
Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Bible Study Course Lesson Twelve

God's Sabbaths

(His Plan of Salvation in Prophecy)

Part 2

Larry E. Ford

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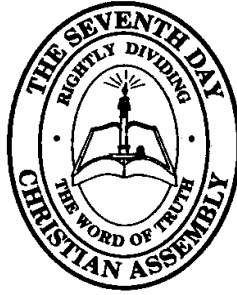
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Larry E. Ford

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Scriptures in this work are quoted from the King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted. The author changes terms like “thee,” “thou,” “thine,” and other 17th Century expressions to more modern terms.

Unless otherwise stated, all definitions for Greek terms are from the Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (University of Chicago Press, 1957). All definitions for Hebrew terms are from the Brown-Driver-Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Publishers, 1999—reprinted from the 1906 edition by Houghton, Mifflin and Company, Boston).



SCRIPTURAL admonitions

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

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

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an open letter from the Pastor:

Here 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 Heb. 4:1-9) that God has planned from the foundation of the world (from the Greek word *kosmos*—which means, in this instance, “the sum total of the created universe” (see Matt. 25:34 and Eph. 1:4). It can include the moment the idea was conceived.

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 of the prominent sources in Lesson 11 that agree with the change ... but they also say that there is no biblical justification for it.

In the following study about God's Sabbaths (note the plurality used), you are going to be made privy to scriptural understanding not generally known or used by Traditional Christianity. Because of the scarcity of a complete usage of the scriptural record, there is also a scarcity of the complete knowledge of God's truth. Amos 8:11-14 is not applicable only to the nation of Israel in the land (read 1 Kings 12). Why? It is not difficult for the discerning spiritual “eye” to understand. Pay close attention to the following.

Throughout the ages, the ten tribes of the *House* of Israel have been scattered throughout the world ... as have been the two tribes of the *House* of Judah. Amos 8:14 makes the case for this prophecy as applied to the House of Israel. Do you have any idea about whether or not your “family” tree includes Israelitish blood? Pay attention to v. 11. The expression “in the land” can easily apply to

Israelitish “blood” wherever it is presently located. You also have to consider Romans 11 and its discussion about the *Gentiles* being “grafted into” Israel through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 11:11-29).

Isaiah 1:1-9 is a *prophetic* discussion about the House of Israel’s wrong-headed religious dealings with the Lord God and how He had severely punished them for it ... to the point of practically casting off the majority of them because only a holy *remnant* had remained faithful.

Isaiah 6 is a follow-up prophecy. Isaiah found himself in view of a marvelous vision of the Lord God. An angel came to him to purify him before the Lord. Then, a question about whom to send to the House of Israel to deliver the Lord God’s message. Isaiah eagerly volunteered ... perhaps expecting a great reconciliation.

However, he was given an assignment that he had not expected: Israel was going to be *reduced* to that small *remnant* of true believers for a very long time. As a matter of fact, vv. 11, 12 say that the House of Israel would be removed out of the land until only a *tenth* of them were left. They were subsequently removed out of the land and scattered all over the earth after their Assyrian captivity.

This is the result of their desire to appear to be religious by mixing *paganism* in with His truth. Deuteronomy 12:29-32 is the Lord God’s warning to them *not* to mix and mingle pagan religious concepts with His truth. The early Church “Fathers” also ignored that warning because they taught that *all* of the Old Testament was *Jewish* scriptures and that God gave them the laws to mark them as heretics and punish them. The “Father’s” theological “drift” was another case of wrong-headed theology mixed with pagan concepts. Why would the Lord God have changed His mind and accepted it?

This study will assist you in understanding whether or not *God* sanctioned the change from the weekly seventh-day sabbath to Sunday and the termination of His holy days in Leviticus 23. The focus in this study will involve more important information about the change from the seventh-day sabbath to Sunday and the holy days in Leviticus 23:23-44.

Chapter One

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 and 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. Read 1 Corinthians 16:2.

As E. B. Allo asserts in his work *St. Paul, premiere epitre aux Corinthiens* (1956; p. 456):

[The] first day of the week here refers to Sunday worship which by the time of the composition of the epistle had already replaced the Sabbath” (emphases added).

It is *assumed*, therefore, that Paul’s instruction in 1 Corinthians 16:2 is a reinforcement of Sunday observance instead of the commanded seventh day:

On the first day of every week each of you is to put something aside and store it up as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come” (emphases added).

Various scholars believe that this is an *implicit* [implied] 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 seventh-day 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 about 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. As he puts it:

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 (emphases added)?

My first reaction is that *Sunday* was adopted as the Traditional Christian day of worship based on their concept of 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 any kind of resurrection. It symbolizes the death of the Christ, the true Passover Lamb.

So, Massi—and others—are in error with that application because *Passover* is a memorial of death, not resurrection (1 Cor. 5:7; 11:26; Luke 22:19, 20). You cannot mix and mingle the two.

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

A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scriptures (1953) says something else that is noteworthy: “It is clear from 1 Corinthians 16:2 that Sunday had already become the day for the Christian assembly and Eucharist” (emphasis added). So, the Eucharist, apparently, is thought to have become a ritualized weekly event that pictures the rituals of Passover instituted by Jesus Christ at His last Passover with His disciples. People are asked to overlook Leviticus 23:4, 5.

Is this term pascha clearly based on 1 Corinthians 16:2? 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 now 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 in order 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 ... once a year! If Allo and the *Catholic Commentary* are correct that the change from Sabbath to Sunday had already occurred by the time of this letter to the Corinthians, then we have some problems explaining a couple of things in 1 Corinthians.

Corinth was rife with heresies—factions that had opposing opinions about God’s truth (see 1:10-13). They were spiritually immature (see 3:1-7), and Paul’s main purpose for the letter was to set the record straight about God’s revealed truth.

Acts 18 shows that he had lived among them for about 18 months (v. 11) and “...reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (v. 4). *The Interpreter’s Bible* suggests that he arrived in Corinth (Acts 18) about A.D. 50/51 and left about A.D. 52/53 (vol. 9; “Acts-Romans”; p. 239).

If the epistle was written about Spring of A.D. 55/56, what would have changed so radically in his custom/manner between his sojourn with them and three short years later—especially since it took close to 500 years for the “Sabbath” question to be “settled” by the Roman Catholics?

As previously stated in Lesson 11, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 gives evidence that Paul still observed Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread—and spoke to the Corinthians as though they did as well. In 11:17-34, he addressed the wrongful manner in which they observed the New Testament Passover instituted by Jesus Christ during His last Passover with His disciples. Read vv. 25, 26 with that in mind.

It is particularly interesting that Paul tells them that such an observance is not for the purpose of eating the Lord's supper (v. 20)! He tells them to eat their supper meals at home because their meeting is for the purpose of observing what Jesus Christ taught His disciples on the same night He was betrayed (v. 23—which was the evening portion of the day of Passover when He “broke” the Passover bread and served the Passover wine after the supper (see Ex. 12:6-10, Lev. 23:5, and Matt. 26:20-25).

Because of the way by which Passover is determined, it might or might not occur on Sunday. It occurred on Tuesday night during the year in which He was crucified (A.D. 31)—and on Tuesday night on April 7, 2009. It will occur on Sunday March 23, 2024 and on Friday April 11, 2025. Hopefully, you can understand the idea I am pursuing: Passover is not a regular “Sunday” event.

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

God makes no such allowance in His command to observe the Passover during the evening of the 14th day of the first month—even in the midst of Egyptian captivity and slavery (Ex. 12:1-13). 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 very well be able to understand, 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. Read Romans 3:31. Translations other than *KJV* translate that verse to read “uphold the Law” and “give the Law its true value.” In essence, Paul says that our Christian faith validates the Law (that is: makes it legally binding).

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: “...that there be no meetings 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 (1 Cor. 16:2).

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. Beyond that, it is apparent that Paul chose the first day of the week for gathering collections rather than the seventh day.

Chapter Two

Acts 20:7-11

Numerous scholars claim that Acts 20:7-11 is the “...earliest unambiguous evidence we have for the Christian practice of gathering together for purposes of worship on the first day of the week” (F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts*; Grand Rapids, 1954; pp. 407, 408). F. F. Bruce is by no means a lone voice in this assertion. Of importance in this claim is the accompanying claim that the *breaking of bread* (vv. 7, 11) is the *Eucharist* celebration.

So, we will again look at the *internal* evidence in this story to discover what Paul was doing and why. I am afraid that the so-called *scholars* have often rushed to conclusions based on the flimsiest of evidence in order to justify a practice that God *never* commanded.

Using our Bible study skills, let’s read the context above and below the account. Why does Paul use “...after the days of unleavened bread...” as a point of reference in v. 6? Notice that they waited until after the *days of unleavened bread* to embark on their journey to Troas. Why? Notice also that they stayed in Troas for seven days—and it was on the *first* day of the week when they met to break bread. Notice also that it was a meeting held at *night*—with Paul preaching until *midnight* (v. 7) before Eutychus fell out of the window and died (v. 9).

After Paul healed him (v. 10), he came back again to *break bread* a second time, preach until *daybreak*, and depart on foot instead of sailing to Assos with Luke and the others in his party (vv. 11, 13).

Why did Paul want to be in Jerusalem on *Pentecost* (v. 16)? To

observe it as his manner was? Our problem is to determine if this is *really* the earliest **unambiguous** evidence of a *formulaic* [a *fixed* form of] Christian practice of meeting *habitually* on *Sunday* as the “Christian Sabbath” and celebrating the Eucharist—as well as, if it was an *ordinary* or *extraordinary* event.

Also, how do we reckon the interpretation of **time**: by the *Hebrew* calendar or the *Roman*? It makes a difference in the actual history of this meeting! Remember that early Christianity was a *Jewish* sect (see Acts 15:5; 24:5; 28:22—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 and time 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/time as a reference point rather than the *Roman*. The Jews still do that. That being the case, this meeting was on *Saturday* night, not *Sunday* night.

When the sun set on Saturday evening, the **first** day of the week began (see Gen. 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 partially on Saturday night until **midnight** ... but **midnight** would have begun the **first**

day of the week: **Sunday**. Paul made an arduous trip on **Sunday**.

Modern Traditional Christianity does not begin the first day of the week until midnight on Saturday. They use the Roman model. So, in the strictest sense of the Hebrew calendar/time, this meeting took place on part of the first day of the week. But, does that make it unambiguous evidence that they met on that night as a regular, habitual religious service as a replacement of the seventh-day Sabbath and took the Eucharist (“broke bread”) as a replacement of Passover?

If so, why don’t they do it that way 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—Sunday morning.

It would mean that the ordinary meeting would have taken place on the previous day during the regular seventh-day Sabbath services. 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 unnecessarily 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)? Surely, that would have been sufficient time for the Eucharist to have taken place before midnight!

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 it refers to breaking bread to feed

the multitudes, eating the last supper, and eating with His disciples after His resurrection (Matt. 14:19; 15:36; 26:26; Mark 8:6, 19; 14:22; Luke 22:19; 24:30, 35). Twice it refers to Paul's eating of a common meal (Acts 20:11; 27:35). Twice it refers to breaking the bread during the Passover service instituted by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24). Twice it refers to common meals shared among the disciples or believers (Acts 2:26; 20:7).

Again, the true Christian Passover is consistent with Leviticus 23:4, 5: it comes only once a year as a memorial of the death of Jesus Christ. It is ***not*** a watered-down observance that occurs 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 Matt. 26:26-28)?

In Acts 20:7-11, we do not see Paul breaking the unleavened bread and distributing it with the wine either before or after midnight. The Greek term *geuomai*, translated “eaten” in v. 11, means “to partake of a [common] meal.” That settles the meaning of 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 (that is: the ***regular*** meal eaten by Christ and His disciples before the portions of unleavened bread and wine were served) 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.

Chapter Three

“The Lord’s Day” in 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?

Explaining “*en te kuriake hemera*”

The argument in Revelation 1:10 focuses on the term “Lord’s Day”—*en te kuriake hemera*. Pope John Paul II claimed that this verse: “...gives evidence of the practice of calling the first day of the week ‘the Lord’s Day’...” (*Pastoral Letter: Dies Domini* [the Lord’s Day]; May 31, 1998).

In this letter, he was addressing the critical problem of the profanation of *Sunday* and making a passionate plea for Catholics and others to make a concerted effort to return *Sunday* worship to its

rightful place of honor.

While it is a commendable goal for the leader of a major world religion to marshal moral forces to get his followers to abide by the great tenets to which their spiritual existence is tied and grounded, that does not automatically translate *ipso facto* (“by that very fact or act”) into 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: “...*hos-te kurios estin ho huios tou anthropon kai tou sabbatou*”: “Therefore the Son of man is also the Lord of the Sabbath.” If this is what Jesus Christ says is the truth of the matter—that He is the Lord of the Sabbath—then it is no big jump of logic to conclude that He is saying that the Sabbath (always meaning the seventh-day Sabbath in scripture) is *te kuriake hemera*: the Lord’s Day. He created it.

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 auto-matically mean that the expression “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? Why? He was the Lord God who created the seventh day Sabbath by resting from His previous work (Gen. 2:2, 3)!

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 (Gen. 2:2, 3) was the One who became Jesus Christ. Paul emphasizes this idea in Colossians 1:16 by saying that He not only created all things, but all things were created for Him. I would say, based on Paul’s assertion, that Jesus Christ 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? No. The ex-

pression “the Lord’s Day” in that case refers to something totally different! The remainder of the book of Revelation is about that “**Day**.” In this case, it has to do with a period of time measured by a special event having some special characteristics ...an era.

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 (Rev. 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 about Sunday—like legislators who add earmarks or amendments to important proposed legislation?

I hope you can appreciate the idea that it is important to ask the right questions when you study through the ideas people present to you. You can ask all the wrong questions you want to, but they will not get you closer to the truth of a matter. Let’s take a brief survey of the book.

Line upon Line ... Precept upon Precept (Isaiah 29:10)

Revelation 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 John’s 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***” (emphases added).

What information in this chapter would prompt the subheading “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 is poor-to-mediocre scholarship at best. It is *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 angels attending Him. Chapter 5 reveals the Lamb of God—the One who is Jesus Christ—and shows that He is the only One who has the power to open the scroll that reveals future events.

It would appear that the hymn sung by those attending God’s throne is part of the revelation of *things to come* because it points toward the result of the Lamb’s sacrifice in order to *set aside a kingdom of priests and kings to rule the world with Him*. Is that coming kingdom of any importance to this prophetic vision?

The Jerusalem Bible labels Chapters 4 and 5 with the subheading (1.) like this: “God entrusts the future of the world to the Lamb.” Let me increase the brevity of my explanation. The Lamb begins opening the ***seven seals*** of the scroll—each exposing a different future event, presumably commencing from John’s time and continuing in-

to 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 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—no more, no less). 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 during which the living are changed from flesh to spirit and the dead are raised to life as spirit-composed beings (see 1 Cor. 15:12-55; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).

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 on Earth (see Dan. 2:44, 45; 7:13-27; and Matt. 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. What is the point of this discussion?

May I take the expression “the Day of the Lord” and express it as the “Lord’s Day”? Yes. According to Isaiah 34:8 and 61:2, this “day of vengeance and recompense” will last one prophetic year

(360 days)—which will overlap the last year of the coming Tribulation period.

As clearly revealed in Revelation, Jesus Christ is going to recompense (pay back in kind) mankind for his sinful ways—especially for the way they have mistreated God’s people through the millennia.

It is interesting that the *Cruden’s Compact Concordance* lists Revelation 1:10 under the entry “Day of the Lord” and also refers the user to the entry as the “Great Day.” **That period of time is the focal point of Revelation** ... not **Sunday!**

That is the importance of John’s comment that he was in a prophetic trance or vision on [during] **the Lord’s day**. It does not matter how Traditional Christianity attempts to frame the argument about the change from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday and doing away with His Holy Days. They admit that in all of scripture **there is not one direct command from God** that the Church that Christ founded should be any different than anyone in the Old Testament with regard to His **Seventh-day Sabbath** commandment.

While it is true that **both** Houses of Israel were divorced by the Lord God (who later became Jesus Christ) because of their refusal to be obedient, it is also true that the True Church of God became the instrument responsible for continuing to announce God’s preparation for the fulfillment of His **original** plan. And, as we can see in Hebrews 4:8-11—written expressly to **New Testament Christians**—that God’s attitude toward the Sabbaths (remember Lev. 23) that He created very much applies to **them**. They were neither **changed** nor **annulled** (see Matt. 5:17-19; Rom. 3:31).

Not even the supposed authority of the Pope has the freedom to do away with or change God’s commandments (see Dan. 7:23-26). That is **God’s** story, and I am sticking to it!

Chapter Four

The Feast of Trumpets

Do you realize that this is not the only day of salvation—that God has planned a process of salvation that will span eternity? This is a concept that is by no means accepted or taught by most of the 32,000+ so-called “Christian” denominations throughout the world.

I base that conclusion on Isaiah 9:7 where Isaiah was inspired to prophesy that “There shall be no end to the increase of His government and peace....” The Hebrew term translated increase is mar-biyth. Notice the definition given by *Brown-Driver-Briggs*: “increase, great number, greatness.”

The various specific definitions refer to increases in the number of family members, and the amount of 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 ensure that such an increase will have the environment and the place 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 Matt. 24:21, 22)!

However, God’s holy days foreshadow the implementation of this increase. Let’s understand God’s revelation regarding this most

important subject.

How the Feast of Trumpets is Involved

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

Read Leviticus 23:23-25. Which feast follows the Feast of Pentecost? During which day and month does it occur? Of what is it a memorial? You will see a relationship between this Holy Day and Revelation 8:1-20:16. There was, however, an Old Testament *type* with which we should familiarize ourselves.

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

Now read Revelation 8-20. What is being discussed in these chapters (8:2)? Make a list of what each *trumpet* represents. What significant event happens with the blowing of the *seventh* (or, *last*) trumpet (11:15)? Are you convinced that this is part of God’s *punishment* of sinful mankind? Of His *defeat* of the world powers?

Now compare 1 Corinthians 15:50-54 to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. Which *trumpet* is highlighted here (1 Corinthians 15:52)? Does a *shout* accompany this trumpet? Again, what happens when that *last* trumpet is blown (Rev. 11:15; 14:14-20)? Is this indicative of a good thing to come (see Heb. 10:1; 11:39, 40)?

What happens in Zechariah 14? Once Jesus greets the resurrected Saints in the clouds, where does He take them and for what purpose (v. 5; see also 1 Thes. 4:17)? What does He become once He has defeated the nations involved in this event (v. 9)? What is this period of time called (Zech. 14:1)?

Compare this to Revelation 1:10—which announces the entire context of the book of Revelation. Does this help you to understand the term **Day of the Lord**? Compare this to Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:19-27; Revelation 5:9, 10; and chapters 15-19. What do they have in common?

There are two scriptures in Isaiah that help us to understand this period of time. Isaiah 61:2 speaks of the acceptable **year** of the Lord and compares it to the **day** of vengeance. In like manner, Isaiah 63:4 refers to the **day** of vengeance and compares it to “...the **year** of my **redeemed**.”

This **day** of the Lord is not **Sunday**, as many who use Revelation 1:10 to “prove” the move from the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday claim it is! That claim is **illogical** on its face!

The Prophetic Sense of the Day/Year Concept

Here’s the **prophetic** sense of this day/year concept:

(a) Jesus Christ will return on the cloud (see Matt. 24:27-36; Acts 1:9-11) to pour out the seven trumpet plagues (Rev. 6 through 11 and 14:14-20).

(b) The last trumpet effects the **first** resurrection from the dead and the instantaneous change from flesh to spirit of those faithful who are still alive (1 Cor. 15:37-58; 2 Cor. 4:7-5:8.);

(c) Once the Saints are gathered to Him on the cloud, there will occur, apparently, the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:6-9); and

(d) In Zechariah 14, He and His Saints will descend to Jerusalem to engage in the battle of Armageddon with the nations of the world gathered there to capture Jerusalem (see

Rev. 19:11-21).

From the time He first appears on the cloud until the victory described in Revelation 11:15, one prophetic year will have passed (360 days). Study carefully Revelation 6:12-17 and 8:1-11:15. Make note that one of the trumpet plagues lasts five months (9:1-5).

This prophetic year overlaps the last 360 days of the 1260-day tribulation period. This prophetic year is the fulfillment of the symbolism of the Feast of Trumpets.

As you can very well see, this part of God's Law has not yet been fulfilled by Christ (see Matt. 5:17). How, then, could the Law have been nailed to the cross as some claim? The words fulfill/fulfilled are translated from the Greek term pleroo ... which means "to bring to its full expression (i.e.: the meaning intended); to show it forth in its true meaning" (see also Rom. 3:31).

Theological "Drift"

How can so many "Christians" describe the return of Jesus Christ as a quick, "blink of the eye" moment to resurrect the dead Christians and change the living to spirit ... and immediately haul all of them back to Heaven for their eternal reward? The dead Christian, according to most "Christian" doctrines, is supposed to have already gone to Heaven when s/he died! I even heard one minister at a funeral claim that the dead woman was already in the New Heavens and New Earth (see Isa. 65:17-25)!!!

Pay attention to the following quote from a major denomination's doctrinal faith and message and note the vagueness of it:

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell,

the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord (emphases added).

That is an overly-broad description maintained by most of denominational Christianity. It does not include any mention of those who, they claim, have died and already gone to Heaven or Hell. The author later explains that there are "...problems concerning last things." Why?

He says that many who interpret them differ about the number of returns, resurrections, judgments, and the millennial reign of Jesus Christ. So, he says:

It is sufficient to say that one's position as to details has never been a test of orthodoxy among Baptists (emphases added)."

Meaning: You can believe whatever you want to believe ... just do not stir up problems in the congregation. See if that can be justified by what Paul taught in Ephesians 4:1-16.

You need to know and understand what is God's truth about this matter. Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52 that our change from flesh to spirit will be "in the twinkling [i.e.: an instant] of an eye." From there we go to the cloud where Jesus Christ sits (1 Thes. 4:13-18; Rev. 14:14-20) and experience whatever the "marriage supper" will be (Rev. 19:6-9). We then follow Jesus Christ to Jerusalem to fight the armies of the world in the Battle of Armageddon (Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14). All of this proves that we do not immediately go to Heaven. The rest of the explanation proves that we do not even go back to Heaven for eternity!

If you understand the prophetic nature of the Holy Days and the promises of God, then it is not difficult to understand how things transpire from Christ's return to the establishment of His Kingdom

on Earth. Too much theological “drift” that was brought into “Christianity” by the early “Church Fathers” has changed God’s truth into a lie. If the “lie” has been the “normal,” then it is difficult to convince the followers of the “lie” that they are deceived (see Rom. 1:18-32; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; 11:3, 4, 13-15).

One scripture should solve the problem. Many will not even consider it because of the “mysterious” nature of the book of Revelation. Read Revelation 20:4-15. Verses 4 and 5 speak of those who have received the change from flesh to spirit at Christ’s return. The last part of v. 4 says that they will “... reign with [Christ] a thousand years...” after His return. According to the Apostle John (Rev. 1:1-3), God gave him this vision of things to come in the “last days.” Do you find that difficult to understand/believe?

Summary

Although Pentecost represents the “firstfruit” harvest, the Feast of Trumpets is the broader discussion about how that “harvest” takes place. Zechariah 14 and Revelation 6-21 represent the finer details involved. Why does mainstream “Christianity” have a problem understanding this?

They have been led astray by the theological “drift” perpetrated by the early Church “Fathers” and their prejudice against anything “Jewish.” They are the ones who claimed that the crucifixion of Jesus Christ did away with the laws of the Old Testament.

If you have no-to-low regard for the Old Testament laws given to Israel (the tribe of Judah is only one of the 12 tribes) by the Lord God (who became Jesus Christ), then you fail to understand Romans 11 and Hebrews 8. Read what Paul plainly says in Hebrews 8 about why Jesus Christ brought about the New Covenant. Pay attention to where the fault of the Old Covenant lay (vv. 7-9). Compare Hebrews 8:8-13 to Romans 11:1, 29-32. Now read Romans 3:31.

Colossians 2:14 is most often considered to be Paul’s claim that the Old Testament covenant and Law were done away by the cruci-

fixion of Jesus Christ. That is *faulty* reasoning because the expression “handwriting of *ordinances*” has to do with *dogma* (a belief that is *assumed* to be true, e. g.: the immortality of the soul; December 24 as the birthdate of Jesus Christ; Sunday at sunrise as the resurrection of Jesus Christ) not law. Paul was warning the Colossians that the *Gnostic* “Christian” religious doctrines and practices were pagan lies!

Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich translates “ordinances” to be *bond*, and Barclay translates it to be “charge-list.” Adam Clarke says the following:

“*Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances*” most evidently means the ceremonial law. This was against them, for they were bound to fulfill it; and it was contrary to them, as condemning them for their neglect and transgression of it. Num. 5:23, [is] where the curses written in the book ... are directed to be blotted out with the bitter waters. ... When Christ was nailed to the cross, our obligation to fulfill *these* ordinances was done away (emphases added).

It is true that Numbers 5 has to do with various ordinances that were levied against certain *diseased* people and sinful actions of the people. Verses 5-10 have to do with the confession of sins committed and actually paying a “fine” for doing so. You can read how that is exacted and enforced.

However, a closer reading of vv. 11-31 reveals laws/ordinances about confessions of sins regarding *marital infidelity* problems. The “bitter water” mentioned is a means by which the truth about a jealousy was found out. It is hardly reasonable to claim that *this* is what Paul meant when he wrote Colossians 2:14.

God’s holy days are a testimony that, in Christ, our sins are removed from us “...as far as the east is from the west.” Do you remember the old saying that “east is east and west is west, and never the twain shall meet”? The same is *not* true of north and south.

When you properly understand the spiritual nature of these holy days, then you will understand that God’s law is “holy, just, and good” (see Rom. 7:12). Paul’s point there is that our death to sin through Jesus Christ is what prevents the law from condemning us to death (see vv. 13-25). What is the “law of sin” (v. 25)? Ezekiel 18:20-32.

Clarke is not correct in his commentary. His answer is dogma. That is not to say that the Lord God has not expressed jealousy toward Israel (Num. 25:11; Deut. 32:21). Numbers 5:23 is not applicable except in the situations described in Numbers 5:23 (read Hos. 2). He has other means of punishing Israel for her sins (Lev. 26; Deut. 28).

God’s holy days, when correctly understood, will help you understand God’s marvelous plan for mankind and how He, through Jesus Christ, will make it possible for the true Christian to be part of the salvation He will make available to us.

Chapter Five

The Day of Atonement

It was impressed upon me early in my conversion process that one truth from God can save us numerous other unnecessary questions. The Day of Atonement presents us with such a truth in relationship to the question of whether or not God sold Jesus' soul to the Devil in exchange for the souls of mankind (dogma). That is the basis for the concept of "harrowing hell" put out by some misguided medieval (Old English and Middle English) theologians about what happened to Christ between His death and resurrection.

One of the so-called "Church fathers," Origen, presented that idea as one of God's "divine stratagems" for dealing with sin. He taught that after Satan accepted God's offer of the sale, he discovered that he was unable to hold Christ—thereby losing both the soul of Christ and the souls of men. Origen presented this as a scheme by the Father to beat Satan at his own game. It sounds great, but...the basic problem is that scripture nowhere teaches the concept of an immortal soul in Christ or man.

God does not need sneaky schemes to defeat Satan. God's truth is shown in the symbolism of the Day of Atonement. How has God really ransomed mankind from the consequences of sin? Leviticus 23:26-32 is a good place to start.

During which day and month is the Day of Atonement to be observed? What is the consequence for not observing this day? For how long is this law in force? Is it also called a Sabbath? As you discover the spiritual intent of this law, see if you can justify doing away with it. In other words, what is wrong with the reason the law exists? Especially if it has "...dominion over a man as long as he

lives” and is “...holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:1, 12).

The Atonement Drama

A *drama* is a serious performance intended to portray life or character or tell a story. Now read Leviticus 16:7-10, 15-22. How many goats were used in the Atonement services? How did they determine which goat was going to represent the parts of the atonement process? Which goat was to be *sacrificed* for sins, and which was to be the *scapegoat*—an innocent person who is blamed for the wrongdoings, mistakes, or faults of others, especially for reasons of expediency? How is the *sacrificed* goat used? How is the *scapegoat* used? Now read Isaiah 53. This is the prophecy about the death of Jesus Christ.

It is not uncommon for commentators to make a mistake about this ceremony by claiming that the Israelites “borrowed” a good bit of it from their pagan Canaanite neighbors—including the part where the scapegoat (what they call “the goat for Azazel”) is taken to the desert place never to return. In a former Church association, the Pastor General taught that the Azazel goat symbolized *Satan the Devil*. He did not include Isaiah 53 in his argument. That would have clarified the matter considerably. He was not alone in this matter.

Note this comment in *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 2; p. 78):

Azazel is one evil spirit among [many unclean spirits], and corresponds generally to the person of *Satan*. In modern terms we might say that the sins of the people were laid upon a goat which was then consigned to the devil. ...*The ritual of the goat for Azazel may therefore represent a concession to popular demands; it was perhaps sufficient to satisfy, and to a certain extent to sanctify and make respectable, crude and superstitious beliefs in the power of ‘spirits’*” (emphases added).

So, the **people** are given credit for having *demande*d such a ritual! Be sure that you read Leviticus 16:1, 9, 23, 26, and 33. Does the language appear to be that of the Lord God *making concessions* to the people? You have to be careful with the concepts found in commentaries.

Then, the commentators equate *Azazel* with a desert demon for whom the goat is set aside (see *Moffatt's* translation)—which makes the observance a *syncretic* religious exercise (i.e.: combining different religions, cultures, or schools of thought) that is far less than a direct command from the Lord God Himself.

This is not unlike the popular concept that the Devil's job is to get and punish the bad people—usually expressed by saying: “The Devil is going to get you.” God's truth is **not** a mixture of what He reveals and pagan trash! Read Revelation 20:10. Satan is to be thrown into the Lake of Fire with unrepentant humans. Read Deuteronomy 12:29-32! What does it say about what the Lord God might have done if the **people** had demanded such a thing of Him? We must understand that!

While it is indisputable that Israel borrowed and/or practiced much from her pagan neighbors (that is: *syncretized*), you must remember that the Lord God warned them **not** to do such a thing. Deuteronomy 12:29-32 and Deuteronomy 29:10-29 are His specific commands **not** to investigate the way their heathen neighbors worshiped their gods. Read the verses carefully and note that He did **not** want them to *adopt* the abominable practices of those foreign gods—which included the practice of sacrificing their children to them.

You can read other warnings in Exodus 20:3-5, Exodus 23:13, Isaiah 48:1-11, Jeremiah 10, and 1 Kings 18:21 as a small sampling. What you must understand is that the Bible is God's revelation of how mankind is expected to conduct himself toward God and his fellow man! God's truth is not an *amalgamation* of Israel's religion and that of her pagan neighbors. So, the scapegoat is **not** something adopted from *paganism*. It is *God's* personal revelation.

Others declare that the *scapegoat* represents Satan himself—the

one who is *really* responsible for the sins of mankind (Gen. 3:1-7). They say that mankind's sins are laid upon Satan because he deserves to suffer the consequences of his deceptions. They use Revelation 20:1-3 as the fulfillment of this symbolism.

Revelation 20:7-10 makes it plain, however, that Satan is only *temporarily* confined to the abyss—whereas, the scapegoat *does not return* from the desert place. It *dies* there—which symbolizes the death and destruction of *sin* itself (compare Rom. 6:23 to Rev. 20:14 and 1 Cor. 15:24-26).

Read Matthew 27:46: “My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?” That was the “desert place” to which our sins were consigned on the sacrificed body of Jesus Christ! Second Corinthians 5:21 says that God the Father made *Jesus Christ* to be *sin* for us. First Corinthians 15:26 says that the last enemy Christ will conquer is *death*. Revelation 20:14 says that both *death* and the *grave* (hell/Hades) will be thrown into the lake of fire for destruction. What does all of that tell you about the *scapegoat*?

Ezekiel 18:4, 20 also make it plain that the *individual* is responsible for whatever sins s/he has committed. Both sin and righteousness are matters of one's personal choice. God has provided the means by which we can be righteous—but we must *choose* to be righteous (see Deut. 30:15-20).

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

What we see in the dramatic symbolism of the two goats is simple: either of them at one point could have been the sacrificial goat or the scapegoat. *Both* had to be of the type and quality to serve the purpose which the lots decided for them—namely, a type of *Christ*.

It would seem, therefore, that each goat represents a different aspect of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ: one dealing with the *covering*

of our sins with His blood and the *cleansing* that is brought about by it, and one dealing with the **eternal removal of our sins** so they are ultimately no longer remembered by either God or the one who committed them (see Isa. 65:16, 17).

Finally, read 2 Corinthians 6:14-18. How would these verses indicate that Satan is **not** involved in the process by which our sins are dealt with in Jesus Christ? How does God hold **you** responsible?

Other Scriptural Considerations

In a previous Church relationship, the Pastor General also taught that God originally intended that the angels were to be given the opportunity to become the “sons of God” and inherit the Earth as their place of abode. The implication was that man was subsequently chosen because of Lucifer’s rebellion, in which at least 1/3 of the angels joined his cause (see Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:12-19).

The Pastor General either overlooked, or misinterpreted, Hebrews 1:5-14. Paul stresses two times (in v. 5 and v. 13) that **at no time** did God **ever** do such a thing. Ephesians 1:4, Philippians 2:5-13, and 1 Peter 1:18-20 testify that God conceived of making mankind in the likeness of Elohim **before the creation of the orderly universe**. That could *precede* the creation of the angels.

Ephesians 1:4-14 and 1 Peter 1:18-20 show that Elohim (John 3:1-3, 14) considered the possibility that mankind could/would sin because They would allow them freedom of choice/thought. Philippians 2:5-11 shows that, at that same time of the formation of the *concept*, the Word (the One who became Jesus Christ) divested Himself of His **equality** with His divine partner in order to be the sin sacrifice if mankind ever sinned and needed to be redeemed. **That decision was the precedent for the law regarding atonement**. The two goats were types/symbols of the role that Jesus Christ would assume at the appropriate time. Read Isaiah 53. How does that prophecy fit into this “picture”?

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

Now consider what you read in Isaiah 53. What great lesson should we derive from this prophecy? Was God going to allow an innocent man to suffer for the sins of mankind? Would you say that our sins were laid upon Him— and not Satan the Devil?

Second Corinthians 5:17-21 explains how God has reconciled us to Himself (atonement). How did He do this? Verse 21 says that God made Jesus Christ to be sin for us so that we can be made the righteousness of God. That claim bears some explanation.

This has to be understood relative to the Atonement ceremony in Leviticus 16:8-10. Focus your attention on the term “scapegoat” (*KJV*). That term is used four times in the Old Testament—all of them in Leviticus 16 (vv. 8, 10 [2x], 26).

A scapegoat is an innocent someone who bears the blame for the mistakes of others. You can see in Leviticus 16:7-10 that this was determined by the casting of lots regarding the fate of the two goats. In fact, v. 5 shows that both goats were for sin offerings.

That would indicate that both were atonement sacrifices that pictured the role of Jesus Christ in: (a) dying in our place and (b) removing our sins from us as far as east is from the west. He was an innocent man who had committed no sin. Read Isaiah 53 again. It says that God laid upon Him “our sins” (vv. 4, 5, 12). That is a “picture” of the scapegoat.

Adam Clarke rightly observes that the translators had given that meaning in other places in scripture where the same concept is expressed and did not do the same in this case. As a result, an infamous meaning was derived that would make Jesus Christ the greatest sinner in all of history if He was made to become sin because all the sins of mankind (at the most) or the Elect (at the least) were now to

be reckoned as the sins that **Jesus Christ** had committed!

In effect, then, would you conclude that **our** sins were laid upon Jesus Christ in fulfillment of the Atonement symbolism? Do you still have to have the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the purposes of salvation and the removal of sins that you might commit after your initial repentance (see 1 John 2:1, 2)?

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

*** Use the space below to write your explanation. ***

Chapter Six

The Feast of Tabernacles

The Fall festivals center around all of the vegetables, grains, and fruit that come to fruition during that time of the year—like grapes, corn, pumpkins, winter squash, oranges, grapefruits, lemons, apples, pears, various greens, and pomegranates.

The Feast of Tabernacles is also called the *Feast of Ingathering* (Ex. 23:16) and *the Feast of Booths* (because of God’s command to live in booths during that festival period (see Lev. 23:39-43).

There is great, meaningful, prophetic symbolism involved in this great Feast. Let’s discover God’s revelation.

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

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

Now read 1 Corinthians 10:6-11; 21. Of what *prophetic* importance is *Israelite* history to us today? You should understand that such history was not put there for no reason.

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

(Rom. 5:14; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45).

As an indication of the *future*, we must be aware of the consequences of certain behaviors—either to imitate them or to avoid them (see vv. 6-22). So, our present-day task is to come to grips with these Holy Days as *prophetic types* of some good thing to come and to figure out how their *realities* are found in the mission and person of Jesus Christ.

Prophetic Types

One would legitimately wonder, then, of what is dwelling in *booths* a *prophetic type* and what is the *reality* in Christ? What *prophetic* reality does it portend? Remember that the Israelites lived in these booths for *40 years* on their way to the Promised Land. Read Numbers 14:26-39 to understand how their sinful murmuring and faithlessness *postponed* their entrance into the Promised Land. That is an example to *us* today! It is also a *prophetic warning* not to do as they did!

Was the dwelling in booths a *temporary* condition—or a *permanent* condition? Did they leave the booths behind every time they broke camp? Was the Lord God with them as they journeyed from Egypt to the Promised Land? Pay attention to the time lines and what happened during that time.

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

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

years!

Read Hebrews 11:8-10. In what did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob live while they sojourned in the Promised Land? Why didn't they build permanent dwellings? Whom did they expect to design and build a permanent city? Why do you suppose it is important for you to understand the difference between the temporary nature of their situation as opposed to the permanent nature of God's planned city? Was this expectation of God's reality part of the faith they had (read v. 1)?

Now read verses 13-16. We know that Israel moved out of tents and built dwellings with foundations once they entered the Promised Land, but was the city that was designed and built by God ever placed there? Did they still consider themselves as being pilgrims and strangers on Earth?

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

How does the Apostle Paul describe the human body in 2 Corinthians 5:1-5? Are we, in fact, in a temporary dwelling? Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-5:8. How does this help you to understand about man being a creature of the dust? How does it help you to understand how the temporary body will ultimately give way to the permanent body? What does Paul mean by saying that "mortality might be swallowed up of life" (*KJV*; emphases added)? How might this understanding help you to prove that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is a false doctrine?

The Focus of the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles focuses on two things: (a) the 1,000-year Kingdom of God on Earth (Rev. 20:4, 5) and (b) the temporary nature of all that is part and parcel to this present world. Related to

that idea is that God, through Jesus Christ, is the one and only source by which humans can move from booths in the wilderness to permanent dwellings designed and built by God (see Dan. 2:44; 7:27). In the above-cited scripture, Paul, by no means, is saying that we will go to heaven to spend eternity.

You must remember to interpret scripture in the context of the overall message—which is God, with us, ruling an eternal Kingdom on Earth (see especially Rev. 21:1-4). The 1,000-year Kingdom of God itself is a time of the Lord God tabernacling among us—but, it, too, is a temporary situation confined to a 1,000-year span of time. It is, however, going to become a permanent situation as described in Revelation 21 and 22. Jesus Christ will use that 1,000-year period to subdue all of God’s enemies and to reconcile all things in heaven and on earth to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24-28; Eph. 1:10; Col. 1:20).

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

Even the Hasidic Jews, in places like New York City, do not have available to them the various types of branches they would need to construct their booths. Instead, they use something like reed mats to build booths on their fire escapes—but they only spend parts of the day in them ... perhaps mealtimes. All of these are considered to be the modern symbolic equivalent of temporary dwellings—which is the symbolic meaning applied to this festival period.

You can see in Nehemiah 8:16-18 how the Jews who returned from Babylon constructed them everywhere in Jerusalem—on roofs, in their yards, in court areas, and in the streets.

You should be able to understand that the focus of the Feast of Tabernacles (a seven-day period) is on the temporary nature even of that 1,000-year Kingdom of God on Earth ... not in heaven. You

should know by now the bogus nature of the “heaven” doctrine.

The Great White Throne Judgment

Why does God say that the Feast of Tabernacles is seven days long ... and then add an additional day to it? It is thought by some to be merely the closing ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles (see *NIV* Lev. 23:36). How would you understand God’s message/lesson about this eighth day if you seemingly have nothing in the New Testament to explain it?

We have God’s inspired comment in Amos 3:7 that He will do nothing without revealing it to His servants the prophets. So, there must be something in scripture that interprets this eighth day for us. If the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles includes the 1,000-year Kingdom of God, what would the extra “eighth” day symbolize?

This is one of the most astounding revelations by God about His plan of salvation. This is the most profound revelation of God’s love and fatherliness that you could ever imagine—and ... it is not understood or taught by Traditional Christianity. Let’s take a very close look at God’s revelation.

What do 1 Corinthians 15:50-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:4-6 have in common? Do you understand that this is the first resurrection that is to occur at the return of Jesus Christ? If so, then do you understand that this is the first phase of God’s plan of salvation that will get all things back on track in order to complete the original plan of God as stated in Genesis 1:26, 27 (refer back to Acts 3:19-21; Rom. 8:19-39 and Eph. 1:10)? Remember the principle inherent in ordinal numbers.

What do Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:13-28; Isaiah 2:1-5; Zechariah 14:16; and Revelation 11:15; 20:4 have in common? Do you understand that Jesus Christ and the Saints will rule over human beings during the 1,000-year Kingdom—over the survivors of the Tribulation and Day of the Lord?

If they are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ and are ulti-

mately changed from flesh to spirit, do you understand that they will be secondfruits in God's plan of salvation? Would that 1,000-year Kingdom fulfill the symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles?

Now read Revelation 20:5-13. Do you understand that there is going to be a second resurrection at the close of the 1,000-year Kingdom period? To which group does this resurrection apply? Who are the rest of the dead? Are they raised to eternal life—or to a flesh-and-blood life? (Form your answer based on the expression “second death” used in vv. 6, 14.) Will they be judged out of books? Is there also a Book of Life that will be used? Do you recognize the continued effort to bring humans to salvation? Do these humans go through a judgment process?

John 7:2, 37-40 speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles. Pay attention to which of God's Feasts Jesus is observing here. Verses 39 and 40 mention the eighth day. By what name is it known here? What would you suppose would be the importance of the water imagery used by Jesus? That will be covered below.

A number of translations call this the last and greatest day of the Feast (for examples: *NIV*, *The Jerusalem Bible*, Luther's German translation). The *Modern Language* translation calls it the most important day. For obvious reasons, then, it also has been called The Last Great Day of the Lord and The Great White Throne Judgment. What would this imply? Last is an ordinal word. It is a signal that there will be no more of this type of day after this.

Then you have a comparison in the superlative degree in the word greatest. While there might have been great days and greater days, the greatness of this day is above and beyond them. Pentecost and Trumpets represent a great harvest; the Feast of Tabernacles represents a greater harvest by comparison because it is a larger harvest than the others.

If, then, the *NIV* and others are correct by translating John 7:39 and 40 to say the last and greatest day, then this eighth day represents the last and greatest harvest of this kind. That does not mean that any subsequent human populations will not come to salvation.

It means that *this is the end of the ministry of reconciliation necessitated by the sin of Adam and Eve* (see 2 Cor. 5:17-20).

The Water Imagery

The *water imagery* represents an outpouring of the *Holy Spirit*. John 7:39, 40 infer that the Holy Spirit will be made available to those resurrected at the last day because they will not yet have been changed from flesh to spirit. They, too, must be trained to be holy, loving, and blameless. Once they have been, they will be changed from flesh to spirit.

Does this mean that the Holy Spirit was not available at all until the day of Pentecost? No. If that were the case, how would David, after his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah, have so earnestly prayed that God would not take His Holy Spirit from him (read 2 Sam. 11:1-12:25 and Psa. 51—especially vv. 10-12)?

How would there have been some of *true faith*—like Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others—during the Old Testament period if they were not indwelt and influenced by the Holy Spirit (read Heb. 11). How can you explain the problem here?

Holy Spirit Implies Great Power

Are you aware of the fact that *atomic power* was available to mankind during the days of *Adam and Eve*? I like Barclay's explanation of this in his commentary on John. Their problem was that they did not have the *knowledge* or *means* by which they could tap into it.

Mankind did not invent atomic power. They *discovered* it (*The Gospel of John*; vol. 1; p. 265). But the atomic power they tapped into during the 1930s and 40s is nothing compared to the atomic power available to them in this present century.

The availability of the Holy Spirit is similar ... but not the exact

same thing. Rightly understood, Holy Spirit has always been available to mankind, but it was not until the Pentecost experience, after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, that greater numbers of mankind were allowed to enjoy its power to a more appreciable degree. Paul calls it the firstfruits of the Spirit in Romans 8:23. Because of the ordinal number involved, there is the automatic assumption that there will be secondfruits.

Even then, it has not been as widely available as it will be when God's Kingdom is established. However, when this last and greatest day occurs, it will be poured out to its maximum extent (see Joel 2: 23-27 and Rev. 20:7-15). That means that it will be available to even greater numbers of humans in a more concentrated amount. What we now experience will pale into insignificance compared to that day.

That is the thrust of Jeremiah's prophecy in Jeremiah 31:33, 34—which is a prophecy about some of those who will be in this second resurrection. When all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest, it will be no longer necessary to try to encourage someone to learn about Him because all will then be empowered by God's Holy Spirit to guide them in their lives. That will be when Romans 12:1, 2 will be realized to the full.

That is the thrust of the idea of having God's laws in one's inward parts, written in his/her heart—as opposed to it being an external force obeyed only by the face value of what it says (see Matt. 5:21-47). That is what the new covenant is about: the problem with the people will be fixed!

Read John 7:37-40 again so you can better understand this concept. Also, read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Note how Paul reveals that the gift of the Holy Spirit has to do with God revealing to us what and how He thinks. It has to do with holy knowledge, holy understanding, and holy living. God will be making available to those who are changed from flesh to spirit great power to do whatever great work we are assigned in the eternity ahead. It will not be just sitting around in heaven staring into the face of God!

Chapter Seven

The Great White Throne Judgment

It is safe to say that this part of the study involves subject matter that is not generally taught among the 32,000+ “Christian” denominations of the world. Consider the doctrinal statements below as you contemplate what you are about to be taught.

...While God’s sovereignty over the natural universe is presented in the New Testament, the ***major*** emphasis is placed upon God’s reign *in the hearts* of all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior. *Jesus sought to guard against the idea of an earthly territorial kingdom.* ...[T]he thought is that the kingdom of God is ***not*** an observable political unit; it is the reign of God among/within men. Some Baptists and others see Jesus at his return reigning on the earth for a thousand years. ***One’s position at this point is not a test of orthodoxy.***.... (Herschel H. Hobbs, 1971; emphases added)

This study of the Great White Throne Judgment and beyond is not something generally known and/or taught among denominational “Christianity”. Please be advised that you need to practice the “line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, there a little” approach in this study. Do not rush through it and ignore the finer parts. Think. *Think. **Think.***

The Great White Throne Judgment

Read Ezekiel 38:14-39:29 and Revelation 20:7-10. What event of major importance occurs after the 1,000 years are finished (v. 11)? Is Satan released from the bottomless pit into which he was thrown (vv. 1-3)? How are Gog and Magog destroyed? Are Satan, the Beast, and the False Prophet thrown into the lake of fire? What is meant by the expression “they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”? The last question is a tricky one.

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

They will reject that grace and will receive the appropriate punishment for their intransigence. Satan will be allowed, for a very short space of time, to practice his deceptive ways, then his judgment will come. The Beast and the False Prophet will have already been cast into this lake of fire (Rev. 19:20)—which suggests that it also could have been used during the 1,000-year Kingdom period for the incorrigibly wicked who survived the tribulation and Day of the Lord.

Note the language used in Isaiah 34:8-10. If this is, indeed, the Day of the Lord revealed to John, then it appears that all of the streams and rivers to the southeast of Jerusalem will be turned to pitch—a petroleum product—to provide the basic fuel by which this lake of fire will burn.

Could that mean that God causes the vast oil reserves of that area to catch fire and spread? There is no way to tell—but it is an interesting thought. However, if that were the case, then there is not an unlimited supply of oil to fuel that fire for ever and ever into eternity.

What about the expression “for ever and ever”? Does this signal

that they will be punished by fire for eternity? No. That is a misconception that has been foisted off on so-called “Christians” in the false concept of the eternal fires of hell that are supposed to torment unsaved souls forever. How can we properly understand God’s revelation here if it does not mean for eternity? This expression cannot mean for eternity because of some mitigating factors of which we must be aware.

The Greek word aion, from which it is translated, can mean “a space of time—as in a life-time, a generation, a period of history, or an indefinitely long period.” It has the possibility of meaning eternity; but it also has the possibility of meaning “for as long as the circumstances which necessitate the condition exist.” That being the case, we need to understand which mitigating circumstances would cause it to mean something other than eternity.

This is where you need to read and understand the focal point of Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:10-13, and Revelation 21, 22. Your first question is this: Is there coming a time when God will destroy all that is part of this present, evil world and replace it with new heavens and a new earth? Could you imagine any purpose or need for any such thing as an eternal lake of fire in such a marvelous new creation?

Now, your next three questions: Would you imagine that such a purification process could be stopped for any reason before it accomplishes what God intends? Would that make it an unquenchable fire? Would there be eternal consequences involved?

Pay close attention to the following analogy. You can set a piece of paper on fire and let it burn to black and gray ashes before the fire goes out. That fire would be unquenched—but not eternal. There could be eternal consequences for the paper involved: it could never be allowed to be reconstituted as the paper it once was.

This is a mitigating circumstance that helps us to understand the Greek term aion as “a space of time” that is not necessarily eternity. In many other scriptures, it is made plain that the face of the earth is going to be renewed. In other words, the old planet will not be destroyed in order to make way for a new planet. It will be purged by

fire and renewed (compare 2 Pet. 3:10-13 to Acts 3:19-21).

Notice what Isaiah 65:17 says: “...the former [creation] shall not be remembered, nor come to mind” (emphases added). How would that be possible if the punishment and the place in which it is executed exists eternally? That is another mitigating circumstance.

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

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

Consider the following commentary. God apparently created three cherubim who would have the highest rank among the angelic beings—that is, they were archangels (arch, in this case, denoting highest rank—like archbishop and archenemy, not an arch that is a curved structure like an opening in a wall or window): Michael, Gabriel, and Lucifer. Some add an archangel that is not named in scripture: Raphael.

These three were ordained to serve at the very throne of God Himself—spreading their wings to provide a type of covering to keep Him from being exposed to created beings who might die from being exposed to His brightness.

After the original creation of Genesis 1:1, but before the seven days of creation described in Genesis 1:2-2:3, Lucifer rebelled because he thought he was bright enough and powerful enough to throw God off His throne. Isaiah 14 reveals that he believed he could be the Most High God!

It appears from Revelation 12:3, 4 that he convinced one-third

of the angels (called stars here) to rebel with him. In this revelation given to John, it appears that Satan will make another attempt to depose God just prior to the tribulation period. That coming rebellion will be put down by Michael and other angels (see vv. 7-9).

Satan's being cast down to earth will set the stage for the tribulation period (read Rev. 13:1-9). Revelation 20:10 is the fulfillment of Ezekiel 28:18, 19. **Satan will be burned to ashes—devoured and destroyed like that piece of paper spoken of above.** So will anyone and anything else that is thrown into that fire. Will it last for eternity?

No. There will come a time when there is no more fuel available to burn, and it will go out. Yet, there will be eternal consequences because those destroyed by it will never exist again in any form whatsoever—and they and their works will be forgotten and never again brought to mind (Isa. 65:17).

Relating the Second Resurrection to the Eighth Day

How is the second resurrection related to the eighth day? We will begin that discussion by reading Revelation 20:11-13. What kind of event is described here? Does this describe dead people coming to life and standing before God's throne? Would you conclude, then, that this is the second resurrection taking place after Satan and Gog and Magog have been dealt with? What happens to these resurrected dead?

What is Ezekiel describing in Ezekiel 37? Is this a resurrection to a physical life as opposed to a spirit life? What clues are given in the text?

So, a resurrection does not necessarily mean being brought up from the dead in a spirit body? Think of Lazarus in this case (John 11:1-45). Whom has God resurrected in Ezekiel 37? From where does God take them (v. 21)? Where does God cause them to live? Who will be their king? Will He make a new covenant with them? What effect will this have on the non-Israelites (v. 28)?

Pay close attention to what is going on here. The only time such

a massive resurrection from the dead will occur is what Revelation 20:5, 6 indicates is the **second** resurrection. If God raises them from the dead in a *physical* human body and causes them to live in the land He promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, one should suspect that He is going to give them an opportunity—a span of time—to come to salvation.

Obviously, He is going to allow them a chance to live long enough to be re-educated in His thoughts and ways. Compare this prophecy to Paul’s comments in Romans 11 regarding the future salvation of *all of Israel*. Note especially Romans 11:25-36.

Of equal importance is the impression this will make on non-Israelites—the heathen (vv. 21, 28)—who are also in the same second resurrection. The heathen are in the same boat with the Israelites. According to Revelation 20:6, these in the **second** resurrection will be subject to the **second** death—which means that they will be *destroyed* in the lake of fire if they are not brought to salvation during whatever space of time they are given to be re-educated in God’s thoughts and ways. Some wrongly teach that Isaiah 65:20 indicates that they will be allowed *100 years* to be converted.

God’s intention and plan is that the **non-Israelites** will be impressed with God’s love, forgiveness, and faithfulness to His plan and purpose. Once they know and understand His revealed truth, they will be able to make an informed decision about being reconciled to Him through Jesus Christ. If they ignore God, if they are unimpressed and refuse to accept this great love and grace and mercy, they, too, will be destroyed. What relationship does this information have to with the **books** spoken of in Revelation 20:12?

Opening the “Books”

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

tually ignored by Traditional Christianity. If read by them, then it is seriously misinterpreted.

When was the last time you heard any of the mainstream “Christian” denominations discuss this in any form or fashion? Rarely, if ever, is my guess. You can tell that they pick and choose their theology about “last things” by the way they encourage people to make their professions of faith before Jesus returns—often punctuating it with the claim that He could return tonight and catch them off-guard. Trust me: He cannot return tonight; He will not do so.

Let’s consider the following quote from a representative of main-stream “Christianity”:

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven. (Herschel H. Hobbs, 1971)

There are things that God says must happen before Christ’s return is put into play. Understanding that, however, does not excuse those who have been taught God’s revealed truth and then decide to take their chances on the second resurrection (see Heb. 10:26 and James 4:17). When they do discuss it, they cast this scripture in the role of the judgment of all of mankind.

Consider the following quote from *The Interpreter’s Bible* (vol. 12; pp. 524, 525):

This second or general resurrection is apparently physical, i.e., the souls of both the righteous and the wicked which went to Hades (Sheol) at death are now reunited with their earthly bodies.... Also, it may be inferred that without a

physical body the saved could not enjoy the blessings of eternal life on earth nor could the wicked be suitably punished in the fiery lake (emphases added).

Ah! The ever-present need to make the Bible conform with the pagan concept of the immortal soul! That is dogma. The above stated scenarios are not scriptural—especially since the firstfruits will have already been judged and given their reward and offices of service 1,000 years prior to this event.

Also, they attempt to validate their claim by referring to various beliefs of the Greeks, Zoroastrians, Judaism, and the uninspired, unscriptural intertestamental Apocryphal writings. The pagan concept of the immortal soul—which is rooted in the idolatrous Babylonian Mystery Religion—figures prominently in this theological misconception.

In brief, none of these concepts have any place in the revelation of God’s truth. If they did, they all would be prominent in the spreading of God’s truth today. Instead, they are what easily could be classified as the traditions of men and the commandments and doctrines of men—dogma (see Matt. 15:1-9, Rom. 1:18-32, and Col. 2:18-23).

Remember that the Lord God divorced Himself from the House of Israel and the House of Judah because they would not obey His truth. The Apostle Peter wrote in 1 Peter 4:17: “For the time is come that judgment must begin first at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel of God?” (emphases added).

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

In his vision of this last and greatest day of the Lord, John is

shown the second resurrection—one in which the second death has power over those who are resurrected. You can logically conclude that these are brought back to life in a physical human body. If they were to have been raised as spirit beings, no death would ever have power over them again.

For what purpose are they resurrected? They are going to be judged “according to their works” (vv. 12, 13). How is that going to be executed by Jesus Christ and the Saints? This is where the books are to be used. There are at least three books opened, one of which is the Book of Life. What is this book?

As early in scripture as Exodus 32:32, Moses reveals the existence of a book in which the names of those worthy of salvation are written. In Psalm 69:28, David calls it “the book of the living” and implies that it contains the names of the righteous. Isaiah says that those who are left in Zion and remain in Jerusalem will be called holy and written among the living (4:3). In Philippians 4:3, Paul praises fellow laborers “whose names are in the book of life.”

In the revelation that God the Father gave to Jesus Christ to reveal to John (see Rev. 1:1), the message to the Church at Sardis is that one's name can be blotted out of the book if they do not persevere in their Christian duties. Revelation 13:8 shows that those who are disobedient are not written in the Book of Life.

These references should be enough to demonstrate that this Book of Life contains the names and records of those who have been faithful to their calling in Jesus Christ. It should be obvious that those in the second resurrection have not had their names written in that book. Why?

Now read John 3:18. Are all unbelievers already condemned? Does there seem to be any leniency for their unbelief—regardless of their circumstances in life? So, someone who is raised in a totally pagan environment—who has never even heard of Jesus Christ—is condemned already? Since those in the second resurrection do not have their names written in the Book of Life, are they condemned already? If that is true, then why judge them at this time? Why not

just summarily throw them into the lake of fire?

Consider the gravity of this situation facing the unbelievers. Jesus Christ does not leave room for leniency. His statement includes small children who die before reaching what is called the age of accountability. It includes those who are raised in cultures that have never even been aware that there is such a person as Jesus Christ—or that salvation on the scale that God has planned is even available.

It includes those who have been deceived by false religions, as well as those whose eyes and ears God has blinded and muted. And, what about the multiple millions of fetuses that have been executed by abortion—even the male babies two years old and younger killed by the Egyptian Pharaoh (Ex. 1:15-22) and Herod (see Matt. 2)?

Again, what about all of the small firstborn children under two years of age who were consumed in the fires as sacrifices to Moloch and other pagan gods? They never had a chance to hear and believe. Yet, Jesus says they are condemned already.

Does God understand the absolute hopelessness of such people? Yes. But ... you are going to learn God's truth about this great dilemma—a truth not even remotely approached by Traditional Christianity.

Revelation 20:12

Since God is going to allow those in the second resurrection a span of time to know, understand, and accept His means of salvation, what would you suppose the books that are to be opened could be? Is it specifically stated—or, do you pretty much have to guess? Think about this carefully: "...the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works."

Does this suggest that there is something in the books with which they are to become familiar and to live their lives by in order to be judged? How many books are there in the Bible? Thirty-nine in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament? A total of 66? Could that be what is meant here?

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

I am not prepared to say that the "books" spoken of in Revelation 20:12 represent the Bible. I am prepared to say, however, that holy scripture will play a huge part in the re-education that will take place in both the 1,000-year Kingdom and in this situation.

I have demonstrated clearly that there is no justification to restore physical life to people who are already condemned and to allow them a span of time to live if you are not going to give them a chance for redemption. What would God have to lose? Destruction for continued rebellion is still very much present.

God desires our salvation far above our destruction (2 Pet. 3:9). Once the salvation of this huge mass of humanity is accomplished, Jesus will have put all things under His authority, having defeated all of His enemies and either reconciled them to God the Father or destroyed them (read 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

At that point, He also will destroy death and the grave (Rev. 20:14, 15). The destruction of death will signal the destruction of sin (read Rom. 6:23). Since death will be destroyed, the grave will no longer be necessary. Here's more proof that the lake of fire will not last forever: **If there is no grave, then there is no place for the dead; what does not exist (the dead and the grave) does not exist!**

This step, then, will culminate in purging by fire the effects of sin on the earth and the entire universe (see also Mal. 4:1). We are told in 2 Peter 3:7-10 that God plans to do such a thing. This will be like a deleavening process.

I am not sure how that will be effected by God, but you can see references to the temporary nature of the present creation in Psalm 102:25-27, Isaiah 51:6, and Mark 13:31. One could only expect that

the vanity and bondage of corruption to which the creation has been subjected will have to be dealt with so that it will not affect future generations of humans who continue to live beyond the creation of a new heaven and a new earth (Isa. 65:17-25; Rom. 8:18-23).

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

Also, the term new in Revelation 21:1 is kainos, not neos. Neos is used to describe something new relative to time—like a new automobile. The Ford was a neos automobile when it first came out. Kainos is new relative to quality and superiority over the old one. Each year model after the first model came out, Ford was a kainos automobile in that it was improved and superior in design and quality to the preceding one.

I know that analogies are subject to breaking down, but I offer this example to illustrate the point of what is going to happen with the coming of a kainos heaven and a kainos earth. This is the force of the language used in Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 because the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the *Septuagint* – LXX) of the Hebrew scriptures also uses kainos to describe what is to happen. The New Testament/Covenant is also kainos (see Heb. 8:6-13).

In order to protect the human population on the earth, will God impose a rolling purge instead of a simultaneous purge? You know, complete the purge in stages instead of in fell swoop? I do not know; it is not revealed. I simply understand that the planet will not be destroyed (see Rom. 4:13—God gave it to Abraham as an inheritance).

I also understand that God made a covenant with David that is contingent on the continued existence of the sun and moon (compare Jer. 33:20-26 to Gen. 1:16). The earth has to be rotating on its axis in order for that day and night to occur.

Finally, I understand that God does not lie (see Num. 23:19 and

Rom. 11:29). And, I understand that I can change my own garments without destroying myself. All of these are mitigating circumstances that argue against the destruction of heaven and earth in order to replace them with a *neos* heaven and a *neos* earth.

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

Summary

There are three distinct periods of judgment during which God will determine which individuals will be granted salvation—being brought into the God family by a change from flesh to spirit (read Heb. 2 and 1 John 3:1-3). Each period of judgment deals with different classifications of people—described *ordinally*, beginning with *firstfruits*. The term *judgment* does not simply mean that a sentence is passed on someone. It means that it is a span of time during which one’s day-to-day actions come under scrutiny in order to assess the confidence God can have in allowing that person to enter His Kingdom.

It is also used to assess the level of *reward* that individual will receive. The parable of the *pounds* in Luke 19:12-27 shows that individuals are given different degrees/levels of responsibility in the rulership of the Kingdom: all were given one talent, but one was given rulership over *ten* cities, one was given *five*, and one was cast out for malfeasance and faithlessness.

The parable of the *talents* in Matthew 25:14-30 shows reward based on where one started with what he had. For example, the one who began with two talents and returned to his master a 100% gain got the same degree/level of reward as the one who began with five talents and returned to his master a 100% gain. Read vv. 21, 22 and

make note that both were made "...ruler over many things." "Many" is not necessarily the same thing. It could be in proportion to the amount of each 100% gain: five times more for the five; two times more for the two.

Judgment, then, involves more than simply deciding if someone is given salvation or condemned to death. Based on what we have seen, God has divided His plan of salvation into three judgment periods:

- (a) the period between Adam and the return of Jesus Christ,
- (b) the period of the 1,000-year Kingdom of God, and
- (c) the period set into motion by the second resurrection.

Let's consider a brief summary of each judgment period in order to be reminded of the big picture of this marvelous plan of salvation. During the first judgment period, God is not attempting to save all of mankind. He is calling out a small, select group called the elect and the firstfruits. They will make up the bride of Jesus Christ and will be the ruling body of the government during the 1,000-year Kingdom. These are not necessarily called because of some great inner desire to serve God or because of their great intellect—made obvious because of the existence of so many who are deeply religious, but actually not serving the will of God (see Matt. 7:21-23; 24:4, 5; 1 Cor. 1:26-29).

While these elect/firstfruits are being trained for their roles in the government of the Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50), they are expected to grow to spiritual maturity in the true faith and to be witnesses of the good news of God's true plan of salvation (see Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20; and 2 Pet. 3:18).

The second period of judgment will occur during the 1,000-year Kingdom. During this time, the human population that survives the tribulation and Day of the Lord will be instructed in God's truth.

They obviously will not have known God’s truth because they will not have been changed from flesh to spirit at the return of Jesus Christ.

As shown in Isaiah 2:1-5 and Zechariah 14:16-19, Jesus Christ and the saints will re-establish the government of God on earth so that they will have a basis for re-educating and reconstructing society so that it will fully conform to God’s holy laws. God will continue to pour out His Holy Spirit in order to open their minds to the truth of His plan for humankind and in order to lead them to repentance—making salvation a reasonable outcome. Naturally, this will also include the numerous offspring they will engender during the 1,000 years. Those who **remain** incorrigibly wicked will be destroyed in the lake of fire.

At the end of the 1,000-year Kingdom, a **third** judgment period will be effected by the **second** resurrection—raising to **physical** life the vast masses of dead humanity who lived and died never having heard about Jesus Christ and God’s plan, or having been “religious” and believing in a false “Jesus” and a false “gospel” about Him, or having been greatly deceived by various other false messiahs (see Matt. 24:4, 14 5, 24; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4; 11:4, 13-15; and Gal. 1:6, 7).

It is not in the holy character of God to destroy anyone who has **not** had sufficient opportunity to know and understand His remarkable truth. Even though His desire is for **all** to come to repentance and salvation, He will not **force** them to do so against their wills.

These three judgment periods give all of humankind ample opportunity to live a full physical life under God’s laws so they can understand why man’s thoughts and ways, apart from God’s, are the way of death (Pro. 14:12 and Isa. 55:8, 9). Once that is achieved through Jesus Christ, they will be given eternal life as full members of God’s divine family. What an awesome God! What a great love!

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

Review Questions

1. The symbolism in God's holy days shows that those who are to receive salvation must get it done before Jesus Christ returns. (A) True (B) False
2. God has planned a process of salvation that will span eternity. (A) True (B) False
3. The Fall Holy Day season reveals three periods of _____.
4. Which of the following are symbolized in the Feast of Trumpets?
 - (A) The resurrection of the firstfruits
 - (B) The return of Jesus Christ
 - (C) The punishment of the wicked through seven trumpet plagues
 - (D) The conquest of the nations by Jesus Christ and His saints
 - (E) all of the above
 - (F) Only B and C
5. What two significant events occur with the blowing of the seventh trumpet?
6. The Lord's Day referred to in Revelation 1:10 is a specific reference to Sunday. (A) True (B) False
7. According to prophecies in Isaiah, how long does the Lord's Day

actually last? _____

8. The prophesied Lord's Day overlaps the coming tribulation period during its last 360 days. (A) True (B) False

9. God sold the soul of Jesus Christ to Satan in exchange for the souls of mankind. (A) True (B) False

10. Both goats set aside as sacrifices on the Day of Atonement were symbols of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. (A) True (B) False

11. Only Satan is responsible for your sins because he is the one who deceived you to sin. (A) True (B) False

12. God made Jesus Christ to be sin for us. In doing this, He allowed an innocent man to suffer for sins He did not commit. (A) True (B) False

13. By suffering as an innocent victim, Jesus Christ did away with God's law – nailing it to the cross. (A) True (B) False

14. What is the significance of the Feast of Tabernacles relative to the Israelites?

15. Give two reasons why it is important to us that God caused the Israelites to dwell in booths during their journey to the Promised Land. 11

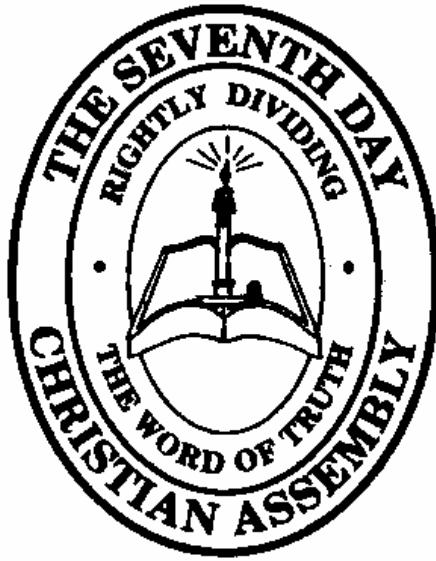
16. The journey to the Promised Land is proof that God wants us to live in heaven with Him. (A) True (B) False

17. The Feast of Tabernacles focuses on two things:

A. _____ B. _____

18. The Feast of Tabernacles symbolizes the time when God will finally establish the city He promised Abraham. (A) True (B) False
19. The human body is presently a temporary dwelling that must be replaced with an eternal dwelling. (A) True (B) False
20. What does the Last Great Day represent?
21. Why is it *last* and *great*?
22. The Last Great Day marks the end of _____.
23. When Satan is released, he deceives _____.
24. How does God ultimately punish Satan?
25. Will the lake of fire last forever? Explain.

***The answers can be found on our website @
www.theseventhdaychristianassembly.org.***



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