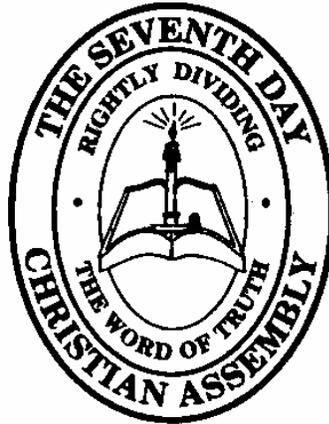


Rightly Dividing

THE
WORD OF TRUTH

Bible Study Course

Lesson Twelve:
God's Sabbaths
(His Plan of Salvation in Prophecy)
Part 2



I gave them my sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them....I am the Lord your God; walk in my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and hallow my sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God. (Ezekiel 20:12, 19, 20; KJV)

If Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day. So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from His. Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. (Hebrews 4:8-11; RSV)

a open letter from

The Pastor

There are two salient points that we must understand about God's Sabbaths: (a) they were originally created by God for the benefit of mankind (Mark 2:27, 28); and (b) they are sacred symbolism that represents a *rest* from *man's* works in a *place of rest* (see Hebrews 4:1-9) that God has planned *from the foundation of the world* (from the Greek word *kosmos* – which means, in this instance, “the sum total of the created universe” (see Matthew 25:34 and Ephesians 1:4).

In spite of this, Traditional Christianity can find only *three* New Testament scriptures to try to frame their argument about the authorization to change God's law by moving the seventh-day Sabbath to the first day of the week: Sunday. Let's look at each scripture and discover the *illogical logic* bound up in the so-called “proof” presented – remembering, of course, that I have already cited some prominent sources in Lesson 11 that agree with the change and say there is *no biblical justification* for it.

1 Corinthians 16:1-3

Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written in the spring of A.D. 55 or 56 – 24 to 25 years after the crucifixion/resurrection of Jesus Christ. (Some place it closer to A. D. 59; however, the *date* is not the point.) Many assume that the new Christian Church was already observing Sunday as the new “Christian Sabbath” before the letter was written. As E. B. Allo asserts in his work *St. Paul, premiere epitre aux Corinthiens* (1956; p. 456): “[The] first day of the week here refers to Sunday worship *which by the time of the composition of the epistle had already replaced the Sabbath*” (emphases added). It is assumed, therefore, that Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 16:2 is a reinforcement of Sunday observance instead of the commanded seventh day: “On *the first day of every week* each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come” (emphasis added).

Various scholars believe that this is an implicit indication of *a regular Christian Sunday gathering sanctioned by the Apostles*. That would be very difficult to explain in the face of Acts 17:2, which asserts that Paul's *custom*, or *manner*, was to observe the seventh-day Sabbath (read Acts 17 and 18 to get the complete picture of Paul's *manner of Sabbath observance*). Notice in Acts 18 that *Corinth* was one of the places where he observed and taught on the seventh-day Sabbath (18:1). He was there ca. A. D. 54. I cannot be exhaustive in this, so I will briefly point out why such an idea as Allo's and others would be a contradiction of God's revelation.

Much of what is issued as “proof” is based on what was supposedly transferred from the *Jewish* roots of Christianity. For example, in his work *La Domenica* (p. 283), Pacifico Massi prefers to think of Sunday as *the weekly Passover* and to interpret the Corinthians' offering as a weekly expression of the *Easter-Sunday* faith: “Sunday is *the weekly Passover* and the day of assembly. Could there be a better occasion to make such an offering to *the risen Christ*?” (emphasis added).

My first reaction is that Sunday was adopted as the Traditional Christian day of worship based on the *resurrection of Christ* – what is referred to above as the “Easter-Sunday faith.” Jesus had *died* three days and three nights earlier – on *Passover* afternoon. The separation between the two events is remarkable because *Passover does not foreshadow resurrection*. So, Massi – and others – are in error with that application because *Passover* is a memorial of *death*, not *resurrection* (1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:26; Luke 22:19, 20). You cannot mix and mingle the two.

Besides that, the *KJV* translates Acts 12:4 to read *Easter*, instead of *Passover* – the only place in the New Testament (in fact, in the entire Bible) where the Greek word *pascha* is translated as *Easter*. *Easter* is a pagan observance of the coming of spring. While it observes the emergence of life from the “dead” of winter, it is *not* an observance of *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Many other translations recognize this and render *pascha* as *Passover* instead of *Easter*.

(Continued on p. 14.)

God's Sabbaths

Do you realize that this is not the only *day of salvation* – that God has planned a *process of salvation* that will span *eternity*? This is a concept that is by no means accepted or taught by most so-called “Christian” denominations (32,000+) throughout the world. I base that conclusion on Isaiah 9:7 where Isaiah was inspired to prophesy that “There shall be *no end* to the *increase* of His government and peace...” The Hebrew term translated *increase* is *marbiyth*. Notice the definition given by Brown-Driver-Briggs: “increase, great number, greatness.” The various specific definitions refer to increases in the number of family members, food-stuffs, wealth, and notoriety. If everyone who is to be saved *must* be saved by the time of the return of Jesus Christ, how do you get such *increases* – especially with regard to *family members*?

The symbolism of the *Sabbath rest* (day and place) foreshadows the coming of governmental conditions imposed and enforced by Jesus Christ that will insure that just such an *increase* will have the environment in which it will thrive. *Man's* attempts at government do not have the power to produce such an environment. As a matter of fact, *man's* government will bring mankind to the point of *extinction* if Jesus Christ does not intervene to prevent it (see Matthew 24:21, 22)! God's holy days foreshadow the implementation of this *increase*. Let's understand God's revelation regarding this most important subject.

The Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets begins the Fall Holy Day season – the season that reveals *three periods of judgment*. We will see how these holy days lay out God's plan to continue His access to salvation beyond the return of Jesus Christ.

1. Leviticus 23:23-25 – Which feast follows the Feast of Pentecost? During which *day* and *month* does it occur? Of what is it a *memorial*?

2. Joshua 5:13-6:25 – How many *priests* were involved in this event? How many *trumpets*? How many *times around Jericho*? How many *days*? How many *blasts*? On which *day* and under what circumstances did Jericho fall? Does there appear to be something significant about the number *seven*? About the *last trumpet*? About the *shout*?

3. Revelation 8-11 – What is being discussed in these chapters (8:2)? Make a list of what each *trumpet* represents. What significant event happens with the blowing of the *seventh* (or, *last*)

trumpet (11:15)? Are you convinced that this is part of God's punishment of sinful mankind?

4. Compare 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Which *trumpet* is highlighted here (1 Corinthians 15:52)? Does a *shout* accompany this trumpet? Again, what happens when that *last trumpet* is blown? Is this indicative of a *good thing to come* (see Hebrews 10:1)?

5. Zechariah 14 – Once Jesus greets the resurrected Saints in the clouds, where does He take them and for what purpose? What does He become once He has defeated the nations involved in this event (v. 9)? What is this period of time called (v. 1)? Compare this to Revelation 1:10 – which announces the entire context of the book of Revelation. Does this help you to understand the term *Day of the Lord*? Compare this to Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:19-27; Revelation 5:9, 10; and chapters 15-19. What do they have in common?

Comment: There are two scriptures in Isaiah that help us to understand this period of time. Isaiah 61:2 speaks of the *acceptable year of the*

Lord and compares it to the *day of vengeance*. In like manner, Isaiah 63:4 refers to the *day of vengeance* and compares it to the *year of my redemption*. This *day of the Lord* is not *Sunday*, as many claim who use Revelation 1:10 to “prove” the move from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday! That claim is illogical on its face!

Here’s the prophetic sense of this *day/year*: (a) Jesus Christ will return *on* the cloud (see Acts 1:9-11) to pour out the seven trumpet plagues (Revelation 6 through 11 and 14:14-20); (b) the *last trumpet* effects the *first* resurrection from the dead and the instantaneous change from flesh to spirit of those faithful who are still alive; (c) once the Saints are gathered to Him on the cloud, there will occur, apparently, the *marriage supper of the Lamb* (Revelation 19:6-9); and (d) He and His Saints will descend to Jerusalem to engage in battle with the nations of the world gathered to capture Jerusalem. From the time He first appears on the cloud until the victory described in Revelation 11:15, *one prophetic year* will have passed (360 days). This *prophetic year* overlaps the last 360 days of the tribulation period. This *prophetic year* is the fulfillment of the symbolism of the Feast of Trumpets. As you can very well see, this part of God’s law has not yet been fulfilled by Christ (see Matthew 5:17). How, then, could it have been *nailed to the cross* as some claim?

The Day of Atonement

It was impressed upon me early in my conversion process that one truth from God can save us numerous other unnecessary questions. The Day of Atonement presents us with such a truth in relationship to the question of whether or not God sold Jesus’ soul to the Devil in exchange for the souls of mankind. One of the so-called “early Church fathers,” Origen, presented that idea as one of God’s “divine stratagems” for dealing with sin. He taught that after Satan accepted God’s offer, he discovered that he was unable to hold Christ – thereby losing both the soul of Christ and the souls of men. Origen presented this as a scheme by the Father to beat Satan at his own game. It sounds great, but...the basic problem is that *scripture nowhere teaches the concept of an immortal soul in Christ or*

man. God does not need sneaky schemes to defeat Satan. God’s truth is shown in the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. How has God *really* ransomed mankind from the consequences of sin?

1. Leviticus 23:26-32 – During which *day* and *month* is the Day of Atonement to be observed? What is the consequence for not observing this day? For how long is this law in force? Is it also called a *Sabbath*?

2. Leviticus 16:7-10, 15-22 – How many goats were used in the Atonement services? How did they determine which one would be sacrificed and which would be the *scapegoat*? How is the sacrificed goat used? How is the *scapegoat* used?

Comment: It is not uncommon for commentators to make a mistake about this ceremony by claiming that the Israelites “borrowed” a good bit of it from their pagan Canaanite neighbors – including the part where the scapegoat (what they call “the goat for Azazel”) is taken to the desert place never to return. Note this comment in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 2; p. 78): “Azazel is one evil spirit among [many unclean spirits], and corresponds generally to the person of Satan. In modern terms we might say that the sins of the people were laid upon a goat which was then consigned to the devil...*The ritual of the goat for Azazel may therefore represent a concession to popular demands; it was perhaps sufficient to satisfy, and to a certain extent to sanctify and make respectable, crude and superstitious beliefs in the power of ‘spirits’*” (emphasis added). So, the *people* are given credit for having *demand*ed such a ritual! Then, they equate Azazel with a desert demon for whom the goat is set aside (see Moffatt’s translation) – which makes the observance a *syncretic* religious exercise that is far less than a direct command from the Lord God Himself. This is not unlike the concept that the Devil’s job is to get and punish the bad people – usually expressed by saying: “The *Devil* is going to *get* you.” God’s truth is not a mixture of what He reveals and pagan trash! Read Deuteronomy 12:29-32! What does it say about what the Lord God might

have done if the people had demanded such a thing of Him? ***We must understand that!***

While it is *indisputable* that Israel borrowed and/or practiced much from her pagan neighbors, you must remember that the Lord God *warned* them not to do such a thing. Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Deuteronomy 29:10-29 are His specific commands not to investigate the way their heathen neighbors worshiped their gods. Read the verses carefully and note that He did not want them to adopt the abominable practices of those foreign gods – which included the practice of sacrificing their children to them. You can read other warnings in Exodus 20:3-5, Exodus 23:13, Isaiah 48:1-11, Jeremiah 10, and 1 Kings 18:21 as a small sampling. What you must understand is that the Bible is ***God's revelation of how mankind is expected to conduct himself toward God and his fellow man!*** It is not an amalgamation of Israel's religion and that of her pagan neighbors. So, the scapegoat is not something adopted from paganism. *It is God's personal revelation.*

Others declare that the scapegoat represents Satan himself – the one who is *really* responsible for the sins of mankind. They say that mankind's sins are laid upon him because he deserves to suffer the consequences of his deceptions. They use Revelation 20:1-3 as the fulfillment of this symbolism. Revelation 20:7-10 makes it plain, however, that Satan is only *temporarily confined* to the abyss – whereas, the scapegoat *does not return* from the desert place. It *dies* there – which symbolizes the *death and destruction of sin itself* (compare Romans 6:23 to Revelation 20:14 and 1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Second Corinthians 5:21 says that God the Father made Jesus Christ *to be sin for us*. First Corinthians 15:26 says that the last enemy Christ will conquer is *death*. Revelation 20:14 says that both *death and the grave* (hell/Hades) will be thrown into the lake of fire for destruction. What does all of that tell you about the scapegoat?

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 also makes it plain that the *individual* is responsible for whatever sins he has committed. Both sin and righteousness are matters of one's personal choice. God has provided the means by which we can be righteous – but *we must choose* to be righteous (see Deuter-

onomy 30:15-20). In the same way, pursuing evil is a personal choice – even though you have a willing partner in Satan the Devil to provide you the means by which you can be very evil. *You* are responsible for *your* sins, not Satan the Devil. *You* will die for *your* sins – and...*Satan* will die for *his* (see Romans 6:23, Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19, and Revelation 20:10).

What we see in the symbolism of the two goats is simple: either of them at one point could have been the sacrificial goat or the scapegoat. *Both* had to be of the type and quality to serve the purpose which the lots decided for them – namely, *a type of Christ*. It would seem, therefore, that each goat represents a different aspect of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: one dealing with the covering of our sins with His blood and the cleansing that is effected by it, and one dealing with the *eternal removal* of our sins so they are ultimately no longer remembered by either God or the one who committed them (see Isaiah 65:16, 17).

3. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 – How would these verses indicate that Satan is not involved in the process by which our sins are dealt with in Jesus Christ?

4. Compare Psalm 103:8-18 to 2 Peter 3:9 – What does God *really* want to do about man's sins? Will He always be patient with man's sins? Has He dealt with us as our sins *really* require (see Romans 6:23)? How does He deal with us? Does He realize what kind of creatures we are – that we are creatures of the *dust* and as *temporary* as the flowers and grass?

5. Isaiah 53 – What great lesson should we derive from this prophecy? Was God going to allow an *innocent* man to suffer for the sins of mankind? Would you say that *our* sins were *laid upon Him*? (Refer back to Lesson 9.)

6. 2 Corinthians 4:17-21 – How has God reconciled us to Himself (atonement)? How did He do this? What did God make Jesus Christ to be in order for us to be reconciled? Is this the picture of the *scapegoat* – an *innocent* someone who bears the blame for others? In effect, then, would you conclude that our sins were *laid upon*

Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Atonement symbolism? Do you still have to have the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the purposes of salvation and sins you might commit after your initial repentance (see 1 John 2:1, 2)?

7. Based on what you now know, write a short explanation of how Jesus Christ fulfilled the symbolism of both goats. Use Hebrews 9 as a source for information – noting the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin. Is there any good reason to believe that this law was *annulled* by being *nailed to the cross* (read Hebrews 10:1-14)?

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Fall festivals center around all of the vegetables, grains, and fruit that come to fruition during that time of the year – like grapes, corn, pumpkins, winter squash, oranges, grapefruit, lemons, apples, pears, various greens, and pomegranates. The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the *Feast of Ingathering* (Exodus 23:16) and the *Feast of Booths* (because of God's command to live in *booths* during that festival period – see Leviticus 23:39-43). There is great, meaningful, prophetic symbolism involved in this great Feast. Let's discover God's revelation.

1. Leviticus 23:33-43 – During which days and month is the Feast of Tabernacles to be observed? In what kinds of dwellings were they to live during this Feast? Why are they to dwell in the *booths*? What happens on the day after the Feast of Tabernacles comes to a close – on the *eighth* day? Is there another *yearly Sabbath*?

2. Compare Hebrews 10:1 and Colossians 2:17. Does the *shadow* represent something called the *reality*? Where is the *reality* of the *shadows* of the law ultimately found?

3. 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11 – Of what *prophetic* importance is Israelite history to us today?

Comment: The term *examples* (KJV) is from the Greek term *tupos*, which means that they are *types* given by God to represent *future events or people*. For example, Adam was a *type* of the Christ who was to come (Romans

5:14; 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45). As an indication of the *future*, we must be aware of the consequences of certain behaviors – either to imitate them or to avoid them (see vv. 6-22). So, our task is to come to grips with these Holy Days as *prophetic types* of some good thing to come and to figure out how their *realities* are found in the mission and person of Jesus Christ. One would legitimately wonder, then, of what is *dwelling in booths* a *prophetic type* and what is the *reality in Christ*? What *prophetic reality* does it portend? Remember that the Israelites lived in these booths for *40 years* on their way to the *Promised Land*. Read Numbers 14:26-39 to understand how their sinful murmuring and faithlessness postponed their entrance to the Promised Land. *That's an example to us today! It is also a prophetic warning not to do as they did!*

4. Was the dwelling in *booths* a *temporary* condition – or a *permanent* condition? Did they leave the booths behind every time they broke camp? Was the Lord God with them as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land?

5. Nehemiah 8 – After the Jews returned from 70 years of Babylonian captivity, what did they do during the seventh month? How did they discover God's will concerning this practice (read vv. 5-8)? Had they done this since they had entered the Promised Land (read v. 17)?

Comment: They entered the Promised Land in the late 1400s B.C. They entered Babylonian captivity during the late 500s B.C. The Medo-Persians, who defeated the Babylonians, allowed Nehemiah to return to rebuild Jerusalem around 445 B.C. (compare Daniel 9:25 to Nehemiah 2:1-6). If Nehemiah's record is correct, then Israel did not observe the Feast of Tabernacles *in this fashion* for almost 1,000 years!

6. Hebrews 11:8-10 – In what did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob live while they sojourned in the Promised Land? Why didn't they build *permanent* dwellings? Whom did they expect to design and build a *permanent* city? Why do you suppose it is important for you to understand the difference between the *temporary* nature of their situation as opposed to the *permanent* nature of God's planned city? Was this expectation of

God's reality part of the *faith* they had (read v. 1)?

7. Verses 13-16 – We know that Israel moved out of tents and built dwellings with foundations once they entered the Promised Land, but was the city *designed and built by God* ever placed there? Even then, did they still consider themselves pilgrims and strangers on earth?

8. Verses 39, 40 – Did they ever receive that promised *city with foundations*? Why? Will the faithful of the Old Testament receive it *at the same time* as the faithful of the New Testament? Does this indicate that the *reality to come* is better than our present, *temporary* situation?

9. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5 – How does the Apostle Paul describe the *human body*? Are *we*, in fact, in a *temporary dwelling*? How does this help you to understand about man being a *creature of the dust*? How does it help you to understand how the *temporary* will ultimately give way to the *permanent*? What does Paul mean by saying that “*mortality might be swallowed up of life*” (KJV; emphasis added)? How might this understanding help you to prove *false* the doctrine of the immortality of the soul?

Comment: The Feast of Tabernacles focuses on two things: (a) the 1,000-year Kingdom of God and (b) the *temporary nature* of all that is part and parcel to this present world. Related to that idea is that God, through Jesus Christ, is the one and only source by which humans can move from *booths in the wilderness* to *permanent dwellings* designed and built by God (see Daniel 2:44; 7:27).

In the above-cited scripture, Paul, by no means, is saying that we will go to *heaven* to spend eternity. You must remember to interpret scripture in the context of the overall message – which is *God with us* ruling an *eternal Kingdom on the earth* (see especially Revelation 21:1-4).

The 1,000-year Kingdom of God itself is a time of *God tabernacling among us* – but, it, too, is a *temporary* situation confined to a 1,000-year span of time. It is, however, going to become a *permanent* situation as described in Revelation 21 and 22. Jesus Christ will use that 1,000-year period to subdue all of God's

enemies and to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:10; Colossians 1:20).

We in The Seventh Day Christian Assembly, like several other similar “sister” organizations, do not build *booths* to live in during the Feast of Tabernacles. We go to selected places to hold the holy convocations, but we live in hotels, motels, and condominiums while there. In some situations, individuals choose to live in campgrounds or motor home parks.

Even the Hasidic Jews in places like New York do not have available to them the various types of branches they would need to construct their *booths*. Instead, they use something like reed mats to build *booths* on their fire escapes – but they only spend parts of the day in them... perhaps mealtimes.

All of these are considered to be the modern *symbolic* equivalent of *temporary dwellings* – which is the *symbolic* meaning applied to this festival period. You can see in Nehemiah 8:16-18 how the Jews who returned from Babylon constructed them everywhere in Jerusalem – on roofs, in their yards, in court areas, and in the streets.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Why does God say that the Feast of Tabernacles is *seven days* long...and then add an *additional day* to it? It is thought by some to be merely the closing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles (see *NIV* Leviticus 23:36). How would you understand God's message/lesson about this eighth day if you seemingly have nothing in the New Testament to explain it? We do have God's inspired comment in Amos 3:7 that He will do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. So, there must be something in scripture that interprets this eighth day for us.

If the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles includes the 1,000-year Kingdom of God, what would the extra day symbolize? This is one of the most astounding revelations by God about His plan of salvation. This is the most profound revelation of God's love and fatherliness that you could ever imagine – and...it is not under-

stood or taught by Traditional Christianity. Let's take a very close look at God's revelation.

1. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:4-6 – Do you understand that this is the *first* resurrection that is to occur at the return of Jesus Christ? If so, then do you understand that this is the *first* phase of God's plan of salvation that will get *all things* back on track in order to complete the plan of God as stated in Genesis 1:26, 27 (refer back to Romans 8:19-39 and Ephesians 1:10)? Remember the principle inherent in *ordinal numbers*.

2. Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13-28; Isaiah 2:1-5; Zechariah 14:16; Revelation 11:15 – Do you understand that Jesus Christ and the Saints will rule over *human beings* during the Kingdom – survivors of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord? If they are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and are ultimately changed from flesh to spirit, do you understand that they will be *secondfruits* in God's plan of salvation? Would that 1,000-year Kingdom fulfill the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles?

3. Revelation 20:5-13 – Do you understand that there is going to be a *second resurrection* at the close of the 1,000-year Kingdom period? To which group does this resurrection apply? Who are *the rest of the dead*? Are they raised to *eternal life* – or to a flesh-and-blood life? (Form your answer based on the expression *second death* used in vv. 6, 14.) Will they be *judged* out of *books*? Is there also a *Book of Life* that will be used?

4. John 7:2, 37, 38 – Which of God's Feasts is Jesus observing here? Does this scripture mention the *eighth day*? By what name is it known here? What would you suppose would be the importance of the *water imagery* used by Jesus?

Comment: A number of translations call this the *last and greatest day of the Feast* (for example: *NIV*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, Luther's German translation). The *Modern Language* translation calls it *the most important day*. For obvious reasons, then, it has been called *The Last Great Day of the Lord* and *The Great White Throne Judgment*. What would this imply?

Last is an ordinal word – there will be no more of *this type of day* after this. Then you have a *comparison* in the *superlative degree* in the word *greatest*. While there might have been *great* days and *greater* days, the greatness of this day is above and beyond them. Pentecost and Trumpets represent a *great harvest*; the Feast of Tabernacles represents a *greater* harvest by comparison because it is a *larger* harvest than they are. If, then, the *NIV* and others are correct by translating John 7:37 to say *the last and greatest day*, then this eighth day represents *the last and greatest harvest of this kind*. That does not mean that any subsequent human populations will not come to salvation; it means that this is the *end* of the ***ministry of reconciliation*** necessitated by the sin of Adam and Eve (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

The *water imagery* represents an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. John 7:39 says that Jesus was referring to the holy spirit, which had not yet been given because He had not yet been changed from flesh to spirit and returned to the Father. Does this mean that the Holy Spirit was not available at all until the day of Pentecost? No. If that were the case, how would David, after his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, have prayed that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him (read 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25 and Psalm 51 – especially vv. 10-12)? How would there have been *some* of true faith – like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others – during the Old Testament period if they were not indwelt and influenced by the Holy Spirit (read Hebrews 11). How can you explain the problem here?

Are you aware of the fact that *atomic power* was *available* to mankind during the days of Adam and Eve? I like Barclay's explanation of this in his commentary on John. Their problem was that they did not have the *knowledge* or *means* by which they could tap into it. Mankind did not *invent* atomic power. They *discovered* it (*The Gospel of John*; vol. 1; p. 265). But the atomic power they tapped into during the 1930s and 40s is nothing compared to the atomic power available to them in this present century. The availability of the Holy Spirit is *similar*...but not the *exact* same thing. It has always been available to mankind, but it was not until the Pente-

cost experience after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that mankind was allowed to enjoy its power to any appreciable degree. Paul calls it the firstfruits of the Spirit in Romans 8:23. Even then, it has not been as widely available as it will be when God's Kingdom is established. However, when this *last and greatest day* occurs, it will be poured out to its *maximum* extent. What we now experience will pale into insignificance compared to that day.

That is the thrust of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 31:33, 34 – which is a prophecy about some of those who will be in this *second resurrection*. When *all* shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, it will be no longer necessary to try to encourage someone to learn about Him because then *all* will be empowered by God's Holy Spirit to guide them in their lives. *That* is the thrust of the idea of having God's laws in one's *inward parts, written in his heart* – as opposed to it being an *external* force obeyed only by the face value of what it says (see Matthew 5:21-47). *That* is what the *new covenant* is about: the problem with the *people* will be **fixed!** Read John 7:37-39 again so you can better understand this concept.

5. Ezekiel 38:14-39:29; Revelation 20:7-10 – What event of great importance occurs *after the 1,000 years are finished*? Is Satan released from the bottomless pit into which he was thrown (vv. 1-3)? How are Gog and Magog destroyed? Are Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet thrown into the *lake of fire*? What is meant by the expression “*they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever*”?

Comment: At the end of the 1,000 years, the perpetrators of great evil upon the earth will be brought to justice. Gog and Magog will be destroyed by fire from God – that is, wiped out of existence. They will have had the entire 1,000-year period during which to be converted and receive the salvation that God has made available through Jesus Christ. They will reject that grace and will receive the appropriate punishment for their intransigence.

Satan will be allowed, *for a very short space of time*, to practice his deceptive ways, then his judgment will come. The Beast and the False Prophet will have already been cast into this lake

of fire (Revelation 19:20) – which suggests that it also could be used *during* the 1,000-year Kingdom period for the incorrigibly wicked who survive the tribulation and Day of the Lord.

Note the language used in Isaiah 34:8-10. If this is, indeed, the Day of the Lord revealed to John, then it appears that all of the streams and rivers to the southeast of Jerusalem will be turned to *pitch* – a petroleum product – to provide the *basic fuel* by which this lake of fire will burn. Could that mean that God causes the vast oil reserves of that area to pollute them? There is no way to tell – but it is an interesting thought. However, if that *were* the case, then there is not an *unlimited* supply of oil to fuel that fire *for ever and ever* into eternity.

What about the expression *for ever and ever*? Does this signal that they will be punished **by fire for eternity**? No. That is a misconception that has been foisted off on so-called “Christians” in the false concept of the *eternal fires* of **hell** that are supposed to torment unsaved souls. How can we properly understand God's revelation here if it does not mean *for eternity*?

This expression cannot mean *for eternity* because of some mitigating factors of which we must be aware. The Greek word *aion*, from which it is translated, can mean “a space of time – as in a lifetime, a generation, a period of history, or an indefinitely long period.” It has the *possibility* of meaning *eternity*; but, it also has the *possibility* of meaning “for as long as the circumstances which necessitate the condition exist.” That being the case, we need to understand which *mitigating* circumstances would cause it to mean something other than *eternity*.

6. Isaiah 65:17; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21, 22 – Is there coming a time when God will *destroy* all that is part of this present, evil world and replace it with *new heavens and a new earth*? Could you imagine any purpose or need for any such thing as a lake of fire in such a marvelous new creation? Would you imagine that such a *purification process* could be *stopped* by any means before it accomplishes what God intends? Would that make it an *unquenchable* fire? Would there be *eternal consequences* involved?

Comment: You can set a piece of paper on fire and let it burn to black and gray ashes before the fire goes out. *That fire would be unquenched* – but not *eternal*. There could be *eternal consequences* for the paper involved: it could *never* be reconstituted as the paper it once was. This is a *mitigating* circumstance that helps us to understand *aion* as “a space of time” that is not necessarily *eternity*. In many other scriptures, it is made plain that the face of the earth is going to be *renewed*. In other words, the planet will not be *destroyed* in order to make way for a new planet. It will be purged by fire and *renewed*. Notice what Isaiah 65:17 says: “...the former [creation] *shall not be remembered, nor come to mind*” (emphases added). How would that be possible if the *punishment and the place in which it is executed* exist *eternally*? That is another mitigating circumstance.

7. Isaiah 14:4-23 – Did God inspire Isaiah to compare the king of Babylon to the rebellious archangel Lucifer (who became Satan the Devil)? Does Isaiah speak of *destruction* in this prophecy? What does *destruction* imply? Does this prophecy imply that the king of Babylon and Lucifer will suffer a similar fate?

8. Ezekiel 28:11-19 – Did God inspire Ezekiel to compare the king of Tyrus to an *anointed/covering cherub*? What was God’s problem with this *anointed/covering cherub*? What will be the ultimate fate of this *anointed/covering cherub* (see vv. 18, 19)? What significance is there to his being *devoured* and *brought to ashes*? How about *never existing anymore*?

Comment: God apparently created three cherubim who would have the highest rank among the angelic beings – that is, they were *archangels* (*arch*, in this case, denoting highest rank – like *archbishop* and *archenemy*, not an *arch* that is a curved structure like an opening in a wall or window): Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. Some add an archangel that is not named in scripture: Raphael. These three were ordained to serve at the very throne of God Himself – spreading their wings to provide a type of *covering* to keep Him from being exposed to created beings who might die from being exposed to His brightness.

After the original creation of Genesis 1:1, but before the seven days of creation described in Genesis 1:2-2:3, Lucifer rebelled because he thought he was bright enough and powerful enough to throw God off His throne. Isaiah 14 reveals that he believed he could *be* the Most High God! It appears from Revelation 12:3, 4 that he convinced one-third of the angels (called *stars* here) to rebel with him. In this revelation given to John, it appears the Satan will make another attempt to depose God just prior to the tribulation period. That coming rebellion will be put down by Michael (see vv. 7-9). Satan’s being cast down to earth will set the stage for the tribulation period (read Revelation 13:1-9).

Revelation 20:10 is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 28:18, 19. Satan will be burned to ashes – devoured and destroyed like that piece of paper spoken of above. So will anyone else who is thrown into it. Will it last for *eternity*? No. There will come a time when there is no more fuel available to burn, and it will go out. Yet, there will be *eternal consequences* because those destroyed by it will *never exist again in any form whatsoever* – and they and their works will be *forgotten* and *never again brought to mind*. Now, what about the *second resurrection* and its relationship to the *eighth day*?

9. Revelation 20:11-13 – What kind of event is described here? Does this describe *dead people* coming to life and standing before God’s throne? Would you conclude, then, that this is the *second resurrection* taking place after Satan and Gog and Magog have been dealt with? What happens to these resurrected dead?

10. Ezekiel 37 – What is Ezekiel describing here? Is this a *resurrection* to a *physical* life as opposed to a *spirit* life? What clues are given in the text? So, a *resurrection* does not necessarily mean being brought up from the dead in a *spirit* body? Whom has God resurrected in this incident? From where does God take them (v. 21)? Where does God cause them to live? Who will be their king? Will He make a *new covenant* with them? What effect will this have on the non-Israelites (v. 28)?

Comment: Pay close attention to what is going on here. The only time such a *massive* re-

surrection from the dead will occur is what Revelation 20:5, 6 indicates is the *second resurrection*. If God raises them from the dead in a physical, human body and causes them to live in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, one should suspect that He is going to give them opportunity – a span of time – to come to salvation. Obviously, He is going to allow them a chance to live long enough to be re-educated in His thoughts and ways. Compare this prophecy to Paul’s comments in Romans 11 regarding the future salvation of all of Israel. Note especially Romans 11:25-36.

Of equal importance is the impression this will make on *non-Israelites* – the *heathen* (vv. 21, 28) – who are also in the same second resurrection. The *heathen* are in the same boat with the Israelites. According to Revelation 20:6, these in the second resurrection will be subject to the *second death* – which means that they will be destroyed in the lake of fire if they are not brought to salvation during whatever space of time they are given to be re-educated in God’s thoughts and ways. God’s intention and plan is that the non-Israelites will be impressed with God’s love, forgiveness, and faithfulness to His plan and purpose. Once they know and understand His revealed truth, they will be able to make an informed decision about being reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. If they ignore God, if they are unimpressed and refuse to accept this great love and grace and mercy, they, too, will be *destroyed*. What relationship does this information have to the *books* spoken of in Revelation 20:12?

11. Revelation 20:11-13 – From where do these dead come (v. 13)? Do *the sea, death, and the grave* pretty much describe all the places where the rest of the dead people could be located? For what purpose are they resurrected?

Comment: This portion of scripture is virtually ignored by Traditional Christianity – or, seriously misinterpreted. When was the last time you heard any of the mainstream “Christian” denominations discuss this in any form or fashion? Rarely, if ever, is my guess. You can tell that they pick and choose their theology about “last things” by the way they encourage people to make their professions of faith *before* Jesus re-

turns – often punctuating it with the claim that He *could* return *tonight* and catch them off-guard. Trust me: He can’t; He won’t. There are things that God says must happen before His return is effected. Understanding that, however, does not excuse those who have been taught God’s revealed truth and then decide to take their chances on the *second resurrection* (see Hebrews 10:26 and James 4:17).

When they do discuss it, they cast this scripture in the role of the *judgment of all of mankind*. Consider this quote from *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 12; pp. 524, 525): “This second or general resurrection is apparently physical, i.e., the souls of both the righteous and the wicked which went to Hades (Sheol) at death are now reunited with their earthly bodies....Also, it may be inferred that without a physical body the saved could not enjoy the blessings of eternal life on earth nor could the wicked be suitably punished in the fiery lake.” Ah! The ever-present need to make the Bible conform with the pagan concept of the *immortal soul!* The above-stated scenario is not scriptural – especially since the *firstfruits* will have already been judged and given their reward and offices of service *1,000 years* prior to this event.

Also, they attempt to validate their claim by referring to various beliefs of the Greeks, Zoroastrians, Judaism, and the uninspired, unscriptural inter-testament *Apocryphal* writings. The pagan concept of the *immortal soul* – which is rooted in the idolatrous Babylonian Mystery Religion – figures prominently in this theological misconception. In brief, none of these have any place in the revelation of *God’s truth*. If they did, they all would be prominent in the spreading of God’s *truth* today. Instead, they are what easily could be classified as *the traditions of men* and *the commandments and doctrines of men* (see Matthew 15:1-9, Romans 1:18-32, and Colossians 2:18-23). Remember that the Lord God divorced Himself from the House of Israel and the House of Judah because they would not obey His truth.

The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:17: “For the time is come that *judgment* must begin first at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?” (emphasis added). Peter’s

comment lets God's True Church know that it is *presently* being judged. How else do they get changed from flesh to spirit *at His return* – while others must wait until *after* the 1,000-year Kingdom *before* they are brought back to life? Something is obviously slipping past the eyes and ears of some who attempt to interpret God's revelation of His truth.

In his vision of this *last and greatest day* of the Lord, John is shown the *second* resurrection – one in which the *second death* has power over those who are resurrected. You should logically conclude that these are brought back to life in a physical human body. If they were to have been raised as *spirit beings*, no *death* would ever have power over them again. For what purpose are they resurrected? They are going to be *judged* “according to their works” (vv. 12, 13). How is that going to be executed by Jesus Christ and the Saints? This is where the *books* are to be used.

There are at least three books opened, one of which is the *book of life*. What is this book? As early in scripture as Exodus 32:32, Moses reveals the existence of a book in which the names of those worthy of salvation are written. In Psalm 69:28, David calls it “the book of the living” and implies that it contains the names of the righteous. Isaiah says that those who are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem will be called holy and *written* among the living (4:3). In Philippians 4:3, Paul praises fellow laborers “whose names are in the book of life.” In the revelation that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ to reveal to John (see Revelation 1:1), the message to the Church at Sardis is that one's name can be *blotted out* of the book if they do not persevere in their Christian duties. Revelation 13:8 shows that those who are disobedient are not written in the book of life. These references should be enough to demonstrate that this *book of life* contains the names and records of those who have been faithful to their calling in Jesus Christ. It should be obvious that those in the second resurrection have not had their names written in that book. Why?

12. John 3:18 – Are all *unbelievers already* condemned? Does there seem to be any *leniency* for their unbelief – regardless of their circumstances in life? So, someone who is raised in a *totally*

pagan environment – who has *never even heard* of Jesus Christ – is *condemned already*? Since those in the second resurrection do not have their names written in the book of life, are *they condemned already*? If that is true, then *why judge them at this time*? Why not just summarily throw them into the lake of fire?

Comment: Consider the gravity of this situation facing the *unbelievers*. Jesus Christ does not leave room for leniency. His statement includes small children who die before reaching what is called the *age of accountability*. It includes those who are raised in cultures that have never even been aware that there is such a person as Jesus Christ – or that *salvation* on the scale that God has planned is even available. It includes those who have been deceived by false religions, as well as those whose eyes and ears *God* has blinded and muted. And...what about the multiple *millions* of fetuses that have been executed by abortion – even the *male* babies two years old and younger killed by the Egyptian Pharaoh (Exodus 1:15-22) and Herod (see Matthew 2)? Again, what about all of the small children under two years of age – *firstborns* – who were consumed in the fires as sacrifices to Moloch and other pagan gods? They never had a chance to hear and believe – yet, Jesus says they are *condemned already*. Does God understand the absolute *hopelessness* of such people? Yes. But...you are going to learn God's truth about this great dilemma – a truth not even remotely approached by Traditional Christianity.

13. Revelation 20:12 – Since God is going to allow those in the *second resurrection* a span of time to know, understand, and accept His means of salvation, what would you suppose the *books that are to be opened* could be? Is it specifically stated – or, do you pretty much have to guess? Think about this carefully: “...the dead were judged *out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works*.” Does this suggest that there is something in the *books* that they are to become familiar with and to live their lives by in order to be judged? How many *books* are there in the *Bible*? Thirty-nine in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament? A total of 66? Could that be what is meant here?

14. Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4; John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Hebrews 4:12 – By what are God’s true people supposed to live? Does that *word* represent God’s *revealed truth*? Does *scripture* represent God’s *inspired truth*? How does God’s *word of truth* help to *judge* a person’s *thoughts* and *actions*? What might this suggest regarding the *books* in Revelation 20:12?

Comment: I am not prepared to say that the *books* in Revelation 20:12 represent the *Bible*. I am prepared to say, however, that holy scripture will play a huge part in the re-education that will take place in both the 1,000-year Kingdom and in this situation. I have demonstrated *clearly* that there is no justification to restore physical life to people who are already condemned and to allow them a span of time to live *if you are not going to give them a chance for redemption*. What would God have to lose? Destruction for continued rebellion is very much present. God desires our salvation far above our destruction (2 Peter 3:9).

Once the salvation of this huge mass of humanity is accomplished, Jesus will have put all things under His authority, having defeated all of His enemies and either reconciled them to God the Father or destroyed them (read 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). At that point, He will destroy *death* and *the grave* (Revelation 20:14, 15). The destruction of *death* will signal the destruction of *sin* (read Romans 6:23). Since *death* will be destroyed, the *grave* will no longer be necessary. Here’s more proof that the *lake of fire* will not last *forever*: ***If there is no grave, then there is no place for the dead; what does not exist – the dead and the grave – does not exist!***

This step, then, will culminate in purging by fire the effects of sin on the earth and the entire universe. We are told in 2 Peter 3:7-10 that God plans to do such a thing. This will be like a *de-leavening* process. I am not sure how that will be effected by God, but you can see references to the *temporary* nature of the present creation in Psalm 102:25-27, Isaiah 51:6, and Mark 13:31. One could only expect that the *bondage of corruption* to which the creation has been subjected will have to be dealt with so that it will not affect future generations of humans who continue

to live beyond the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Isaiah 65:17-25; Romans 8:18-23).

The term *pass away* in Mark 13:31 (Greek = *parerchomai*) has the sense of “losing force; becoming invalid; coming to an end; disappearing.” In effecting such a change, it does not imply its utter destruction and disappearance. It can imply that the *bondage of corruption* will come to an end and free it to continue to develop as *originally* planned.

Also, the term *new* in Revelation 21:1 is *kainos*, not *neos*. *Neos* is used to describe something *new* relative to time – like a *new automobile*. The *Ford* was a *neos* automobile when it first came out. *Kainos* is *new* relative to quality and superiority over the old one. Each year model after the first model came out, *Ford* was a *kainos* automobile in that it was improved and superior in design and quality to the preceding one. I know that analogies are subject to breaking down, but I offer this example to illustrate the point of what is going to happen with the coming of a *kainos* heaven and a *kainos* earth. This is the force of the language used in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 because the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint* – LXX) of the Hebrew scriptures also uses *kainos* to describe what is to happen. (The New Testament/Covenant is also *kainos*.)

In order to protect the human population on the earth, will God impose a *rolling purge* instead of a *simultaneous purge*? You know, complete the purge *in stages* instead of *in fell swoop*? I do not know; it is not revealed. I simply understand that the planet will not be destroyed (see Romans 4:13 – God gave it to Abraham as an inheritance). I understand that God made a covenant with David that is contingent on the continued existence of the sun and moon (compare Jeremiah 33:20-26 to Genesis 1:16). The earth has to be rotating on its axis in order for that day and night to occur. I understand that God does not lie (see Numbers 23:19 and Romans 11:29). And, I understand that I can change my own *garments* without destroying myself. All of these are mitigating circumstances that argue against the *destruction* of heaven and earth in order to replace them with a *neos* heaven and a *neos* earth.

The purge by fire will come, and the creation will be restored to its perfect condition that God called *towb* (good) as His angels sang in worshipful praise and shouted in great joy (Job 38:4-7) – before Lucifer sinned and stained God’s perfect creation; before Adam and Eve put God’s plan for humanity in jeopardy with their sin.

Summary

There are *three* distinct periods of *judgment* during which God will determine which individuals will be granted salvation – being brought into the God family by a change from flesh to spirit (read Hebrews 2 and 1 John 3:1-3). Each period of judgment deals with different classifications of people – described *ordinally*, beginning with *firstfruits*. The term *judgment* does not simply mean that a sentence is passed on someone; it means that it is a span of time during which one’s day-to-day actions come under scrutiny in order to assess the confidence God can have in allowing that person to enter His Kingdom. It is also used to assess the level of *reward* that individual will receive. The parable of the pounds in Luke 19:12-27 shows that individuals are given different *degrees/levels* of responsibility in the rulership of the Kingdom: all were given one talent, but one was given rulership over 10 cities, one was given five, and one cast out for malfeasance and faithlessness. The parable of the talents in Matthew 25:14-30 shows reward based on where one started with what he had. For example, the one who began with two talents and returned to his master a 100% gain got the same *degree/level* of reward as the one who began with five talents and returned to his master a 100% gain. *Judgment*, then, involves more than simply deciding if someone is given salvation or condemned to death.

Based on what we have seen, God has divided His plan of salvation into three *judgment* periods: (a) the period between Adam and the return of Jesus Christ, (b) the 1,000-year Kingdom of God, and (c) the period set into motion by the second resurrection. Let’s consider a brief summary of each *judgment* period in order

to be reminded of the big picture of this marvelous plan of salvation.

During the first judgment period, God is *not* attempting to save all of mankind. He is calling out a small, select group called the *elect* and the *firstfruits*. They will make up the *bride* of Jesus Christ and will be the ruling body of the government during the 1,000-year Kingdom. These are not necessarily called because of some great inner desire to serve God – made obvious because of the existence of so many who are deeply religious, but actually not serving the will of God (see Matthew 7:21-23 and 24:4, 5). While these *elect/firstfruits* are being trained for their roles in the government of the Kingdom of God, they are expected to grow to spiritual maturity in *the true faith* and to be witnesses of the good news of God’s *true* plan of salvation (see Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20; and 2 Peter 3:18).

The second period of judgment will occur during the 1,000-year Kingdom. During this time, the human population that survives the tribulation and Day of the Lord will be instructed in God’s truth. They obviously will not have known God’s truth because they *will not be* changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ. As evidenced in Isaiah 2:1-5 and Zechariah 14:16-19, Jesus Christ and the saints will re-establish the government of God on earth so that they will have a basis for re-educating and reconstructing society so that it will fully conform to God’s holy laws. God will continue to pour out His Holy Spirit in order to open their minds to the truth of His plan for humankind and to lead them to repentance – making salvation a reasonable outcome. Naturally, this will also include the numerous offspring they will engender during the 1,000 years. Those who remain incorrigibly wicked will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

At the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom, a third judgment period will be effected by the second resurrection – raising to *physical life* the vast masses of dead humanity who lived and died never having heard about Jesus Christ and God’s plan, or having been “religious” and believing in a false “Jesus” and a false “gospel” about Him, or having been greatly deceived by various other false messiahs (see Matthew 24:4,

5, 24; 2 Corinthians 4:3, 4; 11:4, 13-15; and Galatians 1:6, 7).

It is not in the holy character of God to destroy anyone who has not had sufficient opportunity to know and understand His remarkable truth. Even though His desire is for all to come to repentance and salvation, He will not *force* them to do so against their wills. These three judgment periods give all of humankind ample opportunity to live a full physical life under God's laws so they can understand why man's thoughts and ways apart from God's are the way of death (Proverbs 14:12 and Isaiah 55:8, 9). Once that is achieved through Jesus Christ, they will be given eternal life as full members of God's divine family. What an awesome God! What a great love!

* * * * *

This has been the final lesson in the Bible Study Course. You can now take your final test. When you have completed everything to your satisfaction, please send me an email, and I'll send you a certificate of completion. I would appreciate your comments about the value of the Course to you and your fund of knowledge about God's truth. Please note our email address: tsdca@hughes.net.

It has been a long process of writing this Course, but I hope that its value to you has been great and rewarding. It has been my pleasure to serve you in this most important way. ***This has been part of God's calling you to His truth.***

I invite you to join us on the 2nd and 4th Sabbaths of each month for our In-home Bible Studies. We have opportunity during these studies to cover God's word in greater detail.

an open letter from (continued from p. 2)

The Pastor

A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scriptures (1953) says something else that is noteworthy: "It is *clear* from 1 Cor. 16:2 that Sunday had already become the day for the Christian assembly and *Eucharist*" (emphasis added). So, the *Eu-*

charist, apparently, is thought to have become a ritualized *weekly* event that pictures the rituals of Passover instituted by Jesus Christ at His last Passover with His disciples. Is this term *clear* based on this verse? The *Eucharist* is defined as being the sacrament of the *Lord's Supper* – also known as *communion* (*Webster's Third New International Dictionary*; vol. A-G; p. 782). As it is commonly presented, Paul was going to be observing Sunday and the *Eucharist* with them when he came through on his mission, so he wanted them to prepare ahead of time to increase the efficiency of his visit. So, we need to understand the difference between *Passover* and the *Eucharist*, the *Lord's Supper*, and *communion*. ***Only Passover is commanded!***

If Allo and the *Catholic Commentary* are correct that the change from Sabbath to Sunday had already occurred by the time of this letter to the *Corinthians*, then we have some problems explaining a couple of things in 1 Corinthians. Corinth was rife with heresies – *factions that had opposing opinions about God's truth* (see 1:10-13). They were *spiritually immature* (see 3:1-7), and Paul's main purpose for the letter was to set the record straight about God's revealed truth. Acts 18 shows that he had lived among them for about 18 months (v. 11) and "...reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (v. 4). *The Interpreter's Bible* suggests that he arrived in Corinth (Acts 18) about A.D. 50/51 and left about A.D. 52/53 (vol. 9; "Acts-Romans"; p. 239). If the epistle was written about Spring of A.D. 55/56, what would have changed so radically in his *custom/manner* between his sojourn with them and three short years later – especially since it took close to 500 years for the "Sabbath" question to be "settled" by the Roman Catholics?

As previously stated in Lesson 11, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 gives evidence that Paul still observed Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread – and spoke to the *Corinthians* as though they did as well. In 11:17-34, he addressed the wrongful manner in which they observed the New Testament *Passover* instituted by Jesus Christ during His last *Passover* with His disciples. It is particularly interesting that Paul tells them that such an observance is ***not*** for the *pur-*

pose of eating the *Lord's supper* (v. 20)! He tells them to eat meals at home because their *meeting* is for the purpose of observing what Jesus Christ taught His disciples on *the same night He was betrayed* (v. 23) – which was the *evening portion of the day of Passover* (see Exodus 12:6-10, Leviticus 23:5, and Matthew 26:20-25). Because of the way by which Passover is determined, it might or might not occur on *Sunday*. It occurred on *Tuesday night* during the year in which He was crucified (A. D. 31) – and on *Tuesday night* on April 7, 2009.

That notwithstanding, W. Rordorf, in his work *Sunday: The History of the Day of Rest and Worship in the Earliest Centuries of the Christian Church* (Westminster Press: Philadelphia; 1968; pp. 203, 204), states that early Christians moved their *Eucharistic* celebration from the *evening* service (which was the time of the *Passover service* it supposedly imitated) to the *morning* service to avoid appearing to be a meeting of the outlawed *hetaeriae* – secret societies accused of plotting against the Roman government.

God makes no such allowance in His command to observe Passover during the evening of the 14th day of the first month – even in the midst of Egyptian captivity and slavery. You need to ask yourself whether or not God changes His plans and expectations based on *governmental pressure* on His people. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, Paul, Peter, and John would argue against such an idea. So would Jesus Christ.

As you might well be able to see by this, it would be very strange if Paul were now supporting both a change in the Fourth Commandment and a change in the commanded Holy Days of Leviticus 23. With no specific New Testament command to the contrary, Daniel 7:25, Matthew 5:17-19, and Matthew 24:4, 5 would warn against such reckless abandonment of God's law. This would argue strongly against this being a regular meeting on *Sunday* to participate in the *Eucharist*.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-3 carefully and note these most conspicuous points: (a) Paul did not specify the type, time, or place of the *meeting* he wanted to have regarding receiving the collections – pay attention to his open-ended

statements in vv. 2, 3: “...*when I come*”; (b) he *did* specify a time and place for setting aside the offerings: on the first day of the week at one's home – which proposes an efficient *private* and *individual* plan for putting together the offering for the poor brethren in Jerusalem rather than indicating a regular, *habitual* observance of a Sunday day of rest and worship; (c) it was to be an offering proportionate to one's ability to give; (d) 2 Corinthians 9:3, 4 shows that Paul did not want to show up anywhere unannounced asking for contributions lest he embarrass those he was soliciting; and (e) he *did not want* there to be any collections when he arrived (v. 2). So, any arguments that the early Church was imitating the Jewish custom of collecting for the poor on the Sabbath is a moot point in this situation. If the truth were known, the Jewish sect of Pharisees known as the school of Shammai *forbade* Sabbath collections for the poor since such a practice conflicted with the Sabbath symbolism of future material abundance for all of God's people – as it is written in “Beth Shammai”: “...even a dowry to marry an orphan man to an orphan woman [is not to be collected].” So, such a practice was not universally *Jewish*.

Acts 20:7-11

Numerous scholars claim that this scripture is the “...earliest unambiguous evidence we have for the Christian practice of gathering together for purposes of worship on the first day of the week” (F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*; Grand Rapids, 1954; pp. 407, 408). F. F. Bruce is by no means a lone voice in this assertion. Of importance in this claim is the accompanying claim that the *breaking of bread* (vv. 7, 11) is the *Eucharist* celebration. So, we will again look at the internal evidence in this story to discover what Paul was doing and why. I am afraid that the so-called *scholars* have often rushed to conclusions based on the flimsiest of evidence in order to justify a practice that God never commanded.

Using our Bible study skills, let's read the context above and below the account. Why does Paul use *after the days of unleavened bread* as a point of reference in v. 6? Notice that they waited until *after* the days of unleavened bread to

em-bark on their journey to Troas. Why? Notice also that they stayed in Troas for seven days – and it was on the *first day of the week* when they met to *break bread*. Notice also that it was a meeting held at night – with Paul preaching until *midnight* (v. 7) before Eutychus fell out of the window and died (v. 9). After Paul healed him (v. 10), he came back again to *break bread* a second time, preach until *daybreak*, and depart on foot instead of sailing to Assos with Luke and the others in his party (vv. 11, 13). Why did Paul want to be in Jerusalem on *Pentecost* (v. 16)? To *observe* it as his *manner* was? Our problem is to determine if this is *really* the *earliest unambiguous evidence* of a formulaic Christian practice of meeting *habitually* on Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath” and celebrating the *Eucharist* – as well as if it was an *ordinary* or *extraordinary* event. Also, how do we reckon the interpretation of *time*: by the *Hebrew* calendar or the *Roman*? It makes a difference in the actual history of this meeting!

Remember that early Christianity was a *Jewish sect* (see Acts 24:5 – which occurred *chronologically* after Acts 20). The earliest Gentile converts to Christianity were, first of all, attracted to *Judaism*. In reference to Judaism’s influence in the known world at the time, Philo of Alexandria pointed out that every country was averse to foreign institutions, but everywhere the seventh-day Sabbath was shown respect, and their citizens were allowed to observe it without governmental interference. In his work *Against Apion*, Josephus wrote that there was not a nation among the Greeks or barbarians where the Sabbath had not been observed (2, 39). Seneca even lamented that such an “accursed nation” as that of the *Jews* could have its religious customs influence other nations throughout the world. So, what we are witnessing in Acts 20 is a small part of the influence of one of the recognized sects of *Judaism* – therefore, it would be no small matter if we understand that Luke uses the *Hebrew* calendar as his references in *Luke* and *Acts*.

The reference points Paul used – the days of unleavened bread and Pentecost – indicate that Luke was using the *Hebrew* calendar as a reference point rather than the *Roman*. That being the case, this meeting was on *Saturday night*, not

Sunday night. When the sun set on Saturday evening, the first day of the week began (see Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). Paul would have departed Troas at daybreak on *Sunday morning*. If it were held according to *Roman* time, the meeting would have been held on *Sunday night* until *midnight* – but *midnight* would have begun the *second day* of the week: *Monday*. Paul would have departed at daybreak on *Monday morning*. Modern Traditional Christianity does not begin *the first day of the week until midnight*. So, in the strictest sense of the Hebrew calendar, this meeting did take place on the *first day of the week*. But, does that make it *unambiguous evidence* that they met on that night as a regular, habitual religious service as a replacement of the seventh-day Sabbath and took the Eucharist (“broke bread”) as a replacement of Passover? If so, why don’t they do it today?

It is difficult to believe that Paul was in Troas for seven days and waited until the last night of his visit to hold a meeting with them. The fact that he was leaving at daybreak the following morning would give credence to this being an *extraordinary* meeting – perhaps an event to bid him farewell before his early departure the next day. It would mean that the *ordinary* meeting would have taken place on the previous day – the regular seventh-day Sabbath. This would lead to the question of whether the account is significant for the meeting’s sake or for the extraordinary event that took place during that night – namely, the accidental death of Eutychus and his subsequent restoration to life by Paul’s intercession.

Then there is the matter of *breaking bread*. Is this a reference to the *Eucharist* – or is this the consumption of an *ordinary meal*? If it is the *Eucharist*, why would Paul have served it *twice* in the same night? Wouldn’t that be redundant in such a short space of time – let’s say between 8:00 P. M. and 2:00 A. M. (six hours or so)? While it is true that *breaking bread* much later became a common expression for celebrating the Eucharist, how does the *New Testament usage* of the term help us to understand what was going on here? According to Samuele Bacchiocchi in his work *From Sabbath to Sunday* (pp. 108, 109), the expression occurs 15 times in the New Testament. Nine times (Matthew 14:19; 15:36;

26:26; Mark 8:6, 19; 14:22; Luke 22:19; 24:30, 35) it refers to breaking bread to feed the multitudes, eating the last supper, and eating with His disciples after His resurrection. Twice it refers to Paul's eating of a common meal (Acts 20:11; 27:35). Twice it refers to breaking the bread during the Passover service instituted by Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24). Twice it refers to common meals shared among the disciples or believers (Acts 2:26; 20:7).

Again, the Christian *Passover* is consistent with Leviticus 23:4: it comes only *once a year* as a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. It is not a watered-down observance weekly or monthly or quarterly or bi-annually. In the Eucharist served in the Catholic mass, the partaker only gets a round, *unbroken* wafer, and the *priest* drinks the sacrificial wine (Fred R. Coulter, *The Christian Passover*; York Publishing Company, 1993; p. 208). How does that imitate what Christ instituted? We do not see Paul breaking the unleavened bread and distributing it with the wine either before or after midnight in Acts 20:7-11.

The Greek term *geuomai*, translated *eaten* in v. 11, means "to partake of a meal." That settles the *broken bread* that was eaten after midnight. Similarly, there is no hard evidence that indicates that *break bread* in v. 7 is anything more than a common meal. Paul and the brethren at Troas were not eating the *Lord's Supper* or celebrating the *Eucharist* or holding *communion*. They were simply sharing an ordinary meal – which commonly began with the ritual of breaking the bread to be consumed during the meal.

Sorry, there is no *unambiguous* evidence here that this is the *only* explicit New Testament mention of a change from worshiping on the seventh-day Sabbath to worshiping on Sunday. What is evident here is that some so-called "scholars" have read meaning into scripture where there is no specific warrant for doing so.

Revelation 1:10

Sometimes correctly interpreting the context of various scriptural situations seems like being an NFL referee who has to look at the replay machine in order to investigate whether or not there is adequate reason to overturn a call made

on the field of play. The announcers usually tell the audience that the referee must have enough evidence to make a decision that leaves *no doubt* – kind of like the jury that is told that their decision to convict must be made based on evidence that is *beyond a reasonable doubt*. In 1 Corinthians 16 and Acts 20, we have seen the presence of too much *reasonable doubt* to believe that there was a decision by the Apostles, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to move Sabbath observance from the seventh day to the first day of the week. Will Revelation 1:10 as "proof" of such be another *Alice in Wonderland* rabbit hole – or will there be concrete, convincing evidence that such a move was, indeed, inspired by God?

The argument focuses on the term *Lord's day* – *en te kuriake hemera* – in v. 10. Pope John Paul II claimed that this verse "...gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week 'the Lord's Day'..." (Pastoral Letter: *Dies Domini* [the Lord's Day]; May 31, 1998). In this letter, he was addressing the critical problem of the profanation of Sunday and making a passionate plea for Catholics and others to make a concerted effort to return Sunday worship to its rightful place of honor. While it is a commendable goal for the leader of a major world religion to marshal moral forces to get his followers to abide by the great tenets to which their spiritual existence is tied and grounded, that does not automatically translate into an *ipso facto* warrant to assume *his* interpretation is based on *God's revelation*.

Let me, first of all, expose the paradigm from which I will work in explaining this verse to you. Mark 2:28 says in the Greek: "...*hoste kurios estin ho huios tou anthropon kai tou sabbatou*" – "Therefore the Son of man is also the Lord of the Sabbath." If this is what Jesus Christ says is the truth of the matter – that He is *the Lord of the Sabbath* – then it is no big jump of logic to conclude that He is saying that the Sabbath (always meaning the seventh-day Sabbath in scripture) is *te kuriake hemera*: *the Lord's Day*. You can say "that car of mine" or "my car," and others will understand that the car belongs to you. It would be no different to say "the Day of the Lord" or "the Lord's Day" in order to understand that the day belongs to the

Lord. But, does that ownership automatically mean that *the Lord's Day* in Revelation 1:10 means "the first day of the week": *Sunday* – especially when we have scriptural evidence that Jesus Christ claimed a special relationship to the seventh-day Sabbath?

If John 1:1-3 and Colossians 1:16 have any bearing on the discussion, then we must realize that the God (Elohim) who *created, blessed, and sanctified* the seventh-day Sabbath (Genesis 2:2, 3) was the one who became Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes this idea in Colossians 1:16 by saying that He not only created all things, but *it was created for Him*. I would say, based on Paul's assertion, that He has a special relationship to that day in particular. That being the case, would the expression *the Lord's Day* in Revelation 1:10 even refer to the *seventh-day Sabbath*?

Our next question, then, would be to ask about the *context* of the book of *Revelation*. What did God the Father reveal to Jesus Christ to be delivered to the Apostle John for publication (Revelation 1:1)? Was the emphasis of this revelation a concerted effort by God to demonstrate that He now favors the *first day* of the week over the *seventh* as the acceptable weekly *Sabbath*? Or, did He *sneak in* this little hint – like legislators who add earmarks or amendments to important proposed legislation? I hope you can appreciate the idea that it is important to ask the *right* questions when you study through the ideas people present to you. You can ask all the *wrong* questions you want to, but they will not get you closer to the *truth* of a matter.

Let's take a brief survey of the book. Chapter 1 introduces the idea of the revelation: John is to deliver its contents to the seven churches in Asia at the time (v. 11). When the glorified Jesus Christ is revealed, He tells John to write what he has seen: things of his present experience and things that are still to come. Chapters 2 and 3 are personal messages to each of the seven churches – which could very well represent the conditions that existed in them at the time, but which are also generally thought to represent messages to church *eras* of the future rather than the specific churches listed in Asia. Those chapters would basically represent an *introduction* to the message about the *things to come*.

Chapters 4 and 5 begin the revelation of the things to come (v. 1). *The Jerusalem Bible* inserts headings at various points. It labels the second main outline heading (II) "The Prophetic Visions" – which it is. The first outline sub-heading (A.) is labeled "The Prelude to the Great Day." What information in this chapter would prompt the sub-heading "The Prelude to the Great Day"? What, exactly, is the *Great Day* of which they speak? What relationship does it have with John being in a *prophetic trance/vision* on the Lord's day? Does this imply that the *Lord's day* is the same as the *Great Day*? How do we settle the answer? Many in traditional Christianity attempt to *prove* that *on the Lord's day* means *Sunday* by referring back to Acts 20 and 1 Corinthians 16 as their proof texts. That's poor-to-mediocre scholarship at best. It's circular reasoning. You know: "Get some water." "I can't; there is a hole in the bucket." "Fix it." "I can't; I need some wood to do that." "Get some wood, for heaven's sake!" "I can't; my knife is not sharp enough to cut it." "Then *sharpen* your knife." "I can't; I need some water for the whetstone." "Then *get some water*." "I can't *because there's a hole in the bucket*." Second verse, same as the first.

The focus of Chapter 4 is a description of the throne of God the Father – the One who, through the Word, created all that exists – and those attending Him. Chapter 5 reveals the Lamb of God – the One who is Jesus Christ – and shows that He is the only One who has the power to open the scroll that reveals future events. It would appear that the hymn sung by those attending God's throne is part of the revelation of things to come because it points toward the result of the Lamb's sacrifice in order to set aside a kingdom of priests and kings to rule the world with Him. Is that *coming kingdom* of any importance to this prophetic vision? *The Jerusalem Bible* labels Chapters 4 and 5 with the sub-heading (1.) Like this: "God entrusts the future of the world to the Lamb."

Let me increase the brevity of my explanation. The Lamb begins opening the seven *seals* of the scroll – each exposing a different future event, presumably commencing from John's time and continuing into the future until the fulfillment is complete. When He gets to the *sev-*

enth seal in 8:1, it is revealed that the contents are *seven trumpet plagues*. Each trumpet plague is more devastating than the one preceding it. The *seventh and last trumpet* (11:15) hails the establishment of God's Kingdom upon the earth ruled over by Jesus Christ Himself.

Chapter 12 goes through some history of Satan's rebellion and deception of the whole world and leads up to the time when he will get involved with the coming *Beast* who will plague the world with the tribulation period of three and one-half years (1260 days/42 months). The activity of the *Beast* and *False Prophet* are described in Chapter 13. Chapter 14 is the announcement of judgment that is coming with the seventh trumpet. It also describes the reaping out of the *firstfruits of salvation* by Jesus Christ. Chapter 15 introduces what is called *the completion of the wrath of God* by the means of *seven bowl plagues* – which is another element of the *seventh trumpet*. Chapters 16-19 describe the effects of those bowl plagues and how Jesus Christ and the Saints will conquer the nations of the world in order to establish the Kingdom of God (see Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:0-27; and Matthew 6:10). Chapter 20 covers the first and second resurrections, while Chapters 21 and 22 cover the new heavens and new earth that result from the victory of Jesus Christ and the Saints.

Many scriptures refer to the period that began with the opening of the *seven trumpet plagues* as *the Day of the Lord*, *the Great Day of God*, and *that day*. May I take the expression *the Day of the Lord* and express it as *the Lord's Day*? Yes. According to Isaiah 34:8 and 61:2, this *day of vengeance and recompense* will last one prophetic year (360 days) – which will overlap the last year of the coming Tribulation Period. As *clearly* revealed in *Revelation*, Jesus Christ is going to *recompense* (pay back in kind) mankind for his sinful ways – especially for the way they have mistreated God's people through the millennia.

It is interesting to me that my *Cruden's Compact Concordance* lists Revelation 1:10 under the entry "Day of the Lord" and also refers the user to the entry "Great Day." *That period of time* is the focal point of *Revelation*. *That* is the importance of John's comment that he was

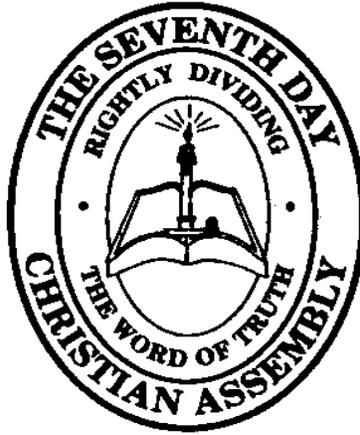
in a prophetic trance or vision *on* [during] *the Lord's day*.

It does not matter how Traditional Christianity attempts to frame the argument about the change from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday and doing away with His Holy Days, they *admit* that in *all of scripture* there is not *one* direct command from God that the Church that Christ founded should be any different than anyone in the Old Testament with regard to His Sabbath commandment. While it is true that both Houses of Israel were divorced by the Lord God (who later became Jesus Christ) because of their refusal to be obedient, it is also true that the True Church of God became the instrument responsible for continuing to announce God's preparation for the fulfillment of His original plan. And, as we can see in Hebrews 4:8-11 – written expressly to New Testament Christians – that God's attitude toward the *Sabbaths* He created very much applies to them. They were neither changed nor annulled (see Matthew 5:17-19). Not even the supposed authority of the *Pope* has the freedom to do away with or change God's commandments. That's *God's* story, and *I'm* sticking to it!

In Christ's Service,

Larry E. Ford

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Straight Talk . . . Plain Truth

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