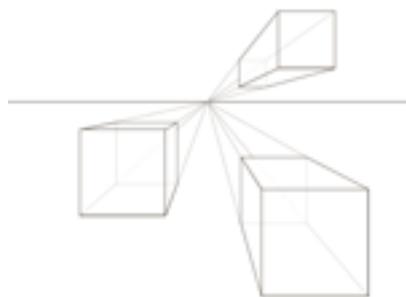


scrisual arts

various
scriptural
interpretations
in acrylic paint

Jack Olson



PERSPECTIVE

“No work of art is more important
than the Christian’s own life,
and every Christian is cared upon
to be an artist in this sense.
He may have no gift of writing,
no gift of composing or singing,
but each man has the gift of creativity
in terms of the way he lives his life.

In this sense,
The Christian’s life is to be an artwork.
The Christian’s life is to be a thing of truth
and also a thing of beauty
in the midst of a lost
and despairing world.”

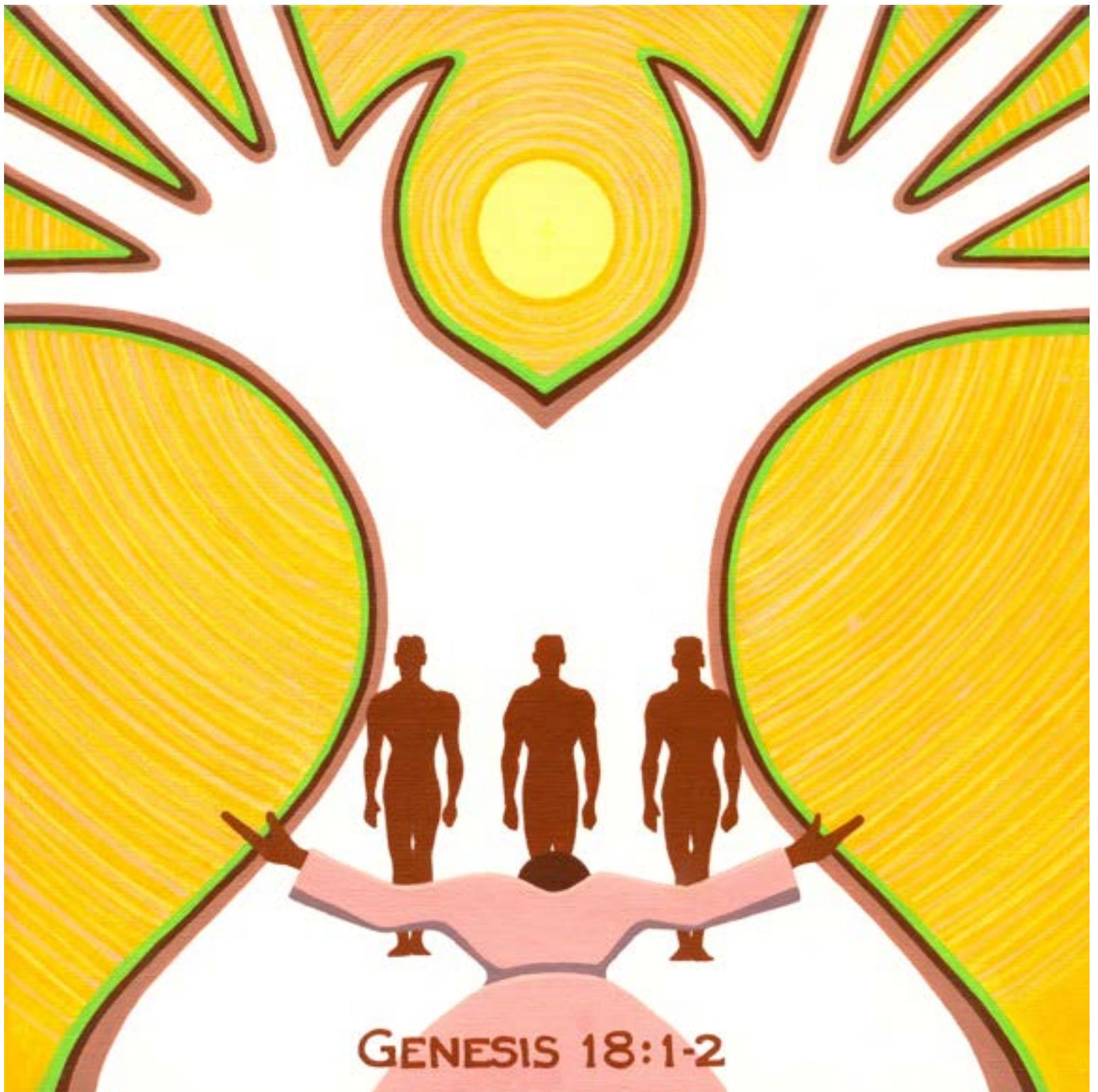
Francis A. Schaffer
“Art and the Bible”
1973

GOD SAW EVERY
THING THAT
HE HAD MADE
& **BEHOLD**
IT WAS
VERY GOOD



GENESIS 1:3-31

THE LORD APPEARED TO
ABRAHAM
HE LOOKED UP AND SAW
3 MEN STANDING
NEARBY
HE HURRIED
TO MEET THEM AND
BOWED LOW
TO THE GROUND



GENESIS 18:1-2

ALTHOUGH I SIGNS
MULTIPLY & WONDERS
IN EGYPT
PHAROAH WILL NOT
LISTEN FOR YOU



EXODUS 7:3-4

**SAMPSON SAID
WITH JAWBONE
THE OF A DONKEY
I STRUCK DOWN
1000 MEN**



JUDGES

15:15-20

HEAVEN
IS MY THRONE
THE EARTH IS MY
FOOTSTOOL



FOR BEHOLD
I BRING YOU
GOOD NEWS
OF GREAT JOY



THE VOICE OF ONE
CRYING IN THE
WILDERNESS
PREPARE THE
WAY
OF THE LORD



MAT 3:1-6

GIVE ME THE HEAD OF
JOHN^{THE}BAPTIST
ON A PLATTER
HIS^{WAS}HEAD
BROUGHT & SHE
GAVE^{IT TO}HER MOTHER



MATTHEW 14:6-11

WHOEVER HEARS MY
WORDS & BELIEVES
HIM WHO SENT
ME HAS
ETERNAL LIFE



JOHN 5:24

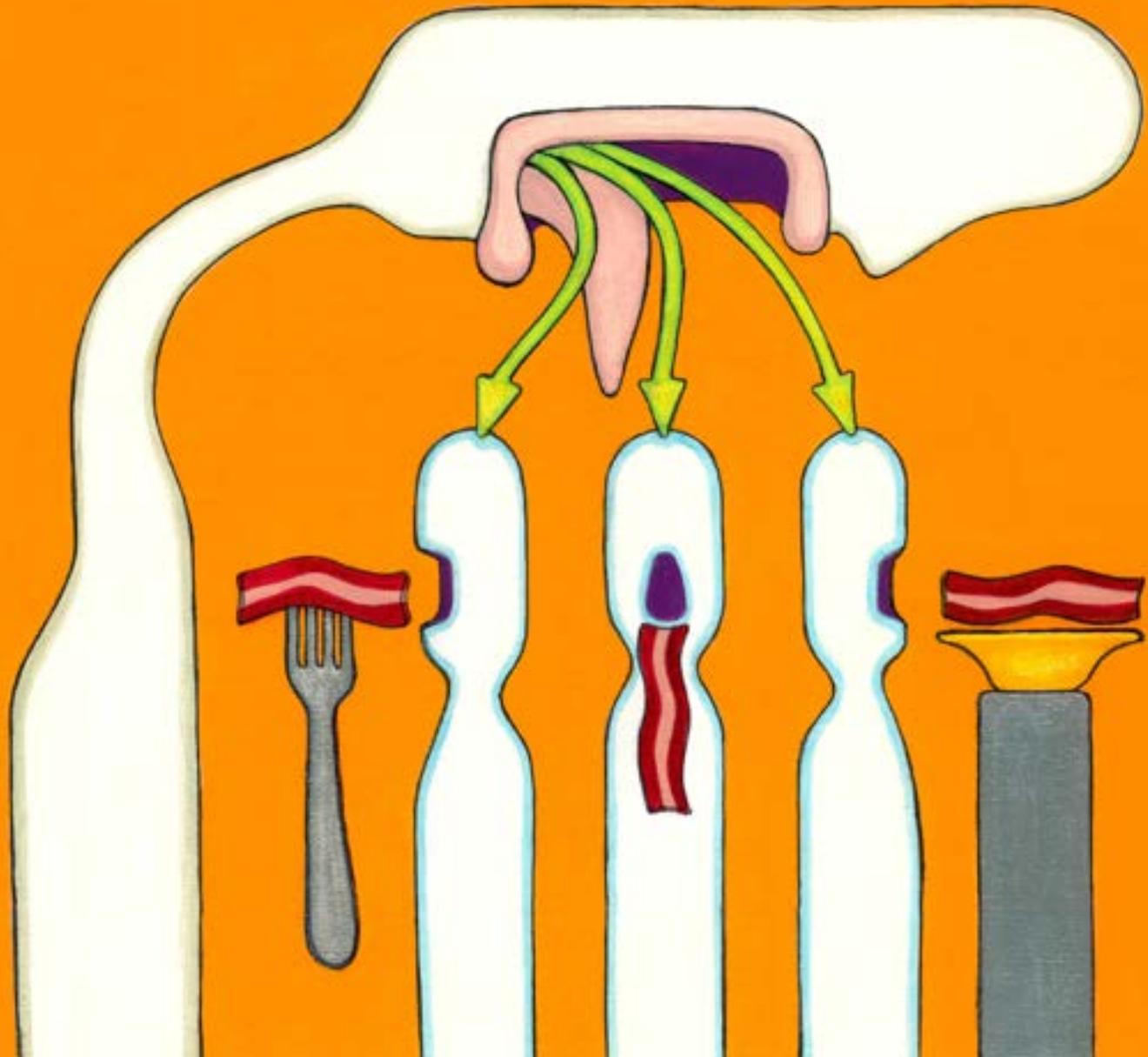
JESUS GAVE THEM
PERMISSION
UNCLEAN SPIRITS
ENTERED
THE HERD
OF ABOUT 2000 PIGS
THE HERD RUSHED
INTO THE
SEA AND DROWNED



MARK 5:1-20

NOTHING
FROM OUTSIDE
MAN CAN DEFILE HIM
THE THINGS OUT
THAT COME
OF THE MAN THOSE
ONES ARE THE
THAT DEFILE HIM

MARK 7:14-23



**EVERY TREE
THAT DOES NOT BEAR
GOOD FRUIT
IS CUT AND THROWN
DOWN IN THE FIRE**



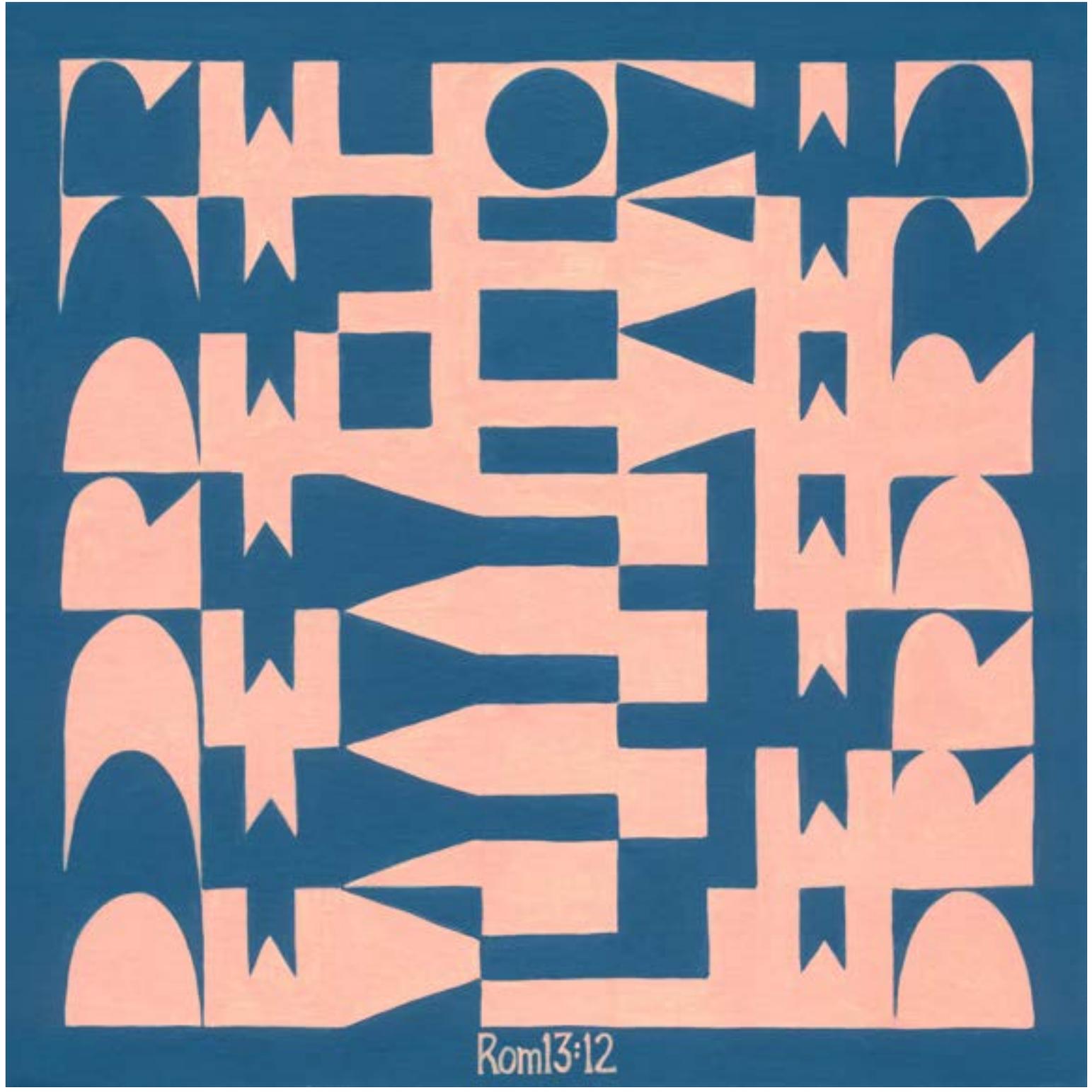
MATTHEW SEVEN NINETEEN

PETER REMEMBERED
THE SAYING
OF THE LORD
BEFORE THE
ROOSTER CROWS
TODAY YOU WILL
DENY Σ 3 TIMES
HE WENT WEPT
OUT AND
BITTERLY

LUKE 22:61-62



NIGHT IS FAR GONE DAY
IS AT HAND, SO LET US
CAST OFF THE WORKS
OF DARKNESS
& PUT ON THE
ARMOR OF LIGHT



Rom13:12

DIVIDED AS
TONGUES OF FIRE
APPEARED TO THEM &
RESTED ON EACH ONE
& THEY ALL FILLED
WERE ALL WITH THE
HOLY SPIRIT



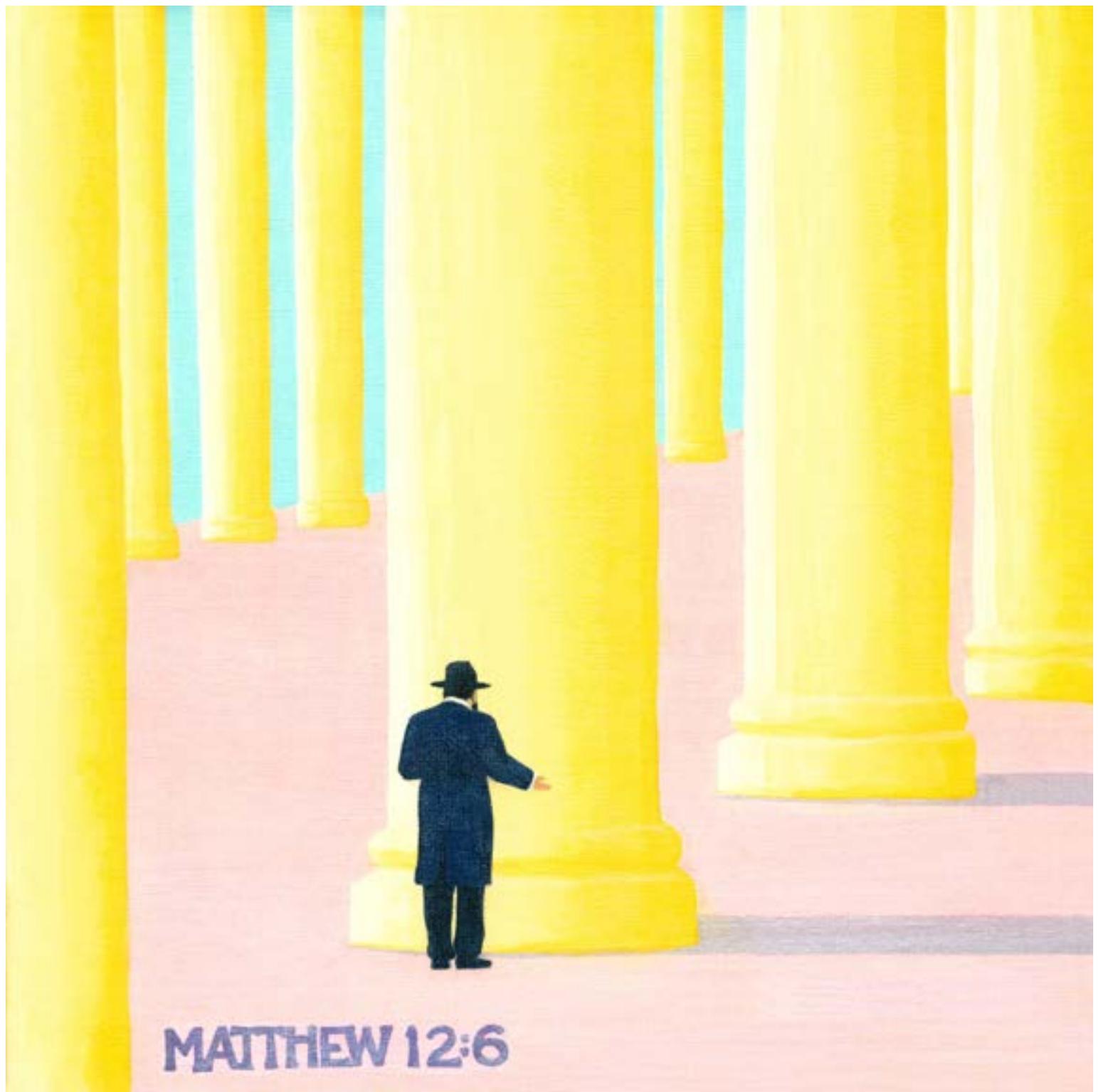
TRULY
TRULY
I SAY TO **YOU**
UNLESS A MAN IS
BORN AGAIN
HE **CAN** **NOT** **ENTER** **THE** **NO** **THE**
KINGDOM **OF**
GOD

The image features a vibrant, stylized brick wall background. The bricks are primarily red, but a vertical column of bricks on the right side is colored in shades of purple and dark blue. The word "NEON" is written across the center in large, bubbly, orange letters with a thick black outline. Each letter is uniquely designed: the 'N' has a small black dot on its lower right; the 'E' has a small purple triangle on its top left; the 'O' contains a blue teardrop shape; and the 'N' at the end has a small purple triangle on its top right. The overall style is playful and modern.

NEON

JOHN 3 1-6

**I TELL YOU
SOMETHING
GREATER
THE TEMPLE
IS HERE!**



MATTHEW 12:6

WHOEVER ^{HE} DRINKS ^{THE} WATER
I GIVE ^{WILL} NEVER
^{THE} WATER I GIVE ^{WILL} THIRST
^{THE} WATER I GIVE
^{WILL} BECOME A SPRING
WELLING UP TO
ETERNAL LIFE



JOHN 4:14

DO NOT
WORRY
ABOUT TOMORROW
TOMORROW WILL
WORRY
ABOUT
ITSELF
EACH DAY HAS
ENOUGH OF ITS
TROUBLE OWN



MATTH W 6:34

BUT SEED FALL
IF A SEED FALL
INTO THE
GROUND S
AND DIES CAN
BEAR FRUIT
MUCH FRUIT



THE PRAYER OF A
RIGHTEOUS
PERSON
HAS GREAT
POWER AS IT IS
WORKING



JAMES 5:15

JAMES 5:16

A THRONE WAS SET IN HEAVEN
ROUND ^W THE THRONE
ABOUT ^F THE THRONE
WERE 4 & 20 ELDERS
WITH CROWNS OF GOLD
AND 7 LAMPS ^L OF FIRE
WHICH ARE THE
SEVEN ^L GOD
SPIRITS ^O



ORDER

The images in this book are related to scripture verses, so it made sense to show them sorted into an order that makes sense of the biblical story.

Old Testament paintings were shown first, then Gospels, then Acts, then Letters,

but that is not the order that I painted them.

On the following pages I will add notes about what I was thinking as I was painting, and it makes more sense to present them chronologically, from “oldest” painting” to “newest”.

Perhaps my thoughts & understanding have evolved over the years that I created them.



John 3:1-6
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2010

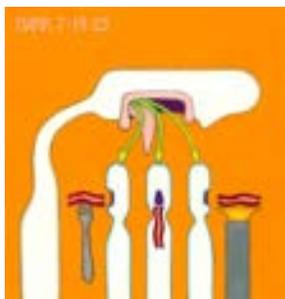
John 3:1-3

Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him."

Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Graffiti wants to be noticed. Much of it is awful; ugly black scrawls, a name or a few initials with no other meaning than to say, "This is my mark upon the world." But not all graffiti is ugly. Some are beautiful, with creative use of color and intricate design. Some of the more complicated works take time to figure out, but after making the effort to decipher the message, I'm often disappointed to realize that it has no more meaning than the ugly ones. Just another name. but prettier.

What would I do? I wondered what kind of public message might be more meaningful, and the word "ReBorn" popped into my mind (I had been reading about Nicodemus). I tried to paint it the way I saw it in my mind, but now I realize I should have painted the shapes of the bricks (or the cracks between them) over the whole design instead of just in the background. Not entirely successful, but fun to paint. The reason it is important to me is that it marks a decision I made: If I am investing time into creating art, it should have a meaning. The most important meaning in my life is learning and exploring and understanding the way of Jesus Christ, and I have eleven more 12" x 12" canvas boards! (to be continued...)



Mark 7:14-23
acrylic and ink pen
on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2011

Mark 7:18-20

And he said to them,

"Then are you also without understanding?

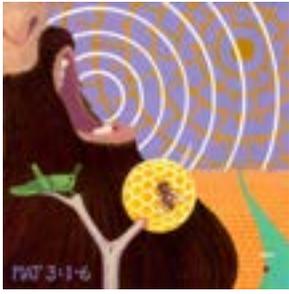
Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach, and is expelled?"

(Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said,

"What comes out of a person is what defiles him."

Is rebellion a choice? Where did my aversion to authority come from? I didn't grow up in a strict household, but as a teenager I couldn't seem to conform to the expectations of school and church and citizenship. My parents asked me to attend Catholic services with them until the age of sixteen and I agreed, looking forward to walking through that Exit Door on my sixteenth birthday. When the time came, I could no longer sense the presence of God in the church at all. It seemed to me that the whole experience had been converted into a hollow system of ritual and obligation.

Imagine my surprise when I stumbled into this little scripture reading. I grew up not eating red meat on Friday (seafood was okay because Jesus was somehow associated with fish). Other faiths have other dietary restrictions. Some don't eat shellfish. Some don't eat pork. If I'm reading these verses correctly, Jesus is teaching us not to worry as much about what goes into our mouths, and to care more about what comes out of our mouths. YES! I had never heard that before. It made sense to me. It gave me joy. I've realized something since then; following the Old Rules is much easier than living this newer teaching!



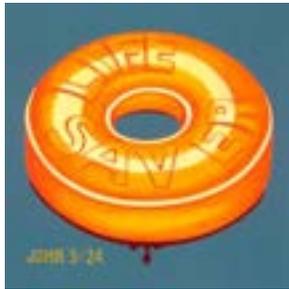
Matthew 3:1-6
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2011

Matthew 3:3-6

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.'"
Now John wore a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.
Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

Evangelism makes me nervous. I know it's a courageous act. I understand that each of us must make an important decision sooner or later, and as time runs out, the urgency increases. I admire the faith and dedication of evangelists, but they still make me nervous. Some are shouting doom from street corners. Others are zoning neighborhoods in pairs, knocking at doors. During the time I was away from the church, I honestly think that their efforts did more to push me away than to bring me closer. But who can really say, since some combination of events and experience (including whatever seeds were planted by evangelism) accomplished the goal. I opened the door....

Thinking about John the Baptist is difficult for me, because I know the type of person I am. What if I had met a sunburned man in the desert, wearing strange clothes, eating bugs, and preaching repentance with urgency and vigor? I might have been interested, but would I have truly listened? If Jesus came to town today, I'm reasonably certain He would not look like the famous portraits that are so familiar to us. Based on His word and acts alone, Would I recognize Him? Would I believe in the One who sent Him?



John 5:24
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2012

John 5:24

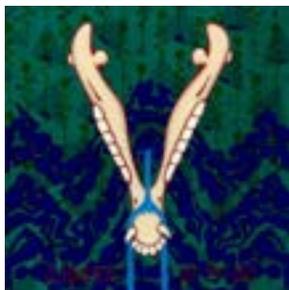
"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

JOHN 3:16 might be the most well-known scripture verse in the world. It's the one I've seen most often on signs, posters, websites and advertisements. Even my bible study software opens to this verse by default. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

I was surprised when I stumbled into JOHN 5:24. It has a similar message, but I've never heard anyone mention it before! "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life."

Either of these verses would be appropriate for the painting, but I chose to highlight the lesser known one.

Every time I read it I marvel at its simplicity, and I'm happy to report that I have passed from death to life. What a promise!



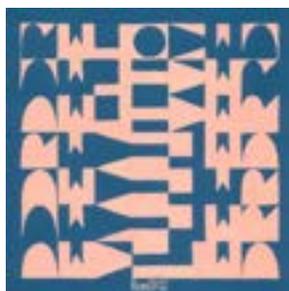
Judges 15:15-20
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2012

Judges 15:16-20 Then Samson said, "With a donkey's jawbone I have made donkeys of them. With a donkey's jawbone I have killed a thousand men." When he finished speaking, he threw away the jawbone; and the place was called Ramath Lehi. Because he was very thirsty, he cried out to the LORD, "You have given your servant this great victory. Must I now die of thirst and fall into the hands of the uncircumcised?" Then God opened up the hollow place in Lehi, and water came out of it. When Samson drank, his strength returned and he revived.

I've spent most of my life ignoring the Old Testament. When I became a Christian I assumed that everything I needed to know would be found in the New Testament. To be honest, I never realized that Jesus was Jewish until I was nearly 40 years old! I just thought of Him as the first Christian.

Now I'm thinking that I might develop a deeper understanding of Christianity by reading the history of Jewish culture in the older books of the Bible, and I can't help feeling that I will be ashamed of myself if I die without reading it at least once. If I suddenly appeared in the afterlife, fully believing that the bible was the most important collection of writing in the world, blessed with a life that afforded me plenty of spare time, but I never took the time to read it, would I be embarrassed? "Sorry God, I was too busy entertaining myself to read your messages!"

So I've assigned myself the task of reading the Bible B. C. at least once, and I hope I don't run out of time before I finish. I know I'm about to read some stories that won't make sense to me, and I'm afraid that I will misinterpret the reasoning behind them. This painting represents one of those stories. But I'm willing to listen, and I'll try to have an open mind.



Romans 13:12
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2013

Romans 13:12
The night is far gone; the day is at hand.
So then let us cast off the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light.

I painted this design just for fun. I like to play around with words, and one day I noticed the similarity between words like LIVE, EVIL, DEVIL, etc.

I started lining up words in a grid, putting the "darker" words at the bottom and "lighter" words above, then filled in the rest of the grid with letters of the opposite color. It's still very difficult to read, so I was hoping the verse about darkness and light would be a clue to the solution. No one I asked could figure it out, so I guess it wasn't very helpful. Oh well...

For anyone interested, the first and last columns are all "D"s or "R"s (turned sideways), the second and sixth are all "E"s. Ignore all of the light letters for the dark words and ignore all the dark letters for the light words.

I – DEVIL – VILE – EVIL – DELIVER – LIVE – EL

Yes, in my interpretation, "I" is the beginning of the road through darkness. The final word "EL" is not common, but you can Google it, right? (okay, I won't make you do the work; it means "GOD"). Knowing what EL means, you might notice that some of the more prominent names in the bible have something in common; AbEL, IsraEL, DaniEL, MichaEL, GabriEL. These are said to be "of God."



Matthew 7:19
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2014

Matthew 7:19

**“A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit,
nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit
is cut down and thrown into the fire.
Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.”**

Knowing that I'm on the downslope of life, I want whatever time remains to be fruitful.

Beyond that, I have a specific problem with this verse. My doubt is probably what drove me to paint it, and to continue to think about it. I doubt that it means what I WANT it to mean.

When I first heard it, it seemed so harsh to me; the wrath and judgment of a disappointed God, sorting out the winners from the losers.

THEN I wondered if it might mean something else!

Could it be that when I arrive at the beginning of my next life, all the mistakes I made will be burned away?

All of my failures will be burned away? All of my embarrassments will be burned away? The times I got angry, or proud, or selfish; the times I could have been merciful, but wasn't; the times I could have shown compassion but didn't; ...BURNED AWAY???

But try as I might to rationalize, the context of the verse just doesn't fit my preference.

What I had hoped might not be truth. Sometimes I paint what I DON'T understand.

This verse really bothers me.



Revelation 4:2-5
acrylic on canvas board
16" x 16"
(40.6 x 40.6 cm)
2014

Revelation 4:2-5 At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. And he who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian, and around the throne was a rainbow that had the appearance of an emerald. Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones were twenty-four elders, clothed in white garments, with golden crowns on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and before the throne were burning seven torches of fire, which are the seven spirits of God...

I'm becoming more conscious of the choices I make in trying to portray people or places described by scripture.

For example, I've painted two images related to John the Baptist, but I don't want to fall into the trap of seeing him as a "bible character" rather than as an actual person. (a person I hope to meet some time in the future!)

What if my portrayal of him is drastically different than what he really looks like? I don't want to be responsible for planting false images.

The same thinking applies to painting John's vision of the heavenly throne room. How accurate could it be?

Why even try, knowing before I start that no image I could create will do it justice?

What attracted me to these verses were the multiple references to LIGHT:

lamps, lightning, rainbow and the gleam of colored jewels. Yes, I was drawn to the light... (smile)

I'm not competent to paint light, so the result is merely a symbol for me;

a reminder that what's to come will be more delightful than I can express.



Acts 2:1-4
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2014

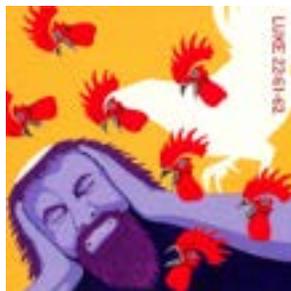
Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

If there is a God, it is reasonable to think that he wants to be with us. The story of the Garden of Eden expresses the first way of our being with Him, the original intention of being together, in communion, as long as we were pure enough to be in his presence (nope). The second way of being was to have us start outside the Garden, outside of His presence, dealing with us remotely or through messengers. Those interactions enabled yet another way of being with us; in a tabernacle or in the temple. If you believe that He came to live with us through Jesus, that would be a fourth way of being with us. God acting in the world directly; teaching, healing, feeding, and announcing the Kingdom. As Jesus was finishing His mission here, He promised the best way of being with God here in the world, through our very selves. In the gospel of John, Jesus says, "And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever... You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you."

The miracle at the Feast of Pentecost allowed the spirit to enter into us directly, partnership in us and with us and through us. We are the new temple. *1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?* (this painting doesn't capture the glory of the moment!)

The final way of being would be our hope that we can live with Him again in an afterlife. The everlasting way of being with Him.



Luke 22:61-62
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2014

Luke 22:55-62

Peter sat down among them. Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with him." But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know him." And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not." And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with him, for he too is a Galilean." But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

After his baptism, and upon returning from forty days in the desert, Jesus began attracting followers.

It was common for rabbis to have disciples.

Is that what the twelve apostles were to Jesus? Were they chosen to be witnesses? To learn? To be priests? Were they ordinary people? Were they like me?

I imagine how I would feel after three years of love and experience with the most amazing person ever, thinking that the Kingdom of God was arriving into the world, Suddenly He is captured and tortured to death.

Even worse, I turn my back on him.

(Is this close to being a self-portrait?)



James 5:15-16
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2015

James 5:15-16

And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

My prayers are usually very short. Mostly "oops" and "thank you"s.

I've been thinking about a story I heard last year about a girl who got sick at a Christian college.

The students started a campaign to get everyone together to pray for healing, and word spread.

Friends and relatives joined in, maybe thousands of people all praying for this one sick girl. Then she died.

If prayer is expected to work like that, I would assume that at least one of those people had the right faith, the right balance, the right timing, the right "whatever it takes for prayer to work." But none of those prayers had the results they wanted.

I wasn't surprised. There are countless stories of countless prayers that go unanswered. Is that the wrong way to pray?

I wonder if the Tower of Babel story in the book of Genesis is trying to teach us something about that.

It seems like that story is the first time in the bible where people got together and said, "Hey, let's find a way to God, so we can use this power and make a name for ourselves!" And God has a direct response. I think He might be saying,

"If I let these people use my power like that, nothing will be impossible for them." He doesn't allow it.

I'm sensing misguided expectations in the church these days; people praying for what they want, and generally not getting it.

I don't think we are supposed to be asking for what we want all the time. I think that's an improper desire for God's power.



Matthew 14:6-11
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2015

Matthew 14:6-11

But when Herod's birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter." And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother.

The story of John the Baptist was my introduction to beheading.

Could I even imagine witnessing such a thing?

At the age I was when I heard about it, certainly not. It seemed like just another story.

Maybe some part of my mind was protecting me from horror in the world.

Should I be grateful if that were true?

Now we can view beheadings "on demand."

Recent ones. Our brutality is showing again.

Are our children's minds protecting them from streaming screaming media?

Pushing the truth into the background? Shrinking away from realization?

Should we be grateful if that were true?



Genesis 1:3-31
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2015

Genesis 1:31

**And God saw everything that he had made,
and behold, it was very good.
And there was evening
and there was morning,
the sixth day.**

Imagine God in the beginning with a most **MAGNIFICENT** idea, "Let's **CREATE**".

But what to create...? What would be worthy of creation?

Any mere physical **OBJECT**, or even a complete **SYSTEM**, no matter how beautiful or intricate, no matter how complex or how ingenious, no matter how imaginative, would be rather pointless without someone to **APPRECIATE** it.

Imagine our world with everything except **PEOPLE**; still a marvelous accomplishment!

A self-contained system supporting all the needs of life, countless forms of life reproducing and adapting into the future.

In perpetual harmony, generation after generation. A **JEWEL** in the cosmos, energized by the sun.

But, **WHO** would know about it ???

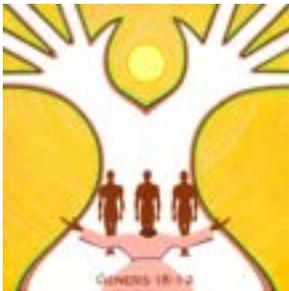
Would God be satisfied with the result of such an effort? Watching a wind-up toy of His own devices?

So in His own image, He created beings with awareness, possessing the means of **APPRECIATING** it all.

With the ability to compose **THESE WORDS**, for example. **INFINITELY** more valuable than mere living and dying.

So, after populating the world with life, and everything required to sustain life, He adds the icing on the cake....

ME !



Genesis 18:1-2
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2015

Genesis 18:1-2

**The LORD appeared to Abraham near the great trees
of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent
in the heat of the day.**

**Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby.
When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance of his
tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground.**

What is the relationship between Spirit and Matter?

We have a long history of trying to make sense of the chaos around us, by assigning spiritual forces or motives; a god of war or a goddess of fertility, holy mountains, rituals for rain or harvests.

In some cultures every physical thing has a spiritual component, even rocks and trees.

I grew up with a completely different concept; that they both existed, but were entirely separate.

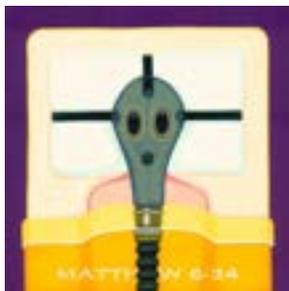
We are here, God is not. The world is here, heaven is somewhere else.

We are stuck in the world while we are alive, and when we die we go to a different place.

Having decided to read the bible for myself, imagine my surprise at finding countless examples of the spiritual interacting with us **IN** the world. Gabriel's announcement to Mary, the transfiguration, tablets carried down by Moses.

The scene in this painting is one of the earliest examples of the spiritual world interacting with the physical.

Hebrews 13:2 ...for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.



Matthew 6:34
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2016

Matthew 6:34
Therefore do not worry about tomorrow,
for tomorrow will worry about itself.
Each day has enough trouble of its own.

My doctor suggested a sleep study for me because I was experiencing fatigue, and they discovered I was having dozens of sleep apneas during the night. It was an easy fix. Now I wear a CPAP breathing mask, which reminded me of a gas mask at first, but it has made a drastic change in my energy level and attitude.

I was lying in bed one night, feeling grateful to be able to fall asleep with "peace of mind."

...thinking about that strange expression, "*peace of mind*", and praying for all the people in the world who don't have it.

How many people struggle with fear? How many wives fall asleep wondering if they will be awakened by an angry husband after a long night of drinking? How many children fall asleep worrying if they will be bullied tomorrow? Or afraid they will be molested during the night? Or if they will wake up to the sound of fighting? How many people will wake to the sound of gunshots? Or sirens? Or screaming? How many worry that they won't wake up at all?

I want to make sure I don't take my peace of mind for granted.

This painting hangs directly across from my bed, and serves as a gentle reminder of how fortunate I am.



Exodus 7-11
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2017

Exodus 7:3-4
...though I multiply my signs and
wonders in the land of Egypt,
Pharaoh will not listen to you.
Then I will lay my hand on Egypt
and bring my hosts,
my people the children of Israel,
out of the land of Egypt
by great acts of judgment.

In most of these descriptions I have tried to focus on the spiritual implications. This time I'm going to describe how I came up with the design. My goal was to create a painting for the Ten Plagues of Egypt in the book of Exodus. They are: blood, frogs, gnats or lice, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the death of firstborn males. The most difficult for me to imagine were the deaths of all the firstborn males, so my first decision was to represent only the first nine plagues in my image.

I realized that both hail and boils are round, so I could have hail in the sky and boils on the ground as a background pattern. If the sky was dark that would take care of the ninth plague.

That led me to thinking about the creatures, especially the snakes. In researching the plagues I kept seeing pictures of the Nile, which is shaped like a fan at the mouth of the river. Well, the text said that Moses' snake was eating the other snakes, and I got that same shape in my mind. The image of Moses' snake would be the Nile, and the other snakes would form the river delta. I could paint around the snakes to represent the river turning to blood.

From there, I knew I had it! The rest was just arranging the rest of the creatures.

(...except I stopped at the ninth plague, so these are the ones that DIDN'T work!)



Matthew 12:6
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2016

Matthew 12:6

I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.

I was listening to a lecture by Ray Vander Laan on the subject of King Herod and his massive building projects. He said that some of Herod's buildings used columns that were cut from a single piece of stone, over fifty feet tall, and said to be so large in diameter that "three rabbis could touch fingers around them". This was the image in my mind as I was thinking about the Temple. It occurred to me that there are signs in the New Testament that the original Jewish temple system was about to change, or had already been changed by the advent of Jesus into the world. Jesus referred to himself as a temple, saying that if it were destroyed he would raise it up again in three days. On the day of the crucifixion the temple veil was torn in two, and fifty days later the spirit came down into the believers on the day of Pentecost. We are the new temple. We are the body of Christ (of which He is the head) through which the power of the Holy Spirit works, to the glory of God. My original idea for the painting was to show three rabbis around a column in the temple. To the viewer it would appear that the rabbis were hugging the column, like the children's game "Ring Around the Rosie", but I thought it might be too politically incorrect. The message is still there, and for that reason I want to show it, but I wish I had painted my original idea.



Mark 5:1-20
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2017

Mark 5:8-13

**For he was saying to him,
"Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"
And Jesus asked him,
"What is your name?"
He replied,
"My name is Legion, for we are many."
And he begged him earnestly
not to send them out of the country.
Now a great herd of pigs
was feeding there on the hillside,
and they begged him, saying,
"Send us to the pigs; let us enter them."
So he gave them permission.
And the unclean spirits came out
and entered the pigs;
and the herd,
numbering about two thousand,
rushed down the steep bank
into the sea
and drowned.**

Jesus has crossed the sea, and entered Gentile territory. Gentiles are people who aren't part of the Hebrew nation (faithful Jews would not be dealing with pigs!). This is a meaningful moment, not only because the pigs commit suicide in the abyss instead of living with the Legion of demons, but because Jesus is offering healing to others (people like ME!). Israel has been promised a savior, and they can't imagine extending that promise to the rest of world. That was what was so upsetting to Jonah, who was angry when God offered redemption to the Ninevites.



John 4:14
acrylic on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2017

John 4:13-14
Jesus said to her,
“Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,
but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him
will never be thirsty again.
The water that I will give him
will become in him
a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

It's hard for me to imagine living in a society where water is not freely available.
I've always had an unlimited supply of fresh clean water wherever I have been.

Life revolves around access to water.

Civilization growing on the Nile River, large communities developing all along the Jordan River,
and Jerusalem situated on the Kidron Spring, a continual source of “living water.”

The scene of this bible story is centered on a well.

The essential components of our physical life here on earth are food, air & water

Jesus announced Himself as the bread of life.

God's Spirit is expressed as the breath of life. Spiritual life.

He compares the free gift of God to living water.

Ever-present, and available to all.



John 12:24
acrylic on wood panel
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2017

John 12:24
Truly, truly, I say to you,
unless a grain of wheat
falls into the earth and dies,
it remains alone;
but if it dies,
it bears much fruit.

Let's zoom out, and imagine that God is seeing the whole map laid out in front of Him. But He's looking at the spiritual map of the world, not the physical map. And each one of you is the tiniest little dot, but it can be colored light or dark. And the times that you are connected properly, producing fruit (love and joy and peace and patience and kindness and goodness and faithfulness and gentleness and self-control). During those fruitful times your little dot just lights right up. If you could look at a map this way, with areas of lightness and darkness, you might be surprised how different it looks from the map of the physical world.

Think about a big natural disaster. People hurting and dying; losing everything, lots of damage. Imagine me saying, “I have a loaf of bread, but I'm afraid to share it with you because I might need some tomorrow”. Well, the world has provided for me, and that's okay, but I think my dot remains dark at that moment. But seeing the bigger picture around a catastrophe, the edges may be positively GLOWING with light! People sharing and caring. People giving first aid; relief flooding in from all around. People making sacrifices to help the needy; providing comfort and reconnecting families. That area might be one of the brightest spots around!!! People dying to the self and producing rich spiritual fruit, loving their neighbors. Pleasing God.

I just wanted to give you that mental picture. The world might look scary and terrible sometimes, but if you look in the right way, you might be happy to discover glowing light all around the edges. I want to be one of those lights, and I hope you are, too!



Isaiah 66:1
Acrylic Paint Markers
(POSCA)
on canvas board
12" x 12"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2019

ISAIAH 66:1

**This is what the LORD says:
Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool.
Where is the house you will build for me?
Where will my resting place be?**

Claiming the earth as your footstool gives me the immediate impression of arrogance, but the questions that follow completely shift my thoughts. The question, "Where will my resting place be?" suggests that He would rather be with us! Inviting Him to be with us would go a long ways towards "*On Earth As It Is In Heaven*," don'tcha think?

I was listening to a podcast about Exodus 24, and the speaker was comparing a verse that says, "No one can see the face of God and live" to verses in Exodus that describe Moses' followers seeing God. (Well, it says they saw the *feet* of God, anyway). This painting collects a few footprints.

I got the mental image of His feet resting on the border between His space and the world. Moses was instructed to remove his sandals on holy ground, and I personally like the idea of being bare footed in my finest hours.

Trying to represent God in a painting without giving anyone ideas about what He really looks like is a challenge. Many would warn against trying to paint God *at all*, and some would remind me of scripture that forbids the making of "graven images." But I want to plant seeds with my art, and God is in the stories. There are many places in the bible where God is represented as having hands and feet, and it teaches that we are made in His image, so I show him the best I can.

In case it needs to be clarified, PLEASE DO NOT PRAY TO THIS PAINTING. TALK TO GOD.



Luke 2:10
acrylic on wood panel
36" x 36"
(30.5 x 30.5 cm)
2018

LUKE 2:10

**And the angel said to them,
"Fear not, for behold, I bring you
GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY
that will be for all the people.**

Thank you, Cyndi
for caring enough
to ask for my thoughts.

love,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jack". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J" that extends downwards.

APOLOGY

This book begins with a quote by Francis Schaffer about the life of a Christian artist, which I have aspired to be. If there were ever a divide between the two terms, I pray I would choose “Christian” over “Artist”.

These images were intended to be personal reminders and not a form of preaching. They are hanging in my bedroom, very high on the walls near the ceiling, so I see them every morning as I’m waking up. Each of them means something to me; a second birth into afterlife, the importance of self-control, the courage to speak, the gift of life, the history of violence, from darkness to light, the desire to be fruitful, the expectation of glory, a church of earthen vessels, the mystery of prayer, weakness of faith, the viciousness of people when confronted with truth, a bountiful home, personal faith, peace of mind, and spirituality.

Quite often, I wasn’t sure that I understood the verses properly, but I felt they were important enough to serve as reminders. They mean something to me, and I enjoyed creating them. Unfortunately, I can’t help feeling that all the hours I invested into coloring canvas boards would have been better spent working in my community or by helping someone else.

I confess:
I have spent more time
pondering the Christian life
than living the Christian life

SOWING SEEDS

The images in this book
are my gift to the world.

They are offered free
for non-commercial use.

<http://scrisual.art>
<http://JaxPage.net>
olson.jack@gmail.com