth of Biblical Christianity is constantly under attack in some way. The Marxist based religion of "woke theology" serves as a Baalism attacking Biblical Christianity in our day. Just as the leaders of the Northern Kingdom assimilated Baalism, many in mainstream Christianity have assimilated "wokeness" into their attempt to "fix" certain problems in Christendom. However, God's grace and God's Word provide the sufficient means to equip us with the ability to defend the Truth against the false ideology seeking to replace the Gospel with the Social Justice agenda of "woke theology."

In the past, God raised up men like Elisha to proclaim the Truth against the backdrop of Satan's lies. First, Elisha reinforced the understanding of personal responsibility as opposed to victimization in the floating axe head miracle. Second, Elisha demonstrated the reality of absolute Truth in God's created world refuting the lie of relativism in the poisoned stew event. And third, Elisha emphasized wise use of divinely provided resources against the greedy actions

of the creditor in the plentiful oil miracle. Similarly, God uses believers in our own time who are committed to His Truth and are willing to stand firm against the ongoing onslaught of false ideologies, like the Marxist “woke theology.”

As ambassadors representing Christ, we need to search the Scriptures for an understanding of how to tactfully interact with those caught in the dark thoughts of “woke theology.” Armed with the Word of God in our soul, God the Holy Spirit can help us evaluate all things in light of the Scripture. As the Lord provides opportunities, we can be ready to defend the faith in such a way to help others see the inconsistencies of the false worldview. Our responsibility is to remain faithful, prepared to use the sword of the Spirit. Pray that the Lord will give us the courage to both engage the culture and stand against it.<sup>49</sup> May the Lord strengthen each of us for the battle and give us grace to interact in a way that the character of Christ shines forth so others can be awakened to the Truth without succumbing to being “woke.”

But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, ye with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Lutzer, pg. 261.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Peter 3:15-16, NASB.

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