

Worshiping God in

Spirit and Truth

A Magazine for Understanding God's Truth

Special Edition!

God's Holy Days:

A Prophetic Outline of

His Plan of Salvation

Is this the only day of Salvation?

What is God's ultimate plan for mankind?

July – September 2014

In This Issue

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From the Pastor: This is a continued discussion of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh-day to the first day of the week. Typically, there are three scriptures that are used to claim that the Apostolic Church had begun to observe Sunday as the Sabbath: Acts 20:7-11, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, and Revelation 1:10. This discussion puts those scriptures in their proper perspective and demonstrates that they are not valid “proofs” for the claim that the Apostles set about to violate Jesus Christ’s claims in Matthew 5:17-19. [Page 2](#)

The Feast of Trumpets: Although there is only a brief description of this holy day in Leviticus 23:24, 25, the symbolism involved shows that it has information about God’s plan of salvation that is of major significance. Correctly understanding this holy day helps one to understand the fallacies of the ubiquitous “Rapture” concept, as well as the answer to those who claim that Jesus Christ can return at any moment. Such information brings into question the validity of many such-like claims. [Page 9](#)

The Day of Atonement: Two equally qualified goats are used in the Atonement ritual described in Leviticus 16. Until the results of the casting of lots are known, either of them could be sacrificed and either of them could be the scapegoat. Some claim that the scapegoat is a symbol of *Satan* – upon whom the sins of mankind are justifiably placed so that he can receive the punishment he so greatly deserves. How correct is that assumption? Is it possible that the scapegoat represents an *innocent victim* who suffers in place of the guilty parties? This discussion explores the symbolism involved and adequately identifies the individual upon whom the sins of mankind have been placed. [Page 14](#)

The Feast of Tabernacles: The Feast of Tabernacles focuses on two things: (1) the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ to complete the *ministry of reconciliation*, and (2) the *temporary nature* of all that is part and parcel to this present world system. The objective of this article is to give a more specific explanation of what that 1,000-year period of time will be like when Jesus Christ sets up His government in Jerusalem and executes the systematic dissolution of the world’s governments and establishes the righteousness of God among mankind. Included in the discussion will be the basis for this effort by Jesus Christ and His saints: Preparation for the *new heavens and new earth* in which *all things* will be renewed (Acts 3:19-21). [Page 22](#)

The Eighth Day: Why does God say that the Feast of Tabernacles is *seven days* long...and then add an *additional day* to it? It is generally thought to be merely the closing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. How would you understand God’s message/lesson about the *Eighth Day* if you seemingly have nothing in the New Testament to explain it? This is the most profound revelation about God’s love and fatherliness that you could ever imagine – and it is not generally understood or taught by traditional Christianity. [Page 30](#)

The New Heavens and New Earth: At the end of the 1,000-year period, there will be a *purging* of the present heavens and earth. What is to follow? Will the present heavens and earth be *destroyed*? The term *kainos* has many applications in scripture – especially with regard to the *new covenant*, our *new bodies*, and the *new* heavens and earth. *All things* will be *kainos* (Acts 3:19-21). What is in store for mankind?



from the desk of: the Pastor

Do you realize that this is not the only *day of salvation* – that God has planned *a process of salvation* that will go far beyond the return of Jesus Christ? 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 they give 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)! Some of God's holy days foreshadow the implementation of this *intervention* and subsequent *increase*. This is a concept that is by no means accepted or taught by most so-called “Christian” denominations (32,000+) throughout the world. Let's understand God's revelation regarding this most important subject.

The Problem: Understanding Scripture

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 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, Ephesians 1:4, and 1 Peter 1:18-20).

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 the April–June issue who agree with the change – but hasten to say that there is *no biblical justification* for it.

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; emphasizes added)

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 Luke 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 embark on their journey to Troas. Why? They were observing that Feast with its two yearly Sabbaths (Leviticus 23:6-8). Notice also that they stayed in Troas for *seven days* – and it was on the *first day of the week* (the *seventh day* of Paul's stay there) when they met to *break bread* (v. 7). 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*. Was this 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; 28:17-22 – 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*...as would be supposed if Paul spoke until *midnight* of the first day of the week by *Roman* reckoning.

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* Saturday night. That minor problem has to be considered.

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* (what is commonly called today *Saturday 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 20:7, 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 (see Matthew 26:26-28)? 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.

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 épître 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 the 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 *implied* observance of *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. Many other translations recognize this and render *pascha* as *Passover* instead of *Easter* (RSV and *Modern Language*, for examples).

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* (emphases added).

So, the *Eucharist*, apparently, is thought to have become a *spiritualized 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?

First 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 purpose of eating the *Lord's supper* (KJV; v. 20)! He tells them to eat their 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 at the beginning of the 14th day of Abib* (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 Jesus Christ was crucified (A.D. 31).

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* (Westmin-

ster 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 made 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) Second 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.

- (e) And, 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*. They have been divided into different *sects* for centuries.

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* – *ente 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 passion-

ate 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 that *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 anthropou 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; John 1:1-3) 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 legisla-

tors 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 subheading (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. Chap-

ter 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 subheading (1.): “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 *seventh 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 to be 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; 7:20-27; 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 their 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* because he was seeing that period of time unfold before his very eyes.

Conclusion

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 still *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 any of the faithful 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. 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 or authority 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, Pastor
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The Feast of Trumpets

(Photo Courtesy of freepik.com)

Revelation 8:1 through 11:15 declares that there will be seven *trumpet* plagues that will precede the return of Jesus Christ to set up the Kingdom of God – the seventh and last trumpet consisting of the return of Jesus Christ with His saints to fulfill Daniel 2:44, 45, Zechariah 14:1-9, and Revelation 11:15 *and* to pour out the final seven *bowl plagues* that will signal the completion of the wrath of God (Revelation 15). It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that the *Feast of Trumpets* is a prophetic message that points to the return of Jesus Christ to complete the process of reconciling all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father (Colossians 1:20). It will be at this point that the *firstfruits* of God's plan of salvation will be changed from flesh-and-blood bodies to a new spirit composition as described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and by John in 1 John 3:1-3 – in effect, *born again into the God Family* (John 3:3-8). This will be an *instantaneous* act spearheaded by Jesus Christ by which both the living and dead saints of God will be changed (see 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). It will be the point at which all *firstfruit* saints of all ages will receive this tremendous reward *together* (Hebrews 11:39, 40).

We will see how the *Feast of Trumpets* begins a Fall Holy Day season that portrays *three periods of judgment* and how these days lay out God's plan to continue mankind's access to salvation beyond the return of Jesus Christ. Let's understand God's revelation regarding this most important subject: *the Lord's Day*.

A Denunciation of the *Rapture* Concept

As bothersome as the *Rapture* concept might be to those who know the truth of God's word, some time must be spent in this article to divorce God's truth from it. It is a popular concept among evangelicals that has not been popularly accepted among most of the 32,000+ mainstream Christian denominations. Yet, it currently has been popularized by Tim La Hay and Jerry Jenkins in their multi-volume *Left Behind* series of books and movies as a real, prophesied event that could take place *at any time*. Let it be understood that those who

espouse this concept do not even agree among themselves when it will occur – some saying *before* the Great Tribulation, some saying in the *middle* of it, and others saying at the *end* of it. They cannot even agree about whether the Great Tribulation is seven (7) years long or three and one-half (3½) years long. This division does not recommend their "plain sense of scripture" method of interpretation. That said, let's understand the need for the divorcement.

Time and space do not allow for getting involved in all of the arguments used to promote this concept; so, we will use a couple of well-placed arguments to demonstrate the fallacy of the concept. If you can debunk a

couple of key components of something, then it is possible to bring down the entire structure. You can think of Samson's use of two pillars in the Philistine house to bring down the entire edifice (Judges 16:21-30).

The Sounding Trumpet

Matthew 24:30, 31 says that when Jesus Christ returns to resurrect the faithful dead and change the faithful living, He will send out angels *with a loud trumpet call*. Paul describes this in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17... and the process is essentially the same. He also describes it in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 with a slight difference: He says that it will occur *at the last trump*. From a language standpoint, the use of *last* in that description presupposes that there is a *series* of trumpet blasts – at least *two, but possibly more* (see Revelation 22:13). It is an *ordinal* number. If this is the *last* trumpet, then at least one other trumpet must have preceded it. So, Paul is in agreement with Jesus Christ about the use of the *trumpet* at His return.

What is the big deal here? In at least one source that I have read, it is claimed that the *trumpet* of 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 is not the same as the *last trumpet* of 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52. However, the Rapturists do admit that the *trumpet* is an integral part of Christ's *modus operandi*.

How did Paul know at that time that there was to be a *series of trumpet blasts prior to Christ's return*? He probably wrote about this *trumpet* scenario based on Matthew's account of Jesus' last instructions to His disciples before His crucifixion. He wrote it *before* John wrote about the *series of trumpets* involved in Revelation 8 through 11.

Acts 9:19 says that he was with some Damascus disciples after his conversion...which, in vv. 20-22, is followed by an acknowledgment that he was very soon capable of changing his entire theological paradigm so that he could preach Christ and prove his point about Jesus being the Christ. Paul admits in Galatians 1:12 that what he knew and preached was by *direct revelation* from Jesus Christ. He says in 1 Corinthians 11:23 that Jesus revealed to him the historical setting and spiritual understanding of the new symbols used in His last Passover with His disciples. In this, a picture emerges about how Paul was able to know what he was

teaching. Very plainly, something happened to Paul's spiritual perception and understanding.

Let's add to that the fact that Paul was a trained rabbi. Is it possible that he learned in his training that Leviticus 23:24 was more than a call to blow a series of trumpets on a day of required worship? Was there no discourse about any underlying *symbolism*? Was it, as some suggest, merely a celebration of the coming of the civil new year and the new moon connected to it? Why was the *first* moon of the civil year placed in the *sacred* position of the *seventh* month (moon)?

By Old and New Testament standards, a thing is established by two or more trustworthy witnesses (see Numbers 35:30 and 2 Corinthians 13:1). Paul and John are trustworthy witnesses. Exodus 19:16-19 supports the idea that the trumpet is a symbol of the mighty voice of God. If Joshua 6 is of any value to this discussion (see 1 Corinthians 10:1-11), then the use of *trumpets* for seven (7) straight days – the last one accompanied by a mighty shout – must have some *symbolic* lesson for us related to the *series of seven (7) trumpets* in Revelation 8 through 11. The *trumpet sound* accompanied by the great *shout* marked the utter destruction of Jericho.

One must not assume that the *last trumpet* and *shout of the archangel* are for the sole purpose of awakening the dead. They are as much for announcing the destruction of all human governments and the establishment of God's Kingdom on the earth. You can deduce that much from Revelation 11:15 and Daniel 2:44, 45.

Paul's description of Christ's return in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 does not contain the least hint that it is a *secret* venture. Rather, it is a moment when the Lord Himself descends with a shout, there is the voice of the archangel, and they are accompanied with the sounding of the trumpet. There is a strange disconnect here between what is happening and what is portrayed as a *secret return* in the rapture concept.

Why, according to the Rapturists, does Christ return in *secret*? To take Christians *living and dead* to heaven so they will not have to suffer the ravages of the Great Tribulation. They base some of their reasoning on Revelation 3:10 and 12:14. Here's the disconnect: *Why do the dead have to be protected from the Great Tribulation?*

Job 14:10-15 addresses the state of the dead by pointing out that they lie in the grave and waste away ...being *undisturbed* until "...the heavens be no more..."

(v. 12). Job's plea to God was to be hidden and kept secret in the grave until God's wrath is past. When it is past, then God will call him forth out of the grave and complete His work in him. If Job 14:10-15 is inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), then we must accept it as God's authoritative truth and, therefore, useful in this discussion. It demonstrates that the *dead* are already in a place of safety. Why disturb them? What pain and suffering would they incur?

Finally, if 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17 are about two *different* trumpets, then there has to be some explanation of the state of the faithful living and dead between the secret rapture and the public appearance of Jesus Christ. That quandry is caused by the Rapturists' theology. Why ask such a question? Because it reveals a basic flaw in the *trumpet* controversy and Rapturist logic.

Does 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 say anything about the living and the dead being *changed* – you know, putting on *incorruption* and *immortality*? No. Nor does it say anything about bringing the *immortal souls* of the *dead* with Him to put back into dead, decayed bodies. With what kind of *body* will these faithful dead be raised so they can be (supposedly) taken back to heaven for seven (7) years while they wait for Christ's public appearance to occur? This theology presupposes that the immortal soul and the dead body must be re-united in order to be made whole again! If, as is claimed in some traditional Christian theology, the immortal soul is the *real person* and the body is merely the *animating force* in the flesh (incarnation), *what real need does the immortal soul have for a redeemed animating force?* One would think that the immortal soul concept would posit that its being able to go to heaven and enjoy the wonders of that life would indicate that it has no need to be re-united to the carnal animating force!

Why did Paul say that the *living* would not *precede* the *dead* in this matter? Some were concerned that the *living* would be given an advantage that the *dead* would not enjoy. Why would that be a problem if they believed that their *immortal souls* had already been taken to heaven when they died? The theological quagmire deepens.

Paul reveals in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 that a *change* in body composition takes place at the *last trumpet*. He reveals through his arguments in vv. 35-

58 that this *change* in composition is necessary for entrance into the Kingdom of God. Here, he is in agreement with Jesus Christ's comments in John 3:3-8 in which He says that the *flesh* must be *born again* into the *spirit*. Notice in John 3:8 that Jesus says that the *spirit* moves at will. So, this *change* is necessary for both the *living* and the *dead*. In v. 46, he says that the *natural body precedes* the *spirit* body. The immortal soul concept ignores that when it claims that the soul has always existed and will never cease to exist. That, in and of itself, cancels the erroneous doctrine of the immortal soul from any consideration in this conversation.

What this means is simple: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 is not a separate event from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58. The *trumpets* in each account are the *same trumpet* because there is no way Christ would orchestrate two separate resurrections from the dead seven (7) years apart! And...they are changed only one time, not two. That pillar is pushed down.

One is Taken and One is Left Behind

This concept is taken from Matthew 24:39-41. With regard to the rapture concept, its use reveals a fundamental ignorance of scriptural revelation. It also reveals a scriptural ignorance of God's process of salvation as revealed in His holy days. How so? Most denominational doctrines in the 32,000+ that are out there in the world conceive of Christ's return as the *closing door* on the possibility of salvation. It is to them, plainly put, the *end of the world*. With their religious paradigm, it makes perfectly good sense to some that this would fit into a rapture concept. They are sincere, but they are sincerely wrong.

Let's consider the process by which Jesus Christ returns to set up the Kingdom of God and complete the reconciliation of all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father (Colossians 1:20). Revelation 5 reveals that Jesus Christ is selected as the only Being who is qualified to open the scroll of seven *seals* (v. 9). In Revelation 6, which is a companion to Matthew 24, He begins to unseal the scroll. Each *seal* represents a different problem for the inhabitants of the earth as history unfolds toward the return of Jesus Christ.

There will be: (1) the rise of a false Christianity (v.

2); (2) a succession of devastating wars (v. 4); (3) a seemingly endless stream of droughts and famines (vv. 5, 6); (4) a great wave of death and hunger and animal depredations (vv. 7, 8); (5) an endless stream of martyrs among faithful Christians – various times of “tribulations” (vv. 9-11); and (6) heavenly signs (vv. 12-17). During this *sixth seal*, Jesus Christ will appear in the heavens for the purpose of inflicting God’s wrath upon a very sinful world (vv. 16, 17). Once He has appeared in the heavens...and prior to the execution of that wrath...His angels will set about identifying those who are to be part of the *first harvest* represented by *Pentecost* that we studied in the last issue (Chapter 7). This is the prelude to *the Lord’s Day*.

The *seventh seal* consists of seven (7) *trumpet* plagues that will be poured out upon the inhabitants of the earth during a 360-day period of time *overlapping the end of the 1,260-day Great Tribulation Period*. That process is revealed in Revelation 8 through 11. So, the seven (7) trumpet plagues are the *seventh seal*.

As you read the account, you will see that the return of Jesus Christ is not over and done with in one fell swoop. He will actually be there in the upper atmosphere of the earth for 360 days – *one prophetic year*. Note in Revelation 9:5 that the *fifth seal* lasts at least 5 months. However, *the resurrection and the ascension of the living and dead to the cloud where He sits will not immediately take place upon His arrival on that cloud*. The faithful will have had to endure a major portion of the Great Tribulation Period before His return...and for some portion after He actually appears (read Revelation 7:14). It is not from the *Tribulation* itself that the faithful will be protected by their ascension to the cloud. We’ll see how that unfolds.

Revelation 10:7 reveals that it is during the *seventh and last trumpet* plague that God’s mystery will be finished. Fast forward to Revelation 11:15. This is the point at which Jesus Christ begins to fulfill Daniel 2:44, 45 by destroying all human governments and establishing the Kingdom of God on the earth. This is the point at which Daniel 7:21-27 is brought to its prophesied conclusion. Revelation 11:18 describes it as a time of *God’s wrath, the judgment and reward of the faithful, and the destruction of those who destroy the earth*. So, there are several things going on during this *seventh trumpet plague*. Revelation 12 and 13 are inset chapters

to describe the expulsion of Satan from heaven and the 1,260-day tribulation brought by the Beast.

Revelation 14 takes up the point at which Jesus Christ appears in the upper atmosphere of the earth. Verses 1-5 speak of those who are taken up to the cloud at this point to be spared the remaining tribulation. They are “reaped out” of earth’s population. Verses 14-20 are a description of Matthew 24:30, 31. This is the prelude to Matthew 24:40, 41. Let’s see how this plays out.

Revelation 14:14 shows Jesus Christ waiting (pouring six trumpet plagues) for word from the Father to set about reaping out the first harvest of the faithful – the firstfruits (read Matthew 24:36). When word comes to Him, He sets about reaping out the firstfruit saints (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58). This is the *first resurrection* (Revelation 20:4-6), not a *secret rapture*. Will *everybody on earth* be reaped out? No. Some will be *taken* and some will be *left*. It will be plainly visible to all (Revelation 1:7).

Zechariah 14 is an Old Testament prophecy that supports this revelation. The setting is the *Day of the Lord* (v. 1). You can compare that to Revelation 1:10. Most of the content of the Revelation has to do with this period of time. Notice that Jesus Christ has come to *wage war* (see Revelation 19:11-21), and He is accompanied by His saints (v. 5, last part). Now read Zechariah 14:16. Are there *survivors* of this warfare? If so, *some were taken* to accompany Christ in His warfare, and *some were left* to suffer the consequences of God’s wrath. What happens to those who *survive* (vv. 16-21)? Are they still *flesh-and-blood humans*? Had they been *left behind* when Christ took the saints to the cloud? *Do they now remain on the earth* (see v. 9)?

Now, compare this to Isaiah 2:1-5. Are Christ and His saints dealing with a *human* population *on the earth* after His return? For what purpose? How does this compare to Revelation 20:4 and 5:10? Again, this helps us to understand that being *taken* and being *left* in Matthew 24:40, 41 has nothing to do with a *rapture* seven(7) years before Christ’s return. This should help us to understand Daniel 2:44, 45 and 7:20, 27. Those who are *taken* at Christ’s return will be priests, kings, and judges over a *human* population on the earth during a period of reconciliation that will last 1,000 years (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). Those who are *left* at Christ’s

return (if they *survive*) will make up the *human population* over whom Jesus Christ and His saints will reign and rule.

It should be obvious from this that the door to salvation has not been closed at the point of Christ's return. The *survivors* will be given an opportunity to be "saved" and ultimately changed from flesh to spirit as *secondfruits unto the Lord*. The door to salvation will not have been *closed* at Christ's return! Some get very angry that we would suggest such a thing. Should not they be overjoyed that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9)?

So, from what have the saints been protected by being taken out of the world late in the great Tribulation ...if it has not been from the Great Tribulation itself? That's where the *wrath* part of Revelation 11:18 comes into play. *They are not protected from the Beast's wrath; they are protected from God's wrath.* Just as the *seven trumpet plagues* are the *seventh seal*, the *seventh trumpet* contains *seven additional plagues* that are called *the completion of the wrath of God: the seven bowl plagues* (Revelation 15:1).

This is the point at which Revelation 14:17-20 comes into play. Notice that this comes *subsequent* to Christ's reaping out the firstfruit saints (vv. 14-16). Now read Revelation 16 to discover from what the saints are to be protected. Also, realize that the saints are actually participating in this warfare against the incorrigibly wicked and ungodly among the human population (Revelation 19:6-21; Zechariah 14). Yet, there will be *survivors* of that wrath – some who are *left alive* for some magnificent purpose in God's grace and love. That will be the subject of another holy day.

Summary

It should be realized that the Feast of Trumpets is included among those parts of God's law that are *shadows* of good things to come (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1). In that sense, it represents a *prophecy* about God's future actions through His Christ. It stands among the *holy days* named in Leviticus 23 and elsewhere that map out God's plan of salvation.

In *Passover* and *Atonement*, we see Jesus Christ providing the holy sacrifice by which God will pass over our sins – Atonement specifically showing how Jesus Christ would take upon Himself the punishment for our sins that we rightly deserve. In the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, we see foreshadowed the means by which we will be delivered from the enslavement of sin and taken into the Kingdom that God has planned for us (Matthew 25:34). The early spring harvest (*Pentecost*) and the late fall harvest (*Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day*) represent at least *three periods of judgment* during which humankind can be "saved" from the human condition and given entrance into the Kingdom of God (symbolized in the *weekly seventh-day Sabbath*). Why would the *Feast of Trumpets* be excluded from this symbolism? Is there any good reason that the Feast of Trumpets cannot be the "shadow" of the return of Jesus Christ to conquer the nations of this world and set up the Kingdom of God? *That* is an important element in God's plan of salvation because, without that timely intervention, mankind would otherwise utterly destroy himself (Matthew 24:21, 22)! Let him that has ears to hear and eyes to see pay attention to God's revelation.

Entering the Family of God

Let's take brief look at one of the most astounding biblical revelations imaginable: How humans will be added to the *Family of God*. Ephesians 1:4-6 says that God planned this before the creation of the universe. Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7 shows God putting His plan into action. Hebrews 2:6-11 shows how Jesus Christ is making us part of the Family. Jesus Christ (John 3:3-8) and Paul (1 Corinthians 15:50-58) show the transformation from flesh to spirit that must take place to complete the process. John says in 1 John 3:1-3 that, when the process is completed, we will be just like Him. Learn more in Lesson 3 of the *Word of Truth* Bible Study Course.

The Day of Atonement

(The Significance of Two Sacrificial Goats)

There is the argument that the “Azazel” goat portrayed in the Atonement rituals in Leviticus 16 is a symbol of *Satan the Devil*. The proponents of that portrayal insist that *Satan* is the one who is ultimately responsible for mankind’s sins; therefore, he is the one upon whom the sins of mankind must be laid – he is the one who must pay the ultimate price for those sins. Why? The proponents insist that Satan is guilty of unsuspectingly *injecting* into humans his own satanic nature – a nature, they say, that has been wrongly called “human nature.” This argument is worthy of investigation and reply because it violates a central principle in the scriptural record about the *entire* role of Jesus Christ in the salvation process.

Our objective, then, is to search out: (a) the meaning of *atonement*; (b) the role of Jesus Christ in the *redemption* of mankind; (c) the role of Jesus Christ in the *total removal of our sins*; (d) the source of “human nature”; and (e) the ultimate fate of Satan and the rebellious angels who are in league with him. There is *powerful* symbolism involved in the ritual concerning the two atonement goats – symbolism that *powerfully accentuates* the *entire* role of Jesus Christ in our salvation.

What is *Atonement*?

The definition of the term *atonement* should give us sufficient understanding of the objective of the ritual in Leviticus 16. In a merely precursory reading of the text, one can readily understand that the sins of Israel were being dealt with in a two-stage ritual involving two sacrificial goats that are specifically identified as *atonement sacrifices unto the Lord* (for example, vv. 10, 16). In the dramatization, one goat is sacrificed and the other is used to have heaped upon it all of the sins of all Israel. Why have *two* goats?

Some translations refer to the live goat as the *scapegoat* (KJV); others refer to it as the *Azazel goat* (RSV, Jerusalem, Modern Language, Moffatt, Luther, etc.). The point is this: *both goats are initially qualified to be*

either the sacrificial goat or the scapegoat...both of which play a significant role in the atonement process.

You also must understand that some translators of the term *Azazel* predicate it on the idea that Israel included in this ritual some type of homage to a *desert demon* (Azazel); so, they write that the goat is “...*for* Azazel.” Note, for example, Moffatt’s translation of Leviticus 16:8: “Aaron shall cast lots over the goats, one for the Eternal and the other *for Azazel the demon...*” (emphasis added). *The Jerusalem Bible* reads that it is to be allotted “*to Azazel*” but adds a footnote that reads: “Azazel in ancient Hebrew and Canaanite belief, is a demon of the desert. It will be noticed that the ‘scapegoat’ is not *sacrificed to Azazel*” (emphases added).

It is not uncommon among exegetes and commentators to link Israel’s religion to that of the Canaanites

as though Israel liberally borrowed religious concepts from those pagans. It is commonly known that Deuteronomy 12:29-32 is the Lord God's warning to Israel not to do such a thing. So, if you read in Deuteronomy 32:17, Psalm 106:37, and Isaiah 34:14 that they sacrificed to "devils" and "satyrs," then you should understand that they rebelled against God to their own hurt.

Once they had mixed and mingled the paganism with the Lord God's revelation, you see Him saying:

Come no more with your meaningless offerings! Incense is abominable to Me; [likewise] the new moon and sabbath, the convoking of the assembly! My soul hates your new moon festival and appointed seasonal feasts; they have become a burden on Me; I am weary of bearing them. When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; yes, even though you multiply your prayers, I will not hear. (Isaiah 1:13-15; see also Amos 5:21; Jeremiah 7:21-28; Malachi 1:6-14)

The Lord God is not advocating the disposal of the feasts and weekly Sabbath that He gave to Israel – you know, *doing away with the Law*. Read, for example, Leviticus 23:1 and see the source of this legislation. The *Lord God* is the author of these observances. He is the one who later became *Jesus Christ* (John 1:1-14).

As Paul writes in Romans 7:12: "...The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." It is when the *unclean* has been mixed in with it that its very *holy* character is changed (read Haggai 2:11-14). The Lord God tells us in Exodus 20:1-5 that He is not willing to share His honor and glory with any kind of false god. It is no wonder, then, that He would be disgusted with Israel's religious pretense because they liberally mixed and mingled paganism with the truth that God had revealed to them.

Others write "...for Azazel" but add a footnote that gives an alternate translation: "...for removal" (ex., *American Standard Version, Living Bible*). The difference in meaning should be obvious to the thoughtful reader. Yes, translators, exegetes, and commentators might very well allow their personal theological paradigms to "color" their translations and comments. Note this exegetical comment in *The Interpreter's Bible*:

In modern terms we might say that the sins of the people were laid upon a goat that was then consigned [that is, handed over, delivered] to the devil....The ritual of the goat for Azazel may...represent a concession to popular demands; it is perhaps sufficient to satisfy, and to a certain extent to sanctify and make respectable, crude and superstitious beliefs in the power of "spirits" [that is, of *devils*, the *jinn*, the *hairy ones*, the spirits of the desert wastelands]. (vol. 2; pp. 77, 78)

That's not unlike the belief that the Devil is the gate-keeper of Hell and unrepentant sinners will be turned over to him for eternal punishment. In that way, the *sinner* is actually, supposedly, *removed* instead of his sins. What, pray tell, would the Azazel *demon* do with the sins once he got them...if that is how we should understand the role of this goat? Also, how could the people make a "popular demand" that the Lord God should include such a ritual in the Atonement ritual? Such an idea is preposterous and ludicrous!

We will investigate this phenomenon as we pursue the meaning of the term *atonement* and try to understand what that means in reference to the expression in Leviticus 16:10 that the live goat will be "...presented live before the Lord, *to make an atonement with him*" (KJV). There is more to this than meets the casual eye. We will discover that there is no role in this ritual for a demon of any sort – nor for Satan the Devil.

The Hebrew term from which *atonement* is translated is *kaphar*. It is a cognate of the term used to name the day as *Yom Kippur* – the Day of Atonement. In the *Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon*, they give the sense of this ritual under definition #3: "cover over, atone for sin and persons by legal rites [that is, according to applicable religious laws]." So, the idea is that sins will be *covered* (concealed; hidden; treated as though they never existed – see Isaiah 1:18, for example) in a way that is legally acceptable to God. In addition to this, the offended party (God) will be appeased and placated and offenses against the transgressor will be forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, pardoned, et cetera.

The supreme idea behind all of this is the *justification* of the offender and the subsequent *reconciliation* with the offended party that must take place in order for

their relationship to be restored to its originally intended status (see Ephesians 1:4). It is significant that the Lord God sat on the *mercy seat* that covered the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies on this day. The term *mercy seat* in Hebrew is another cognate word: *kapporeth*. In effect, this is a day for appearing before the *mercy seat* of the Lord for the purpose of total *reconciliation* – which is possible only if the sins are totally expunged from the record.

Now, *BDB* adds this to the #3 definition: “[*Kapporeth* is also used] for the goat (which was presented before Yahweh to consecrate him for the bearing away of the sins of the people).” Then they cite Leviticus 16:30 to show the purpose of *both offerings*: “Atonement shall be made for you to cleanse you, from all your sins shall you be clean before Yahweh.” In other words, “bearing away” and “complete removal” mean that the Lord God will **treat you as though** you have **never** sinned (see Romans 4). That is the sole purpose for *atonement*. Now we shall see that Jesus Christ played a **dual role** in making such a wonderful, gracious, merciful gift possible for **all** of sinful mankind (see Romans 3:23 and 6:23).

The Problem With the Ritual Drama

It is a commonly accepted idea that religious ritual involved an **acting out** of the symbolism involved – in other words, a *dramatization*. It is commonly believed that such religious dramatizations were the forerunners of modern stage, screen, and television. In the case of Leviticus 16, it is an **acting out** of the meaning of the process of *reconciling all things in heaven and on earth to God the Father* (Colossians 1:20; Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). It is generally thought to be reasonable to consider the two goats as being two aspects of the role of Jesus Christ in the reconciliation process: (a) the redemption sacrifice and (b) the one who actually bears the burden of all of the sins of all of mankind for all time past and future and removes them from the presence of God and His people (see Hebrews 10:12-23). As it is stated in *The Interpreter's Bible*'s commentary on v. 8 (KJV – “scapegoat”):

Throughout the Christian centuries the scapegoat has been taken as the type of Christ in his

rejection by the people, his death, **his bearing of the sins of men**” (vol. 2; p. 80; emphases added).

So, this is not merely one man’s opinion; it has been a longtime and widely-held point-of-view. Here’s the interesting part that is largely not understood about the role of the scapegoat: Not only is he used to “remove” mankind’s sins; he is used as an active force in the *atonement* – that is, the *reconciliation* – process.

The problem with this particular ritual drama is simple: the goat that pictures the *sacrifice of the life of Jesus Christ* actually **dies**. That *sacrificial* death is appropriately pictured, but how does the “removal” part of the drama take place with a **dead** goat? Do you lay hands on a **dead** goat and drag it out to the desert to be abandoned? No, the “removal” part of the drama demands another *qualified* goat that pictures One who is *qualified* to have all of the sins of all of mankind for all time heaped upon Him and disposed of (“removed”) from the memories of God and the glorified saints. You can see in Revelation 5:1-10 that Jesus Christ has the qualifications to get the job done. Paul says in Ephesians 1:6 that we are **made acceptable** to God the Father through Jesus Christ. How? By the “removal” of our sins through Him.

The live goat is for the purpose of dramatizing the “removal” of the sins. In the Mishna (Yoma 4:1), it is demonstrated that, after the lots were drawn to determine which goat was which, the High Priest laid hands on *both goats* and said: “A Sin offering to the Lord” (*Interpreter's*; vol. 2; p. 80). This indicates that both goats were considered to be a **single** sin offering to the *Lord*. Whatever else might be thought about this scapegoat, it is apparent from this comment that he was “*sacrificed to the Lord* and not to a desert demon or Satan. The people would rejoin by shouting: “Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever.” That would be an appropriate answer for the expectation of a future kingdom in which sin will not exist. ***Just because you can find parallels to this in paganism, that does not give you warrant to assume that Israel merely copied them. You have to remember the deceptive nature of Satan the Devil*** (see 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:4, 13-15; and Revelation 12:9).

If you use the *pattern analogy* submitted by Paul in Hebrews 9:19-28, then you should see a picture emerge

that helps to explain the use of two goats. Here we see that the mission of Jesus Christ was not completed merely with His *sacrificial death*. There was another aspect of it that was required for the reconciliation process to be completed. What Paul shows in vv. 23, 24 demonstrates the process of actually reconciling things *in heaven*. Verse 26 says that He came to “...put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” ***Is the scapegoat less of a sacrifice unto the Lord than the sacrificial goat? No!*** The “removal” is as important to the process as the sacrifice.

Purging and cleansing the stain of sin in the heavenly sanctuary involves not only the stain of your own sin that has been presented before God the Father; it involves taking care to “remove” the stain caused by Lucifer and those angels that rebelled against God with him (see Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-19). Hebrews 9:19-28 is a revealed witness to the fact that Jesus Christ ascended to the heavenly sanctuary to use His own blood to do just that. Verse 28 is most certainly indicative of the role of the scapegoat: “So Christ was once offered ***to bear the sins of many*** [in heaven and on earth]....” In the dramatization of the process of atonement, it was necessary to have two goats because a *dead goat* cannot actively pursue the process of ridding *heaven and earth* of all of the sin that has been present there. That’s the problem with the dramatization and why you need two goats to symbolize the work of a single Savior.

Applicable Scriptures

It is not enough to make a claim that the scapegoat is a symbol of Satan the Devil. Those who do often use Revelation 20:1-3 to demonstrate that it portrays the point at which Satan is corralled, bound, and cast into a dark hole by a “strong man” angel in fulfillment of the symbolism involved. Yet, this explanation of the symbolism in that guise fails the “smell” test. How so? Part of it has to do with whether or not angels can be *destroyed*...since they are described as being *immortal*. Part of it has to do with what actually happened to the scapegoat in the ritual as compared to what will happen to Satan in the Revelation 20 account – that is, the scapegoat does not return to Israel, but Satan is loosed for a season after the 1,000-year period is over (Revela-

tion 20:7). It is here, as they say, that the “rubber meets the road.” Yes, I know that sometimes analogies can eventually break down. I also know that symbols can be wrongly interpreted and analogies wrongly applied. Let’s study some applicable scriptures to see where they take us.

Getting Rid of Sin, Death, and the Grave

Revelation 20:14 shows that *death* and *the grave* are to be cast into the Lake of Fire. For what purpose? In the mystery of the symbolism involved, do you suspect that they will be made to languish there *for ever and ever*? That is the assumption made by some about Satan, his rebellious cohorts, and the Beast and False Prophet in v. 10 – and others with regard to so-called rebellious “immortal souls.”

You must understand, however, that *for ever and ever* is an expression of *irreversible finality*. The description of the *torment* is not in question. The expression “day and night for ever and ever” does not imply that they will be *endlessly* tormented. The Greek term from which this expression comes (*aion*) has several definitions – one of which is “eternity.” But...it can also mean “for a very long time” without meaning “eternity.” It can also mean “for a segment of time” and “an age.” The key to understanding this verse, I think, comes from understanding the *destruction of death* itself.

We find a description of the destruction of *death* in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. Verse 26 says that Christ must reign until He has *destroyed* all of God’s enemies – *death* being the last one. Why is this important? Let’s consider John’s comment in 1 John 3:4 (“*Sin* is the transgression of the Law”) and Paul’s comment in Romans 6:23 (“The wages of *sin* is *death*, but the gift of God is *eternal life* through Jesus Christ.”). This provokes the question about how to *destroy* death.

Can Immortal Angels be Destroyed?

The Greek term translated as *destroyed* in 1 Corinthians 15:26 is *katargeo*. This word can mean “to make ineffective, powerless, or idle.” In this case, however, it means “to abolish, wipe out, set aside” – the preference in v. 26 being “to wipe out.” That is the sense of Revelation 20:14: Throwing *death* and the *grave* into

the Lake of Fire is for the purpose of wiping them out so that they will have no power whatsoever over anything in God's creation ever again. That same word and definition is applied in Hebrews 2:14. This is an assertion that Jesus Christ took on the human form "...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil" (emphases added). In essence, Satan is to be *wiped out of existence by complete and total destruction*.

If you wipe out sin and its author, then you wipe out death. If you wipe out death, then you wipe out the grave and the need for such a place. If you wipe out sin, then (true to the symbolism of the Feast of Unleavened Bread) you effectively *destroy* any and all agents of it just like the Lord God wiped out Egypt's Pharaoh and army in the Red Sea when He led Israel out of that land of bondage (see Romans 6:11-23).

God will very likely *torment* Satan "for a segment of time" in an irreversible judgment, but that does not mean that the Lake of Fire itself or the torment will exist for eternity. For the sake of argument, God could allow that torment to last throughout the 1,000-year Kingdom. Will He? I doubt it very seriously because it would not serve a practical purpose. Once we reach the creation of the New Heaven and New Earth (Revelation 21), there will be no need for such a place because sin, death, and the grave will have been destroyed and, therefore, useless in the eternity ahead of that time.

If a member of the God Family could be made flesh and brought to physical death, then an immortal angel can be brought to a condition whereby it can be destroyed. Granted, the Word God *volunteered* to be made flesh as the supreme sacrifice for sin. However, if God the Father had decided not to resurrect Him, He would still be a pile of dust lying somewhere in the landscape of Jerusalem because He would have died a *human's* death. In Jesus' case, God *died*, but God was not *destroyed* because He was resurrected.

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 can be translated thus: "The *living being* that sins shall die." Verse 20 specifically says that each *living being* will bear the responsibility for its own sins. One would rightly assume that immortal angels are as much *living beings* as humans are. One would rightly assume that immortal angels are as personally responsible for their own sins as humans are. Although Satan is an evil, deceitful, nefarious creature,

he is responsible *for his own sins* just as each human is. That being the case, he can only *tempt* the human to sin ...not actually *make him yield to the temptation and commit the sin* (see Jesus' example in Matthew 4:1-11). The individual is responsible for controlling his own mind and heart and resisting the Devil (read 1 Peter 2:21; 5:8, 9 and 1 Corinthians 14:29-32).

The proponents of the idea that angels cannot be destroyed use that supposition to interpret two interesting prophesies in a way that agrees with it. In Isaiah 14:13-15, Lucifer is judged concerning his rebellious aspirations and actions. When the prophecy renders judgment against him in v. 15, the proponents say that the context of the prophecy reverts back to the *human* king of Babylon (v. 4) because God cannot destroy immortal angels. If you allow v. 15 to apply to Lucifer, then it appears that God has every intention of *destroying* him. Sheol (*the grave*) is the place of the *dead*. The Lake of Fire is the place where the *second death* (a death from which there is no recovery) is executed (Revelation 20:14). Put the pieces of the puzzle together!

The same tactic is used in interpreting Ezekiel 28:18, 19. They say that once the prophecy turns to the idea of destroying someone by *turning them to ashes*, it has to be applied to the *human* king of Tyre (v. 12) because God cannot destroy immortal spirits. Again, if you let the prophecy apply to this extraordinary "anointed cherub that covers" (v. 14), it most certainly reveals that he will be *destroyed by fire* so that he will be "ashes upon the earth" (v. 18) and never again exist in the future (v. 19). Put the pieces of the puzzle together! Read Malachi 4:1 and Romans 16:20.

Who Bears Your Sins?

Even if Satan is the *author of sin*, must he be the one who ultimately must bear *your* sins? If that is the case, then it appears that we have been led astray by some very powerful scriptural witnesses to the contrary. Let's take a look at what God has revealed (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

How much of a part in the atonement process would 1 Peter 5:7 play? Is the act of "casting your cares upon Him" part of the *reconciliation* process and worthy of being a reference to the scapegoat? Don't get me wrong: I'm all for Satan getting what is coming to him,

but I'm also for admitting that I am not an innocent bystander in the sins that I have committed.

James says that the *lust* produced by the *temptation* is *a product of my own mind* (James 1:14). The net effect is that I *allow* the temptation to entice me to give birth to sin (v. 15). Instead of letting the mind of Christ be in me (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5), I yield to the *human* mind and thought processes and fall into sin (see Romans 8:5-9). That was the problem Adam and Eve had because God had not given them the Holy Spirit; they had only the *human* mind with which to operate. They were, in effect, created *spiritually neutral*. They had what is commonly called *human nature* because, at that point in their lives, they had not been given any of God's *holy nature* through the Holy Spirit. The Serpent merely provided the *temptation*; he did not *inject* an adversarial spirit into them that they could not resist (read 1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now, we must understand the role of Jesus Christ in the *redemption* of mankind, as well as the role of Jesus Christ in the *total removal* of our sins. Both the *redemption* and the *removal* are two-pronged – that is, there is a *present application* and there is a *future application*. It is a *process*, not a fell-swoop moment in time application. We should be able to understand this concept if we understand that we are still human after our conversion...if we understand the wrestling match in which we are involved that pits the *spiritual* against the *carnal* (see Romans 7:14-25; 8:5-9, for examples). John alludes to this wrestling match in 1 John 2:1, 2, as well as the continuing intervention by Jesus Christ on our behalf while we are being re-educated through the Holy Spirit.

There must be an understanding of the *redemption* process. Basically, there are five Greek terms that are translated as *redeem/redemption*: (1) *agorazo* – “to purchase; to acquire as property” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20; 7:23); (2) *apolutrosis* – “to ransom in full”; “the release from sin and finiteness that comes through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 1:14); “freeing our bodies from earthly limitations” (Luke 21:28; Romans 8:23; Ephesians 1:7; 4:30; Colossians 1:14); (3) *exagorazo* – “to buy up [completely]”; “to rescue from loss (and improve opportunity)”; “to buy back” (Galatians 3:13); (4) *lutroo* – “to set free by rescue” (Luke 24:21; Titus 2:14); and (5) *lutrosis* – “re: legal and commercial application: ran-

soming; releasing; to bring about a deliverance for something or someone (Luke 1:68; Hebrews 9:12)”. All of these terms give us *evidence* of the two-pronged nature of *atonement* and *reconciliation*, as well as the intricacies of the process involved in giving us *total release* from sin and its consequences.

Romans 7:14 says that the sinner is *sold under sin*. This expression means that mankind was disposed of as merchandise and *sold into slavery*. Second Peter 2:3 shows that we can be made merchandise of through *feigned words* – artificial or fictitious words used to deceive us (see Ephesians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15; Jude 4). This was the situation between the serpent and Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3) – the outcome of which was a major *coup d'etat* by Satan the Devil by which he became the *god of this world* (2 Corinthians 4:1-4). How we got into *bondage/slavery* and how we get out is the focus of Romans 5-8. Read it slowly and attentively, and you will see that we have to be *bought back* out of that condition *through Jesus Christ*. This is where the dual role of Jesus Christ is most pronounced.

Notice Leviticus 16:20. The purpose of the first goat was to *reconcile* (make *atonement* for) *the holy place, the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar*. After that drama is played out, the scapegoat is then brought forward. Why? *To have all of the sins of all of the people transferred onto him*. This goat is used as a tool of *redemption*. The sin-bearing goat is a symbol of a *legal transfer of property rights* so that the people now belong to the Lord God and not to sin. But that is not all there is to the drama. After the sins are loaded upon the scapegoat, he is led away to a desert place for the *disposal* of the sins. That goat, in effect, has *become sin* and must die the penalty of sin owed to the sinners (Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

When they sinned, Adam and Eve became *bodies of death* and were told that they would *disintegrate* back to the dust of the earth from which they were created (Genesis 3:19) and not have access to immortality beyond their deaths (vv. 22-24). Their only hope was that the *Delivering Seed* (v. 15) would come and do His divinely-appointed job. Ephesians 1:4-14 and Philippians 2:5-11 declare that this was part of God's plan *before the orderly universe was created*: Mankind – more specifically, those who become Christians – was chosen to become part of the God Family *through Jesus Christ*.

The laying of our sins upon Jesus Christ is the subject of Isaiah 53 – especially v.12: “He bare the sin of many.” It is also the subject of 2 Peter 2:21-25 – in which Peter refers to Isaiah 53: “...Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...” (v. 24). The Word God became flesh for the express purpose of being the sacrifice for mankind’s sin. His life was *traded* for the lives of all of mankind in order to rescue them from all sin for all time. The *ransom* part of this action was not a payoff to a kidnapper; it was taken to satisfy the demands of God’s law that “the living being that sins will die.” That is a death from which there is no prospect of recovery...unless and until God provides the gracious and merciful remedy. Ephesians 1:4 shows that God had His bases covered well in advance of the creation process (see also Ephesians 3:9-21).

Removing Our Sins Forever

Now, once the *penalty of sin* is taken care of, how do the sins become *non-existent*? Psalm 103:8-18 explains this very nicely: (a) Because of God’s love, mercy, and grace, He has not dealt with us as our sins deserve (vv. 8-11); (b) Because He understands the manner of creature with which He is dealing, His plan is to *remove our sins from us forever* (v. 16); and (c) This is conditional on getting into a covenant relationship with Him and remaining true to that covenant (vv. 17, 18; see also Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Matthew 26:26-28). So, the scapegoat dramatization is the *acting out* of this process by which our sins are removed from us forever. How do we know that they are removed *forever*?

This is where the Greek term *apolutrosis* comes into play. All of our physical life, we will continue to wrestle with the demands of holiness and the pulls of the flesh. If we allow sin to continue to *dominate* our lives after our conversion, baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), then we risk having to suffer the penalty for sin (see Romans 6:1-15; Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26, 27). If we honestly and persistently work at overcoming sin, then we have an Advocate with God (Jesus Christ) who will continue to bear our sins and accept the responsibility for disposing of them (1 John 1:5-2:6) – even though we have died a *symbolic* death, burial, and resurrection in Jesus Christ (Romans 6:3-10). The fact that we continue thereafter to wrestle with

the flesh demonstrates that our *tendency to sin* has not yet been *removed forever*. Now what?

There are two scriptures in which *apolutrosis* is used to show the point at which that ultimate and final *removal* comes: Luke 21:28 and Ephesians 1:14. In Luke 21:28, “your *redemption* [*apolutrosis*] draws near” means that the “*freeing* [of] our bodies from *earthly limitations*” is about to occur at the return of Jesus Christ. What happens? The greatest miracle imaginable is about to be pronounced upon true Christians: Being changed from *flesh* to *spirit* (see John 3:3-8; 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Indeed, there will be a *second birth*.

The use of *apolutrosis* in Ephesians 1:14 is similar to Luke 21:28: “release from *sin and finiteness* that comes through Jesus Christ.” That means that you will not be subject to the pulls of the flesh anymore forever because God will have finally disposed of any taint of sin you might otherwise have had in the flesh (see Isaiah 65:17) when you are resurrected from the dead or instantaneously changed when Christ returns. The taint of sin will be wiped out of the mind of God so completely that its former existence will be *totally expunged from the record*. That is the symbolism of the scapegoat that reveals the *entire* work of Jesus Christ in becoming the *atonement* sacrifice for our sins whereby all things in heaven and on earth can be reconciled to God the Father. He not only died in our place for our sins; He has taken on the responsibility to provide the means by which they can be *eternally removed*.

Finally, we must realize that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ was not only for mankind. Paul shows in Romans 8:18-25 that *all of creation* has suffered the *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* into which it has been delivered because of sin. Paul says in v. 21 that the *creation itself* will be delivered – which is most certainly to be understood under his statement in Colossians 1:20 as being part of *all things* in heaven and on earth.

The manifestation of the sons of God comes when Jesus Christ returns to begin the completion of the ministry of reconciliation, which is a common theme in the symbolism of the seventh-day Sabbath. It also begins the *Sabbath* spoken of in Hebrews 3 and 4. Deuteronomy 5:15 says that God commanded the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath for the purpose of its being a reminder of *being delivered from slavery*. The *holy rest*

required by God is a testimony that God does not will for mankind to be slaves to anything or anybody in this world. Man was not created just so God would have someone to worship Him on the Sabbath; the Sabbath was created for the *holy benefit* of all of mankind for all time (Mark 2:27, 28).

Exodus 20:8-11 shows that God's will is for the Sabbath to be a reminder that God is the Creator who declares that *humans* and *animals* are not to be forced to work during *His* Sabbath – that is, they are to be given *total release* and be *free* to worship God (see Exodus 5:1-9 and John 8:31, 32). That has been the symbolic nature of the seventh-day Sabbath since it was created by the Lord God in Genesis 2:1-3. By what truthful logic can one insist that God *needed* to change that *rest* to Sunday just because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Yet, men have argued illogically that such has been the case. They have accused God of doing something so contrary to His stated will and purpose that it boggles the mind. All of the healings that Jesus performed on the Sabbath were for the purpose of a type of *redemption* for the creature and creation – a *release* from sin and the limitations of the flesh.

Conclusion

It is not a stretch of truthful logic to argue that Jesus

Christ is symbolized in both of the atonement goats. The *cleansing* and *covering* of our sins by His blood...as well as the *total removal* of those sins...were the objective of His selfless sacrifice. Because this drama was being acted out and one of the goats actually died, it was necessary to have two equally qualified goats to demonstrate that symbolism.

According to 2 Corinthians 6:14-18, there is no situation in which the holiness and holy purpose of God can be mixed and mingled with Satan and the religious system that is driven by his deceit and lies. Therefore, there is no logical reason to claim that the scapegoat is *to Azazel* or *for Azazel*. It is for "complete removal." Unless we die to Satan's system through Jesus Christ, we cannot be God's children.

It should be plain by now that our sins were laid upon Jesus Christ for the certainty of their *complete forgiveness* and *eternal disposal*. *Justification* (Romans 5:1) means that God reckons to true believers the status of being *sin free* – as though they had never even committed a sin (Romans 6:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). We will have died for our sins according to God's Law, but it will have been *in Jesus Christ* that such a death will have taken place. All of this is bound up in the meaning of *atonement*. So, rejoice and be exceeding glad for this marvelous gift!

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The Feast of Tabernacles



Feast of Tabernacles. (Image by RonAlmog, CC) Courtesy of encyclopedia.com

Leviticus 23:33-44 is a description of the Feast of Tabernacles...with vv. 42, 43 describing the basis of the concept: "You shall dwell in *booths*....That your generation shall know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of Egypt: I am the Lord your God." You can read v. 40 to get a description of the materials used to construct those primitive, *temporary* lodgings. They were useful for the purpose of shelter while Israel camped in an area, but they were very easily abandoned and left behind when it was time to make progress toward the Promised Land. Verse 39 shows that Israel celebrated this Feast after the fall harvest – a large collection of vegetables, grains, and fruit that came to fruition at that time. For that reason, Exodus 23:16 refers to it as the *Feast of Ingathering*.

The prophetic symbolism involved with the *temporary nature* of the booths and the *ingathering harvest* is very important in God's plan of salvation. We will explore that prophetic symbolism in relationship to the concept that this Feast pictures the 1,000-year period during which Christ and the saints will rule over the earth to complete the *ministry of reconciliation* (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). What significance does the *temporary nature of booths* have relative to the concept of an *ingathering harvest*? The answers are a testimony to the great love that God has for mankind relative to the work of Jesus Christ.

Where was the Lord God Leading Israel?

The geographical area that has been occupied by Israel through the centuries does not constitute the entirety of what is called the "Promised Land." The area eventually occupied by Israel after her release from 430 years of Egyptian slavery is a very small portion of what was promised to Abraham (Genesis 15:13-16; Exodus 12:40-42; Galatians 3:16, 17). At no time since that promise was made has Israel occupied the entirety of the "Promised Land." It has been a very narrow view to conceive of the "Promised Land" as being that little

wedge of ground between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River (going west to east) and between Lebanon/Syria and the Sinai Peninsula (going north to south). No, it's far more expansive than that.

If you can understand that, then perhaps you can more fully appreciate Hebrews 11:13, 39:

These [faithful patriarchs] all died in faith, *not having received the promises*...and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth....These all [other faithful saints], having obtained a good report through faith, *received*



not the promise....” (emphasis added)

You might even more fully appreciate the meaning of Hebrews 6:13-20 where Paul encourages Christians to have a strong consolation in the promises that the Lord God made to Abraham – a consolation that would drive them to “...Lay hold of the hope set before us...” (v. 18) and use it for a sure and steadfast “...anchor of our lives...” (v. 19). To what was Paul referring in these verses?

Genesis 15:18-21 is a description of the *promise* that the Lord God made to Abraham and vv. 8-17 are a description of the *oath* He made to doubly ensure the validity of the promise – two things by which the promise became immutable – that is, *incapable* of being changed. The “Promised Land,” then, is an area on the earth located between the Nile and the Euphrates Rivers (v. 18; east to west). There is no description of the north/south borders except within the confines of the territories occupied by the various tribes listed in vv. 19, 20.

The gist of Paul’s discussions in Hebrews 6 and 11 is that both the *promise* and the *oath* have preserved the fulfillment for some point in the future. As a matter of fact, he says in Hebrews 11:8-10 that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived in *temporary dwellings* waiting for the *permanent dwelling* to be built on the earth by God: “For [Abraham] looked for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (v. 10; emphases added). Paul is suggesting by this that Abraham already understood what was revealed millennia later to the Apostle John in Revelation 21, 22! It will be to mainstream Christianity’s shame that they have forsaken that vision in favor of *going to heaven* – Romans 8:16, 17 and Galatians 3:26-29 suggesting that Christians will inherit these promises with Abraham and Jesus Christ – in effect, mainstream Christianity changes what Paul says is immutable (see Romans 1:25).

Make no mistake about this: The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the *temporary nature* of our present “dwelling” in order to focus our attention on the more permanent “dwelling” that God has designed and will build within the territory that He promised Abraham and his descendants. Paul, of course, broadens that inheritance in Romans 4:13 when he says that Abraham

was to become the “heir of the *world*.¹”

In this case, the term *world* is translated from the Greek term *kosmos*, which has numerous definitions. In Romans 4:13, it means that Abraham is to be the inheritor of the planet on which we live. In Revelation 11:15, it means that Jesus Christ will become the supreme and independent ruler of the planet on which we live. If Christians are to inherit and rule and reign with Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:10; 20:4-6), then they should expect to be on the planet earth for at least 1,000 years after His return (John 14:1-3; Revelation 20:4, 6).

When the Lord God (the one who became Jesus Christ) was leading Israel to the “Promised Land,” He was leading them to eventually take possession of the territory described in Genesis 15. They failed miserably in understanding what was in store for them as God’s peculiar people (Hebrews 8:8). They acted more like Esau than they did like Jacob. We will discuss Hebrews 3 and 4 in relationship to the idea that the Lord God was leading Israel to *His rest* when He led them out of Egyptian slavery to the “Promised Land.”

Why are the Holy Days *Prophetic*?

Paul reveals in Colossians 1:16 and Hebrews 10:1 that the *Law* is a “shadow of things/good things to come.” These holy days (including the weekly, seventh-day Sabbath) are, therefore, prophetic *shadows* (Greek = *skia*) of a greater reality. This is a term that means that something is “suggested or indicated beforehand” (“to foreshadow”). The *shadow* is contrasted with the *reality*. If you have studied very much about the nature of certain aspects of literature, then you should be familiar with the term *shadow* and its implications.

Take, for instance, Jesus’ conversation with a group of Jews in John 5. In vv. 39-47, He tells them that the scriptures that Moses wrote were written about Him (vv. 39, 47; for example: see Genesis 3:15 re: the woman’s seed). Phillip demonstrated this in Acts 8:26-40 when he explained to the Ethiopian eunuch portions of Isaiah 53 (vv. 30-34). Notice v. 35: “Then Phillip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached Christ Jesus” (emphases added).

Paul also uses the *shadow* concept in 1 Corinthians 10:1-14. In vv. 6, 11, he says that the experiences of the Israelites in their exodus from Egypt to the “Land of

Promise" were *examples* (Greek = *tupos*) for those "upon whom the ends of the world are come" (v. 11). A *type* is a classic model. As such, what happens to the *type* is a *foreshadow* of what happens to any and all who follow the example of the *type*. The *type* is a *shadow* of the ultimate *reality*. Paul's tactic leads to his comments in vv. 13, 14 about effectively dealing with temptations.

Genesis 1:26-28 is also such a *shadow*...and it has something to do with the *temporary nature* of the body of flesh, as well as the plan of God to give to mankind the *planet earth* over which to exercise dominion. Genesis 2:7 shows that the Lord God began this venture by making mankind from the dust of the ground – literally, from clods of dirt. By the time you have read to Genesis 3:22-24, you should be aware that the body of "dust" is merely a *type* or *foreshadow* of a body to come at some point in the future. The body of "dust" was never meant to be the *reality* of what the Lord God had in mind when He created man in His image.

If you begin to piece together the larger picture in scripture (see Isaiah 28:9, 10; KJV), then the answer to the *shadow* begins to emerge. Jesus says in Matthew 25:34 that God planned from the "*foundation of the world*" (that is, from the time He began to create the heavens and the earth: Genesis 1:1; John 1:1-3; Ephesians 1:4) to give to man a *kingdom* as an *inheritance*.

The planet earth was created to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18). Jesus revealed in John 3:3-8 that man will have to undergo a *second birth* – that is, be *born again* – in order to enter that kingdom. That *rebirth* is not a spiritual conversion as many in mainstream Christianity suppose; it is a change from flesh to spirit. This is echoed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 where he shows that flesh and blood cannot enter the Kingdom of God and *must* put on *immortality* and *incorruption* by being changed from flesh to spirit. You can go back through the entire chapter to see the full argument put forth by Paul – especially in v. 46 where he shows that the *earthy body* was *first* and the *spirit body* will come in the future. That is a contradiction to the belief that man is an immortal soul that has been put into a body...because the proponents of that doctrine suppose that the immortal soul has always existed and will always exist.

So, with that explanation, we can explore the ways by which the *temporary nature* of things applies to the

prophetic nature of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Mankind's Personal *Temporary Dwelling*

Paul explores the mystery of mankind's *temporary dwelling* in 2 Corinthians 4:5 through 5:10. In 4:6, Paul refers to God's truth that delivers the true believer out of spiritual darkness. He had already shown the Corinthians that true spiritual enlightenment comes from God through the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). This truth of God is, indeed, a great treasure because it is not commonly known or understood among mankind. It is when one receives the enlightenment through the Holy Spirit and lives by it that he becomes truly free of the deceptions of men and the folly of changing God's truth into a lie (John 8:31, 32; Romans 1:25). So, Paul says in 2 Corinthians 4:6 that we have this *treasure in earthen vessels* (refer back to 1 Corinthians 15:46-50). It is as if Paul is saying that the *earthen vessel* can be enlightened, but the *earthen vessel* cannot maintain that enlightenment *ad infinitum* because it is *perishable*. So, what is the solution to this problem?

The focus of what comes when the *shadow* becomes the *reality* is a matter of *God's power* (4:7, 15). The *shadow* will become the *reality* in the same way that Jesus Christ was changed from flesh to spirit by a resurrection from the dead (4:14; read also Romans 6:3-11). What we presently suffer in the flesh is *temporary* (4:16-18; see also Romans 8:18). There is yet a *glory* that will be revealed in us according to God's plan when He created us in His image out of the *earth* (1 John 3:1-3): *the manifestation of the sons of God* (Romans 8:19).

Paul expresses the true hope of the true Christian in 5:1: Because the fleshly *earthen vessel* is destined to return to the dust from which it was made (Genesis 3:19; Ecclesiastes 9:4-10; 12:1-7; Job 10:9; Psalm 30:9), God has an *eternal replacement* for it that will not be fashioned with hands like Adam was (see Genesis 2:7).

Second Corinthians 5:3 is not a comment about the immortal soul being left bare when the physical body is stripped away from it. We have shown in numerous studies that man is not an immortal soul, nor does he have one. Paul's comment here about not being found *naked* simply means that the dissolution of the *earthen vessel* (5:1) – that is, *returning to the dust from which it was created* – does not leave the individual without a

remedy for receiving the *eternal replacement* God has planned for him/her. As a matter of fact, all true Christians *groan* and *earnestly desire* to have our present *temporary dwelling* replaced by the *eternal house [tabernacle]* (5:2, 4). In order to assure us that such an *eternal tabernacle* is awaiting us, God has given to us a *down payment* of the Holy Spirit to *guarantee* that such a thing will happen (see also Ephesians 1:13, 14). God is not like man that He should lie (Numbers 23:19; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18).

Second Corinthians 5:6-8 expresses the confidence we have that God will deliver on His plans and promises. In the flesh, we cannot be present with the Lord in the same way we will be when we are given our *eternal tabernacle*. So, we are willing to shed this *earthen vessel/tabernacle* in order to be *eternally* present with the Lord. We are willing to keep the faith in order to do so.

The *Temporary* Nature of the Present World

The expression “end of the world” is rather common in Judeo–Christian religious circles. Scripture does refer to such a future event. However, many conceive of such an “end” as being the *total destruction* of the planet earth...and, possibly, the entire universe. Why? Because the righteous, supposedly, will have “gone to heaven” as their eternal reward. The incorrigibly wicked, supposedly, will have “gone to hell” to suffer eternally for their wickedness. This dichotomous scheme leaves room for only two places to exist forever: *heaven* and *hell*. Is that *really* what God has in mind?

Some say “No.” Why? Because they believe that God made certain *earthly* promises to the Jews, so the righteous *Jews* will receive *the earth* as an inheritance, while the righteous *Christians* will receive *heaven* as an eternal inheritance because He made certain *heavenly* promises to them. This concept is part and parcel to New Covenant and Dispensational Theology. Again, is that *really* what God has in mind? Where do we begin to look for God’s answer? We can begin with the information given above on pp. 22, 23.

In the New Testament, you have three Greek terms that are translated into English as *world*: (1) *aion* – generally, a reference to a period of time; (2) *kosmos* – generally, (a) adornment; (b) the sum total of everything here and now; (c) the sum total of all beings

above the animal level; (d) the planet earth; (e) the world as mankind; (f) the world as the scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, suffering, etc.; (g) everything that is at enmity with God; and, (h) the *sum total* of something; and (3) *oikoumene* – generally, (a) the inhabited earth; (b) the Roman Empire; and (c) in extraordinary usage: the whole world inhabited by humans and spirits. Your task in coming to understand the expression *end of the world* is to find out which word and which meaning is attached to any given comment about it. Let’s see what that entails.

I have selected several passages that contain the expression *end of the world* and will identify them with the Greek term used. Then, we will see which definition is given to the citation.

aion – Matthew 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Hebrews 9:26; 1 John 2:17 > All but 1 John 2:17 refer to the segment of time known as *the present age*. John refers to the segment of time that is to come: *eternity*. His comment means that the *present segment of time* will pass away, but those who do the will of God will continue even beyond that point.

kosmos – 1 Corinthians 7:31 > “the world as the scene of earthly joys, possessions, cares, suffering, etc.” There is no reference to the destruction of the *planet* itself.

oikoumene – This term is not used in an expression like “*end of the world*.”

So, those are your choices as you contemplate the discussion that follows.

The term *aion* is the one to which we should pay attention (exclusive of 1 John 2:17). It is this segment of time from Adam to the return of Jesus Christ that is referred to as *the present age*. Ephesians 1:10 (KJV = “...in the dispensation of the *fulness of times*...”; Modern Language = “...a plan to be brought to completion when the time comes...”) reveals that God has established a *terminus point* for this *present age*. As John indicates with his comment, there is another segment of time called *eternity* that we have not yet entered. It is patently clear, nevertheless, that this *present segment of*

time must pass away – that is, cease to exist – to make room for *eternity*. This is the prophetic gist of Paul’s comment in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “...Old things are passed away; behold all things [in heaven and on earth] are [to] become new...” (emphases added).

Some interpret 2 Peter 3:10-12 as signaling the *total destruction* of all that presently exists. It does not. It signals the total destruction of the works of the flesh – of the carnal mind (Romans 8:5-8). Paul reveals in Hebrews 1:10-12 that the heavens and earth will be changed like someone changes an old garment. It is the same process by which the true Christian will be changed from flesh to spirit: *the old person becomes a new person by virtue of being born again, but the person himself is not destroyed*. What does that mean?

Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13, and Revelation 21:1 speak of the creation of new heavens and a new earth. In plain English, that means that the old heavens and old earth will not exist in the eternity ahead. As Paul says in Hebrews 8:13 regarding the new covenant: “By saying ‘new,’ He has made the first *out of date*. But what is *antiquated* and *obsolete* approaches the vanishing point” (*Modern Language*; emphasis added). Isaiah 65:16, 17 make two good points about this: (1) “...the former troubles are forgotten...[and]...hid from my eyes” and (2) “...the former things [that is, heavens and earth] shall not be remembered nor brought into mind.”

This is where we must inject Romans 8:18-23. Here we see that the creation itself waits to be delivered from the *vanity* and *bondage of corruption* to which it has been subjected by God Himself. That deliverance will *begin* to be realized when the children of God are revealed at the return of Jesus Christ. Remember, however, that the completion of the ministry of reconciliation will take 1,000 years. The point here is simple: There is coming a point at which the *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* will be put to an end.

Acts 3:19-21 speaks of the blotting out of sins coming with the “times of refreshing from the Lord” and the “times of restitution of all things...spoken of by all of God’s holy prophets since the world began” (emphases added). So, this present age has a *terminus point* which God had in mind from the very beginning. All that makes up this *present age* will have become *antiquated* and *obsolete*. *Change* will be necessary. Why? The fault has been with the *people* and how they have man-

aged the heavens and earth since the Garden of Eden.

Kainos – versus – Neos

The 1,000-year completion of the ministry of reconciliation by Jesus Christ and the saints will usher in a *new age* that will be marked by the creation of *new heavens* and *new earth*. It is a wrong assumption that posits that this will bring about the *destruction* of the present heavens and earth. Can Peter’s summation in 2 Peter 3:10-12 be anything other than the *destruction* of the heavens and earth? In order to understand the following discussion, ask yourself if fire can purge without destroying. This is where we can understand the difference between *kainos* and *neos*. Both of these Greek terms are translated into English as *new*. But...they are not the *same kind* of *new*.

Kainos has to do with three things: (1) something that has never been used (however old it is); (2) something that was never present – unknown, strange, remarkable...with the connotation of the marvelous or unheard-of; and (3) in contrast with the old in the sense that the old has been replaced by something *superior in quality*. Second Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1 speak of *kainos* heavens and earth. If Isaiah 65:17 is quoted from the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint*), it also speaks of *kainos* heavens and earth. Jesus Christ also referred to the *New Covenant* as a *kainos* covenant (Matthew 26:28). But, which definition do we go by in order to understand what is *meant*?

This means that *neos* is not applicable here. *Neos* generally means “new in point of time.” There was a time when Plato’s philosophy and Germany’s Nazism were “new in point of time.” If someone comes along later and rekindles either concept, it will not be *kainos*; it will be *neos*. Think in terms of *neo-Platonism* and *neo-Nazism*. Also think of *neo-natal*: a “newborn” child; *neo-classic*: “a *revival* of the classic style in art, literature, etc.”; and *neo-colonialism*: “a *renewal* of colonialization by foreign powers.”

The definition that we are interested in is #3: “replacing the old with something *superior in quality*.” For several years after my retirement, I have been remodeling a farmhouse that was built in 1916. While it is true that I have gotten rid of old materials and changed the structure in various ways, *I did not destroy*

the house itself and replace it with a new [neos] one. My present house is a *kainos* house because it is “*superior in quality and design.*” This is the point that I am trying to make about the “end of the world [‘age’]” and “*kainos* heavens and earth.”

In essence, the “old garments” will be stripped off and the heavens and the earth will be re-dressed with *superior* “garments” that will be suitable for the eternity ahead under the rule of God in the city that He has designed to be built *upon the earth* as His New (*kainos*) Jerusalem headquarters. This presupposes that the *planets* in the *new heavens* also will be suitable for *habitation* by continued generations of Abraham’s multitude of “seed” (see Genesis 13:15, 16; 15:5; 22:17).

Remodeling the Earth

How will the “remodeling” of the earth’s *surface* be carried out? In Luke 3:4-6, Jesus Christ cites Isaiah 40:3-5. There appears to be several changes coming to the landscape: (a) valleys that will be raised, (b) hills and mountains that will be lowered, (c) places that require a crooked path to traverse will be straightened for easier travel, and (d) the rough places will be turned into plains.

Isaiah 35 speaks of the desert places being changed to well-watered places where flowers and crops can grow in abundance and the human and animal population will be safe from harm. Highways will be constructed in the former desert country because it will now be safe to travel there without worrying about dying of thirst or heat prostration. This give us the idea that the world’s climate will be moderate and not given to the extremes of heat and cold.

Amos 9:13, 14 suggest that there will be continual growing seasons with plentiful harvests. There will be no drought, adverse weather, or any other such thing to cause scarcity or famine. All humans will be active in growing and reaping their own food supplies...Isaiah 65:21 revealing the *personal responsibility* aspect of that action by saying that “...they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them.”

So, it should be understood that the *renewal* of the earth is a very real aspect of God’s plan beyond the revocation of the *vanity* and *bondage to decay* to which God subjected the heavens and earth after the sin of

Adam and Eve (Romans 8:20, 21). Consider, for example, the concerns about the melting Arctic ice and global warming. It is apparent that something is going on with the weather and climate in the world that is a constant and ongoing threat to mankind. Unless that *vanity* and *bondage to decay* are terminated and their effects are remedied, it will eventually bring about the destruction of the earth. It is like God has input the self-destruct code and we are on the countdown to its explosive *terminus point* (see Matthew 24:21, 22). Acts 3:19-21 addresses this very issue when it uses the expressions *times of refreshing* and *times of restitution of all things*.

The *Temporary* Nature of Christ’s Millennial Reign

Because it is true that Christ will reign for ever and ever (Revelation 11:15), it must be apparent that the 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth is for a specific, *temporary* purpose. That in and of itself does not indicate that He will thereafter *abandon* the earth for some other place. In fact, Revelation 21:2, 3 reveals that God’s throne will be relocated from its present location to the *New Earth*. Therefore, we should understand what is that specific, *temporary* purpose of Christ’s millennial reign.

We find in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 that true Christians have been given a part in the *ministry of reconciliation* being pursued by Jesus Christ. Part of this *ministry* is focused on the inhabitants of the *earth*. However, Ephesians 1:10 and Colossians 1:20 speak of reconciling *all things in heaven and on earth* to God the Father. Paul seemingly anticipates our participation in this *ministry of reconciliation* in 1 Corinthians 6:3 when he asks: “Don’t you know that we shall judge *angels*?” (emphases added).

Paul also anticipates the *terminus point* of that ministry in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28 when he says: “Then shall the *end* come...” (v. 24; emphases added). When that *terminus point* is reached, all enemies of God will have been destroyed (vv. 24-26). *Death* will be the last one destroyed (see also Revelation 20:14). If He destroys *death*, then He will have destroyed *sin* (see Romans 6:23). If He destroys *death*, then He will, in effect, destroy the *grave* (see 1 Corinthians 15:55). By this action, He will have fulfilled the symbolism of the Feast

of Unleavened Bread in that He will have **deleavened** the heavens and earth and returned them to their originally intended **sinless** state (Isaiah 65:16, 17, 25; Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 21:4, 8, 23-27; 22:3, 14, 15).

I have stated in some of my writings in the past that the 1,000-year reign of Christ represents the fulfillment of the symbolism of the weekly seventh-day Sabbath. I have said this because many in our tradition have believed for decades that the 1,000-year reign of Christ is the seventh 1,000-year period of time from Adam's creation and, therefore, prophetically answers the **rest** pictured in God's Sabbath. This concept is *centuries* old. Because of the research I have done for this article, I am more inclined now to believe that the millennial reign of Christ will not, in and of itself, be the **rest** that is symbolized by the seventh-day Sabbath.

While I have recently expressed my reservations about the so-called "6,000-year plan of God" that posits that God has allotted mankind 6,000 years to suffer the consequences of their thoughts and ways (see pp. 21-23 in our free downloadable book *Understanding the "Beasts" of Revelation 13*), I have not – until now – ventured further to re-think the *Sabbath symbolism* as the **rest** at the end of the seven-day "week." My present problem with the generally "accepted" interpretation of the *Sabbath symbolism* comes from the **temporary nature** of that millennial reign. Let me explain further.

The **rest** pictured in the seventh-day Sabbath has to do with the *times of refreshing* (Greek = *anapsuxis*: "times of **rest**") in Acts 3:19, as well as the continued *redemption* that occurs when the curse of sin and death and the curse of the *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* have been destroyed (see Revelation 22:3). The effect is that an **eternal rest** is pictured thereafter in the symbolism of the New Heavens and New Earth. **This is not the "eighth day" as posited by traditional Christianity to try to "prove" the validity of the Sunday Sabbath in substitution for the seventh-day Sabbath.** As the rabbis said, Genesis 2:1-3 was not summarized with "And there was evening and morning, the seventh day" as all the previous six days were summarized. That leaves open God's invitation to His Sabbath rest

What this demonstrates is simple: It is the same attitude shown in Genesis 6:3 where the Lord God says: "My spirit will not always strive with man...." This is reiterated in Psalm 103:8, 9: "The Lord...will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever." Paul ad-

dresses this in Hebrews 3 and 4 when he ties "today" to God's coming "rest." While God has shown extreme patience with mankind, there is coming that *terminus point* beyond which the incorrigibly wicked dare not seek to cross. "Today" is approaching the *terminus point*. While God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9-14), the *ministry of reconciliation* will come to an end when Christ has destroyed all of God's enemies by the end of His millennial reign.

That means that "today" is the *temporary* period of time during which the **invitation** is offered (which includes the millennial reign of Christ), not the **eternal rest** pictured by the open-ended Sabbath created and blessed by God on the seventh day with the invitation to all of mankind to enter **His rest** (Exodus 20:10) through Jesus Christ. I will explain the *eighth day* attached to the end of the Feast of Tabernacles in a following article. Suffice it to be said at this point, that *eighth day* is also a **temporary** period of time included in the "today" invitational period.

In summary of the point of this part of the discussion, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ marks only a part of His **eternal reign**. During that 1,000-year period of time, He will complete the *ministry of reconciliation* of all things in heaven and on earth – called the *restitution of all things* in Acts 3:21. Once that total reconciliation is accomplished, the invitation of God to be reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ will come to an end. That accomplished, the heavens and earth will be purged of the unrepentant and the effects they have had upon God's creation – making way for the New Heavens and New Earth and the **eternal rest of God** to be put into effect.

The *Harvest* Involved

With all of the above in mind, now we should address the *symbolism of the harvest* involved with the Feast of Tabernacles. Typically, mainstream Christianity does not discuss overmuch the prophecies that extend **beyond** the return of Jesus Christ. The main reason, I suppose, is because they do not consider the **offer of salvation** as being extended beyond His return. But... it seems to be quite plain that such an offer will be extended.

If you remember the article in the April – June issue

of *Spirit and Truth*, you, no doubt, will remember the discussion about *ordinal numbers*. The *early harvest* symbolized by Pentecost is indicative of a *firstfruit harvest*. If you have *first*, then you must have *second* and you can, thereafter, have *third...et cetera*. This fall harvest called the *Feast of Tabernacles* and the *Feast of Ingathering* symbolizes a *second harvest* that will occur during the 1,000-year completion of the *ministry of reconciliation*. How do we know this to be true?

Let's take a lesson from Christ's discussion with His disciples in Matthew 24:29-41. We can see that Jesus Christ returns to effect the *first resurrection* (see also Revelation 20:4-6). The result of that *first resurrection* is found in vv. 40, 41: "...one shall be *taken*, and the other *left*." That is also covered by 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Even those who accept the concepts in the "Rapture" theory accept the idea that human beings will survive the Tribulation Period – except, they believe that those who will be saved beyond the return of Christ will be saved *during* the time that He pours out the wrath of God on the Beast and those who have accepted his "mark"...not *after*. Let's allow scripture to speak its truth and see where it leads us.

Matthew 24:31 shows Him sending angels out to gather those who qualify to be in the *first resurrection*. This is repeated in Revelation 7:4-14 and 14:14-16. Revelation 20:5, 6 show that there is going to be a *second resurrection* at the end of the 1,000 years. Our focus, then, is upon the 1,000-year period. Who is being *judged, served in a religious manner, and reigned over* during that time? It cannot be those who have been changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ because they will not need such attention. Notice also that Revelation 20:7-9 describes *human beings* who will fall prey to Satan's deception when he is released for a short time at the close of the 1,000-year period. For brevity's sake, I will use a few scriptures to demonstrate my point.

Zechariah 14

Jesus Christ will return with His saints (vv. 1-5) to

intervene in the devastation that is going on (see Matthew 24:21, 22 and Revelation 19:7-21). Zechariah 14:16 shows that there will be *human survivors*: one had been *taken* to be with Christ, and the other had been *left* because s/he did not qualify, for one reason or another, to be taken. Notice also in vv. 16-21 that there will be *religious expectations* of these humans and *consequences* for noncompliance. Notice also in v. 9 that Christ will be the *King* of the entire *earth*. Ask yourself this: For what *purpose* will this be done?

Isaiah 2:1-5

Notice that Jesus Christ will set up His headquarters in Jerusalem and be exalted above all of the governments of the world (see Daniel 2:44, 45). Verse 2 shows that the human nations of the world will go there to worship Him and v. 3 shows that they will be instructed in His thoughts and ways (Isaiah 55:8, 9). Notice also in v. 3 that His *Law* will be used in the instruction and to enforce its adoption by the people (see also Jeremiah 31:31-34 and Hebrews 8:6-13; 10:15-31). The human population (Jews and Gentiles) will be taught and judged (v. 4) in order to bring them to a common understanding of God's original intention for creating mankind (Genesis 1:26-18 and Ephesians 1:4-14).

You must understand that there is a supreme purpose for all of this *ruling, judging, and teaching*. It is not an exercise in *vanity*. John 3:14-20 and 2 Peter 3:9 are key scriptures for understanding this. This is a 1,000-year period of time during which Jesus Christ and His saints will be teaching a grossly deceived human population God's unvarnished truth so that the scales of deception can be lifted from their eyes! Why? *So they can be the great "harvest" of secondfruits pictured by the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles!*

Just as the seven days do not mark the very end of Tabernacles, the *eighth day* (Leviticus 23:36, 39) is a special *Sabbath* during which God's *rest* will be extended to others *before* the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth. That will be the topic of our next article.

The Eighth Day

“Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty, we’re free at last!”

When Dr. Martin Luther King uttered those immortal words, he did not place them in the *present tense*. He placed them in the *future tense* as something of which he very much longed to be a part. I cannot totally fathom what the *reality* will be like when we finally experience the fulfillment of Jesus’ statement in John 8:31, 32: “If you adhere to My teaching, you will truly be My disciples; *you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free*” (*Modern Language*; emphases added). I do know this: Although we can presently experience a type of *freedom* in our present world, we will enter an *eternity* in the future in which there will not exist any of the pain, suffering, prejudice, and slavery that exists in our present world. We will be *totally free at last!*

God’s revelation about this coming *freedom* is astounding. It will come as a result of what Jesus Christ will accomplish during that period of time toward the end of His 1,000-year reign that is pictured by the *eighth day* of the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the time of the *second resurrection* (Revelation 20:5-15). You will come to understand in this article that mankind will enter yet another *temporary* period of time when God’s *final offer* of salvation through Jesus Christ will be made to those who have lived and died since the Garden of Eden. It will be part of the *great harvest*. This is some of the greatest news that we could ever contemplate!

This “Eighth Day” Does Not Picture *Eternity*

In music, an *octave* is the *seventh* note above a given tone. All of the notes together make an *octave* – that is, *eight* notes. The *eighth* note is a higher repetition of the first note (example: *do* – re – mi – fa – so – la – ti – *do*). Gregory of Nazianzus (A.D. 329-389) used a similar concept to label *Sunday* as the *eighth day*: “...The *first* day with reference to those that followed and the *eighth* day with regard to those that preceded” (*Oration 44 In novam Dominicam*; pp. 36, 612c–613a; emphases added). In this manner, from *Sunday* to *Sunday* was considered to be an inviolable cycle akin to *infinity*. Thus, the *first* day represents the *beginning* of creation, while the *eighth* day represents the *eternal perpetuation* of the day on which our sins were cleansed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to this concept, no other possible *octave* significance was af-

firmed to other days of the week (example: Sabbath to Sabbath; Tuesday to Tuesday; et cetera).

Notice how Eusebius framed his argument concerning this subject:

...The ogdoad [the *eighth*] is the Lord’s day [Sunday] of the resurrection of the Saviour [sic] when we believe that the cleansing of all our sins took place. It was on that day that children were symbolically circumcised, but that in reality the whole soul which is born of God is purified by baptism (Eusebius [died ca. A.D. 340], *Commentaria in Psalmos* 6, pp. 23, 120a).

For this reason, baptisms were administered on *Sunday* in order to connect that rite with the command to Abraham and Israel that all males were to be circumcised on the *eighth day* (Genesis 17:9-14, 26; Exodus 12:48;

Joshua 5:1-9).

To further stress the point being made, I also quote Origen (ca. A.D. 185 – ca. 254):

Before the arrival of the *eighth day* of the Lord Jesus Christ the whole world was impure and uncircumcised. But when the eighth day of the resurrection came, immediately we were cleansed, buried, and raised by the circumcision of Christ. (*Selecta in Psalmos* 118, pp. 12, 1588; emphases added)

You also might be able to figure out from these comments why Sunday is called *the day of the Lord* and *the Lord's day*. You also might be able to understand why it is necessary to join the argument about the day on which Jesus Christ was raised from the dead – especially when the generally accepted doctrine is that He was crucified on *Friday* – dying about 3 P.M. and being buried just before sundown – and raised three days and three nights later (Matthew 12:38-40) on *Sunday morning at sunrise*. I know: There's something wrong with the math. Try putting a 72-hour period of time into that narrow slot and see what you come up with.

There also has been the centuries-old concept of a *cosmic week* based on the seven-day week. This concept divides the week into seven 1,000-year periods – in some circles, the first six days amount to the six days that the Lord God assigned to man for the “work” he was to do and the seventh day is considered to symbolize a 1,000-year period called the *Sabbath of God* – a time during which He will restore Paradise to its originally intended purity. Once those seven days are completed, the *cosmic week* concept foresees an *eighth day* that is an *eternal aion* that is called by some a “world [aion] without end.” No doubt, they tie this concept to the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth revealed in Revelation 21:1.

While I accept the coming *aion* of the New Heavens and New Earth – which I discussed in the previous article – I do not agree with the manner in which traditional Christianity has *syncretized* the concept out of pagan religion and philosophy. Religious *syncretism* is the attempt to unite and harmonize conflicting principles without critical examination or real logical unity. It is demonstrable that the history of the argument over

seventh-day Sabbath versus Sunday reveals blatant abuse of rhetoric and logic in order to devalue the seventh-day Sabbath in favor of a faulty cobbling together of “proof” of the *superiority* of Sunday worship. One tactic has been to go through scripture to find every mention of *eighth* and *eight* to “prove” the *eighth day* concept as the justification for moving the Sabbath rest to Sunday – against the authority of the Fourth Commandment. Let me illustrate a couple of examples.

Note this comment from *The Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. A.D. 135) – an extra-biblical work – in which the *cosmic week* concept is lifted from the *Book of Enoch*:

Further [God] says to them, “Your new moons and Sabbaths I cannot endure.” You see what [God] means: it is not the present Sabbaths that are acceptable to me, but the one I have made, on which having brought everything to rest, I will make the beginning of an *eighth day*, that is, the beginning of another world. This is why we also observe the *eighth day* with rejoicing, on which Jesus also rose from the dead, and having shown himself ascended to heaven. (15:8, 9; emphasis added)

In this, *Barnabas* has completely overlooked the context in which the Lord God’s remarks were made – and settled for a religio-philosophical concept taken out of pagan religion and philosophy.

Read the context in Isaiah 1 in which the Lord God said He hated the new moons and sabbaths of the Israelites. He calls them a “...sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel and alienated themselves from Him” (v. 4). If you compare that to Jeremiah 7, you will see that they thought that they could act any way they wanted to because they had God’s Temple in their midst – in effect, they had God in a box and could command His services at will in the same way the pagans did their gods (read Deuteronomy 12:29-32; 1 Kings 11:1-13; 26-33; and Jeremiah 10). In reality, they had *grossly* violated the first four commandments.

In Amos 5:21-27, the Lord God makes His case against Israel, not because He has a problem with their feasts and solemn assemblies *per se*. He has a problem

with *them* because they have “...borne the tabernacle (that is, *superfluities* – erroneous misconceptions) of your Moloch and Chiun your images, the star of your god, which you have made yourselves.” Hosea 2:5-17 shows how Israel mixed and mingled pagan religious trash into the truth of God to the point that she could not tell the difference between the Lord God and Baal! It was because of that *syncretization* of conflicting religious concepts that the Lord God said: “I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast days, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts” (v. 11).

Paul reveals in Romans 11 that all but “*a remnant according to the election of grace*” (see Isaiah 1:9) was left to obtain what the majority of sinful Israel could not obtain (vv. 5, 7). That majority was *blinded; therefore, their knowledge and understanding of the meaning and purpose of God’s sabbaths, feasts, et cetera* was taken away from them. This was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s ministry as described in Isaiah 6:8-13. It was the point of Jesus’ statement to His disciples in Matthew 13:10-17 – the disciples being part of the *remnant according to the election of grace*. Paul even warned what became a Gentile-dominated Church not to get cocky and fall into the same erroneous pit that Israel fell into (11:16-27).

Also, consider the claim by many well-meaning theologians who claim that early Christians during the Apostolic period gravitated to worshiping on Sunday. They use that bit of information as though it is the “key” that opens the door of revelation that legitimizes the practice. What they fail to admit or understand is that this practice was not that of the *Apostolic Church* or the *Apostles* themselves. They leave out of the discussion those so-called “Christians” who were part of numerous *heresies* that attempted to infiltrate the Apostolic Church and change the intended nature it had or to steal from it those members who were naive and unstable. This problem was widespread and not at all unusual.

Gnosticism, for instance, became “Christianized.” Paul addressed one of their theological assertions in 1 Corinthians 15:12-58: *They did not believe that Jesus Christ actually died and was raised from the dead.* They were *numerologists* who believed in the divine power of numbers and names. If you could get a particular god’s *number* and learn his *name*, then you could manipulate that god for your own purposes. They were

ecstatic about the *eighth day* concept because it allowed them to do away with the “Jewish” Sabbath – they were clear-cut, determined enemies of the Jews.

Consider Samuele Bacchiocchi’s comment in his extraordinary work *From Sabbath to Sunday*:

...[The Gnostics] substituted the Judaeo-Christian eschatological view of the *eighth day* as symbol of the eternal kingdom to come, with the view of the cosmological and spiritual world of rest and eternity found above this world of *seveness*. They developed this interpretation by bringing together the Pythagorean notion of the *seven spheres* which were embraced by the *eighth*, immovable firmament, with the prestige attributed by the Christians to the *eighth day*. Thus, for the Gnostic, *Sunday* became the symbol of full and perfect life attainable here below by “spiritual” people. (1977; pp. 286, 287; emphases added)

In simple terms, they embraced *going to heaven* instead of taking a part in God’s Kingdom on the earth as the reward for the “saved.”

Notice the term *seveness*; it “represents the present state of change and sin” (*Ibid.*). In and of itself, the concept of the *temporary nature of things* is not an invalid concept. The point-of-view from which you conceive and develop it can be. *Eight* symbolized to the Gnostics “the supreme rest in the future world or the super-celestial kingdom or the state of changelessness and sinlessness” (*Ibid.*). I dare say that such thinking has continued to invade “Christian” thought through the centuries and change the very nature of its truth.

If you were to take a survey of New Testament thought after the Gospels, you would find the appearance of heretical groups who followed pagan religion and philosophy but considered themselves to be “Christians.” Consider Paul’s warning to the Corinthians about *false apostles* who taught *another Jesus, another gospel, and another Spirit* (2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15). Consider his warning to the Galatians about a *perversion of the gospel of Christ* (Galatians 1:6-9). Read Ephesians 4:1-24. The Colossian heresy was about meat, drink, holy days, new moons and sabbaths that were taught by “Christian” gnostics who worshiped an-

gels and elementary spirits. Paul labeled their teachings as being “the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:22). Peter encountered the same thing (2 Peter 2), as did John and Jude. And...these “Christian” gnostics observed Sunday as the sabbath rest. So, “Christians” did observe Sunday during apostolic times, but the *Apostles* did not teach or observe such things.

I perceive that the ones who carry on the arguments against the Sabbath and holy days of God are, in fact, in the same boat as ancient Israel: God has blinded them to His truth because they have set about turning God's truth into a lie just like ancient Israel did (Romans 1:18-32). It was not because God hated all of the things He had commanded them to observe. He hated the way they had profaned His holiness with their spiritual *uncleanness*. Why should He accept worship and sacrifices from people who treat His revealed truth with such contempt?

The true “spiritual wisdom” of many of the early “Church Fathers” is shown in the ineptness of their arguments. One argument maintains that the *eighth day* was symbolized when Judaeo-Christians who observed the seventh-day Sabbath allowed their services to go past the Sabbath into the first day of the week. (Remember that the first day would begin at sundown on Saturday.) Paul, who did this in Acts 20:6-12, is an example. Instead of claiming that it was a totally different day, the “Church Fathers” claimed that it was a continuation of the seventh day. How much sense does that make if, in their minds, it is, indeed, the *eighth day*?

My point in this part of the article is to demonstrate that the *eighth day* of the Feast of Tabernacles is a *separate day* from the previous seven days...but it is part and parcel to the symbolism of the *temporary nature* of the Feast because the eighth day described here is also a temporary period of time during which the 1,000-year *ministry of reconciliation* is brought to a resounding close (see 1 Corinthians 15:22-28).

Read John 7:37, and you will find that it is described as being “...the last day, that great day of the feast [of Tabernacles]....” It has nothing to do with the *eighth day* concept that posits Sunday’s superiority over the seventh-day Sabbath. **It does not picture the New Heavens and New Earth.** We will discuss that idea in the next article.

Revelation 20:5, 7-15

Revelation 20:5 reveals that there is coming a second resurrection from the dead at the end of the 1,000-year period. It is also revealed in v. 6 that they will be subject to a second death. This is a death from which there is no possibility of recovery – the *resurrection to damnation* spoken of in John 5:29. This does not mean that all of them will be considered *automatically disqualified* from an opportunity to receive salvation through the *ministry of reconciliation*. This is an *inference* based on logic and scriptural patterns of prophetic revelation. I will use some examples of these in the discussion that follows.

Consider Paul’s revelation in Romans 11:8, 25-27. His point is simple: God has *temporarily blinded* Israel until a *later time* when He can lift that blindness and take away their sins and ungodliness. In effect, Israel will subsequently be brought to salvation through Jesus Christ as part of the New (*kainos*) Covenant (see Jeremiah 31:31-34). If God has included *Gentiles* in His plan of salvation (Galatians 3:6-8 and Acts 10) – and He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34, 35) – then God will not discriminate against the Gentiles during this same period of time because they will have been as *blinded* to God’s truth as Israel has been.

If the *blindness* has been caused by God, how can He hold them responsible for not knowing His truth? Would a just God *destroy* people to whom He had given such a blindness – especially if He truly loves the world and desires their salvation (John 3:16-19; 2 Peter 3:9)?

Also, consider Revelation 12:9 and 2 Corinthians 4:4. These two scriptures reveal that God has allowed Satan to be part of this *blindness*. Satan has *deceived* the whole world and prevented the *truth* of God’s revelation from being known. It is patently obvious that Satan has not prevented mankind from being *religious* (remember 2 Corinthians 11:4, 13-15). But it is also obvious that Satan has kept *some* of mankind from believing anything at all, and...God has not intervened to undo the deceit and blindness.....yet.

Now consider Ezekiel 37 and the miracle of the “dry bones.” This is the source of the old Negro spiritual “Dem Bones.” Verses 1-14 explain that there will be a resurrection to *physical* life for all of Israel. We know this because of the flesh (muscles) and sinews and skin

that will be laid upon the dry bones – subsequently followed by their resuscitation with the breath of life. God's testimony to all of Israel is that He has not left them in the grave (remember Genesis 3:19) but has, indeed, remembered the work of His hands (Job 14:14, 15).

The “whole house of Israel” (v. 11) consists of the two separated houses: Israel and Judah (vv. 16-20; see also 1 Kings 10-12). Yes, there are *Israelites* who are not *Jews*. *Judah* was one of Jacob’s 12 sons (see Genesis 35:21-26). *Judah* was the father of the *Jews* (short form of *Judahites*). The vast majority of the *Israelites* who were not in the *first resurrection* (see Revelation 7:2-10) will be in this *second resurrection*. Why? Because God will be giving them a chance to be *saved* through Jesus Christ (Romans 11:15, 26).

So, this prophecy in Ezekiel 37 is an *example* of that *second resurrection* that comes at the end of the 1,000-year period. It is not known exactly at which point that will occur, but it would stand to reason that it will be a reasonable period of time during which the deceit and blindness can be healed and they can be re-habilitated in God’s unvarnished truth. Some have suggested a period of 100 years, but that is based on a comment in Isaiah 65:20 about a child dying at 100 years of age. I do not make such a case because Isaiah 65:17-25 looks forward to the New Heavens and New Earth (v. 17), not the last, great day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Lest I give voice to a faulty piece of speculation, let it be sufficient to say that Jesus Christ and His saints will be in charge of this period of rehabilitation of all who have never had the opportunity to know and accept God’s unvarnished truth. It will be a *temporary* period of time as described in Revelation 20:11-15. However, let’s notice something that is important to the discussion.

Revelation 20:7 shows that Satan will be released “...when the thousand years are *expired* [Greek = *teleo*]...” (emphases added). The *Bauer–Arndt– Gingrich Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament* (p. 818) defines *teleo*: “be brought to an end, be finished, completed” and refers also to vv. 3 and 5 as having the same meaning. I get no indication that this term *teleo*, in this case, should be translated “*being* brought to an end, *being* finished, *being* completed.”

The *BAG* definition labels it as *passive voice* as op-

posed to *active voice*. *Passive* is completed action; *active* is continuing action. That being the case, it is less than speculative to say that vv. 7-15 are *not* the waning years of those 1,000 years. They appear to be an *extension* of time *beyond* that time period. I consulted eight different translations, and none of them translated vv. 3, 5, 7 to read “...and when the thousand years were *being brought* to an end.” All translated it as having been *ended* or *completed*.

In like manner, v. 11 appears to be the time of the *second resurrection*. According to v. 5, this will occur when the 1,000 years have been *completed*. Within the context of vv. 11-15, there is no indication of how long that period of judgment will be. But, whatever the length of that period of time, we can be sure of two things: (1) the *judgment* that takes place will be the work of Jesus Christ and His saints and (2) it will be part of the completion of the *ministry of reconciliation* – the *end* described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:22-28. As indicated in vv. 13-15, the last enemy to be destroyed will be *death* – and with it, *the grave*.

The *Judgment* in Revelation 20:11-15

In mainstream Christian theology, *Judgment Day* is regarded as being the time of final judgment for *all people*. This concept is presented in the sense that *judgment* will come in one fell-swoop of time. That’s the way most people interpret Matthew 25:31-34. They conceive of the *judgment* as being a huge mass of people being divided into two groups before God’s throne: sheep and goats. Once that grouping is concluded, the sheep go to *heaven* and the goats go to *hell*.

Yet, they maintain that the *immortal souls automatically* go to either place immediately upon the death of the body. Others claim that *St. Peter* will decide who gets into heaven and who will have to go to hell. Those who have never professed faith in Jesus Christ *automatically* will go to hell...*regardless of the circumstances of their lack of a profession of faith* (example: pagan infants sacrificed to pagan gods). Some also teach that the “*saved*” really do not have to stand before a judgment seat because they will be taken up to a cloud at the return of Jesus Christ so they can be whisked off to heaven with Him. This is just a small sampling of the theological conflict that exists among 32,000+ “Chris-

tian” denominations in the world. Our task is to unravel God’s truth from all this theological quagmire and be set free from the falsehoods and outright lies.

Hebrews 9:27 says: “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” Peter proclaimed that “...the time has come that *judgment* must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17). Here’s the question: If true Christians are *presently* being judged, **when did they die?**

I won’t belabor the point when a couple of scriptures can solve the puzzle for us. You can get additional references by looking at a concordance or marginal references in your Bible. Paul shows in Romans 6:1-12 that *full immersion baptism* is our *death to sin*. As Peter says in Acts 2:38, we *repent* (that is, confess our sins and turn from them) and get *baptized for the remission of our sins*. When that happens, *death* is effectively *destroyed*. We will have *died* for our sins in Jesus Christ. But...that is not the end of it.

Romans 5:9 says that we are thereafter *justified* by the blood of Jesus Christ and *shall be* (future tense) saved from God’s wrath through Jesus Christ. *Justified* is a legal term that means that God will treat us as though we have never, ever sinned (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). We will be treated as though we are newly created. With that in mind, read Galatians 2:20; 5:22-26; and 6:14. John 3:18 says that all who have not believed on Jesus Christ are *already condemned*. That includes *newborn babies* who have never had the chance to learn about Him and make a rational decision about accepting His sacrifice. So, why is there *judgment* of a true Christian after he has made that confession of faith, repented, been baptized, and received the Holy Spirit? Revelation 20:12 provides part of the answer: “...The dead were judged out of *those things written in the books, according to their works*” (see Ephesians 2:10). Why is this important?

Hebrews 6:4-8 and 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 explain it very well. Hebrews 6:4-8 explains the necessity of remaining faithful to the truth that God has revealed to us (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; John 8:31, 32). If your *works* are nothing but *thorns and briars*, then you will not have used the opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ very well (see John 15:1-11 and Matthew 7:21-23). Second Timothy 3:16, 17 briefly ex-

plains the benefits to be obtained from the *things that are written in the books* that prepare one for the *works* God has ordained for us to engage in.

It should be evident to you that the *judgment* of the House of God is now underway and is being based on how we deal with the truth of God *written in the books of the Bible*. If that is the pattern shown in scripture, then why should this “great white throne” *judgment* be any different? Doesn’t it make sense that the people who are in this *second* resurrection to physical life – who have never had an opportunity to hear about or know about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice – would be given an opportunity to remedy that ignorance and be “saved” from *destruction*? After all, if they have been *blinded by God and deceived by Satan and their own ignorance*, what real chance have they ever had to understand God’s unvarnished truth? Why should any true Christian despise such a doctrine?

The lesson of Revelation 20:12 is difficult for most to understand because it seems that those who are resurrected are judged by the *works* they had during their lifetime before their *first* death. How many *works* would the millions of *aborted* children have had? In God’s sight, all of those fetuses will not be considered as having been *nothing*. Read Romans 9:9-11. Rebecca had two unborn brothers in her womb who had done *no good or evil*...and had the *potential* of being born into the world. Read Isaiah 7:10-16. The lesson here is that there is an age at which children become accountable for the good and evil they might do after birth. Until that age is reached, they cannot be said to have been *accountable* for either the good or the evil.

How many *billions* of children have been executed or otherwise have died before they reached that age (read Exodus 1:15-21, Leviticus 18:21, and Matthew 2:16-18 for three examples)? How many people have lived in such remote places in the world that they have never even known that a Jesus Christ ever existed – or had the means by which they could learn of such a thing? Surely you can understand that there have been *billions* who have lived and died without knowing and understanding God’s unvarnished truth. Yet...God loves them and desires that they should be brought to salvation. It is inconceivable that such a great, loving God would summarily execute them without giving them a chance to know and understand His plan.

Put John 6:44, 65 into that context:

No man can come to me, except the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day [that is, in the first resurrection].

No man can come unto me, except that it were given unto him of my Father. (emphases added)

Now read all that comes between those two verses. Christ uttered *truth* that many were not able to receive or believe. Why? It must have been because *they were not being drawn to Him by the Father and their spiritual eyes and ears were not being opened!* It is a puzzle, to be sure. But...it is not a puzzle for which God has no solution.

The *Great White Throne Judgment* is that solution. They will be given an opportunity to understand at last (see Joel 2:28, 29) – there will be a time when God will pour out His Holy Spirit upon them and draw them to Jesus Christ. It will be a time when they will be allowed to know and live by God’s truth for a given period of time so that He can make the ultimate judgment about their fitness for being changed from flesh to spirit and given entrance into the Kingdom of God.. After all, they must attain an age at which they can be held *accountable* for what they do with that which is written in the books. Those who resist and rebel will thereafter be subject to the **second death**.

What is the Second Death?

It appears that vv. 13-15 mark the time when the **second death** will be executed upon all who have proven to be *incorrigibly wicked*. Many of them will have died between the Garden of Eden and the return of Christ. They will have been left in the grave when Christ returns for the *first* resurrection. Others among the human survivors of the Tribulation Period will die

during the 1,000-year period and be left in the grave to be raised from the dead in the **second** resurrection. Some teach a **third** resurrection, but the information in these verses is too sparse to conclude that with certainty. What, then, shall we say about this?

Here is a speculative conclusion. The resurrected incorrigibly wicked of all ages will be summarily thrown into the Lake of Fire once their judgment is given by Jesus Christ (see John 5:25-29 and Matthew 25:31-34). Those to whom a *period of grace* is given will receive a final judgment once that *period of grace* is concluded. If found to be worthy of it, they will be given eternal life. Some, apparently, will continue in human form into the New Heavens and New Earth period (read again Isaiah 65:17-25). If not, they will be thrown into the Lake of Fire to be destroyed. Verse 13 is pretty specific: *Death and the grave will be emptied so that the final judgment can be rendered*. This will be the point at which Jesus Christ conquers the last enemy of God: *death and the grave*. All of the wicked spirits (see Matthew 25:41 and Revelation 20:10) and all of the incorrigibly wicked will be **destroyed**.

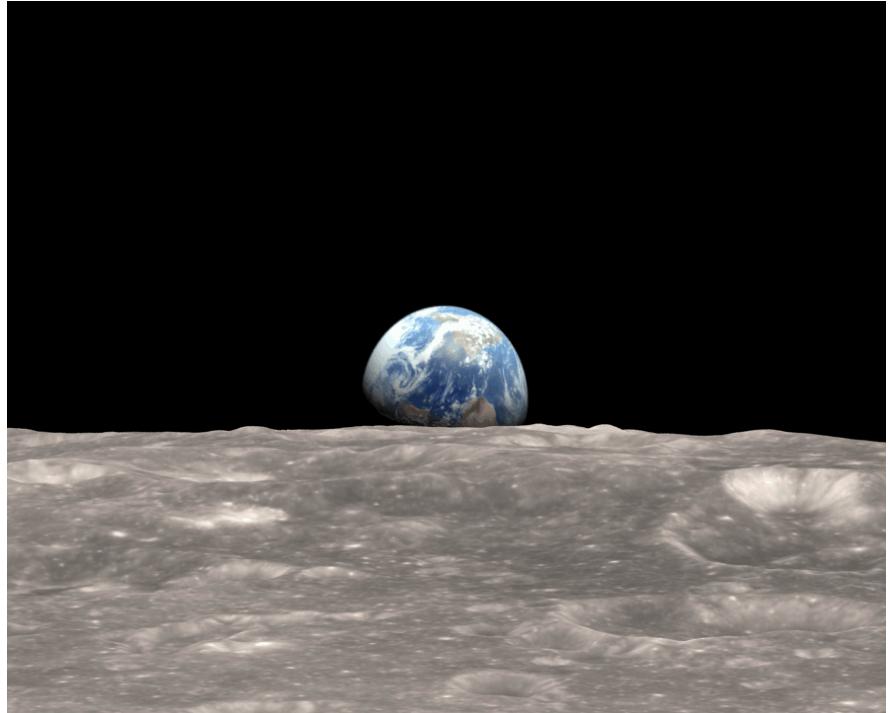
That is the nature of the **second death**. It will mark the point in time when *sin and death* will cease to exist. It will mark the point in time when God will again turn His attention to the works of His hands in the fashion that He originally intended (see Ephesians 1:4). Mankind will continue to be produced from the “seed” humans that are allowed to cross over, but there will be no more carnal mindedness to rebel against God and no more adversarial spirits to tempt mankind into sin against God. The **second death** is the **destruction** of all that opposes this most holy God (see Malachi 4:1 and Romans 16:20).

Such is the symbolism found in the *eighth day* of the Feast of Tabernacles. What a great plan! What a great God! This is the reason that the gospel of the Kingdom of God is such **good news!**

Hebrews 2:10, 11: Entering the Family of God

“In bringing many sons to glory....Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy **are of the same family**” (NIV; emphases added).

The New Heavens and New Earth



(NASA Photo Courtesy of wired.com)

Would it surprise you that not *all* of the present creation was originally designed to be *temporary*? Oh...we read in 2 Peter 3:10-12 about the heavens passing away with a great noise and the elements being melted with great heat – the earth and the works of man being burned up completely. You can't get any more *temporary* than that. And...we know that this is supposed to pave the way for *new heavens* and a *new earth*. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17: "...Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." Isaiah punctuates this by saying that, when the *new heavens* and *new earth* come, "...The former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." Why? Because they will be *hidden* from the eyes of God (Isaiah 65:16, 17).

We should be impressed by the *temporary nature* of things in our present experience and realize that there are things that are passing away – that they are not worthy of being perpetuated into the eternity that lies ahead of us. It is incumbent upon us, therefore, to be spiritually mature enough to be able to discern which things are worth being held on to for their *eternal* values. The *temporary things* must be evaluated regarding their worth to our spiritual growth and development, their worth to our worship and dedication to God and His Christ, and their worth to our moral and physical consumption. The objective of this lesson, therefore, is to explore how God will make all things new after Jesus Christ turns the Kingdom of God over to Him after destroying all of His enemies (1 Corinthians 15:24-28). This is a very important lesson about God's plans for the future of His created order.

The *Permanence* of the Heavens and the Earth

The title of this section presupposes that the fervent heat mentioned in 2 Peter 3:10-12 does not signal the

destruction of the heavens and the earth – and...starting over from *nothing* to create a totally new set of heavens and earth. That would be a correct assumption. The earth has existed for over four billion years and has undergone many notable changes during that time. In like manner, the universe has undergone many notable

changes in its 14+ billion years of existence. This should have taught us that there are aspects of the heavens and earth that do change either periodically or continually due to a *temporary nature*. Does that signal, therefore, that they are scheduled for complete and utter destruction so that they can be replaced by a totally *new* model? There are ways by which we can understand what God has in mind when He brings about this monumental change.

Genesis 13:14-17 shows the Lord God dealing with Abraham *according to the covenant* that He was going to establish with him and his descendants. Notice what the Lord God promises in v. 15: “For all the land that you see, I will give it to you and your descendants *forever*” (emphases added). By that description, it is difficult to believe that the Lord God will thereafter *destroy* that land and start over from scratch in contradiction to His holy word.

Genesis 15 is a description of how the Lord God sealed and concluded that covenant with Abraham. We know from Genesis 12 to Genesis 15 that His *promise* has already been extended to Abraham. In Genesis 15:1-7, we see that the Lord God is bringing more specific focus to the promise by narrowing down which of Abraham’s “seed” will be his rightful heir. In v. 7, He repeats to Abraham that He brought him to that particular territory to show him the land that He was giving him. In v. 8, Abraham asks a very good question: “How shall I *know* that I shall inherit it?” Verse 6 says that he believed the Lord God’s promise, and that belief (faith) was counted to him as righteousness. So, there is no lack of faith involved in this question; it is a reasonable thing to ask.

The ceremony described in vv. 9-17 describes the *oath* made by the Lord God as a *second witness* to firmly establish for all time that what the Lord God had promised would be done. In vv. 18-21, we see the confirmation of the covenant and the description of the territory that is involved. That narrow wedge of ground that comprises present-day Israel is *not* the *Promised Land!* Nor has any of the territory occupied by Israel throughout history *ever* been the fulfillment of that *promise* and *oath*. Nevertheless, what the Lord God established with this *promise* and *oath* is the *perpetual existence* of that territory as an *inheritance* for Abraham and his descendants. That information has great signifi-

cance for the *Christian*.

God’s Covenant With Abraham Significantly Affects *Christians*

Paul discusses this covenant in Hebrews 6:13-20. In this discussion, Paul addresses it to *Christians* and draws three interesting conclusions:

1. God buttressed His *promise* with an *oath* to demonstrate the *permanence* of His intentions.
2. Both the *promise* and the *oath* are *immutable* – that is, they are not subject to *change* or *revision*...and it is *impossible* for God to lie about the various aspects of the covenant agreement.
3. The person who lives according to the faith of Abraham (according to Abraham’s belief that God is going to do exactly what He promised – see Romans 4) will have *great hope* and *comfort* that such a *promise* and *oath* can be nothing other than what He promised and swore an oath to (see Hebrews 11:1).

Hebrews 11:10 adds to this discussion that Abraham, because of that covenant, expected God to design and build a *permanent* city in the same land that He promised him.

This is a problem for those who teach that God intends to give the Old Testament saints the *earth* because He made *earthly promises* to them...and the Christians will receive *heaven* because He made *heavenly promises* to them. If that is true, why does Paul address the significance of this covenant with *Christians*? Such an idea would be at cross purposes with Paul’s assertions in Romans 8:14-17 and Galatians 3:26-29 – both of which conclude that true Christians will inherit what God promised Abraham and will *share* in that inheritance with Jesus Christ. Traditional Christianity has violated the *immutability clause* referred to by Paul in Hebrews 6:17-19. They, in effect, *change God’s truth into a lie* (Romans 1:25) by doing so. Such a violation by *changing* or *revising* what the Lord God promised is reprehensible to a holy God whose word is *truth* (see John 17:17 and John 4:23, 24).

What Does Forever Mean in This Context?

Now, let's discuss the term forever in relationship to Genesis 15:13-16. Abraham was to have descendants who would be delivered from a long captivity and be brought back to the land of promise. In v. 15, the Lord God said that He was giving this land to Abraham's seed forever. The Hebrew term is olam. This term means that the covenant promise and oath are in force "infinitely; always; indefinitely; unendingly in the future." The same meaning is attached to the term as it is used in Exodus 12:14; 31:13-17; and Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, and 41. If you understand the gravity of the promise and oath, then you will take more seriously Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17-19 that He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. **He came to make sure that they are fulfilled as promised** (read also Isaiah 55:10, 11).

Read the Lord God's statement about His covenant with David in Psalm 89:34-37. This is a repetition of 2 Samuel 7:16-29. The prophet Jeremiah repeats it in Jeremiah 33:17-26 in a broader context. What this demonstrates is that the sun, moon, and ordinances of the heavens and earth are olam! There are laws relative to the operations and functions of the sun, moon, and stars that are olam! There are covenants that are olam! **They are not subject to the temporary nature of things.**

What should you be understanding at this point? It's really very simple: God does not plan to *destroy* the heavens and the earth and begin from scratch with a totally new creation! While there are things within the present creation that are *temporary* and unworthy of eternal perpetuation, there are some things about the present creation that are *permanent*. There are *promises* and *oaths* that the Lord God made with Abraham, Israel, and David that are *permanent*.

Sadly, some have made the Lord God look as though He is either fickle or a liar – subject to changing. They say that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ wiped out the contents of His covenants with Abraham, Israel, and David – or, at least altered them from the original intention – and rendered them null and void. Their claim that Christians are not under the old Law is an outright admission that such is the case. So, we have to ask ourselves whether or not God really means what He says about these things. We have to allow God's word to

teach us about that which is *temporary* and that which is *permanent*. As simple-minded as it might appear, *language* is one means by which we can learn those lessons.

Understanding the Kainos Concept

In Jeremiah 31:31-33, the Lord God gave Jeremiah a revelation about a *new* covenant that He intends to make with the Houses of Israel and Judah in the future. The Hebrew term in this context is *chadash*. Verse 33 explains that the difference between the *old* covenant and the *new* covenant lies in the change that will take place *in their hearts*. What is that change?

Let me give you a couple of examples of how this works. First, it is unlawful to drive your automobile on the city sidewalks. As you are driving through the city, a criminal is eluding the police in a high-speed chase and speeds toward you *in your lane*. You have a choice: (a) maintain your lane and get killed, or (b) drive on the sidewalk to avoid an awful wreck. What does the law allow you to do? Second, the law says that you must not commit adultery. Although you are given many opportunities to do so, you obey the law and abstain from adulterous sexual encounters. Does the law allow you to fantasize about what those sexual encounters might have been like? The answers lie in what is called obeying either the letter of the law or the spirit of the law.

Paul explored this type of situation in Romans 2:17-29. He questions whether or not it is possible for a man to be *righteous* in the covenant relationship by obeying only the letter of the Law. Is there a way to commit adultery even though you do not get involved with actual physical adultery (see Matthew 5:27, 28). Does the mere act of having your foreskin removed from your penis *automatically* impute to you *righteousness* according to the Law and covenant? Or, is your relationship with God through the Law and covenant supposed to be on a much deeper spiritual plane (vv. 27- 29)?

Romans 7:6 addresses that question, but Paul's comment is not to be interpreted as it is by mainstream Christianity...who claim that we are delivered from God's Law because it has been *annulled* or *destroyed* through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ because "*He fulfilled it.*" How are we *delivered* from the Law? The answer is very simple...and it relates to the kainos concept.

Paul approaches the answer in Romans 7:6 by saying that we are *delivered from the Law* by being *delivered from the death imposed upon us by it*. You have to take this comment in the context in which it is used. The context goes all the way back to Romans 6:1, which asks the question of whether or not *Christians* are to remain in *sin* after receiving God's grace and forgiveness. What is *sin*? We see in 1 John 3:4 that: "Whosoever commits *sin* also transgresses the *Law* because *sin* is the transgression of the *Law*." Paul says in Romans 6:23 that "...the wages of *sin* is *death*." He poses a question in Romans 3:31 that he quickly answers: "Do we [Christians] make the Law *void* through *faith*? God forbid [that we do such a thing]: in fact, we *establish the Law*" (all emphases added). What does this mean?

The term *establish* is from the Greek term *histemi*. Although that term has several definitions, the one intended in this context is this: "establish, confirm, make or consider valid." None of this shows that the Law of God is to be *invalidated* by faith in Jesus Christ. Which of the 10 Commandments would you consider *invalid*? Jesus says in Matthew 22:36-40 that *all* of the *Law* and *Prophets* are undergirded by God's two basic laws: Love God supremely and love your neighbor as yourself. Paul concludes in Romans 13:8-10, based on the last six Commandments, that "...*love is the fulfilling of the Law*" (emphases added).

If *sin* still exists in this world and people are under the death penalty for sinning, how do you do away with the law that accuses them? Romans 7:7, 8 says two things of importance: (1) The Law *defines* sin, and (2) where there is no Law, there is no sin. So, in Romans 6:16, Paul emphatically states that "You cannot be the slaves of sin that leads to death and at the same time be slaves of obedience that leads to righteousness." There is a problem intrinsic in that relationship – a vicious cycle where sin cancels righteousness which cancels sin which cancels righteousness *ad infinitum* (see Ezekiel 18:4, 20).

So, in Romans 7:1-5, Paul makes the argument that the Christian must *die* to his metaphoric *marriage* to sin so that he can be released from the *death penalty* of the Law. He is not arguing about the *invalidation of the Law itself*. He says in v. 5 that "Before our conversion our sinful passions, quite *unsubdued by the Law* [in other words, we sinned despite the warning of the Law

that we will die], *fertilized* our bodies to make them give birth to *death*" (emphases added). This is a sexual analogy. The offspring produced by this unholy *marriage* to sin is *death*. Paul points out in v. 1 that the Law "...affects a person only *during his lifetime*" (emphasis added). Romans 6:1-11 is Paul's description of how our *death to sin* occurs. Our repentance, faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, subsequent baptism, and receipt of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) mark the *death* of the "old man" in order for us to become a *new person* set upon a path to *new life* through Jesus Christ (see also 2 Corinthians 5:17). That's a *kainos* life.

Beyond Romans 7, Paul says in Romans 8:4 that there is a *righteousness of the Law* that must be fulfilled in our new lives. Why? So that we will not walk according to the dictates of the *flesh* (the carnal mind; vv. 5-8), but according to the dictates of the *Spirit*. In vv. 12-15, he points out that there must be an ongoing process of *putting to death* the deeds of the carnal mind (see Galatians 5:13-21) and learning how to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-26). In that process, we show ourselves to be the true children of God and are able to attain to the *adoption* into the literal Family of God by being changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4-14).

Fulfilling the Law does not mean that it is thereafter *abolished* and *invalid* for your life. *Fulfilling* means that it is being used for the purpose for which it is intended (read again Isaiah 55:10, 11). That is the intention of Jesus' claim in Matthew 5:17-19: He came to use the Law of God and the Prophets for the purpose for which they are intended – not to *abolish* them as though His word was uttered in vain and fell uselessly to the earth into oblivion.

Hebrews 10:1-9 is a perfect example of this. The sacrifice of bulls and goats was a law in which the animals were a *shadow* of the coming *reality*. The Lord God came among us in a body of flesh in order to *fulfill* the intention of that *shadow*. Once that *shadow* was *fulfilled*, the law of the sacrifice was not *annulled* or *cancelled* or *invalidated*. It was *established* and *confirmed as being valid*. How do we know this to be true?

Paul concludes in v. 9 that the *first manner of sacrifice* was taken away in order that the *second manner of sacrifice* could be *established* (Greek = *histemi*). This is used in the same context as Romans 3:31. In other

words, the law of sacrifice was *fulfilled* by *validating* the *reality* of God's original intention...just like loving God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves *validates* the 10 Commandments. To verify this conclusion, ask yourself whether or not the sacrifice of Jesus Christ continues to make possible the salvation of sinners – that is, those who break God's Law. If it does, then the law of *sacrifice* has been moved to a *spiritual level* above what was being done before Jesus was actually sacrificed. This is why Paul says in Galatians 5:23 that there is *no law against the fruit of the Holy Spirit*. Why? They do not *transgress* God's Law and cause you to be accused as a *sinner* – the penalty of which is *death*.

Paul is clear in his warning to Christians in Hebrews 6:4-8 (couple that with Galatians 6:7, 8). You cannot receive the benefits of the relationship that is established with God the Father through Jesus Christ and treat it with disdain. You cannot walk away from the spiritual experience and hope to receive the benefits that the relationship *guarantees* you. If you do, then you will suffer the indignity of being destroyed in the Lake of Fire. The opportunity of leading a *new life* in Christ is a serious matter; you must not take the name of the Lord in vain (Exodus 20:7).

The *kainos* concept that is involved in both the New Covenant and the new heavens and new earth has nothing to do with *destroying* the old and replacing it with a totally different thing...no more than *you* will be totally destroyed and replaced with a totally different individual. How does this work?

In Hebrews 8:6-13, Paul explains that the fault with the Old Covenant was not with the covenant itself. The fault was with the *people*. God had *intended* that His people would have maintained a *righteous* relationship with Him by being obedient to His Law and faithful to the Covenant – that they would be *blameless, holy, and loving* (Ephesians 1:4; Deuteronomy 11:26-28).

Exodus 32:15, 16 describes the tablets on which the covenant of God was written as the *work of God* and the *writing of God*. In Exodus 34:28, Moses writes that God wrote the *10 Commandments* on those two tablets. In Deuteronomy 9:9-11, Moses says that the tablets were the *covenant* that the Lord God made with Israel. The point is this: The *people* were at fault when they did not live up to the intentions of those 10 Commandments – which are summed up in the two basic laws spoken of

by Jesus Christ in Matthew 22:36-40.

That is the reason the Lord God ended His metaphoric *marriage* with Israel (read Jeremiah 3 and Ezekiel 16). Apparently, they did not understand how to *internalize* the demands and intentions of those 10 Laws – what some refer to as the 10 *Words* of God (see Deuteronomy 8:1-3 and connect the message to Jesus' statement in Matthew 4:4). Something *better* had to be done in order to make the Covenant a *better covenant*. With this in mind, go back to pp. 26, 27 ("Tabernacles") and re-study the *kainos* – versus – *neos* explanation.

The New Covenant, as explained in Jeremiah 31:31-34, is one in which the Law of God is put into their *innermost being* (their *hearts*). This means that they will have it *internalized* so that the *spiritual intent* will be the guiding factor of their lives – instead of the external *letter of the Law*. As Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 3:7-16, God put a *veil* over the Old Testament that hindered Israel's understanding of what they were reading (see Isaiah 6:8-13). It was put there because of their *sins*. That veil is there to this day for them and everyone else who has but a superficial faith or no faith at all. It can be lifted only by the gift of the Holy Spirit.

But...there is coming a time when that veil will be lifted and the *spiritual intention of the Law* will be understood and lived – when a totally *new* (*kainos*) approach will be the rule rather than the exception. As Paul explains in v. 6, the *letter* kills but the *Spirit* gives life. The pouring out of God's Holy Spirit upon *all of mankind* will transform this world in a way that it has never before experienced (see Joel 2:21-29).

The *kainos* heavens and earth, then, will be the time that follows the purging of the present heavens and earth just prior to the throne of God the Father being brought to a *kainos* Jerusalem – that permanent city that Abraham believed God will build in the Promised Land (Hebrews 11:8-10; Revelation 21:2). *Everything* will be *kainos* from that point forward – that is, *new* in respect to *quality and durability and spirit*.

How does such a thing work in the face of 2 Peter 3:10-12? Peter is addressing a common notion of humanity: That the creation and the way things work in the creation have some sort of *permanence*. Involved in that notion is that the governments, religions, educational activities, et cetera of humans have a *permanence* that is partnered with the creation.

The Preacher in Ecclesiastes lays out this idea in chapter one by citing the endless cycles of nature and the activities of man. In v. 9, he comes to a dreadful conclusion: “The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done [and, we might infer, in *endless, pointless cycles*]: and there is nothing new under the sun.” Peter is making a point that the *endless, pointless cycles* have a *terminus point*.

Paul addresses this issue in Romans 8:18-22. First, there is a *future* glory yet to be revealed by God that far surpasses the present indignities that we suffer. Second, that *future* glory will be made manifest when God reveals to all of creation the completion of the works of His hands (see Genesis 1:26-28 and Ephesians 2:10) when His true, literal *sons* are revealed in the glory of the finished product (see Ephesians 1:4-14, Hebrews 2:5-18, and 1 John 3:1-3). Third, until that time is reached, all of creation has been subjected to *vanity* and the *bondage of corruption*.

Basically, that means that mankind and creation itself have been subjected to a *pointless, empty, transitory, purposeless, and futile* condition. It is as if God has punched in the self-destruct code that will ultimately *obliterate* all that exists. Romans 1:24, 26, 28 shows that God has turned mankind over to the consequences of his sins whereby human society will be ultimately overwhelmed by a scourge of social and sexual misconduct – which will ultimately bring about its *death and destruction* (v. 32).

Jesus Christ foretells in Matthew 24:14-22 that there is coming a time when all of this *vanity* and *bondage to corruption* will bring about a time of trouble never before experienced among mankind. It will be a time so very terrible that the very destruction of all human flesh is a decided possibility – even at the door. If Jesus Christ does not intervene, it will most assuredly happen without remedy.

Rest assured of this: Peter is addressing this issue in 2 Peter 3:10-12 when he asserts that the *new heavens* and *new earth* will be preceded by this great intervention by God after Jesus Christ has intervened and destroyed all of God’s enemies (see 1 Corinthians 15:24-28). There are two words to which I pay attention in Peter’s comments: *elements* and *dissolved*. Why?

The word *elements* is translated from the Greek

word *stoicheion*. *Stoicheion*, in this context, means the basic elemental substances from which everything is made. Because of that definition, many believe that it means that all of the universe will be melted into dissolution in order that a *new* universe can be created. Let’s not be too hasty to jump on that bandwagon. I also need to explain the term *dissolved*.

Dissolved comes from the Greek term *luo*. There are five definitions to *luo*, one of which has the meaning that all of the parts of the universe will be *broken up* and *destroyed*. I can understand why lexicons would prefer that definition...it's because of the fixed idea that Peter means that everything will be destroyed. But...and this is an important exception...*luo* can also mean that something is *set free* because the bonds that hold it captive have been *loosed* and it has been *set free*.

My acceptance of *that* definition is predicated on what we read in Romans 8:18-22 and Matthew 24:22. It is also dependent on the term *redemption* as defined in the Greek term *apolutrosis*: *set free* from the penalty of sin and the limitations of the flesh (Ephesians 1:14). It is also bound up in the *redemptive* nature of God’s *Sabbath* (“rest”) both now and in the future – which is also part of the “times of *refreshing*” and “the *restitution* of all things” spoken of in Acts 3:19-21.

So, I conclude that Peter is not foretelling the *destruction* of the present heavens and earth in order to create from “scratch” totally new (*neos*) heavens and earth. *Kainos* heavens and earth are the prophesied objective of God. What does this mean? Simply this: All of the wealth, productivity, and assets bound up in the natural elements of creation will be *set free* (Romans 8:19, 21, 22) for the benefit of the inhabitants of the *new* heavens and *new* earth. Let me give you an example of this.

In *The Albany [Ga.] Herald* (June 14, 2014, p. 7A), there was an article from Reuters explaining the existence of huge amounts of water that are presently inaccessible for human consumption because it is so far down in the earth’s crust that it is locked inside the molecular structure of minerals. It is not in the form of liquid, solid, or gas. When the minerals reach certain depths, say the scientists, they release the water to form *magmas*. They have found some of this water trapped in a commercially worthless diamond that contained *ringwoodite*. The inference one could draw from this

article is that such water could be *released* for consumption under the right conditions.

This appears to be an *elemental* situation that could be affected by the *fire* foretold by Peter. I admit that this is *speculative*; but.....the *possibility* is presented that, *under the right conditions*, all of the *water* that scientists have looked for on other planets is really there as described in this article, and its *release* could, in fact, support life there. In effect, the entire universe would become *kainos* (superior in quality) because it would become more *suitable* for habitation due of the release of the water. That is merely one way in which the *kainos* concept would be applicable. After all, why should we inherit something for which we have no useful purpose? Why should we be *restricted* to only the earth when there is so much more *expanding* territory into which the countless *seed* of Abraham can go to colonize and inhabit?

So, the idea is that there will be a time when the present *elements* (fire, water, earth, wind, et cetera) will be *set free* by a great act of God so that they can fulfill the amazing potential for which they were designed. Man has spent millennia messing it up. In order for it to be *set free* from the *bondage to corruption* to which it has been committed, it must undergo a fundamental change in its *elemental composition*.

That brings us to the Greek term for *earth* (*ge*). *Ge* includes the *inhabitants* of the earth. Remember that Jesus Christ has spent 1,000+ years “harvesting” more sons of God among the “survivors” of the Tribulation, the warfare of Christ and the saints, and the Eighth Day. The total of humans who will populate the earth at that time could number in the multiple *billions*. There is no word that they are to be temporarily transported to *heaven* until the *fire* finishes its work. As a matter of fact, scripture is silent on many of the particulars in 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Revelation 21:1. Nevertheless, there are some things to which we should pay attention.

The *land* (*ge*) is to be inherited by the *meek* (Matthew 5:5). It is easier for the *planet* (*ge*) to pass away than it is for one jot or tittle of God’s Law to pass away (Matthew 5:17; Luke 16:17). Abraham is going to inherit the *planet* (*kosmos*; Romans 4:13), and Christians are going to inherit it with Abraham and Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16-18, 26-29; Hebrews 6:9-20). Then there is the Lord God’s covenant with David that is discussed

in Psalm 89:24-37 and Jeremiah 33:17-26.

Notice the *celestial* and *terrestrial* markers that are included in the Lord God’s covenant with David – twice mentioned is His “covenant of the day and night” and once mentioned is the “ordinances of heaven and earth” (see also Colossians 1:17 where it says that Jesus Christ holds *all things* together by His power). These things speak of at least the perpetuation of the *basic structure* of the present universe. What emerges from the purging that Peter discusses is a *renewed* universe that is superior in quality compared to the present one. It is *kainos*. It is more suitable and conducive for the things that God plans to accomplish in the eternity ahead.

This *kainos* is applied in the same way to the change that Christians will experience at the return of Christ. The new bodies will be *superior* to our present bodies because they will be *imperishable* and *incorruptible* (1 Corinthians 15:50-54). The future universe will undergo a similar experience when the curse of *vanity* and the *bondage of corruption* are lifted: *It will become imperishable and incorruptible*.

Read Amos 9:11-13. Read Isaiah 65:17-25. What you see is that there will continue to be a *human population* on the earth that is producing offspring and living in peace and safety in a world where all of the problems of this present world have been *destroyed* and the productivity of nature and man are *set free* to bountifully provide for their life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness.

Is it unreasonable to believe, therefore, that Gene Roddenberry might have been correct in the *Star Trek* series that man will eventually go where they have never gone before? That humans will eventually be strewn among the stars into the distant reaches of the universe? You can leave out all of the evolutionary concept’s claim that all of those other sentient beings will be there waiting for our arrival. There is *no indication* in scripture that humans are not unique in all of creation. But there is every reason to believe that man will be strewn into the far reaches of the universe as the God Family continues to be supplied with candidates for sonship (read Isaiah 9:7).

Peter’s *real* issue in 2 Peter 3:11-14 is this: If there is coming this great *renewal* of the heavens and earth, what manner of person ought *you* to be in all holy conduct and godliness? You cannot be the same-old-same-old. God, hasten the day when your Kingdom comes!