

What's the Bible All About?

Building the



Family of God

By Robert Curry

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Why Read This Book?

“The two most important days in your life are the day you are born and the day you find out why” (Mark Twain).

God’s instruction manual answers your big questions of life. So why not just read a Bible which is commonly done in one year?



“But the word of the Lord was to them, ‘precept upon precept ... line upon line, here a little, there a little’” (Isaiah 28:13)—an enticing but baffling puzzle! God wrote His book “that they

might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught” until the Father decides it’s the best time to open someone’s eyes (John 6:44).

Is this your time?

This book provides the vital picture on the box and how to put the pieces together.

People say Jesus spoke in parables so the common folk would understand his down-to-earth stories, but Jesus said He spoke that way so only His Disciples would understand (Matthew 13:11-15).

Paul said “how shall they hear without a preacher? (Romans 10:14). An Ethiopian eunuch said to Philip, “How can I [understand what I’m reading] unless someone guides me?” (Acts 8:31).

This book shares what God has taught me for 52 years

through His Church (1 Timothy 3:15) and through living His Way (Matthew 7:14). It's inked in prayers that it helps you better understand God's inspired instruction book. "Lord, to whom shall we go?" (John 6:68). Only God and His Bible "have the words of eternal life." Every step of this book I asked His guidance for your sake. I want you to know the thrill of being a part of building the Family of God.

How Did Everything Begin?

It didn't. Yes, translators write "in the beginning" in Genesis 1:1 and in John 1:1. A book usually begins on page one, and Genesis means "beginnings," but the Bible is full of surprises.

If you want to understand it

each time you begin studying it, ask God to open your mind, guide you, and then help you to live it (Psalm 111:10). A foundational principle of the Bible is that to understand, you must be doing. When you see God says to do something, just do it, and eventually you will understand why.

Already we learn that John 1:1 precedes Genesis 1:1, the beginning of the world. The "beginning" of John 1:1 really isn't.



John sets the record straight that "God" and "the Word" just always were. The Word was God also.

Two God Beings without beginning!

God and the Word lived in perfect harmony and unity for who knows how long. Jesus said of their relationship, "We are one" (John 17:22). One but also we!

John agrees with the Shema [pronounced Shmah], the first Hebrew word of the verse: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord is one!"

(Deuteronomy 6:4). Except Judaism does not hear that the Bible reveals two God Beings. The Hebrew word *echad* for “one” also means sole, alone, priority. The issue here is no other gods as the First Commandment will teach.

God and the Word were both composed 100% of Spirit (John 4:24). The Holy Spirit is their power, essence, nature and character—not a God Being like God and the Word.

“The Old Testament clearly does not envisage God’s spirit as a person ...” states *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, “God’s spirit is simply God’s power.”

Talk about a shocking surprise! From the very beginning the Bible has revealed that the “litmus test” for Christians is false doctrine. A closed triangular godhead would deny you becoming part of the Family of God. The trinity doctrine wasn’t formed until the fourth century long after Jesus Christ and the Apostles did not teach it.

God is love (1 John 4:8)—and also the other eight fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). The Holy Spirit gives power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). There is no greater power—and never will be! So we should never procrastinate for a better time to overcome. For the Bible’s litmus test, a Christian must have the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9) and be led by it (verse 14).

God and the Word have always been wise (Proverbs 8:23). Their law is “holy” and “spiritual” (Romans 7:12, 14), and they have always kept it. Those who think they won’t continue to do so will be what’s done away!

God and the Word were not bound by time and space. They hadn’t yet created them.

Besides these two great Beings, powered by the Holy Spirit, the Bible mentions nothing else—material or spirit—existing

all that indefinite time which really wasn't.

Our limited minds can't really comprehend it. We must take their Word for it (John 17:17). The Living Word inspired His written Word! There were no reporters around to come up with fake news.

Don't be misled by Plato and philosophers (Colossians 2:8). Don't be duped by Darwin. Don't climb one of Colorado's 53 fourteeners in search of a guru. Don't be swayed by family and friends. Resist peer or appear pressure. Especially watch out for ministers and religions (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). They weren't around when only God and the Word were. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).

Don't deny yourself—take the time God is giving you right now. If God is calling you, you'll realize the importance of looking up each scripture in your own Bible and proving for yourself like God says His Bereans will do (Acts 17:11). Don't believe me or anybody else. There is nothing more important you can be doing.

The Bible doesn't say much about how God and the Word amused themselves. But they obviously thrived without Netflix. God and the Word embodied love by their actions and thoughts. The givers of abundant living (John 10:10) surely are living it. Those promising "fullness of joy [and] pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11) no doubt live a good, fun life!

The Word became Jesus, and Jesus said "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17). It must be fulfilling.

Who's the Greatest?

Sorry, Ali. These two created the butterfly and the bee that

you could only float and sting like.

How did God and the Word relate to each other? God became the Father when Jesus was born as His human Son. Jesus especially liked calling Himself “the Son of Man,” fully flesh-and-blood human but also hinting back in a *remez* [to those who knew the Old Testament well by memory] about His exalted position of Daniel 7:13. Jesus said “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Obviously while He was human. But was God always greater in authority than the Word? Some believe “the government of God” would require such a hierarchy.

John 1:1 reveals that both God and the Word were uncreated, self-existing God Beings with no beginning. Our puny minds have trouble fathoming the idea of one God with no beginning. Two is even more of a challenge. But how in the world one would be in authority over the other with no beginning is beyond inconceivable. Except we’re talking about God for whom all things are possible (Matthew 19:26).

The key scripture is stated by Paul in Philippians 2:5-6: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God ...” Because of what I had been taught, I have always read this as “equal with God but under God’s authority.” But this verse cannot prove that the Word was not under authority of God because the same Greek word for “equal” [*isos*] is used in John 5:18 where the Jews sought to kill Jesus because He said that “God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (John 5:18). Here He was equal even under the authority of His Father.

Paul says the Word “made Himself” and “emptied Himself” and Jesus said “I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18). Some feel that proves that the Word could only do that—with true free moral agency—if He was not compelled by being under

authority. But even verse 18 ends with “This command I have received from My Father.” For most of my working years I was happily the righthand man to a department head and later a business owner, and I can easily relate to the Word volunteering for His mission even if under authority to God.

So while we can't know what the relationship was like between God and the Word beyond what the Bible clearly reveals, God the Father and Jesus the Son and our Brother can teach us about true humility because They model it. They do not think of themselves more highly than They ought (Romans 12:3). Imagine that because They are the highest!



While of one mind in purpose and Way of life, They are not yellow pencils. They were two Beings with unique personality! God was happy to rule the universe from the third heaven, overseeing the whole plan. Seemingly more of an adventurer, the Word was happy to roar about the universe in His gyroscope portable throne, wrestle with Jacob, take on the Pharisees and satan, die an excruciating death and actually be nonexistent for three days and three nights. They were both committed to each other and so nothing will thwart their eternal plan!

Jesus said the greatest is he who serves the most (Matthew 20:26). Jesus is clearly happy to be under the authority of His Father for the rest of eternity! God and the Word fully serve each other and happily submit to each other. Each esteems the other better than himself (Philippians 2:3) by serving the other and by looking out for the other's interests. At some point they wanted

Additional companionship

They would rather give than receive (Acts 20:35). Who else could They give to? Who else could They love? “For I know

the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11).

They were thinking thoughts that would lead to us!

So They Came Up with a Plan

God and the Word lived together in love, joy and harmony for who knows how long. Their favorite joke might have been: “We’ve gotta stop doing this!” And then the other would laugh: “We never started!”



Did They get lonely? Bored?

They didn’t stay home on a Saturday night. They hadn’t yet created one!

At some point They decided They wanted to share what They enjoyed with others. They were generous (Luke 6:38), giving (Acts 20:35) and hospitable (Romans 12:13), but who else was around to benefit?

So get a dog? No, that would be somebody else’s best friend, remember that for later!

Erect a robot and program it to be perfect? No, They wanted other God Beings who would choose to be fully like Them (Ephesians 4:13)—filled with the Holy Spirit, “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), having a mind just like Them (Philippians 2:5).

So they created a plan to reproduce themselves

To create billions of God Beings like Themselves (Genesis 1:26) who would live on for eternity in a special, intimate relationship. God promised eternal life “before time began” (Titus 1:2).

God and the Word knew that the first law of success is a good plan. If you don't make a good plan, you still plan—to fail.

Who knows how long They worked on the plan with all its intricate, interconnected, exciting details! They had no deadline. They had all the no-time in the no-world! They didn't miss sleep over it.

They knew they would pull it off! (Isaiah 46:9-10).

The family plan

God and the Word decided this amazing creation would best take place within a family arrangement. Children would understand from birth what it means to grow up to become like their father, mother and older brother.

God and the Word would bring many sons and daughters to glory (Hebrews 2:10). Their long-lasting relationship would take on a whole new dimension with God becoming the Father and the Word His Son and our older Brother. The sons and daughters would become the Church of God which would be the Mother of us all and the Bride of Christ to marry Him at His return.

So, just snap their fingers and voila—billions of God Beings? No, the sons and daughters must have free moral agency and character to always choose the love Way of God and the Word. This would require time and experience.

God and the Word devised an amazing plan where

Every human will have opportunity for eternal life

“Then you will call upon me and go and pray to me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek me and find me, when you search for me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:13). May

you be as David: “My heart has heard you say, ‘Come and talk with me.’ And my heart responds, ‘Lord, I am coming’” (Psalm 27:8 *NLT*).

God and the Word planned three crucial action steps

“From the foundation of the world”

◆ The Word would willingly become the Lamb slain (Revelation 13:8). He would become our Savior, crucified in our place. God and the Word knew what loomed ahead. The Word would risk giving up His divinity (Philippians 2:7) to become the Son of God who would become the first human resurrected to the God Family and Kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:22-23). The Father would be with His Son all the way and together They would succeed.

◆ “He [God the Father] chose us in Him ... that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having *predestined* us ...” (Ephesians 1:4-5). This isn’t talking about some being preselected to be saved and others doomed before they are even born. God desires all to be saved! (1 Timothy 2:4, Romans 11:26, 2 Peter 3:9). Rather, it’s teaching that God the Father, the Master Timer, decides who understands and when is the best time for each of us to achieve our destiny. May it be happening for you now!

◆ Names would be written into the Book of Life (Revelation 13:8). This occurs when a new Christian receives the Holy Spirit after repentance, baptism and having a true minister lay hands on him or her (Acts 2:38). Mark 16:16 and Romans 8:9 provide motivation!

What a plan!

Two God Beings would become billions. “So great a salvation!” that nobody should want to neglect! (Hebrews

2:3). Then this unstoppable God Family and Kingdom will go on to never-ending accomplishments.

God and the Word were ready to make it so. Hopefully you are actively engaged in the enterprise that would boldly go where no man had gone before because there was no man yet!



First, to start the plan, some extra help was needed. Maybe not angels in the outfield. But despite all Their power, omniscience and omnipresence, God and the Word realized They needed some ministering spirits to serve the Gods to be (Hebrews 1:14).

When & Why Did God Create Angels?

We might assume that God and the Word were always living in heaven, sitting on thrones, accompanied by angels. You need your house and La-Z-Boy, so you'd think they have to live somewhere and sit on something. Angels are spirit beings so they must have been flitting about heaven and strumming their harps forever. But none of us was there.

And it's puzzling to construct a timeline when there's no time.

Thankfully, the Word of truth (John 17:17) gives four crucial pieces of information:

◆ “In the beginning God created the heavens ...” (Genesis 1:1).



◆ God's throne in the north (Isaiah 14:13) is called “the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2). If Genesis 1:1 applies to Their spiritual heaven, then at some point God and the Word created it. And experienced the same thrill of planning, building and owning Their own home that humans would enjoy! Did They batch it for a while in Their new home without help?

◆ At some juncture They created angels (Ezekiel 28:13, 15). These powerful and beautiful beings “were created through Him [the Word who became Jesus Christ] and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).

◆ When? Before God “laid the foundations of the earth.” At that magnificent event “the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy” (Job 38:4-7 *NIV*).

Based on this foundational revelation, at some point before God and the Word created the earth and its two physical heavens, They

Created Their spiritual heavenly realm

John saw in vision at the heavenly throne seven spirits of God, four Living Creatures and 24 Elders (Revelation 4). Daniel had a vision of 100 million angels serving at God’s throne (Daniel 7:10). Angelic choirs and orchestras provide regular praise. That’s why one of God’s names is *YHWH Sabaoth*, meaning “Eternal of Hosts” (1 Samuel 17:45).

Angel means “messenger” (Hebrew *malek* and Greek *aggelos*). Gabriel, one of three powerful archangels whose name means “strong man of God,” delivered special messages to God’s servants (Daniel 9:21). Michael (“who is like God”) seems to be the powerful warrior archangel (12:1). Lucifer (“light bringer”) had special responsibility at God’s throne (Ezekiel 28:14). It seems that one of the two archangels on the physical mercy seat pictured him (Exodus 25:20). That God covers us with His wings (Psalm 91:4) rightfully makes us think of a hen protecting her chicks, but also pictures His protection from His merciful throne, no doubt by Michael and Gabriel now.

The Word was a God of action! He wanted to go places. At some point He created a portable throne remarkably resembling the heavenly one except without 24 Elders along for the ride. This gyroscope-like throne is upheld and propelled by four powerful cherubim and has a sea of glass (Ezekiel 1, 10).

They don't look so angelic!

When it comes to them and seraphim (Isaiah 6:2), forget the image you probably have of chubby little babies like the putto of early Renaissance Italian art. That idea needs to be kaputto!

And they don't sport a halo like the ancient Egyptian god Ra.

Though having male names and appearing to humans as adult males, angels certainly don't look so human in their glorified state: not with four or six wings and four faces: ox, human, lion and eagle—with ox being the primary face (Ezekiel 1:10, 10:14). Maybe this will make you feel better next time you stand in front of a mirror! It's interesting that the four faces are the exact configuration of Israel's camp in the wilderness: lion of Judah, Dan eagle, Ephraim bull and Reuben man (Numbers 2).

Angels had animal faces long before God would later create them on earth. Perhaps there are other animals patterned after the angels. When Jesus Christ returns on a white horse, will it be on an angel that looks like a horse (Psalm 18:10)? Hi ho, Michael away! Some wonder if angels might serve as pets someday for God Beings resurrected into the Family of God.

Angels do not marry (Matthew 22:30), indicating they are sexless and do not reproduce. They seem capable of shifting appearance and shape long before *Star Trek* would futurize it. These powerful spirit beings exist in a spiritual dimension not bound by physical laws.

Angels have emotions. Besides making joyful celebration at the creation of the earth, they feel great joy over a person who repents of sin (Luke 15:10). Hope you are giving them joy!

They praise God with exultation. They care for God's people (1 Kings 19:5-7), helping with physical issues. They point people to worship God, never themselves.

Of utmost importance, God and the Word created the angels with

Free moral agency

Hopefully they would always choose to direct their thoughts, attitudes and feelings toward serving God and His Gods to be (Hebrews 1:14). God had big plans for them. But they would never be begotten as sons and daughters for God's Family and Kingdom (verse 5).

Hopefully they would continue to act like an angel for all eternity.

This Will Be Home for the Meek

Until now everything was spirit. Now it was time to get physical.

“God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1)

“God created” in Hebrew is *Elohim bara*. *Elohim* is a uniplural noun grouped with a singular verb because two God Beings are one united God. It’s a family name because God and the Word had already planned to create family. *Elohim* means “the strong ones,” and God and the Word each had a strong part in Their marvelous creation.

God determined it was time to create as They had planned. The Word, called *Logos*—meaning “spokesman” (John 1:1)—was also rarin’ to go! Like Captain Jean-Luc Picard of the Enterprise commands “Make it so!”, “He spoke, and it was done” by the power of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 33:9). “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made ... by the breath of His mouth” (verse 6). Was it literally with just one word? Maybe “Okay! ...”?

Talk about issuing a command with far-reaching results! “All things”—that were created through the Word and for Him (Colossians 1:16)—means the universe!

The Bible mentions three heavens, and the two physical ones were created at this time: the atmosphere above the earth, where a whirlwind exists (2 Kings 2:11); and the solar system with all its stars, planets and galaxies (Deuteronomy 4:19).

“The universe is so extraordinary that only God could have created it,” observed Albert Einstein. “My job is to figure out how He did it.”

Out of nothing

When my daughter Heather was in sixth grade, “sitting bored in gym class one day,” she started imagining the gym floor stretching out to the right, top and bottom with no walls in sight. On the left it was coming out of nothing. From this Heather came home excitedly telling Mom and me that “If God is everything, then all else is nothing!” Oops, maybe I should have issued a spoiler alert!

In his thought-provoking book *The Fundamental Force ... How the Universe Works*, Len Kurzawa writes: “Let’s start with nothing: no matter, no light, no space, no time; absolute nothingness!” He says at some point an opening at “the intersection of dimensions unknown to us ... allowed pure energy to enter the new physical dimension” (Pages 249-250). Later Kurzawa asks if the opposing charges for space expansion and contraction, each 2.567×10^{-38} , could be “combined in such a way to produce zero—nothing? Is everything in the universe made from nothing?” (page 330).

“By faith we understand that the entire universe was formed at God’s command, that what we now see did not come from anything that can be seen” (Hebrews 11:3 *NIV*). It looked like nothing but everything came from spirit.

“The Bible begins with God, not with philosophic arguments for His existence” (*The Schofield Study Bible III*, page 2). Creation has always demanded a Creator. Nobody would ever argue that a Rolex assembled itself together, no matter how much time given to do so. Sorry, Charles Darwin, there was *nothing* to evolve from.

Job knew that God hung “the earth on nothing” (Job 26:7). Sorry, flat earthers, the earth is a “globe” (Isaiah 40:22 *Douay-Rheims*). With the perfect tilt of $23\text{-}1/2$ degrees. With the necessary atmospheric gases ratio of nitrogen 78%,

oxygen 21% and carbon dioxide 1%. With crust and tectonic plates at the necessary depth. In sum, with all of the 20 or more Goldilocks criteria for complex life to exist, so that if even one were bearly changed, everybody would die!

Could there be a more choice piece of real estate than earth, so why shouldn't God capitalize on

Location, location, location!



The Privileged Planet book and video by Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay Richards in 2004 showcased how the earth is perfectly situated for complex life to exist and is located in the sweet spot of the Milky Way between its

Sagittarius and Perseus arms. In fact, it appears that our galactic home may well be in the very center of the ever-expanding universe.

Moreover in marvelousness, earth's location in the solar system and in the Milky Way provides the best spot from which to study the universe and discover its mysteries. The most significant point of this is that the God who created it all positioned His kids to be to be able to discover Him!

Anybody can look up at a starry sky like David would and ask in awe, "What is man that you are mindful of him?" (Psalm 8:4).

"Because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being

understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and *Godhead* [emphasis mine], so that

They are without excuse” (Romans 1:19-20)

Paul says creation demands a Creator! More intriguing, he says creation in some way reveals “invisible attributes” of the Godhead. Perhaps through two great bodies of light—the sun and moon? Perhaps indicating God was greater than the Word?

“I have deep faith that the principles of the universe will be both beautiful and simple” (Einstein).

Of the ultimate unifying theory of the universe, sought by theoretical physicists like Stephen Hawking, John Archibald Wheeler says, “It must be an utterly simple idea that when we discover it, it will be so compelling, so inevitable, and so beautiful; that we will all say to each other, Oh, how could it have been otherwise!”

Oh, God is building His Family! Two Gods will become billions! Oh, the simple ultimate unifying plan!

God created a home for His Family

“The most striking feature of the universe is that order began from the very start ... everything occurs as if mankind was born in a universe ‘created for them,’ in effect, intentionally designed for human beings. It is similar to preparing a bedroom before the birth of a baby” (“The Universe Was Not Born From Chance,” *Le Point*, June 10, 1991).

God created the universe as a cradle for human life that provides everything we need. He could already envision the meek inheriting it (Matthew 5:5). The Word becoming His Son and returning to govern the Family and Kingdom on it

(Revelation 11:15). Far more than what Carl Segan called a “pale blue dot,” earth is the focal point of the plan of God!

And then, the grand finale for what is revealed so far, a new earth with all physical, material and especially sin, purged off—and the Father Himself will move down to live happily ever after with His Family (Revelation 21:1-3). Heaven comes down to earth. It’s no fairy tale!

Is it any wonder this earth was created the privileged planet! We do not go to heaven when we die, and we will not spend eternity there. “The earth He has given to mankind” (Psalm 115:16 *New International Version*).

And no wonder the angels got so excited! They were about to begin a wondrous assignment.

What in the Devil Happened!

The whole reason for the physical earth and universe was to bring about the spiritual purpose of reproducing two God Beings into billions. No matter how important the physical might seem, the real story is what's happening in the spiritual.

Science does its best to date the earth and universe, but only the Bible reveals the factual framework for what really happened.

Everything God creates is “good,” as humbly pronounced after each day's work in Genesis 1—actually vastly understated! The angels thought the new earth so awesome, they couldn't help shouting for joy. Lucifer and his angels must have been thrilled to be put in charge of the new earth to carry out the exciting plans for it.

Why Lucifer?

Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 reveal crucial facts for us who base them on Scripture. These chapters start out discussing the King of Babylon and the Prince of Tyre, but it's obvious that some of the words that follow could not be describing any human. Moreover, they could only be true of Lucifer.

◆ Lucifer, from the original Hebrew word *Heylel*, used only once in the Bible (Isaiah 14:12), means “brightness” or “shining one.” Like the other angels, he was created (Ezekiel 28:13)—not born like the Prince of Tyre and other humans.

◆ “You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; you were on the holy mountain of God” (verse 14). Lucifer was one of two cherubim whose wings covered the

heavenly throne of God (Exodus 25:18-20). His topnotch service in the government of God made him the obvious one for this choice assignment.

◆ Lucifer was “the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12). A perfect administrator to carry out God’s big plans for His privileged earth! And no doubt, after succeeding there, branch out to the rest of the universe.

“Scripture gives no data for determining how long ago the universe was created” (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, p. 2). But the Bible plainly reveals that

Something diabolical occurred

between verses 1 and 2 of Genesis 1 to utterly ruin the earth. It became *tohu* and *bohu*.

Funny sounding words to be sure, but this isn’t about crying over vegan. These Hebrew word descriptors mean “without form, and void” (Genesis 1:2). A better translation is “waste” and “void” (*Young’s Literal Translation*).

“Well, that’s how God created it,” some would say, “formless and empty, and then He went on to enhance it in seven days of shaping and filling.”

That makes Isaiah 45:18 such a game-changing puzzle piece for what really happened. God states that He “did not create it [the earth] in vain.” Yes, He did not create it in *tohu*!

So it follows that in Genesis 1:2, the Hebrew word *hayah* should be translated “became” as is done in 2:7 and 19:26. Like Miss Piggy’s cry caused Muppets to become unglued!

Created perfect and joyful, “now the earth had become waste and empty” (*Rotherham*).

How? “God is not the author of confusion” (1 Corinthians 14:33) so who made it that way?

A great spirit rebellion caused such upheaval!

Lucifer had been perfect in all his ways “till iniquity was found in you” (Ezekiel 28:15).

In Universe War I, the war to begin all wars, Lucifer said in his heart, “**I** will ascend into heaven, **I** will exalt my throne above the stars of God; **I** will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; **I** will ascend above the heights of the clouds, **I** will be like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13-14). Lucifer should have opened his **eyes** to the pride and vanity swelling up in his heart!

“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor” (Ezekiel 28:17). You’d have to surmise that Lucifer couldn’t stand the idea of forever serving those to come who would rise above him as actual God Beings (Hebrews 1:14). Unfair! He could never be begotten as a child of God (verse 5). Sea of glass ceiling! Somebody’s got to break it!

In the greatest miscalculation blunder of all time, Lucifer ascended to heaven aiming to knock God off His throne and become the Most High! To those shocked by human rebellion and division, this was against the perfect government of God!

Lucifer no doubt deluded himself into believing he could overthrow God, since over who knows how long a time he had by intrigue, whispering, innuendo, deceit and lying convinced one-third of the angels to join him (Revelation

12:4). He must be right to have so many free thinkers agreeing with him! It didn't seem to cross his corrupted mind that

- ◆ God would have two-thirds loyal angels with Him!
- ◆ What chance did He have of catching God by surprise!
- ◆ God would not create anything that could become more powerful than He. Nobody will ever knock Him off His throne. God insists on creating beings with free choice and is prepared to carry out His plans even after they make bad choices.

“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Proverbs 16:18)

Talk about a fall! More decisive than any Red Baron flameout or LeBron James block! For Lucifer and his “angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode” (Jude 6), God swatted them back to the earth! (Ezekiel 28:16, Luke 10:18).



Lucifer's name was changed to the Hebrew noun *satan*, meaning “adversary, accuser, slanderer.” His name devil is translated from the Greek *diabolos*, meaning “diabolical.” He is also called in Hebrew *abaddon* (“destruction”) and in Greek *apollyon* (“destroyer”) (Revelation 9:11). Such deadly names and he lives down to them!

His fallen angels became his demons and nobody you'd want

to pal around with.

Since then satan's main goal is to thwart God's plan to build a family relationship with us. He and his demons will stop at nothing to abort us from becoming children of God. But we don't have to fear them as long as we resist them; they'll flee from us (James 4:7).

God left satan still in charge of the earth as its ruler (John 12:31) until the future day the Word would return as Jesus Christ and replace him (Revelation 11:15). When God cast the sinning angels down to "hell" (2 Peter 2:4), the Greek word *tartarus* means "a place of restraint." The devil and demons are on a very short leash! They can only do what God allows. In fact, they unwittingly facilitate His plan!

How long from creation of the earth did it take Lucifer to rebel? The Gap Theory isn't talking about where satan needed to go shopping after he got too big for his britches! The Bible doesn't say how long before or after satan's rebellion.

Paleontologists believe dinosaurs became extinct at the end of the Cretaceous period because of a large asteroid. Satan's rebellion could have caused this as he unleashed havoc in the heavens.

"The most puzzling event in the history of life on the earth is the change from the Mesozoic Age of Reptiles, to the ... Age of Mammals. It is as if the curtain were rung down suddenly on a stage where all the leading roles were taken by reptiles, especially dinosaurs ... to reveal ... an entirely new cast" (G.G. Simpson, *Life Before Man*, 1972, page 41).

In God's due time, the Word through the Holy Spirit would renew the earth (Psalm 104:30).

From Wrecreation to Re-creation

God knows what it's like to be a landlord and have a tenant wreck the place. And then have to patiently go through the eviction process.

Inquiring minds want to know:

◆ If satan and the demons had stayed loyal, would they have fulfilled God's desire for additional companions? The Bible indicates no, since two-thirds of the angels stayed loyal, yet God would create new beings. Secondly, the Lamb was slain before the foundation of the world so God was back then planning additional beings who would sin and need a Savior.

◆ Did satan's rebellion catch God off-guard and force Plan B? God always creates beings with free moral agency and knows they might choose badly. He begins with the end in mind long before Stephen Covey would make it one of his seven habits for successful people. You'd expect God to have devised a perfect plan envisioning all possible contingencies that nothing could derail.

◆ That plan no doubt called for an adversary. Were Lucifer and his angels predestined to become it? I'm sure Lucifer and the one-third angels would never say "God made me do it." They chose to grasp for power and will deserve their severe punishment for their heinous actions. God and the Word knew Lucifer inside and out from his prior service in Their government. They knew any proclivities in his perfection. Perhaps Lucifer had already tipped off his insatiable ambition. Though God no doubt could have easily withstood a 100% angelic rebellion, perhaps They deliberately only let Lucifer have access to one-third down on earth to minimize his corrupting reach.

Six Days of Renewal



God decided it was time to renew the earth and universe Satan wrecked, and the Word carried out Their wishes in six productive days through the power of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 104:30, Genesis 1:2).

The Bible specifies 24-hour days, like the ones we still experience (Genesis 1:5, John 11:9). The difference between this renewal and erroneous errors of theistic evolution are night and day. If any of the days were a thousand years long, the plants on day three would have died off without pollination from bees and hummingbirds created on day five.

When the Word directed “Let there be light,” a different word than *barah* was used (*hayah*), the sense being “to appear, become visible.”

Day one: light is diffused

Day two: vapor above, water below

Day three: one land mass, one sea, plant life appears

Day four: sun, moon and stars become visible

Day five: sea animals and birds of the air created

Day six: land animals created. Paralleling Adam and Eve being created as adults, we have the answer to the famous riddle: the chicken—sorry, the Bible doesn’t reveal why it crossed the road

Day seven: Sabbath by God resting

Day four is noteworthy in that it provided for “seasons” from the Hebrew *moedim*, meaning “appointed times.” This shows that God’s Holy Days and Festivals (Leviticus 23) were planned before the creation of man. And of course they

would have been since these Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation!

After each of the first six days of work up through creation of the animals, God pronounced "good." After the creation of mankind, "very good."

"By the seventh day God had finished His work" (*NIV*).
"Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it"
(Genesis 2:3).

Considering all that God had accomplished in six days, what makes us think we have too much to do to rest on God's Sabbath!

God's 7,000-year plan

The real news of this renewal of the earth and universe is that this week of six days of work followed by the seventh day of rest reveals God's 7,000-year plan. With God a day is as a 1,000 years (2 Peter 3:8). Man will have 6,000 years to govern himself and then the Word as Jesus Christ will set up His millennial government of peace and restoration.

Jewish tradition places this re-creation in the autumn, specifically starting on one of God's Holy Days, the Feast of Trumpets. How appropriate since this Holy Day pictures the return of Jesus Christ to set up His Kingdom on earth. We must never forget that Jesus said only the Father knows the day or hour (Matthew 24:36), but I'm expecting 6,000 years to the day.

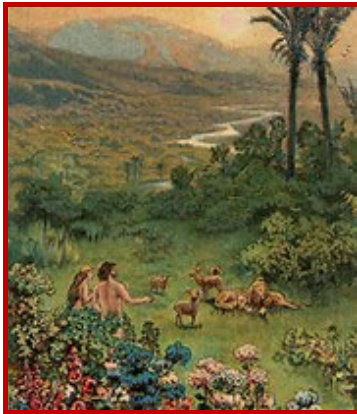
So it was time to create the God Beings to come, starting as humans!

The First Man, Woman, Marriage

Then God (*Elohim*) said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ (Genesis 1:26-27). They said “Us” and “Our” because it was God and the Word.

This is classified information: humans are not animals, even if they sometimes act like it! They are of the God kind! The Word created them male and female because their destiny is to become sons and daughters in the *Elohim* Family and Kingdom (2 Corinthians 6:18).

The First Adam



And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being” (Genesis 2:7).

Unlike speaking all of the earlier creation into existence, the Word knelt down in the dirt and shaped the first man with His own hands and fingers. He gave him a healthy masculine physique that would last 930 years! The Word would have personal

intimate involvement with this special creation!
Adam’s first sight was His Creator!

The Hebrew word for man is *Adam*, meaning “red.” If any would threaten, “your name is mud,” he’d say “well, yes it is!”

It’s crucial to note that when the Word forcibly blew into Adam’s nostrils the breath of life, Adam “became a living soul” (*King James Version*). Don’t miss that: Adam became

a soul. He didn't have an immortal one! The Hebrew word for "soul" is *nephesh*, and that word is used in Genesis of various physical, material creatures—even dead ones.

The Word told Adam pointedly, "For dust you are, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). A little kid looked under his bed, got scared and ran to his momma crying, "Somebody's either coming or going!"

The Spirit in Man

Take crucial note: While Adam was not created with an immortal soul, the Word breathed into him a Spirit in Man. "There is a spirit within people, the breath of the Almighty within them, that makes them intelligent" (Job 32:8 *NLT*). Adam's children become human and receive their Spirit in Man at conception (Jeremiah 1:5). God's children are begotten as His sons and daughters when they receive His Holy Spirit after repentance, baptism and the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38). This is when we are written into the Book of Life.

This Spirit in Man enables a human to know "the things of a man" (1 Corinthians 2:11). It empowers the physical brain with human intellect to make humans aspire to qualities such as abstract thinking, art appreciation, and even questioning our own existence. This Spirit in Man is what makes humans so vastly superior to animals. It is not conscious of itself and does not exist apart from the human (Psalm 146:4). When a human dies, the Spirit in Man goes up to heaven as a recording of the person's physical traits, memories, character and even fingerprints for God to use to resurrect the person (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

The question arises about claims for prehistoric beings millions of years ago. The Bible calls Adam the first man" (1 Corinthians 15:45). Jesus Christ (the Word who created

Adam) traces His lineage back no further than Adam. Speculation says perhaps there were creatures created by Lucifer/satan which did not have a Spirit in Man. Radioactive dating methods are highly suspect for past the Flood because the sudden worldwide chaos didn't go along with alleged uniformity.

The Word planted a special Garden of Eden for Adam and commissioned him to “tend and keep it” (Genesis 2:15).

Adam needed “a helper comparable to him”

And the Word said “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him” (verse 18). But first, to impress upon Adam his need for intellectual and emotional companionship, He brought all the animals and birds, probably in pairs of males and females, to Adam to see what he would name them. It was painfully obvious to Adam that he was odd man out.

So God put Adam into a deep sleep, took one of his ribs, and from it made a woman just for him. The Hebrew *banah* literally and figuratively means built! When God brought the woman to Adam, he—and she—probably gasped in appreciation! Maybe they both shouted “Vive la différence!” Maybe the first joke shared between this new couple was “pardon my French.”

“Woman was not taken from man’s head, to rule over him, nor from his foot, to be crushed by him, but from under his arm, to be protected, and from near his heart, to be loved” (poet Mildred North). This would remind them that neither can be whole without the other. It’s not good for either to be alone. God apparently gave men and women each half of His great qualities so they could form a great team uniting together and picturing godly completeness.

“And Adam called his wife’s name Eve (“life”), because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20). Again, this argues against prehistoric humans.

God instituted marriage

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:24-25, Hebrews 13:4). God blessed them and told them to be fruitful and multiply and subdue the earth.

Marriage was between one man and one woman, with each’s relationship with God being the most important part of their relationship. This is the Supreme Court of the Universe’s definition of marriage!

Adam and Eve were not created with evil human nature. They started out neutral. Innocent. Adam had fulfilled the arduous chore of naming all the animals in a good attitude. The Word summed up their special startup: “it was very good” (Genesis 1:21).

Beautifully understated! Adam and Eve starting life with each being specially created for the other by God in a private garden paradise created just for them, stocked with peaceful animals and real delicious uncorrupted food!

How could the Word top that? With a special day to keep!

The Sabbath Was Made for Man



The Word created Adam and Eve just for each other and married them. Then He made a special day for their delight and pleasure—the seventh day of the week lasting from sunset to sunset (Mark 2:27).

He made it by resting from all He had created, and He sanctified it—setting it apart as holy time (Genesis 2:3). “There remains therefore a rest [Greek *sabbatismos* = Sabbath keeping] for the people of God” (Hebrews 4:9). “And from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me” (Isaiah 66:23). Are we?

The Word knew that humans would need a day of rest physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually each week to cope with all the craziness of life!

This was the origin of the weekly Sabbath, though the word “Sabbath” appears only indirectly. The Hebrew word *shabath* means “to rest.” The Master Timer created it just in

time for the new couple to have 24 hours before having to start dressing and keeping the garden.

And speaking of no dressing, the evening was their wedding night, and the Word no doubt was happy to give them welcome space!

But first Adam and Eve probably started the Sabbath with a special meal, shared with their Creator. The human family pictures the God Family, and the Sabbath is all about family. Then the Living Word may have shared a Bible study on how to have a happy marriage. Perhaps He touched on some insight into child-rearing they would need in about nine months.

During the seventh day, the Word would be meeting up with Adam and Eve for worship and religious instruction. Religious instruction would be their most important education.

Of all that could be preached

What did the Word teach them that first special Sabbath together?

No doubt about the two special trees—the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. These two trees summed up God’s way of living (give and love) versus satan’s way (get and hate).

What a glorious seven days! God first *loved* us! He *gave* us everything! How could man possibly *get* off to a better start!

We’re going to *hate* to find out what happens.

Not Ignorant of His Devices

Put yourself in Adam and Eve’s shoes ... er ... bare feet. You’ve just enjoyed the Sabbath in paradise directly with your Creator.



And then the next day, the first day of the new week, probably a sunny day, probably at sunrise, satan shows up. You don’t hear a shriek out of the woman because “the serpent” was not yet cursed into a writhing reptile that would be “enmity

with the woman” (Genesis 3:14-15). Satan may have appeared “perfect in beauty” (Ezekiel 28:12), shiny like a reptile without needing Cindy Crawford’s skin products. And dismiss the idea of hissing—he undoubtedly spoke eloquently straight to their yet untapped feelings.

The Bible makes it clear that satan—the ruler of the earth (2 Corinthians 4:4)—was only there with God’s permission (Job 1:12, 2:6). All God Beings to come will have to face him and overcome him just as the Word would 4,000 years later to replace him (Matthew 4:1).

The Bible doesn’t say how much—if any—the Word had prepared Adam and Eve for their *con*frontation with the adversary. The key word is *con*. They were “ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11) like we too often are.

Adam and Eve were created “for a little while lower than the angels” (Hebrews 2:7 *The New American Standard*). They didn’t stand a chance against the wiles of the great deceiver, and the Word knew that because He was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8).

Satan said to Eve

Has God said “You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” Look out, Satan’s opening jab is his outrageous twist: God wants you to starve!

Satan knew God had planted a whole garden full of lovely trees good for food. Two trees were right in the middle because they really mattered and would influence everything Adam and Eve thought and did (Genesis 2:9).

Satan blew the one restriction all out of proportion. Why should you be limited! God’s unfair! He is personally wronging you!

Eve rightly understood God’s basic instructions and answered that they could eat from any of the trees except from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—“lest you die” (3:3).

“You shall not surely die”

Satan lived up to his status as the father of lies from the beginning (John 8:44)—when he subverted the angels and now here with his first recorded one.

The truth was the Tree of Life represented the Holy Spirit, and they would have lived forever as long as they regularly ate from it and obediently avoided eating from the forbidden one. Actually they weren’t to even touch it (Genesis 3:3)

because God wants us to stay far back from sin and not cozy up to any line.

But the liar said they would live forever anyway because they were immortal souls. The one who tried to swoop up to heaven would convince mankind that they would go to heaven when they died, if they were good, but if bad, they would get *his* punishment of eternal hell.

“You will be like God”

Satan knew that was their purpose! And he was all-out committed to stopping them from fulfilling it. He goes for the knockout! So he lied that they could become God now, deciding for themselves what is good and evil, if only they would eat from the forbidden tree. They could determine their own standards. “God is holding out on you!”

Satan pulled out all the stops in appealing to their vanity, lust and pride (1 John 2:16)—which up until then he cornered the market on. You owe it to yourself. Don’t you deserve it! Why should you miss out. Judge for yourself. If it looks good and feels good ... but wait! Act now! And we’ll double the offer! Both of you can have some and share the pleasures of God! Bon appétit!

Instead of recognizing more French to pardon, when Eve’s eyes fooled her, she went for a bite. She liked the taste of whatever fruit it was. It doesn’t say apple, but there was no doctor present, so who knows. Then she gave to Adam—and it’s instructive that he was right there “with her” (Genesis 3:6). The one who was to lead was not deceived like Eve, but he had stayed weak and silent (1 Timothy 2:14).

The divine interrogation

The Word came walking in the garden in the cool of the day.

It's worth pointing out that the God Being who interacted with humans in the Bible was the one who became Jesus Christ. Never God who became the Father. Jesus said, "You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form" (John 5:37). Jesus came to reveal the Father (17:25-26) because He looked like Him and He said and did what the Father told Him.

Adam and Eve foolishly tried to hide from their omniscient Creator, camouflaged in their new fig leaves. A fashion disaster! Since then man generally hides from God.

The Word confronted Adam first because he was responsible to lead his helper. Regrettably, he sounded like he thought he was living in Jimmy Buffet's Margaritaville: "Some people claim there's a woman to blame."

Next, Eve did what Flip Wilson's Geraldine Jones character would later alibi: "The devil made me do it!"

God took no lip from the devil. It's the first prophecy in the Bible (Genesis 3:15): Jesus Christ would bruise satan's head (Romans 16:20) by replacing him as earth's ruler, and satan would bruise Jesus' heel through the crucifixion.

How quickly paradise was messed up! Through Adam and Eve eating forbidden fruit instead of bearing fruits of the Spirit from eating of the Tree of Life, sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). They committed sin worthy of eternal death. Their neutral human nature became evil. This ruins everything.

We should be able to identify with this real-life story that actually bedeviled our first parents.

Each day we face the same two trees

When tempted, I sucker for “Why can’t I do what I want!
Nobody tells me what to do.”

Today, what fruit have you chosen to eat (Deuteronomy
30:19)?

Cut Off—Except for a Select Few

Now, lest Adam and Eve, corrupted by sin and their human nature tilted evil, “take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” (Genesis 3:22), God drove them out of the garden and into the world where satan would be the interim landlord (2 Corinthians 4:4) and deceive all the tenants (Revelation 12:9).



God posted cherubim with a flaming sword. Closed till further notice (22:2, 14)!

This eviction changed the course of humanity, though all according to God’s great plan of salvation.

Mankind, as a whole, was now cut off

from access to the Holy Spirit for 6,000 years—until the Word would return as Messiah and set up His Kingdom of God on earth. In the end, the whole earth will become a Garden of Eden (Isaiah 51:3) and all will have access to the Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2).

Adam and Eve’s progeny do not inherit original sin (Romans 3:23) or evil human nature. But it doesn’t take long for newborn innocent babes to succumb to the 3 S’s: satan, society and self. Except for a select few, all have only the

Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil to live under and choose from. Some live more good, some more evil.

God hadn't yet taught man His Holy Days, but Pentecost teaches that there will be only a smaller harvest of firstfruits by Christ's return (Leviticus 23:17). How small? Revelation 14:1-4 says 144,000 firstfruits, and some estimate 140 billion humans have lived on the earth in addition to current ones. Less than one out of a million!

From Adam to the Flood, few righteous

What Eve said of her first child Cain may be much more profound than first appearance (Genesis 4:1). Looking for the Savior who would bruise Satan's head (3:15), she may have thought she just gave birth! *God's Word* translation puts it: "I have gotten the man that the Lord promised." It looks like Eve meant "I have gotten a man ... the Lord!"

Cain means "possession, gotten, acquired" and his line would live "the way of Cain" (Jude 11)—the get way versus God's Way of give.

We evaluate gifts we receive—how does God view our offerings?

The Word did not accept Cain's offering, though grain offerings are okay with God (Leviticus 6:15-17). Maybe his grain was day-old or throw-away. For sure it was his attitude. The Word discerned that Cain was on the verge of serious sin, and even after talking to him personally about how he needed to "do well" and "rule over" sin knocking at the door, Cain flung it open and became the first murderer and fratricide.

"Am I my brother's keeper?" Yes, Cain, you must keep from

killing him! And you must not even make him stumble (1 Corinthians 8:13).

God called Abel

Leave it to God to call the second born with a name meaning, of all things, “vanity.” God doesn’t call whom you’d expect (1:26-27). Just look in a mirror! Many Christians ask “why me?”

Abel brought “the best of his firstborn lambs from his flock” (Genesis 4:4 *NLT*). You have to wonder if this special sacrifice for Cain and Abel might have been on the night that would later become Passover picturing Jesus Christ’s sacrifice for man. It’s amazing how many of these “hints” you see once you know about God’s Holy Days. Abel is the first person listed in the Hall of Faith (Hebrews 11:4).

Genesis also lists the line of Seth, the third son. The names mean: Adam (“man”); Seth (“appointed”); Enosh (“mortal”); Cainan (“sorrow”); Mahalalel (“blessed God”); Jared (“descend”); Enoch (“teach”); Methuselah (“his death shall bring”); Lamech (“despairing”); and Noah (“comfort”). Strung together in order, their names prophesy: Man [is] appointed mortal sorrow, [but] the blessed God shall come down teaching [and] His death shall bring [those] despairing comfort. It’s interesting to consider God’s involvement in having all those men named!

It was after Enosh that “men began to call on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 4:26). Yet the only other person rated righteous until Noah is Enoch. Sounds like “Lord, Lord” denounced by Jesus (Luke 6:46).

Enoch “walked with God” (Genesis 5:24), just as today, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as

He walked” (1 John 2:6). And Enoch “pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

What happened to Enoch?

When the Bible says Enoch was “translated” (KJV), it’s not talking about into French. Another translation for “taken away” is “transferred elsewhere.” The Bible does not specify where he was taken. It does emphatically state where he was NOT taken. We are taken in by satan’s immortal soul lie if we don’t believe what Jesus Himself said about whether humans have gone up to heaven (John 3:13). Please read this crucial scripture for yourself and believe what the most credible source possible said!

“So that he would not see death” (*New American Standard Bible*) is a better translation because Hebrews 11:5 says Enoch “died in faith, not having received the promises” (verse 13). At only 365 years!

The Bible doesn’t say plainly why or how Enoch may have been transported somewhere on the earth to escape from a deathly situation. Perhaps to avoid martyrdom for prophesying about the Second Coming of the Lord “with ten thousands of His saints” to execute judgment on the ungodly (Jude 14-15). Enoch liked that last word!

Timelines make fascinating study. At the juncture of 1,000 years of completed human history, eight generations could’ve had direct contact with Adam and Eve.

Yet only Abel and Enoch are singled out as righteous. That’s certainly a few. Two few. God is more particular than the Marines! He wants the few, but not the proud! Are we responding to our calling?

As in the Days of Noah

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:5-6). God feels a flood of emotions. And learns. He was surprised by how wicked His kids had become. Oh-oh! Look out!

The earth was “corrupt before God” and “filled with violence” (verse 11).

Scary, sounds so much like today!

But back then, one big problem was “sons of God” (Genesis 6:2) taking wives for themselves, resulting in giants on the earth. This was not fallen angels interbreeding with women to produce half-demon giants! Humans—not angels which can’t reproduce (Luke 20:35-36)—were the problem here. “The reference has to do with the breakdown of the separation of the godly line of Seth by intermarriage with the godless line of Cain” (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 13).

Our loving God felt compelled to wipe out all the evil with a worldwide flood as the best merciful solution. In His comprehensive plan, the drowned would have their opportunity for salvation in His Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-12). In due time He would teach mankind His Holy Day called the Eighth Day (Leviticus 23:36).

“But Noah found grace

[in the Old Testament!] in the eyes of the Lord.... Noah was a

just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God” (Genesis 6:9)—like Enoch had.

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, *moved with fear*” (Hebrews 11:7 *King James Version*). Surprise, we don’t expect to find fear in the Hall of Faith chapter! The Greek word here for fear [*eulabeomai*] appears only one other time—in Acts 23:10 where the commander was fearing Paul might be ripped to pieces by the mob. *Barnes Commentary* says “It might mean Noah was influenced by the dread of what was coming.” Happily, he was more influenced by obeying God!

We all find ourselves living somewhere between fear and faith, hopefully closer to the faith side. The same Paul who wrote 2 Timothy 1:7 also wrote 1 Corinthians 2:3.

Noah built by faith, not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). He kept swinging the hammer under cloudless skies.



If Noah had normal human resistance to undertaking such a massive project, perhaps God did win him over with Bill Cosby's classic "how long can you tread water!"

It's encouraging that God allowed Noah's wife [surely not named Joan of], three sons Shem, Ham and Japheth, and their three wives to survive with him. It gives hope that when it's time to flee to the Place of Safety (Revelation 12:14), God might allow unconverted family to flee also if they are willing to step out in faith.

Noah and his family built the three-deck ark according to God's specs—surely the Master Ark-itect!

"On the basis of a cubit as 18 inches, the ark was 450 ft. long with a beam of 75 ft. and a depth of 45 ft. Similar to the proportions of a modern ocean liner"—*Scofield*, page 14).

To gather all the wood, it took a lot of go-foring! And more pitching than Jason Verlander! Building the ark took 120 years, with Noah bravely serving his neighbors as their "preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5) though they undoubtedly jeered and mocked him as a religious nut building in the middle of a desert! Surely this 600-year-old neighbor must be having a mid-life crisis! (Genesis 7:11). Gone off the deep end!

Interesting, it was while Noah was occupied with building the ark that Jesus "went and preached to the spirits in prison"—Satan and the demons in *tartaroo* [a Greek word meaning "place of restraint" which is usually translated "hell"] (1 Peter 3:19-20). They were restrained on earth, and perhaps Jesus warned them they wouldn't have much to do during the Flood except call a plumber! Actually He probably informed them that they would have additional restraint from influencing man to become evil so fast.

All aboard!

Moses didn't have to be adept at roping and riding because God caused the animals, birds and insects to come to him—two by two, male and female (Genesis 6:20), reminiscent of the Adam parade (2:19).

It's crucial to note that Noah understood about clean and unclean meats because God instructed him to load seven pairs of clean versus one pair of unclean (7:2). This would be necessary to eat, sacrifice and repopulate.

Note that this was long before Mt. Sinai, but long after Abel knew he needed to sacrifice a clean animal, which Leviticus would later show would be partly eaten. It's likely that Adam who named the animals was taught which foods “God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:3, Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14).

Skeptics question that there was

Room for all the animals

Noah only had to take pairs from each Genesis kind of animal (Genesis 1:25) rather than scientific species. A biblical kind is more like a scientific genus where two horses can be selectively bred and end up with 400 different varieties ranging from Shetland Pony to Clydesdale. Similarly, all humans to come down from Adam were funneled from the eight passengers. Since the biggest percentage of land animals are insects, and it's been calculated that the average-sized land animal would need only a cubic foot and a half of space, many studies have concluded that the ark was big enough to serve as a floating zoo.

In June 2018 Mary and I visited the exciting life-size Ark Encounter theme park in Kentucky! This male and female felt drawn to get on the boat!



When it was time, God invited Noah and his household aboard (7:1). He responded like we must when God the Father calls us. The Bible beckons “Come!” all the way until Revelation 22:17.

Then, in a thoughtful gesture to spare Noah feeling guilty, God shut the door. Noah had relatives who must have drowned including probably other sons and daughters born before he was age 500 (Genesis 5:32). It is thought that 969-year-old Methusaleh, the longest living human who outclocked Noah by only 19 years, died at the Flood and maybe clawing at the door! Adam and Methusaleh tag-teamed all the way to the Flood!

“All the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the

windows of heaven were opened” (7:11). It rained 40 days and nights! With all the critters aboard, Noah probably felt like it was raining cats and dogs!

If you believe the Bible [which we must and do!] the Flood covered even all the mountains of the earth by 15 cubits. Believe it, a worldwide flood! Peter knew that “The world that then existed perished” (2 Peter 3:6). The Bible indicates that the waters of the earth at that time were gathered in one place with one land mass (Genesis 1:9), and looking up at my world map, Europe and Africa look like they would snuggle up to the Americas.

The Flood—God’s, not actually Noah’s, since how much water can a human come up with except water under the bridge—is dated 2,325 B.C.—1,656 years after re-creation.

From embarking to walking off, the flood lasted one year and 10 days (7:11, 8:14). Noah marked off time in seven-day periods undoubtedly according to God’s weeks ending in Sabbaths to observe.

After the Flood

“The ark rested ... upon the mountains of Ararat” (8:4). With Ararat being an ancient name for Armenia, covering much of far eastern Turkey and western Iran, who knows if God will allow eager artifact hunters to find it. It’s exciting for me to know a brother in Christ who is an expert on the subject and believes he will find the ark in Iran!

God delegated the administration of the death penalty to man (9:6). And at this time He permitted meat to be eaten (verse 3). This doesn’t mean they had been vegetarians because we’ve already seen that clean meats were surely eaten before the Flood so it looks like they hadn’t been allowed to eat the cargo while on the ark.

After the Flood the canopy of “water above the firmament” (1:7), which it’s thought provided greater air pressure and a shield from the sun’s harmful rays, was gone. This was real climate change! This may have allowed the first rainbow to be seen, establishing God’s Covenant that promises He will never again wipe out the earth with a flood. The average lifespan plummeted from 857.5 years to 120 years (6:3).

During the first 2,000 years of human history, eight generations had direct access to righteous Noah.

In our day

Jesus, the Living Word, showing He believed the Flood occurred just as he inspired the Written Word to attest, prophesied that “as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24:37-39).

Life goes on looking pretty normal, people eating, drinking and marrying. As with Noah’s day, they *don’t know* until they’re *taken all away*.

How long can we tread ignorance?

Babel & Tower Then & Now

Not much has changed from the developments during the 350 years Noah lived after the Flood.

Noah cursed Ham's younger son Canaan for what he did to him while he was asleep in a drunken stupor: "May he be the lowest of servants to his relatives" (Genesis 9:25 *NLT*). And Canaan's descendants have suffered for their ancestor's violation on down to the present in the Middle East. Reminding ourselves that sin has unintended long-lasting consequences should act as a brake on runaway evil desires.

In verse 26, Noah blessed "the God of Shem." "All divine revelation is through Semitic men, and Christ ... descends from Shem" (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 18). It doesn't take Satan long to plot that anti-Semitism is a can't-miss device (2 Corinthians 2:11).

The Table of Nations is a clan list of 70 nations, descended from Noah's three sons that will reappear in Bible prophecies.

Eber is included in the list (Genesis 10:25) from whom will descend the Israelites and Abraham's descendants. The Hebrews will include more than Jews.

To this day international relations revolve more around ethnic considerations than borders. At the end when "nation will rise up against nation," the Greek word is *ethnos* (Matthew 24:7).

Spread Out!

God intended man to disperse and repopulate the whole earth. But they rebelled: "Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens" (Genesis 11:4).

Yeah, your rainbow is real pretty but we're going to build so tall that you can't flood it! Their actions called God a liar!

“Let us make a name for ourselves”—build a religious and political empire that will dominate over all.

Their leader Nimrod, with a rather despotic-sounding name, “was a mighty hunter before the Lord” (10:9). A better translation is “against” the Lord. Nimrod built the two most powerful cities of the time—Babel and Nineveh. Paganism, still prevalent down to today—traces back to Nimrod and his Babylonian Mystery Religion.

“But the Lord came down”

“Come on down” might sound good on *The Price Is Right*, but in the Bible this expression forebodes impending doom—with the Word, having heard troubling reports from His angels, coming down to see for Himself and to personally administer the punishment. Let's hope He never has to come on down to us except for the first resurrection at His return!

Quickly sizing up the long-term consequences, the Lord judged “Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; *now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them*” (11:6). The Spirit in Man gives humans incredible ability to accomplish almost anything they set their minds to! But the Word was keeping a wary eye on developments then just as Jesus Christ our Judge surely is today.

Babel

means “confusion” and the Lord confused their languages and scattered them. This apparently occurred about the time of the birth of Peleg (10:25), 101 years after

the Flood and 326 years before the call of Abraham. History depends on geography.

The confusion was so thorough that today the count is 7,099 languages, 23 considered major ones. The United Nations speaks in six languages: Chinese, English, French, German, Japanese and Russian. Agreeing on how much they hate Israel! (Psalm 83:4).

This is why Zephaniah 3:9 is such an important prophecy regarding Jesus Christ's coming Kingdom on earth: "For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, that they all may call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one accord."

When the Word "separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples"—the surprise is: "according to the number of the children of Israel" (Deuteronomy 32:8). Israel didn't exist yet! But God and the Word had long ago planned for how much space the Israelitish tribes would need from their pagan neighbors.

"And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings" (Acts 17:26).

A huge principle of the Bible is that it covers Gentile nations only to the extent of how they interact with Israel and what impact they have on Israel. That's not because Israel was anything great (Deuteronomy 7:7) but because God would choose them to be His model nation to teach the Gentiles about Him and His Way (4:6-8). So for Babel and its provocative tower

Time's up!

Yet Babel and its Babylonian Mystery Religion proceed on

down to trouble the earth at the end. Today we have spiritual Babylon (Revelation 13, 18) and towers that relay our Internet and smartphone communication. Has there ever been more confusion!

Some things don't change, but we must. "Come out of her, my people" (Revelation 18:4).

The Father of You?

Surprise, Paul said God “preached the gospel to Abraham” (Galatians 3:8).

The Bible is one book with one message sharing the mind of God. One is the operative word for all the major spiritual components (Ephesians 4:4-6). The method of salvation is the same in the Old and New Testaments. And why not since the Word, our Creator and Judge in the Old who interacted with humans, became Jesus Christ in the New.

God established Abram as

“The father of the faithful”

(Romans 4:11, Galatians 3:7) and “the friend of God” (James 2:23).

The Word actually talked to Abram: “Get out of your country, from your family ... to a land that I *will show* you.” What was Abram’s reaction to such a big disrupting move: “So Abram departed as the Lord had spoken to him” (Genesis 12:1). Simple unquestioning prompt obedience! No demand to see a Zillow analysis first!

And huge faith because at age 75 “he went out, not knowing where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8). This was different than my senior moments!

God promised Abram physical blessings: to make a “great nation”—Israel to come—out of his descendants who would number as the stars. The childless Abram and Sarai had to be left constantly pondering: “descendants?”

God promised the land of Canaan and would place Israel there to be special (Genesis 17:11). Exceptionalism!

What a missed opportunity for people and nations who haven't paid attention to God's promise—"I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you" (12:2-3). Time will show that this will apply to a much bigger Israel than just the one tribe in the Middle East.

The best promise was that "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. "This is the great evangelic promise fulfilled in Abraham's Seed, Christ, and in all the spiritual seed of Abraham who, like Abraham, are justified by faith ... It gives added revelation and confirmation of the promise of the Adamic covenant concerning the Seed of the woman (3:15)"—*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 24. Abram's descendants would distribute the Bible and preach the gospel worldwide.

But Abram and Sarai had human weakness like everybody else, and the Bible reveals the flaws of its heroes. Twice Abram had Sarai lie that she was his sister lest a Pharaoh might kill Abram so he could add the ravishing Sarai to his harem. She was his half-sister but God showed He didn't condone their intent to outright deceive. Yet opening court wombs was a loving way to no doubt encourage Abram and Sarai! (20:18). You're next! Today we still make the same mistakes twice—if we can hold it down to that—and God still forgives!

Time passed until Abram felt compelled to ask God how he was supposed to have descendants when his only heir was his servant Eliezer. God told him he would have an heir "who will come from your own body" (15:4).

Waiting for the promised heir

was especially hard for Sarai because of the painful social

stigma of being childless. Their growing impatience produced a short-sighted “solution” pushed by Sarai and heeded by Abram. Slacking and Hagar went together even back then. God hadn’t said the child would come through Sarai, so Abram would go into Sarai’s handmaid (16:2). According to cultural customs of their day, Sarai would be considered the mother.

Unknowingly, they gave birth to conflict that carries down to the Middle East today! If only we would patiently trust God to work out His sure promise in His own time and way!

Hardly a surprise that three’s not the way to the crowd God promised. Sarai and Hagar ended up despising each other. You-Are-the-God-Who-Sees (verse 13) told Hagar to name the boy Ishmael (“whom God hears”). He and his descendants would become “a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives” (verse 12 *NLT*). God would multiply Ishmael exceedingly and he would become 12 princes (17:20). God blessed Ishmael because he was so special to Abraham, and God often extends His blessings to our loved ones because He loves us so much!

“In the space of one hundred years following the death of Mohammed in 632, the Arabs had carried the sword of Islam from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, holding at one time most of Spain, part of southern France, the isle of Sicily, all of North Africa and Egypt, all of Arabia, the Holy Land, Armenia, Persia, Afghanistan, and almost a third of India. The empire of the Arabs was larger than that of Alexander the Great or of Rome”—Louis L’Amour, *The Walking Drum*, 1984, pages 171-172.

Abram was 86 (Sarai 76) when Ishmael was born (16:16). After 13 more years of patiently waiting, the Word appeared

to Abram and changed his name from Abram (“exalted father”) to Abraham (“father of a multitude”) and Sarai (“princess”) to Sarah (“princess” but higher status like a queen). Interestingly, both names were changed by adding one Hebrew letter (He). Pronounced like the English *H* as a breath of air, some see this as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. God gave them His Holy Spirit and perhaps it was at this point.

God commanded circumcision to be the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. It’s interesting that vitamin K blood-clotting peaks on the eighth day for a male baby.

You can know that a 99-year-old man would like to reason with God about that one! But Abraham in faithful obedience, that same day, was circumcised with all the males in his household. Ouch, not funny!

But when God told Abraham that Sarah would have his son—with him 100 years old and Sarah at age 90 and barren—Abraham “fell on his face and laughed” (17:17). When Sarah heard she “laughed within herself ... shall I have pleasure” (18:12). God got the last laugh by Abraham naming Isaac (“laughter”) so that Sarah said “all who hear will laugh with me” (21:3, 6).

Now sacrifice your only son of promise

Imagine the shock when God told Abraham to go sacrifice Isaac (22:2). True to his unparalleled obedience, Abraham rose early in the morning. It was a three-day journey by donkey, prefiguring Christ’s humble mode of transportation into Jerusalem and the Father’s pain for the three days and three nights His only begotten son would be in the grave.

Abraham told his servants “the lad and I will go yonder and worship, and *we* will come back to you.” That’s *we*! The Hall

of Faith chapter tells us that Abraham concluded “that God was able to raise him [Isaac] up, even from the dead” (Hebrews 11:19).

Isaac pictured Jesus’ submissive role in the crucifixion, not once resisting or struggling. When he asked Abraham “Where’s the lamb?” the answer in sight was “You is it!” But in faith, Abraham answered “God will provide.” The remarkable teenager trustingly let Abraham bind him and lay him on the altar.



God mercifully stopped the knife on the way down, but Abraham and Isaac had made the sacrifice—close enough! Abraham named the place “The Lord Will Provide (*YHWH-Jireh*).

God joyfully applauded them: “for *now I know* that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Genesis 22:12). God didn’t foreknow what Abraham was going to do! God learns about us from how we respond to our tests.

“Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws” (26:5). Did God make it plain that these are His! This is why Paul would agree with James that Abraham was saved by grace and faith (“Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness”), but “you see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only” (James 2:23-24). God will not save anybody who won’t obey Him. It’s so simple that it’s faith *and* works, grace *and* law.

Abraham “waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10)—the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2!

Sarah is the first woman honored in the Faith chapter (Hebrews 11:11). Sarah also walked away from her life in Haran and obediently supported her husband in all their precedent-setting endeavors in a way that pleased God (1 Peter 3:6).

Are they the father and mother of you?

How Could He Be Righteous!

It gives people the heebie jeebies! C'mon, how could he be? ... called "righteous Lot" (2 Peter 2:7), when this no-good father offered the mob his two daughters (Genesis 19:8)!

Well, when Abram and Sarai in remarkable faithful obedience left Haran, Lot also went with his uncle and aunt without knowing where they were going (12:5).

After that, it's hard to be inspired by anything Lot does.

◆ When Abram and Lot had to head in opposite directions because their sizeable herds were butting heads, Abram commendably took the lead in resolving their dispute. He may have been Lot's foster father (11:28). He humbly let Lot choose which land he wanted, trusting that God would fulfill His promises no matter what Lot would choose. "Lot chose for himself" the well-watered plain of Jordan (13:10-12)—instead of asking God for guidance.

◆ Lot pitched his tent "toward" Sodom (*King James Version*), and soon he was in it! (14:12). And then "sitting in the gate of Sodom," apparently serving in the city government (19:1).

After Lot was rescued by Abram with his armed 380 trained servants, the grateful Abram gave

Melchizedek

"the priest of God Most High ... a tithe of all." This is the first example of tithing which is a statute of God for His people who wouldn't think of robbing Him (Malachi 3:8-12).

Since Melchizedek was the "king of righteousness ... king of

peace ... without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life ... made like the Son of God," he could have been no other than the preincarnate Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:2-3).

Melchizedek brought out bread and wine, no doubt it being the time of Passover (Genesis 14:18). This is backed up by the fact that Lot made the two angels "a feast, and baked unleavened bread" (19:3). The Days of Unleavened Bread is the Festival that immediately follows the Passover (Leviticus 23). Perhaps it was on the 7th Day of Unleavened Bread—when God parted the Red Sea and later would make the walls of Jericho fall down—that God chose to give victory over sin at Sodom and Gomorrah.

The Word and the two angels first stopped at Abraham's place, and interesting details are offered. People think the lowliest servant had to wash feet, but even divine guests were given water and washed their own (Genesis 18:4). So what a shock when Jesus will wash His Disciples' feet!

Rabbis note that Abraham promised little—"a morsel of bread"—but then delivered big—three fine cakes and a tender fatted calf. He offered the divine beings milk and meat together so they weren't kosher or vegetarian.

The Word was going down—remember, His action that forebodes impending doom for the visitee—but He said: "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing? ... For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him" (verses 17, 19). Abraham was God's friend (James 2:23) and a prophet (Amos 3:7). God values our opinions. He wants us to reason with Him (Isaiah 1:18).

Abraham rightfully did his best to be a good intercessor and boldly dickered God down from 50 righteous to 10, knowing

He would be merciful to even sinful Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-33). But the Word surely put on a good poker face, knowing that there was only one!

Yes, righteous Lot

◆ “As he lived among them, that righteous man tormented himself day by day with the lawless deeds he saw and heard” (2 Peter 2:8 *Holman Christian Standard Bible*). Lot was fulfilling Ezekiel 9:4—“men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.”

Why'd he offer his two daughters? Perhaps he rightfully assumed the threatening mob wouldn't be interested in women. Perhaps he hoped a diversion would give the guests time to escape. But the biggest reason which we today can't begin to understand is that the obligation to show hospitality and protection to guests was paramount in their culture. Otherwise it's an insult to the guests and paints the host as worthless, which is what readers today think of Lot! Just like we can't understand how righteous Abraham was willing twice to try to save his life knowing that it meant a Pharaoh would be with his wife!



◆ Lot lingered. The angels had to drag them out by the hand! His wife looked back, yearning to go back to that life.

Salt is a preservative, and it certainly preserved her in place! God mercifully let any of Lot's unrighteous relatives escape with him if they were willing, and this is great encouragement for the end-time.

◆ Lot let his daughters get him snockered so that he fathered what becomes Jordan today from Moab and Ammon.

The story of Lot matters because God prophesied that at the end time it's going to be

“As in the days of Lot” (Luke 17:28)

People today try to rationalize away Sodom and Gomorrah. In May 2015 53% of Americans said gay and lesbian lifestyles were morally acceptable, and in June the U.S. Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage. But the Book that will judge us says “those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them” (Romans 1:32).

Actually Sodom's sins were so much more than the grievous obvious: “pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy ... haughty ... abominations” (Ezekiel 16:49-50).

Showcasing God's awesome plan of salvation which is so little known, Jesus said “it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city” which rejected His servants (Matthew 10:15). In the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-13), their minds will be opened to “the books” of the Bible and no doubt readily respond to it!

Do we give reason for any to ask: How can he be righteous!

Thanks to the Patriarchs

Israel exists today and many of us live in the most blessed, prosperous nations on earth because of the promises God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for their faithful obedience” (Deuteronomy 7:6-8).

Picturing Jesus Christ & His Church

To have the promised descendants, the son of promise first needs a wife. Abraham sent his trusted servant, probably Eliezer (“God his help”), a type of the Holy Spirit (the *parakletos* Helper, John 15:26, Genesis 24). Rebekah is a type of the Church, the *ecclesia*—called out ones. Isaac served as a type of the Bridegroom, whom the Bride has to accept unseen, who goes out to meet and receive His bride. Isaac gets married at age 40—which was very encouraging to me when I was in my 30s still trusting God to bless me with the right mate.

Years passed, with the couple never complaining or resorting to handmaidens. But finally Isaac “pleaded with the Lord for his wife” (25:21). In the Bible “fervent” prayers “avail much” (James 5:16). They had patiently waited in faith 20 years for Rebekah to give birth when Isaac was 60.

Maybe they were too fervent because Rebekah delivered “two nations” when Esau and Jacob came out (Genesis 25:23). From birth they would compete for supremacy right on down to our day today. Jacob (“supplanter”) grabbed Esau the firstborn (“red, hairy”) by the heel!

Their relationships were strained by Isaac loving his hunter son Esau and Rebekah favoring Jacob the family

businessman who was a cunning manipulator of people and events.

Conning

The deceitful Jacob tricked Esau into selling him the birthright. The faithless hunter “profaned” the spiritual blessing (Hebrews 12:16) and valued it less than a hill of beans. All he got was a bowl of lentils.

Showing how a bad example keeps on going, ever ready to batter, Isaac blatantly lies to King Abimelech that Rebekah was his sister. The ruse was working until the King saw them “sporting” (Genesis 26:8 *King James Version*). The “siblings” weren’t expecting any spectators!

After Philistines would stop up one of his wells, Isaac demonstrated “turning the other cheek” by having his servants “Dig Another Well” (Paul Overstreet’s country song).

Later Rebekah pushed Jacob into tricking Isaac to give the family blessing to him while Esau was out hunting Dad’s favorite wild game. Goat skins wrapped around his arms and neck felt hairy enough to deceive the old blind patriarch even though he could hear it was Jacob’s voice (27:22).

So the promises were passed on to the second-born Jacob like they were to the second-born Isaac. Rebekah said “Let your curse be on me, my son” (verse 13), and she never saw Jacob again after he fled from Esau’s threat to kill him.

Jacob saw a ladder in a dream that had angels ascending and descending it. God reiterated the Abrahamic promises to him.



Jacob's pillow became a sacred pillar stone—the Stone of Scone—which resided under the coronation throne in Westminster Abbey for 700 years but has recently been returned to Scotland on display at

Edinburgh Castle [see page 131]. Jacob promised to tithe to God. (28:22).

Conned!

Jacob met his match in the wily Laban, Rebekah's brother. After Jacob diligently served his uncle for seven years for the reward of Rachel's hand in marriage, he wakes up the morning after his wedding night to discover it was Leah lying in his bed! How could he not notice! ... Jacob must have been muttering to himself for the next seven years as he resiliently double-downed for Rachel.

When Laban said he couldn't "give the younger before the firstborn (29:26)," the word "firstborn" must have rocked Jacob for what he did to Esau.

The two women waged a baby race, enlisting their handmaids to conceive one daughter and 12 sons who would become the 12 Tribes of Israel. At last God removed Rachel's barrenness and she delivered Joseph and Benjamin, Jacob's two favorites, dying during the last birth.

God underscored His miraculous involvement with the Abrahamic Covenant by the fact that all three women (Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel) were healed so they could give birth to the promised lads.

Jacob followed Isaac and Rebekah's bad example of favoritism and suffered a highly dysfunctional family.

For 14 years God had blessed everything Jacob did to make Laban rich. Now it was time for God to bless Jacob with herds of cattle and sheep as a reward for his maturing development in right character. Jacob started with only white sheep so Laban figured there was no way he could come up with spotted or speckled ones. He couldn't. But Jacob understood that "my righteousness will answer for me" through God's blessing (30:33). Even as Laban changed his wages 10 times (31:41), God changed the sheep born to be appropriately speckled or spotted to fleece the wily uncle and give his livestock to Jacob (verse 9).



On the way home to meet and reconcile with Esau, at Mahanaim ("This is God's camp"), Jacob found himself wrestling with God—the preincarnate Jesus Christ. You'd think it'd be no contest, but to win the Word put Jacob's hip socket out of joint. Still Jacob refused to quit until the Word would bless him! (32:26).

The Word changed Jacob's name to Israel ("prevailer or prince with God"). Jacob said "For I have seen God face to face" (verse 30). It was more like muscled torso and limbs!

God gave Jacob this huge promise that is a key to Bible prophecy and part of what the key of David (Revelation 3:7) means: Israel would become the greatest nation and a company of nations (Genesis 35:11).

Spoiler alert: People can't figure out why small nations are identified in the Bible but nothing is said about the greatest nation that has ever been—the United States— and the greatest company of nations that has ever been—the British Commonwealth. Duh! That's because people don't believe

what God plainly promised Jacob and what history shows He worked out!

And people haven't been taught that Anglo-Saxon derives from Isaac. And that prophecies about Jacob pertain to more than Judah only (Israel in the Middle East). Jacob is headed for the worst trouble that has ever been (Jeremiah 30:7), and Jacob doesn't know who's about to get clobbered!

And wouldn't you know it: the ones so totally blessed because of the faithful obedience of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are now being duped by the god of this world to turn against patriarchy, reject exceptionalism, and cancel culture and history.

Into Slavery

Abraham had God's exciting promise about numberless descendants to come, but in good news/bad news fashion, they would become "strangers" in a foreign land, afflicted 400 years (Genesis 15:13). Actually Israel would be in slavery just over 200 years.

The 400 years apparently dates from Abraham's death to Israel's possession of the Promised Land. To get Israel out of slavery more than 250 years later, God first has to get them there in a way no one would ever guess!

God sets in motion a most amazing sequence of events, taking Joseph

From slavery to second in command of Egypt

Israel unwisely favored Joseph more than his other 11 sons, causing the brothers to unfavor Joseph. He gave Joseph a coat of many colors worthy of Broadway. If the brothers wanted one too, they were undoubtedly told "in your dreams!" And then Joseph compounded their hatred with his dreams of their sheaves and later the sun, moon and 11 stars bowing to him.

When Joseph was 17 (Genesis 37:2), envy drove them to bring about circumstances that would look like Joseph's life was ruined but yet would bring about what the dreams foretold! Reuben, worthy of French diplomacy, persuaded them into dropping Joseph into a pit so he could later rescue his brother. But Judah, like a good Jew, talked dollars-and-cents into them selling Joseph to some Ishmaelite traders. Then they dipped his multicolor tunic into the one color of blood and deceived Israel like he and Rebekah had once

deceived Isaac with a coat and goat. The Bible hammers home “reap what you sow” (Galatians 6:7).

Joseph was caravanned to Egypt and sold into slavery to Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh’s guard. Wherever God took Joseph, Joseph had no say except he served faithfully with all of his might (Ecclesiastes 9:10) and God prospered all he did and caused all who came into contact with him to be blessed and to put Joseph in charge to cause more blessings! Potiphar’s wife tried to seduce him day after day, purring “Lie with me.” Joseph didn’t say ok, you tell one and then I’ll tell one. He remanded, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Genesis 39:9). Joseph knew the 10 Commandments were in force (Romans 5:13), and fled fornication long before the command was stated in the Bible (1 Corinthians 6:18).

The scorned woman lied without him and got him thrown in prison. Joseph interpreted dreams for the chief butler and baker, but wouldn’t you know it, the butler forgets to tell what Joseph did, and he’s stuck two more years! (Genesis 41:1).

Then God blessed him to interpret Pharaoh’s dream about cows and heads of grain. After Joseph advised Pharaoh to find a man who would wisely respond to the crisis during the seven fat years so they would then survive the seven lean ones, Pharaoh wisely recognized that Joseph was the man—and made him #2 [prime minister] in Egypt at age 30 (verse 46).

Altogether, Joseph endured about 13 years with Potiphar and prison to reach the unseen outcome God planned for him. This rates, like the book of Esther, as such an encouraging example in the Bible of trusting God to work all things out for good! (Romans 8:28).

Famine brings Israel to Egypt

When his brothers came down to Egypt to obtain grain, I guess they couldn't recognize their brother because it wouldn't cross their minds that they would run into him, and it had been 22 years since selling him into slavery. Joseph plays with them like a cat with a mouse. Eventually he can't help revealing himself to his 11 brothers, the same way someday Joseph and the other tribes of Israel will be revealed to themselves and to the world!

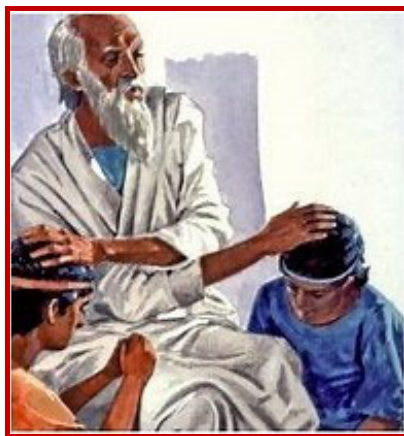
Joseph has Israel and his entourage of 70 (75 counting other relatives) move down to Egypt and live in the land of Goshen. Israel lived in Egypt 17 years and had wonderful time with his beloved son Joseph whom he thought dead for over two decades.

Before Israel died at age 147, he called for Joseph's two sons Manasseh and Ephraim and passed on the family birthright. This adopted the boys as his sons.

The birthright should have gone to Reuben as the firstborn but the original French lover had "defiled his father's bed" (1 Chronicles 5:1-2) and been disqualified by sin.

For the blessing, Joseph positioned Manasseh to be at Israel's right hand, but Israel reversed it and "set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Genesis 48:20).

Israel told Joseph "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be



greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations” (verse 19).

Just a meaningless ceremony? Look into it for yourself the Bible truth about how the United States became the greatest nation ever on the earth, and the British Commonwealth at its prime ruled one-fourth of the earth’s area and population.

Ephraim stayed greater than Manasseh until Feb. 21, 1947 when “Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world leadership, with all its burdens and all its glory, to the United States” –Joseph Jones, *Picking Up the Reins*.

Note that in his blessing Israel specified

“Let my name be named upon them” (verse 16)

So Israel and Jacob in prophecy primarily refer to the United States and British Commonwealth nations.

Israel gathered together all of his sons to prophesy “what shall befall [the 12 tribes] in the last days” (49:1). Joseph would be “a fruitful bough ... his branches run over the wall” in colonization. He would be blessed militarily and “with blessings of heaven above ... the deep ... the womb” (verses 22-26). Until they would Roe verses Wade off the deep end by legalizing abortion in 1973!

The chief promise is that “The scepter shall not depart from Judah ... until Shiloh [“Peaceable and Prosperous One”] comes.” A succession of Jewish kings would continue on down to the return of Jesus Christ so the throne of David will exist for the King of Kings to claim.

When Israel died at age 147, the 11 brothers fretted that Joseph might take revenge on them. But Joseph assured them, “am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant

evil against me; but God meant it for good in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive” (50:19-20).

God promises to do for us like He did for Joseph: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3:5-6).

Before Joseph died at age 110, by faith he “made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones” (Hebrews 11:22, Exodus 13:19).

Sometime between Joseph and Moses to come, during the time Israel will be in slavery in Egypt, it appears that

Job was the most righteous man on earth

God said “there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil” (Job 1:8).

The shock is that Job appears to have been a descendant of Esau, not Jacob!—King Jobab, the second king of Edom (Genesis 36:33), the son of Zerah of the Edomite city of Bozrah, making Job the great grandson of Esau.

A big lesson of Job is that satan can only do what God allows (Job 1:12, 2:6). By the way, satan was appearing before Jesus Christ’s portable throne—not before the Father’s throne in the third heaven from where he was cast down. Anyone who “loves and practices a lie” is not allowed there (Revelation 22:15).

Job matured to the point that we all must: “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).

The Master Timer takes His people into slavery for great purposes—and then delivers them out of suffering like He did Job to fulfill His great plan of salvation.

Passover Then & Tonight

The Exodus Passover was one of the pivotal events of the Bible and is hugely significant for Christians today.

“When the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt till another king arose who did not know Joseph” (Acts 7:17-18). When “the land was filled with them” (Exodus 1:7), the Egyptians enslaved them into “hard bondage” (verse 14). This when-when situation was hardly a winning one for the Israelites!

But when the Hebrew midwives Shiphrah and Puah refused Pharaoh’s order to kill male babies, God showed His approval (Acts 5:29). The Levitical parents of Moses are commended in the Faith Chapter because “they were not afraid of the king’s command” (Hebrews 11:23).

At the right time

God prepared the Deliverer for His people

Better than any episode of *Mission Impossible*, the mother put her three-month-old son into “an ark” (Noah, anyone? A remez hinting back to a previous deliverer) and floated it down the Nile where it was spotted by Pharaoh’s daughter who realized he was a Hebrew baby (Exodus 2:6) but no doubt considered it a miraculous gift from the Nile god Khnum. His sister had been tailing the basket and at her suggestion, the royal daughter drafted the mother to nurse him!

The daughter “brought him up as her own son” (Acts 7:21). She named him Moses (Hebrew *Mosheh* like *Mashah* for

“draw out”). The name Moses was well known in the Egyptian court because several Pharaohs had names compounded with it such as Ahmoses and Thutmoses. The daughter had drawn Moses out of the water, and God would use him to draw out His people from bondage!

“And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds” (verse 22). Josephus wrote that Moses was a great Egyptian general. He had it made in power and royalty!

And gave it up!

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26). Salvation in the Old Testament!

When Moses killed an Egyptian who was beating a slave, “he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand” (Acts 7:25). It sounds like at age 40 Moses knew he was supposed to be God’s Deliverer!

“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king” (Hebrews 11:27). He fled to the Midian desert in northwest Arabia and tended sheep for his father-in-law Jethro. For 40 years he delivered ... lambs!

“He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.” Until the Word revealed Himself to Moses as a burning bush that wouldn’t burn up! “It is significant that the verb is in the first person; the Speaker names Himself ... It is the announcement of a present God, who has come to fulfill His covenant and keep

His promise” (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 89). YHWH or YHWH, known as the Tetragrammaton and pronounced Yahweh or Jehovah except by religiously observant Jews, means “I AM WHO I AM”—the Eternal, Ever-Living, Self-Existent One” (Exodus 3:14). Jesus would later rile religious leaders by claiming to be “I Am.”

YHWH commissions Moses to return to Egypt and tell Pharaoh “let My people go.” When Moses objects that nobody will believe he is sent, YHWH gives him two impressive signs. When Moses objects that he is not eloquent enough, the bush probably blazed up because God’s anger was kindled over the excuses from a man “mighty in words” (Acts 7:22). Someday Moses will talk to Jonah about what happens when you resist doing a mission God gives you! Yet God mercifully provided Aaron his brother three years older to be his voice. We’d best have no excuses to feebly throw at our God!

But put ourselves in Moses’ sandals. God is asking him to go back to where Pharaoh had wanted to kill him (Exodus 2:15). Imagine the faith and courage it took Moses when God warned him in advance that “I will harden Pharaoh’s heart” and he “will not heed you” (7:3-4).

The Battle of Wills

Jannes and Jambres, Pharaoh’s magicians, withstood Moses (2 Timothy 3:8) by duplicating his signs and, in response to the first two plagues, by creating more blood and frogs. Just what Egypt needed! Ribbit, thanks a lot! By the time they were scratching their bodies for lice, they urged Pharaoh, “This is the finger of God” (Exodus 8:19).

It’s interesting that the Israelites suffered the first three plagues along with the Egyptians. But with the last seven, YHWH “set apart the land of Goshen” and made “a

difference between My people and your people” (verses 22-23). At the end, God’s spiritual Israel will suffer the first four seals with the world but is promised a Place of Safety (Revelation 12:6) and will be spared the Seven Last Plagues! (3:10, 15:2).

The 10 Plagues in Exodus were each pointedly chosen by God to mock the power and worth of the Egyptian gods. Pharaoh himself was considered to be the reincarnation of Horus. He foolishly and stubbornly kept hardening his own heart (Exodus 9:34) faster than God was hardening it.

The Lord’s Passover

God told Moses that Abib 1 (“Green Ears”) would “be the first month of the year to you” (12:2). That’s good enough for me to choose it each year over Jan. 1. Everything is bursting green with life instead of being in the dead of winter. And it’s not wrapped up in the 12 days of paganism!

God instructed the Israelites to select on the 10th a male lamb without blemish, keep it until the 14th and “kill it at twilight” (verses 3-6). The Hebrew is literally between the evenings—between sundown and darkness.

The Israelites were instructed to paint the blood on the two doorposts of their dwellings (representing arms and action) and on the lintels (head and thoughts, emotions).

“It is the Lord’s Passover” (verse 11). In so many ways! The lamb represents Jesus Christ (Revelation 5:6) who would come to earth to suffer agony, abandonment and betrayal and be sacrificed for us all in A.D. 31. And YHWH said He would be the one passing over: At midnight “I will pass through the land of Egypt” and will strike all the male firstborn of man and beast who does not have the blood on the door (Exodus 12:12).

Probably He was tracked not by an enveloping green fog but by the shrieks of loved ones throughout the terror-filled land! How just and merciful since an earlier Pharaoh had killed the Hebrew males and not just the firstborn.

“So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations ... by an everlasting ordinance” (verse 14).



Is it coincidence or God’s guiding that tonight, March 29, after sundown is Abib 14 and the Lord’s New Testament Passover service for 2018. “Indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). Tonight we wash feet, drink His blood of the New Covenant and eat the unleavened bread of His body broken for us, proclaiming “the Lord’s death till He comes” (11:24-26).

What a Week!

For Passover evening, the Israelites were warned not to go out of their houses until morning (Exodus 12:22). They would soon depart by night (Deuteronomy 16:1), but it wasn't on Passover.

At last Pharaoh had enough. “Get out!” God had given them favor so that they had plundered the Egyptians of gold, silver and valuables (Exodus 12:36) as payment for their years of slave labor which would later provide for the tabernacle (25:3).

Somehow during the Passover daylight, about three million people [likely since 600,000 men], scattered all over the land of Goshen, some as much as 20 miles away, gathered themselves, their animals, belongings and plunder to Rameses for departure. Who are these people! I'd be wiped out for a week! Yes, they lived a hardy life but also God gave them special care so that their clothes and shoes would not wear out and apparently special healing so they would not stumble on their Exodus.

They left that night. There was no Motel 6 back then, but God left the light on for them via a full moon, which always shines on

The Night to Be Much Observed

“This is that night of the Lord, a solemn observance [vigil] for all the children of Israel throughout their generations” (verse 42)—still observed today by spiritual Israel sharing a special meal together and remembering this night's significance. The Hebrew word for “solemn” is not there. Anyone who keeps this night knows it's a joyous time

because they were leaving slavery, and they went out with a “high hand” (14:8 *King James Bible*). I celebrated this glorious night last Friday night, March 31, 2018 with 18 brethren. We get the better deal: they trudged, we dined!

This night of Abib 15 begins the Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, a very-important week-long Festival of God (Leviticus 23:6-8). Israel had left in such haste that they hadn’t had time to leaven bread. “No leaven shall be found in your houses” (Exodus 12:19). No problem when you’ve left your houses! Spring cleaning today is traced back to this removal of leaven.

When was this Exodus? 1 Kings 6:1 stipulates that it was 480 years before Solomon’s fourth year reign which is most often dated 967-966 B.C. Adding 480 years dates the Exodus as 1447-1446 B.C. Solomon’s rule was figured Tishri to Tishri, making 1446 B.C. the most accepted date for the Exodus. However, the Bible shows that it must have been 1447 B.C.— by the fact that 40 years later in Joshua 6 at the time of conquering Jericho, Israel ate the food of the land on the first day after the Passover and the manna ceased after 40 years. This means they waved the Wave Sheaf on the day after the Passover, so the Passover had to have been on a Sabbath, which occurred in 1407 B.C. but not 1406 B.C.

Exodus 12:42 and Galatians 3:16-17 state that on this same day—this Holy Day of Nisan 15—430 years earlier, a defining event occurred: apparently circumcision instituted as the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, when Abraham was 99 years old, in 1877 B.C. (Genesis 17).

God had told Abraham that his descendants would “be strangers in a land that is not theirs” and would be “afflicted 400 years” (Genesis 15:13). Israel was in actual slavery just over 200 years. The 400 years (Acts 7:6-7) seems to be from

the death of Abraham until Israel inherits the land in Canaan 46 years after the Exodus--1801-1401 B.C.

Israel then—and spiritual Israel today—must purge our lives of spiritual leavening which is sin that so easily “puffs up” in vanity and spreads to the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:2, 6). Paul would later write “Therefore let us keep the feast [of Unleavened Bread], not with ... the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (verse 8).

“And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light” (Exodus 13:21). Paul would write that Jesus was the Rock who led them (1 Corinthians 10:4).

The people surely must have thought His GPS was malfunctioning! “God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, ‘Lest perhaps the people change their minds when they see war, and return to Egypt’” (verse 17). How often do we think God is leading us funny? Or worse, think He’s not leading us at all!

Instead, God led them into what literally looked like a dead end—between two mountains, blocked by the Red Sea. Then to ramp up the stakes, God hardened Pharaoh’s heart to pursue the escaping slaves with his revengeful army and chariots.

The Miracle of the Red Sea

The pillar of fire moved between the Israelites and the overtaking Egyptians to hold them back just long enough. And Moses said to the people shaking in their sandals: “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians

whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.” Yes, for the moment stand still and hold.

But when you see what I’m doing, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward” (14:13-15).



Moses lifted up his rod, God caused an east wind to blow all night long and heaped up the water into walls on both sides, and the Israelites walked through in likely more fear than faith.

One scholar “figured that marching ten abreast, the numbers would have formed a line over 150 miles long, and would have required eight or nine days to march by any fixed point” (Jonathan Kirsch, *Moses, A Life*, page 175). That estimate was for only 2-1/2 million, and since Israel crossed in a single night, they must have walked thousands abreast! God scooped out a watery boulevard wider than even Cecil B. DeMille could imagine!

At the right tipping point, the Master Timer flamed out, let the Egyptian chariots pursue the Israelites, “took off their chariot wheels” and drowned them in the sea! Tim Mahoney’s *Patterns of Evidence: The Red Sea Miracle* traces their route and filmed encrusted chariot wheels! This victory occurred during the seventh day of Unleavened Bread, which is still a Holy Day (Leviticus 23:8). Like the walls of water came tumbling down, 40 years later in 1407 B.C., same day, so will the walls of Jericho!

Seven is the Bible number for perfection and completeness, and the seventh Day of Unleavened Bread seems to be God’s favorite Victory Day. In addition to the Exodus and the walls of Jericho a tumblin’ down, three other epoch victories over sin likely occurred during the Days of Unleavened Bread and

specifically on this Holy Day: the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:3), Gideon's victory over the Midianites (Judges 6:19), and deliverance of the Jews in Esther (3:12) where Haman's decree to "destroy, kill and annihilate" Jews was enacted on the day before Passover. This seems to be the first use of a thesaurus in history! And the first use of gallows humor!

This physical history has spiritual lessons of grave importance for us (1 Corinthians 10:11). Saved by the blood of the lamb, God completely delivered them from physical Egypt [sin] and Pharaoh [satan] by baptizing them in the Red Sea (verse 2). Victory over satan and sin through YHWH! For those who obediently painted the blood and walked.

What a glorious week! Seven Days of Unleavened Bread, keeping sin out of our lives while following the Lord faithfully and building our relationship. How will Israel do after the Red Sea deliverance?

This seventh day holy day for 2018 starts tonight at sunset. How amazing to be right in sync with the Bible! How are we doing?

Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread have so much more meaning for us now that Christ the Bread of Life was resurrected and lives in us through His Holy Spirit.

We've already seen how critically important God thinks keeping His Sabbath is. So we should take special note that among all the many reasons to keep God's Sabbath, the Fourth Commandment forcefully states: "Remember that you were once slaves in Egypt, but the Lord your God brought you out with his strong hand and powerful arm. *That is why* the Lord your God has commanded to rest on the Sabbath day" (Deuteronomy 5:15, NLT).

Back to Egypt

God took Israel out of Egypt, but the problem was taking Egypt out of Israel. They had leeks in their thinking (Numbers 11:5) and forgot the lashes. So many had stiff necks (Exodus 32:9) that there weren't enough chiropractors to crack them. They kept whining to go back.

Israelites seem to have a three-day limit. Right after the Red Sea they complained about no water at Marah when if only they had waited until the oasis at Elim just ahead (15:22). Later they would grumble about lack of meat (Numbers 10:33) and be fed with quail.

The test Commandment

Earlier God re-established His weekly Sabbath by means of providing manna from heaven each of the six work days of the week. Any left until morning would breed worms and stink, except on the sixth preparation day when they were to gather for the Sabbath day as well. The honey wafers in Hebrew meant “what is it?” so it made for awkward conversations when somebody would answer “manna.” Abbot and Costello would have enjoyed discussing it—who's on first and what'd he eat!

But this feeding regimen was of utmost importance because before Mt. Sinai God established His Sabbath as the “test” commandment—“that I may test them, whether they will walk in My law or not” (Exodus 16:4). He knew that people would generally see the need for the other nine Commandments, but no way that Fourth one!

The manna was a type of Jesus Christ, the true unleavened bread of life (John 6:31-35) who would be born in Bethlehem [“House of Bread”].

God provided some help for His leader. Aaron and Hur, who was undoubtedly glad to not live among English-speaking people, held up Moses' hands for victory against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:12). And Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, taught him the management principle of handling an issue at the lowest administrative level possible (18:22).

Pentecost marriage covenant

At Mt. Sinai on Pentecost, YHWH thundered the 10 Commandments and judgments and ratified the Mt. Sinai covenant in blood (24:8) with Israel to be married to Him (Jeremiah 3:14).

The people vowed "all the words which the Lord has said we will do" (Exodus 24:3). They probably intended to, but would not have the heart (Deuteronomy 5:29) until God would provide the Holy Spirit and start His Church on a Pentecost in Acts 2.



Even many calling themselves Christian argue that they don't have to keep the 10 Commandments, and the Sabbath is a burden. Would they argue they don't have to love? The Bible defines love: "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3). The one a Christian must emulate said "if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:17).

While Moses was up on the mount fasting for 40 days and 40 nights receiving the two tablets written by God's own finger, God gave him the pattern for how to construct a tabernacle in the wilderness with all its furnishings that would be like His living quarters in the third heaven—so He would be able to dwell with them (Exodus 25:8-9). Moses and the Israelites did it "as the Lord had commanded, just so they

had done it” (39:43)—raising it up about a year into the exodus.

God gave Israel a special Sabbath Covenant “to observe ... throughout their generations as a special covenant” (31:16). How important was it? It identified God as Creator and who were His people.

When Moses delayed his coming from Mt. Sinai, the Israelites preceded the Kingston Trio into thinking he was the man who never returned, and they pressured Aaron into crafting a golden calf—which just “came out”—to lead them back to Egypt once their orgy subsided. Moses blazed with such righteous indignation that he smashed the two tablets and wasn’t thinking that it meant he would have to go back up for another 40 days of fasting!

God’s wrath burned hot against Israel and He was just about to wipe them all out and start over with Moses, until Moses successfully pleaded intercession for them (Exodus 32:11).

God promised Moses that His Presence would go with them (33:14). He “spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend” (verse 11). So, brighter than the sun, He let Moses catch a glimpse of His glorified backside. Thank God He makes Himself accessible to us! Like Moses, we must be safely positioned in the Rock!

Losing out

Moses disqualified himself from being allowed to go to the Promised Land because he lost his temper and struck the rock twice when God had told him only to speak to it. Striking it worked the last time! He probably thought his closeness to God gave him leeway to play loose with God’s instructions, but God always holds His leaders to higher standards (Numbers 20:11).

Israel was in Kadesh Barnea [Petra] when Moses sent out 12 spies to bring back a report of the Promised Land. Ten spies, whose names nobody remembers, brought back an evil report about the unconquerable giants. They overruled Caleb and Joshua who said “Let’s go up, God will give us the victory.” These two had a different spirit! (Numbers 14:24).

The spies had returned in 40 days. God sentenced all Israel except for the two righteous spies and those under 20 to wander in the wilderness for 40 years until they would all die off. This is the “day for a year” principle often seen in the Bible.

It gives a warning that even those who will be taken to a Place of Safety (Revelation 12:14) won’t have it made unless they stay obedient and faithful. Ten times the Israelites tested and rebelled against God in the wilderness (Numbers 14:22). Ten is the number of judgment in the Bible. We must be like Joshua and Caleb to make it to the Promised Land. We must go forward, face ahead, eyes riveted on Jesus Christ leading us—our back to Egypt.

There Oughta Be a Law

There is! Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Torah (“teaching”). The Pentateuch. The Law of Moses, really the Law of God.

When a Pharisee lawyer would someday test Jesus with what is the great commandment in the law (Matthew 22:36), the theme of the first four Commandments—“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind”—will come from Deuteronomy 6:5. The theme of the last six Commandments—“You shall love your neighbor as yourself”—from Leviticus 19:18.

The Law of Moses is not done away, any more than the rest of the Old Testament is done away. That was all there was when Jesus would say “Your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Jesus also said “one jot or tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled ... whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom” (Matthew 5:18-19). That’s why Paul would write “Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12).

The five types of sacrifices in Leviticus, only two of which involved sin and trespasses, are no longer required today when there is no priesthood or temple system. They could not forgive sin. In all details they picture Jesus Christ and the sacrifice He would make for man, saving us by His blood (Hebrews 9:9-15).

It’s interesting that when YHWH brought Israel out of Egypt, “I did not speak to your fathers, or command them ... concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices” (Jeremiah 7:22). He commanded them to obey Him! (verse 23).

A matter of holiness

The theme of Leviticus is holiness, obvious since the Hebrew word *qodesh* for “holiness” or “holy” appears more than 150 times. Though Paul would later write that the Kingdom of God is not food or drink but righteousness (Romans 14:17), rebellion and lusting are matters of righteousness.

The fact that God considers instructions about clean and unclean meat to be worth two chapters in His book (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14) should tell us something! Like when the 10 Commandments repeat in Deuteronomy 5.

Can't a holy God tell His people “to distinguish between the unclean and the clean” so they can be holy like He is! (Leviticus 11:44-47). Can't we let God tell us before the doctor has to!



These two chapters specify the “foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:3). That scripture is one of several that people twist to justify eating unclean food, and like

this one they don't say any such thing. We can be thankful for a ham dinner all we want and that doesn't make it truth. If God says an animal is unclean, it's going to stay that way even if it should fly!

Holy Days reveal God's plan of salvation

Leviticus 23 is one of the most important chapters in the

Bible. We've already seen how several crucial events occurred on Holy Days before God announced them as being His special worship days.

Critics rebel against them as Jewish. Buzzer! At the lowest level, Judah was only one of the 12 Tribes, and we are to be spiritual Israel (Galatians 6:16).

At the highest level, God calls them "the feasts of the Lord ... holy convocations ... my feasts" (verse 2). The Hebrew word *mo'edim* means appointed times. We have appointments with God! That's when He worships! God expects us to show up! They are a summons, and this is the Judge of the universe.



And why wouldn't we want to show up? Now in my 52nd year of keeping them, they are a joy to keep! More than that, they reveal and teach God's plan for salvation—more each year as we keep them. A crucial

principle of the Bible is that you have to humbly and obediently do God's instructions in order to understand them (Psalm 111:10).

Leviticus 23 begins with the weekly Sabbath.

The seven Festivals with their seven Holy Days fall in three harvest seasons of the year in the northern hemisphere—the early smaller harvests of Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread in the spring and Pentecost in early summer—and the greater fall harvest of the Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Feast of Tabernacles and

Eighth Day. These show how and when God's spiritual harvest of God Beings will go from two to billions.

On these Holy Days during the three seasons are the only time the Church of God passes the offering plate (Deuteronomy 16:16-17).

Leviticus 27:30 discusses tithing, and the first tithe has always been to finance the spiritual work of God (Numbers 18:21). We must not rob God "in *tithes* and offerings" (Malachi 3:8-10) because our commission today involves preaching the gospel and preparing God's people in all nations (Matthew 24:14, 28:18-20).

People ask how in the world can we afford to keep the Holy Days? God commands the setting aside of a Second Tithe which we spend on ourselves to rejoice on His Holy Days (Deuteronomy 14:22-27)—especially the Feast of Tabernacles which offers travel opportunities worldwide. God exhorts "spend that money for whatever your heart desires!"

To take care of the poor, God commands a Third Tithe every third and sixth year out of a cycle of seven (verses 27-29). What! I would join the ranks of the poor! How can God expect that! He says "that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand." God's on the edge of His bench eager to bless us! Giving brings joy. But also the biggest blessings of my life have come during third-tithe years, so that I look forward to them! I'm in one now, and am being blessed as usual, materially but especially spiritually.

As part of instruction about Pentecost, God said "when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners" (Leviticus 23:22). Significant is that the poor had to come reap it, like Ruth would do (Ruth 2:2). "The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10 *NIV*).

God's welfare features caring and giving plus individual responsibility.

Jubilee at Second Coming

Leviticus teaches about land Sabbaths (Leviticus 25:4) and about the year of Jubilee every 50 years when debts are released and property returned to original owners (verse 10). A Jubilee year is proclaimed fittingly on a Day of Atonement, and Jesus Christ seems certain to return in a Jubilee year (Isaiah 61:1-2).

The New Testament will refer to Deuteronomy more than 80 times, one of only four books that will be quoted in the New Testament. Christ will quote it more than any other book. No wonder since a prominent message in it is obedience in response to God's love.

God said He gave Israel His commandments, statutes and judgments to be their "wisdom and ... understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear ... and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him?" (Deuteronomy 4:6-8). If only the United States and Great Britain were living up to this!

Deuteronomy carries Israel down to the verge of the Promised Land. Moses gets to view it only, from Mt. Nebo overlooking Jericho—a view I have shared on two trips to Israel. He died at age 120 (34:7). "Since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses" until Jesus would come (18:15).

God directed Moses to appoint Joshua as his successor. Moses prophesied of Israel: "For I know that after my death you will become utterly corrupt, and turn aside from the way

which I have commanded you. And evil will befall you in the latter days” (31:29).

Somehow that was supposed to make Joshua “strong and of good courage” (verse 7).

“As For Me & My House”

Joshua is a type of Jesus Christ who will lead us to the Promised Land. Joshua and Jesus both mean: “Jehovah is salvation.”

The book of Joshua is the first of the 12 historical books and the first of the Prophets division (Hebrew *nevi'im*) Jesus would cite in Luke 24:44. It offers strength and encouragement for us who seek eternal life.

YHWH was the one actually leading Israel (Deuteronomy 31:7-8). On the First Day of Unleavened Bread He appeared to Joshua as Commander of the army of the Lord” (Joshua 5:14) and gave Joshua the battle plan to bring down the walls of Jericho. Will we let God fight our battles? (2 Chronicles 20:17). Our best position is on our knees with Bible open!

What a remarkable storyline that Rahab a harlot was spared because of her obedient faith toward God—not for lying—and ends up marrying Salmon of a leading tribe of Israel and becomes part of the genealogy of Christ (Matthew 1:5).

The Israelites marched around Jericho for the seven Days of Unleavened Bread, with the seemingly impregnable city falling down flat on the ending Holy Day. The same day God opened the Red Sea 40 years earlier! And Sodom and Gomorrah were likely destroyed during the Days of Unleavened Bread (Genesis 19:3), probably on the seventh day. That would make three miraculous deliverances from sin which are pictured by the Days of Unleavened Bread!



Archeology eventually discovered that British Kathleen

Kenyon in the 1950s had erred in her interpretations and that Jericho totally backed the details of the Bible's description of its destruction. It will always be the case that the Bible is a book of divine truth (John 17:17) and has it right, and eventually science will dig it. The most recent—and rising—count is that 79 people mentioned in the Bible have been confirmed by archeology.

The 2014 book and movie *Patterns of Evidence: The Exodus* details how all the evidence perfectly aligns with the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan when the dates are properly placed 200 years earlier than reputed experts were claiming.

YHWH exhorted Joshua to

“Be strong and of good courage”

because He had already given them “every place the sole of their foot will tread upon” (Joshua 1:3). Just step out in faith! It wasn't until the priests carrying the ark of the covenant, symbol of God's presence, actually put their feet into the Jordan River that the water dried up (3:13).

Today we must “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6)—by faith and not by sight.

God charged Joshua to “observe to do according to all of the law which Moses My Servant commanded you ... This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it” (Joshua 1:7-8).

Joshua is from the Hebrew *Jehoshua* meaning “the Eternal is salvation.” In Greek Joshua is *Iesous* and in Latin *Jesus*. Imagine the pressure of having that name to live up to! Well, we are Christians!

Joshua had been prepared for his crucial role

by serving as assistant to Moses throughout the 40 years of wandering (Exodus 24:13). He led the battle against Amalek (17:9). Along with Caleb, he was the only faithful spy arguing that Israel should promptly go up because God would give them the grapes from the giants.

He was nearly stoned!—yep, he was ready to face his new assignment with shepherding the stiff-necked Israelites!

When the Israelites cheerily answered Joshua, “Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you” (Joshua 1:17), the new leader must have muttered to himself: “Oh-oh!

You probably picture Joshua like he was portrayed in the classic *10 Commandments* movie. But Josephus says Joshua was 85 years old when he succeeded Moses. Since he was an Ephraimite, maybe he was more like Winston Churchill!

Joshua is only charged with one major mistake, when he foolishly got duped by the Gibeonites pretending they came from a far distance. He “did not ask counsel of the Lord” (9:14). Instead he made a covenant of peace, when Israel had been commanded to drive out all the Canaanites in the land (Deuteronomy 7:2-3).

God had cursed Canaan for his sexual sin against Noah. Canaanite idolatry combined religion with free indulgence of sexual desire. Talk about mercy, God gave the Amorites and the other “ites” time to repent (Genesis 15:16). The time was supposed to be up when Joshua led the Israelites into Canaan, but they failed to complete the job.

God supplied hailstones and hornets. In one special case He granted Joshua a long day. Those who want to argue that it

changed the Sabbath to a day later should note that it was only “a whole day” (Joshua 10:13). The big news was not the celestial miracle but that

“The Lord heeded the voice of a man”

“The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). Effective prayers in the Bible are always fervent ones!

Joshua served in the role of Jesus Christ when he interceded for Israel after the foolish sin of Achen. It’s amazing how astutely people are named in the Bible, because he was surely doing that when he and his family were stoned for stealing forbidden items from Jericho. One man’s sin troubled the whole nation! A little leaven leavens the whole lump. We can’t say “It’s my business. What’s it hurt you!” Are we building not only the Family of God but our nation?

Pity, if Achen had only waited obediently, he would have had God’s permission to spoil all he wanted from Ai (Joshua 8:2). Remember how the Israelites complained about no water at Marah not knowing that just ahead was Elim with 12 wells! (Exodus 15:27).

Joshua’s farewell speech

After six years of conquest of the land, 25 years of leading Israel, just before dying at age 110, Joshua gathered the tribes and leaders and charged them:

“[The Lord said] I have given you a land for which you did not labor, and cities which you did not build ... vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.’ Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him *in sincerity and truth* [the same words Paul would later use during the days of Unleavened Bread in 1 Corinthians 5:8] ... Choose for yourselves this day whom

you will serve... Put away the foreign gods which are *among you* ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:13-16, 23).

But how incredible is it—and a testimonial to Joshua’s exceptional leadership—that “Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua” (24:31).

How are we and our house doing?

Still Judging for Ourselves Right & Wrong?

Judges spans about 325 years from the death of Joshua to the coronation of Saul with the 12 tribes surviving as a loose confederation. “In those days Israel had no king; all the people did whatever seemed right in their own eyes” (Judges 21:25 *NLT*).

About 3,000 years into human experience, man is still eating of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. “So I let them follow their own stubborn desires, living according to their own ideas. Oh, that my people would listen to me! Oh, that Israel would follow me, walking in my paths! (Psalm 81:12-13 *NLT*). It’s a narrow one that few find (Matthew 7:14) and hopefully that includes you! Finders keepers!

“Now the Israelites stopped worshiping the Lord and worshiped the idols of Baal and Astarte” (Judges 2:13 *CEV*). Today, thanks to the Internet, it gets publicized that our major holidays stem from paganism, but people rationalize that the God who specified His Holy Days in His Bible (Leviticus 23) doesn’t mind. You’d think we’d want to pay rapt attention to what God calls an “abomination” to Him! (Deuteronomy 12:30-32).

“Few periods in Israel’s eventful history are as important as the period of the judges. During these centuries the nation took the wrong turning ... The apostasy of the later generations has its origin in the early years of the settlement ... when the nation first went after Baal ...” (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*).

“The Lord was so angry at the Israelites (Judges 2:14 *CEV*)

that he let the enemy nations that Israel failed to drive out plunder them and test them. But when Israel cried out for help, God would feel sorry for them and raise up 12 men and one woman to judge and deliver them.

Rebellion, retribution, repentance and restoration

Israel might have had more long-lasting results with readin', writin' and 'rithmetic! The Judges cycle has also been expressed as sin, servitude, supplication and salvation. Our merciful God always gave way more years of peace than servitude.

God gave dew diligence to encouraging Gideon. Then He whittled Gideon's army down to just 300 men who lapped with their hand to their mouth—an alert position ready for action. God wasn't going to have it where anybody would “claim glory for itself against Me, saying, ‘My own hand has saved me’” (7:2).

Jephthah didn't get to read what Jesus would say about vows (Matthew 5:33-37), or he probably wouldn't have uttered his. But he is mentioned in Hebrews 11 as a man who acted in faith. When the Hebrew is translated clearly, “whatever” should be “the one” and “I will offer it up as a burnt offering” should be “or I will offer Him a burnt offering” (Judges 11:31). Jephthah left it in God's hands whether he would be setting apart a person to God's service or offering a burnt sacrifice. Jephthah was probably expecting a household servant, but in faithful obedience—even to his own hurt (Psalm 15:4)—he paid his vow (Deuteronomy 23:21-23) by consecrating his only child to perpetual virginity in temple service, giving up any hope of grandchildren and family line which back then was viewed as a curse from God.

God blessed Manoah's barren wife to have a son Samson who would be set apart special to God with a Nazirite vow. “God

was seeking an occasion to move against the Philistines” (Judges 14:4). It was God who gave Samson his supernatural strength, not his hair. Paul would later teach that “it’s disgraceful for a man to have long hair” (1 Corinthians 11:14).

Samson should have chosen a better barber, but in the end he wised up and God used this flawed tool “so the dead that he killed at his death were more than he had killed in his life” (Judges 16:30).



Samson is mentioned in Hebrews 11.

Deborah was a woman of resolute conviction, like Margaret Thatcher would be for Great Britain. The “Iron Lady” would tell U.S. President George Bush, Sr.: “Don’t go wobbly on me, George!”

The Church of God—Jesus Christ’s woman and bride-to-be—should know why it exists.

Deborah prodded Barak, her general who is mentioned in Hebrews 11, to victory over the 900 iron chariots of Sisera, thanks to God supplying a heavy rainstorm (Judges 5:4-5). And to Jael having a spare tent peg lying around.

God used two other special women to show that

Individuals can live godly lives even in unjust times

Naomi and her daughter came to Bethlehem where our Redeemer would later be born. Ruth committed herself to Naomi and to the God of Israel. With God’s blessing Ruth caught the eye and favor of the wealthy and righteous

landowner Boaz. Another kinsman could have redeemed Ruth and ruined the whole fairy-tale ending, but all parties controlled themselves and left it in God's hands.

Ruth and Esther are the only books in the Bible named after women.

Ruth is a Megilloth festival scroll read by Jews at Pentecost, part of "the Writings" (Hebrew *ketuvim*). They didn't just pick this sweet romantic story out of a hat! Ruth and Naomi came to Bethlehem at the beginning of barley harvest (Ruth 1:22) and gleaned during the wheat harvest which ended near Pentecost. Boaz (picturing Christ) redeems Ruth (picturing the Church which is neither Jew or Gentile), and their marriage foreshadows the glorious wedding of Revelation 19:7.

Both Ruth and Boaz are listed in Christ's lineage (Matthew 1:5). Ruth becomes the great grandmother of David!

Are we seeking first our King Jesus Christ's coming Kingdom and His righteousness (6:33) where we will serve as His godly judges? (Psalm 149:9). Paul says we will judge the world and angels! (1 Corinthians 6:2-3).

“Make Us a King”

When the grateful people begged Gideon to rule over them, he wisely deferred, “the Lord shall rule over you” (Judges 8:23).

In the Hebrew canon, 1 and 2 Samuel are one book, as are 1 and 2 Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings. The Old Testament totals 22 books paralleling the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Adding 27 New Testament books totals 49 [7 x 7—the number of perfection squared] rather than the undesirable 66 from the commonly recognized 39 Old Testament books.

Samuel, the last judge, was also a Levitical priest (1 Chronicles 6:33-38) and a respected prophet because “the Lord was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground (1 Samuel 3:19). Ironically, Samuel was a direct descendant of Korah who was swallowed up for presumptuously demanding priestly duties (Numbers 16:10).

Once again a great servant of God began with a miraculous birth to a barren woman, and a grateful Hannah and her husband Elkanah dedicated Samuel (“heard by God”) to God’s service.

“The word of the Lord was rare in those days” (verse 1), but Samuel always listened to God and always answered:

“Speak, for Your servant hears”

He faithfully delivered God’s hard pronouncements, starting with telling Eli that his house was coming to an end because “his sons made themselves vile, and he did not restrain them” (verse 13). God killed Aaron’s two sons for offering

“strange fire” (Leviticus 10:1) and Eli and Samuel didn’t deal well with their minister’s kids either!

In Solomon’s time Zadok will assume the duties of Abiathar [Eli’s descendant] (1 Kings 2:26). All earthly priests will descend from Zadok, not just Aaron (Ezekiel 43:19).

Shocking demand for a king

The elders of Israel astounded the aging prophet: “Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Samuel 8:5).

Israel already had a king—the King! And we’re not talking Elvis. The Rock of Israel! The preincarnate Jesus Christ! Ever since Moses and the Exodus (12:12).

God’s reaction: “They have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.” God told Samuel to warn the people what a king would do: draft, tax, enrich and oppress. “Great, four more years!” they begged.

So God set up a limited constitutional monarchy where His prophet gives His king his job evaluation. God chose Saul (meaning “asked for”) to be their king. God generally gives the people the leader they deserve (Daniel 2:21). We ask for it!

Saul was a “choice and handsome son” of a “Benjamite, a mighty man of power” (1 Samuel 9:1), but you wouldn’t know it from Saul’s humble analysis (verse 21) when he was “little in his own sight” (15:17). When installed as king, he was found “hidden among the equipment.” Was it humility or evasive fear of responsibility?

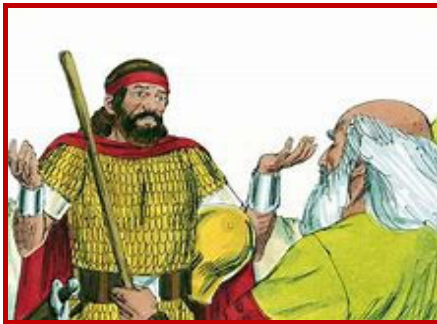
Impatient rebellion

Samuel had told Saul “Seven days you shall wait, till I come

to you and show you what you should do” (10:8). But when Samuel delayed, Saul was in the midst of sacrificing as only a priest could do when—wait for it—Samuel showed up. Another Elim. Another Ai. Saul’s future went up in the smoke. The would-be leader who was head and shoulders above the people got God’s dandruff up by his impatient rebellion.

What a loss for Saul because “For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue ... because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you” (13:13-14). God could have merged Saul into the line of Judah, perhaps through marriage. Saul’s daughter Michal will marry David but have no children (2 Samuel 6:23).

Believing that “it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains the Lord from saving by many or by few,” Saul’s son Jonathan and his equally courageous and loyal armor bearer rewarded the Philistine garrison with death for inviting them to come up, but his father thought it was a honey-of-a-deal worthy of death for Jonathan!



The final straw was when Saul spared Agag and the best of the sheep instead of wiping them all out as God commanded. The long-term result of Saul’s sin would be Haman’s perilous threat to Esther and the Jews and terrorists in the Middle East.

Samuel heard bleating in his ears! Yet Saul had the audacity to proclaim “I have performed the commandment of the Lord” (15:13). Oh, the animals? The people brought them back to sacrifice to God!

Samuel rebuked such wooly excuses: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings, as in obeying the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice ... For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (verses 22-23).

If God forbids something, we can say we are doing it to His honor all we want, but that doesn't make it so. Just obey Him! (Luke 6:46).

Saul actually added witchcraft to his rebellion, going to secretly consult the Witch of En Dor. Samuel had died by this time, and was in his grave unconscious (Ecclesiastes 9:5), awaiting his resurrection at Christ's return. Movies to come notwithstanding, there are no ghosts—Casper or otherwise—for anybody to bust. The spirit called up was a demon impersonating Samuel. The Bible clearly states that God did not answer Saul “by the prophets” (1 Samuel 28:6).

The worst punishment for Saul was that

God took His Holy Spirit

from Saul and gave it to a “man after God's own heart” who would be careful to obey Him (16:13-14). That's Saul He asks of us. From then on, “a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him.”

Will we who are being groomed for service in God's eternal Family and Kingdom humbly and carefully obey Him so He can make us a king (Revelation 5:10)?

Today's Embassy Dedication & Saturday's Royal Wedding Trace Back to “a Man After God's Own Heart”

What a moving dedication today (May 14, 2018) of the new embassy with the United States recognizing Jerusalem officially as the capital of Israel! Feels end-time!

Three thousand years ago God sent Samuel to anoint a son of Jesse to replace Saul as king. No brainer—God must want the oldest!

Not so! “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature ... For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but

The Lord Looks at the Heart [1 Samuel 16:7]

God selected “the youngest ... keeping the sheep” to be the one to lead His flock of Israel. David was “ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking” (verse 12), “skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him” (verse 18).

The day David came to the Valley of Elah, Goliath rumbled out, mocked, challenged and terrorized as he had for the previous 40 days. But it turns out he should have taken the day off!

There was no World Wrestling Federation to dub him “The Exile” but one look at the seasoned, champion warrior

made opponents flee from his imposing height of “six cubits and a span.” His nine feet looked like a bridge! His coat of mail weighed 150-175 pounds and Israel wished for a new postman! The staff of his spear was like a weaver’s beam with an iron spearhead weighing 20-30 pounds! The frightened Israelitish army could only cringe and cry “gathly!”

How did David view him? “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (17:26). God had delivered him from a lion and a bear, and would deliver him from this giant. David prepared for the encounter wisely by rejecting Saul’s armor that he could only waddle about in and by choosing five smooth stones from the brook. Did he have four extra in case he missed? Or for killing Goliath’s four brothers? (2 Samuel 21:15-22).

David ran toward his problem. He attacked! Not a youth playing with a toy sling. A sling was “a formidable weapon of war used in the Assyrian, Egyptian and Babylonian armies as well as in Israel.... It has been estimated that stones weighing up to one pound could be projected with uncanny accuracy at speeds up to 90 m.p.h.!” (*Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries*) (Judges 20:16).

Everyone else cowered because Goliath was too big to fight. David knew he was too big to miss! Where others saw a shepherd boy, God saw a king! Don’t tell God how big your giants are; tell your giants how big God is!

“I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you and take your head from you” (1 Samuel 17:45-46).

Saul verses David

It was never the other way around. David as king would

mean the end for Saul plus keep Jonathan from the throne. It irked Saul that Jonathan and David made a pact to remain deep and true friends (2 Samuel 1:26).

Lucky for the two friends that Saul was such a terrible aim and kept the remodelers busy patching walls. Of course, Saul would excuse himself that he was only kindly offering them a stick of gum—when he tossed a spearmint for them! (1 Samuel 19:10).

Twice David spared Saul's life because he refused to "stretch out my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord" (24:3). The first time, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself and perhaps got too busy reading a magazine to notice David cut off a corner of his robe!

David left it all in the hands of the Master Timer! "There was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David. Though David was on the run for over a decade, he grew stronger ... and Saul weaker" (2 Samuel 3:1).

David was 30 when he began to reign. He ruled over Judah in Hebron for 7-1/2 years and then over Israel and Judah for 33 years in Jerusalem (5:4-5). David established Jerusalem as the capital of Israel that Manassah courageously recognized today.

"He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God" (23:3).

David had the ark of God brought into the City of David. God killed Uzzah because as a priest he should've known not to touch it and the ark should have been carried on staves (6:7). Again, good intentions don't make up for disobedience! David reacted with moves worthy of *Dancing with the Stars*, "leaping and whirling before the Lord" with

all his might (verse 16)—like he always did everything—but got a poor score from Michal.

David always inquired of the Lord before doing anything (5:19-23). Except the time he saw Bathsheba, taking a ritual bath on a roof (11:2-3). David couldn't resist the temptation of this beauty who was the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite. Both men were part of David's 37 mighty men he would have spent hours around campfires with and would have had as regular guests around his table. Uriah kept messing up David's cover-up plans by his fair play and loyalty, so David arranged to have him exposed in battle so he would be killed.

"You da man!"

God's prophet Nathan nailed David (12:7). David stands out from all the kings of Israel and Judah because he repented and did that sin no more. David had "godly sorrow [that] produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted (2 Corinthians 7:10). He wrote Psalm 51 about his experience. God told him the son born would die, but David had such a great relationship with YHWH that he still fasted seven days in hopes his merciful God might change His mind (Isaiah 1:18).

David wrote 73 Psalms with his name on it, most famously Psalm 23, and may have written many of the ones that bear no author's name. He loved God's law and meditated on it day and night, and prayed three times a day (Psalm 55:17).

God promised David an unconditional dynasty

lasting until Jesus Christ would return to earth and sit on the throne of David in the city of David on Mt. Zion (Psalm 89:34-36, Zephaniah 3:15).

This explains all the fascination with the throne of England including when Prince Harry and Meghan Markel will wed Saturday at St. George's Chapel in Windsor. Harry was royally demoted to sixth in line of succession with the birth of his brother Andrew's son Prince Louis last month.

Jesus Christ has the key of David, granting access to eternal life (Revelation 3:7). Jesus will give the Philadelphia era of His Church knowledge about where the tribes of Israel are and empower them with open doors to preach His gospel to all nations and prepare His people for His return.

David will be resurrected in the first and best one at Christ's coming and will sit on his throne over the 12 tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 34:23).

His name means "beloved" and he was regarded as the greatest king of Israel, who the righteous kings were compared to. Matthew 1:17 marks time with 14 generations from Abraham to David and 14 from David to the Babylonian captivity. This is a remez hinting back to Christ's royal Davidic ancestry.

David bought the threshing floor of Araunah which would become the site of the Temple (2 Samuel 24:24). He wanted so badly to build God a house. But God said he was a bloody man and would have to let his son build a temple in the city of peace.

Will we learn from David to become a person after God's own heart?

Wiser Than Solomon?

David gave his son Solomon the plans for the temple, a detailed structure for serving duties that was observed through the time of Christ, and incredible wealth to build with including his own. God paves His streets in gold, and Solomon spared no expense. The first temple was his crowning achievement, taking seven years to build (about 967-960 B.C.).

What God really wants is to live in righteous humans as His temples through His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

It's interesting that the temple was "built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any other iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being built" (1 Kings 6:7). What a picture of how saints will be assembled at the Second Coming—and fit together perfectly!

God liked Solomon's temple and His Shekinah glory entered it. All choirs and instrumental ensembles should notice when: "when the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the Lord" (2 Chronicles 5:13). God sticks His choirs out in front of armies! (20:21).

God promised: "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and *turn* from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (7:14). People overlook that "turn" part. Including Solomon.

"Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.... and God said

“Ask! What shall I give you?” (1 Kings 3:5)

“I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.... Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of yours?”

“Because you have asked this thing ... I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.”

“Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.... He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five” (4:30, 32).

Song of Songs, one of the Megilloth festival scrolls, is read in the synagogues at Passover. It seems to share Solomon’s frustration that though he had 700 wives and 300 concubines, the shepherd woman was the one who got away! He is left to write about the Proverbs 31 woman that he never got to wed and hold, though the likes of me have!

A lass and a lack, “his wives turned away his heart” after foreign gods. (1 Kings 11:3). God had warned Israel about intermarrying foreign women and making political alliances.

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem 40 years (968-928 B.C.). God made Israel the power of the region and actually of the world. Solomon’s ships supplied by King Hiram of Phoenicia made sailing trips all over the world taking up to three years (10:22). Historical accounts such as *The “Lost” Ten Tribes of Israel ... Found!* by Steven Collins speak of his ships

journeying to copper mines in Wales and to places in what has become the United States, bringing back wealth to Israel.

Solomon means “peaceable” and he built Jerusalem into the closest it’s been to a “City of Peace” until the Prince of Peace returns.

Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, another Megilloth festival scroll that is read in synagogues at the Feast of Tabernacles. Solomon writes about having the wealth to try everything—even to excess—that humans have always foolishly thought would bring joy and success: wine, women and song! Solomon found all was “vanity of vanities”—seven vanities of completeness! (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

Did Solomon wise up?

Did the wisest person who ever lived continue like a foolish man? Let’s hope he finished right with God at the conclusion of the matter: “Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man’s all” (12:13). The *KJV* puts it “the whole duty of man.” The *Contemporary English Version* says “what life is all about.”

There is no scripture saying Solomon was given the Holy Spirit or his time of salvation. It doesn’t look promising that because of Solomon’s disobedience, the unconditional Davidic dynasty was changed to go through David’s son Nathan (Luke 3:31). My guess is he will be one of the “great” who will rise in the second resurrection at the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-12).

Who else wants to be wise?

“God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the

world to shame the things which are mighty” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Solomon is the one who wrote “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10). Solomon’s proverbs offer wisdom to youth but also to all ages who heed.

“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5). “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (3:17).

Will we just read that and pass on? God gives us opportunity to be wiser than Solomon.

Two Sticks Until Joined at Second Coming

Today the tiny nation of Israel is really primarily the tribe of Judah, and most people have no idea where the “lost” tribes of Israel vanished to. Remember how Jacob, renamed Israel, put his name on Ephraim and Manassah (Genesis 48:16).

Most Israelites are not Jews. The first time “Jew” appears in the Bible in 2 Kings 16:6 (*King James Version*), the Jews are at war with Israel!

For how this all started, we go back to when Saul, David and Solomon ruled a united kingdom of all 12 tribes (David over only Judah for the first seven years of his 40 years). There was always a distinction between Judah and the other tribes of Israel, such as when David numbered the people (2 Samuel 24:9).

When Solomon sinned, God told him that because of His unconditional promise to David, He would “not tear away the whole kingdom” from his son Rehoboam but leave him one tribe—Judah, the scepter from which Jesus would come (1 Kings 11:13). Judah and Israel would separate into

Two sticks



that would not be united until the return of Jesus Christ (Ezekiel 37:15-34), when David would be resurrected to king over them.

A tax cut was the sticking point back then also, with Rehoboam's sheer folly of letting the advice of his "young men" trump that of "the elders." "So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn of events was from the Lord" (1 Kings 12:15).

Just as the Bible compares righteous kings of Judah to David, it measures evil kings of Israel against Jeroboam. He set up two calves of gold ["your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!"]. He made priests out of non-Levites, including himself (13:33). And he ordained a feast like God's Feast of Tabernacles in the eighth month instead of the seventh (12:32). Perhaps he did the same with changing the Sabbath.

The primary difference between the two standards—David and Jeroboam: David repented and never did the sin again; Jeroboam "did not turn from his evil way." He didn't care.

"Judah's nineteen kings were all descendants of David and reigned 345 years. Israel had nineteen kings of nine dynasties, reigning 210 years, eight of whom were either slain or committed suicide" (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 463).

Scofield says 1 & 2 Chronicles covers many of the same events as 1 & 2 Kings, written for the most part from the priestly point of view. "1 Chronicles begins with the most extensive collection of genealogical records in the Bible, the purpose of which is to draw all lines of redemptive history to their focal point in David" (page 553). That will naturally then point to Christ to come.

It's instructive that Josiah, an inspirational model for how youth can follow God, and Hezekiah led Judah to return to God in revival by restoring worship of His Holy Days (2 Chronicles 30, 34). The second main way to "return" is to stop robbing God in tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:7-8). Our heart follows our treasure! (Matthew 6:21).

When You Just Don't Know What to Do

When Jehoshaphat was invaded and the whole nation was a-jumpin', this righteous king appealed to God: "O our God, will You not judge them? For we have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do" (2 Chronicles 20:12). Actually, he did know what to do when we just don't know what to do! "Our eyes are upon You."

The battle was "not yours, but God's ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord (verse 17). On our knees is the best position! Till we rise early and heed God to move forward, with the choir in front of the army!

"Believe in the Lord your God, and you shall be established; believe His prophets, and you shall prosper"—spiritual 20:20 vision! So needed in this year of 2020!

In one of the most dramatic healings in the Bible, God was pleased enough with Hezekiah's heartfelt repentance to give him 15 more years to live and make the sundial go backwards 10 degrees! (2 Kings 20:1-10).

For an example of God unleashing amazing mercy: After God's prophet Elijah told Ahab that dogs would lick his blood, the wicked king humbled himself with fasting. God postponed calamity to the days of his son (1 Kings 21:27-29, 22:38).

God sent prophets

to warn the kings that the blessings and cursings would be exacted and national captivity would come if they didn't repent (Leviticus 26:32-39, Deuteronomy 28:47-68).

His Servants the Prophets ... Speak to Us!

God, who ... spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son” (Hebrews 1:1).

Moses prophesied “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me” (Deuteronomy 18:15)—Jesus Christ, the greatest prophet who uttered more than 100 prophecies, the chief one being His Olivet prophecy (Matthew 24).

The Bible tells

How to test a prophet

If what the prophet says does not come to pass, “the Lord has not spoken” (Deuteronomy 18:22). If it does occur, but the prophet says “Let us go after other gods,” God is testing us (13:2-3). This is crucial because the Bible tells of God using a false prophet such as Balaam—and even speaking through his donkey (Numbers 22:28).

Really surprising is the time the preincarnate Jesus Christ, sitting on His portable throne described by Ezekiel (chapters 1 and 10), commissioned a demon who had the best plan for deceiving the prophets of King Ahab (1 Kings 21:22). That’s why the Bible warns us to “test the spirits” (1 John 4:1), and “If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20).

Acts 3:24 speaks of “all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow.”

Samuel and Elijah had schools of the prophets. “While Jezebel massacred the prophets of the Lord,” Obadiah hid 100 prophets in two caves (1 Kings 18:4).

Soon after, Elijah took on the 450 prophets of Baal. He challenged the people to choose whether they were going to follow Baal or God. Syncretism is not a valid choice today either!

He prayed a powerful prayer lasting only about 15 seconds: “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that You are God in Israel and I am Your servant, and that I have done all these things at



our word. Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again” (verses 36-37). God fired! Elijah executed the 450!

Then to show how human God’s servants are, after such a miraculous victory, Elijah got so scared of Jezebel that he fled into the wilderness and begged for death. God encouraged him with a “still small voice” and brought Elijah out of his funk by giving him a job to do in His Work (19:15-16). The way out of discouragement is to put our hearts into the Work!

Major, minor, women!

The Bible mentions more prophetesses than you’d think: Miriam, the sister of Moses; Deborah the judge; Huldah the wife of Shallum; Isaiah’s wife; the widow Anna; and Philip’s four unmarried daughters.

God used 16 prophets to speak for Him from about 850-400 B.C.

Four are called Major prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah (also wrote Lamentations), Ezekiel and Daniel. In Feb. 2018 *Biblical Archaeology Review* announced the stunning find in 2009 of a bulla with “[belonging] to Isaiah” on the top row and *navy* on the second row, the Hebrew word for “prophet.” It was found south of the Temple Mount less than 10 feet from a Hezekiah bulla.

Twelve wrote the Minor prophecies (“the twelve”), which are “minor” only in size, not inspiration or importance: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

A student of Bible prophecy must understand

Two key factors

1) Is the prophet addressing Jerusalem and Judah, Israel, or all 12 tribes? Ezekiel spoke to the “house of Israel” (3:3) as their watchman.

2) Prophecy is most often dual, with a much greater fulfillment in the end time. Ezekiel warned Israel of coming captivity over 120 years after they had already been enslaved by the Assyrians in 721 B.C.! He had been taken captive to Babylon in the second deportation of Judah in 597 B.C.

So prophecies should prod the modern lost tribes of Israel to wake up and turn to God. Also brother Judah! When Ninevah finally heard God’s warning—from the prophet who didn’t get away after the greatest fish story ever!—they and even their animals responded.

Jonah thought he was justified to be upset because he knew

God would mercifully postpone punishment on the Assyrians, allowing them to become His rod of anger against His people (Isaiah 10:5).

God's prophets invariably deliver stern warnings to shape up but then conclude with His sure promises of favor and restoration. The Bible is packed with millennial prophecies and messianic Psalms to inspire and encourage!

Prophecy commands attention because

“I am God, and ... only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish” (Isaiah 46:9-10 *NLT*).

Malachi closes out the Old Testament by promising an “Elijah the prophet [will come again] before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse” (4:5-6).

Churches of God like to joke that we are non-prophet, playing off our organizational IRS status. But we have the written Word of God, which has been said to be one-third prophecy. And we have Jesus Christ who lives in us through His Holy Spirit, heads His Church and guides His ministry.

“Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets” (Amos 3:7). God didn't hide from Abraham what He was doing (Genesis 18:17), and He won't hide from His people today either.

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 2:20-21).

“So we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns” (verse 19).

“What manner of persons ought you to be

in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God?” (3:11-12).

We must make our calling and election as sure as prophecy! (1:10).

Did God Fail to Keep His Promise to David?

God had repeatedly warned Israel and Judah that they would go into captivity if they didn't repent (Deuteronomy 28:64-66). They didn't listen, just like Judah today (misleadingly called Israel) and the lost 10 Tribes of Israel aren't paying attention.

So in 733-732 B.C. and 722 B.C., the Assyrians took Israel into captivity after which God sifted them so that not the smallest grain would fall to the ground (Amos 9:9). As foretold, God directed immigrants arriving through Ellis Island so that Manassah became the greatest single power on earth; Ephraim the greatest company of nations (Genesis 35:11). Immigration today threatens that "The alien who is among you shall rise higher and higher above you, and you shall come down lower and lower" (Deuteronomy 28:43).

People are baffled that the Bible seems to say nothing about the United States or the British Commonwealth nations though it mentions lots of obscure, far-less significant ones. Despite the obvious duality of Bible prophecies, who would worry themselves that these powerful nations could be taken captive by an Assyrian-led "beast" and be facing the coming time of "Jacob's trouble" (Jeremiah 30:7)? Anyone paying attention to Bible prophecy who would like to be "counted worthy to escape" (Luke 21:36)!

And in 604-586 B.C. the Babylonians took the Jews into captivity. When King Zedekiah's sons were all slain before his eyes, which were then put out, and he died in captivity, it looked like the end of God's unconditional promise to David.

Was God's promise to David dethroned?

God had given Jeremiah a strange commission to “root out and to pull down” but few pay attention to the part: “build and to plant” (Jeremiah 1:10).

After all was rooted out and pulled down as he warned, Jeremiah, accompanied by his scribe Baruch, escorted the three “king’s daughters” (Jeremiah 41:10) on a crucial mission—the tender twigs to be planted on a high and prominent mountain of Israel in the riddle of Ezekiel 17:22-24.

Ezekiel 21:25-27 prophesied that the royal throne would be “overturned” three times until “He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him”—Jesus Christ! The first was when Jeremiah and Baruch took the three daughters to northern Ireland where a marriage then occurred between Tea-Tephi and King Herremon. Besides continuing David’s dynasty, this marriage between the daughter of the line of Pharez and the king of the line of Zerah healed the breach between the two branches of Judah royalty (Genesis 38:27-30).

Jeremiah brought the harp of David which is still the symbol of Ireland. King Herremon started a school called Mur-Ollam which is the name in Hebrew and Irish for school of the prophets. And he changed the name of his capital city from Lothair (or Cothair Croffin) to Tara, also a Hebrew name. Later the throne was overturned to Scotland and finally England.

The Stone of Destiny

Of special significance is that Jeremiah brought an amazing stone called Lia-fail, or stone of destiny—believed to be

Jacob's pillow stone, the stone Israel brought out of Egypt, and the stone struck by Moses at Horeb. History says this stone was brought to Ireland by way of Spain, then taken into Scotland by King Fergus about 370 years later, and then transferred to London's Westminster Abbey under the coronation chair in A.D. 1296 after Edward I invaded Scotland.



All these years the kings of Ireland, Scotland and England have been crowned over this stone about 22" long, 13" wide, 11" deep, the color of steel mixed with red veins.

These five exiles continued the unconditional throne of David so that Jesus Christ will have a throne to claim when He returns! This "Key of David" God gave to His Philadelphia Church (Revelation 3:2) explains today's news and you can't rightly understand prophecy without it.

Perhaps just as significant were the four young Jewish men taken from Jerusalem to serve in the Babylonian administration. The prophecies of Daniel reach until the first and second comings of Jesus Christ!

Daniel—Exploits & Visions

“I’m Ashpenaz. You four have been taken to Babylon at about age 16 because you are ‘good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, who had ability to serve in the king’s palace ...’” (Daniel 1:4).

Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach & Abed-Nego: “That sounds good!”

“Let me finish—I’m Ashpenaz, chief of the eunuchs.”

Despite all the challenges they would encounter there, the four remained faithful to God. Right away Daniel convinced Ashpenaz to test them out of polluting themselves with the king’s delicacies which were likely often unclean.

When Nebuchadnezzar demanded all to bow down to his image of gold or be tossed into a burning fiery furnace, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were hauled before the furious despot: “Who is the god who will deliver you from my hands?”

They calmly, probably with hearts beating madly, replied boldly: “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter ... our God whom we serve is able to deliver us ... and He will deliver us from your hand ...

But if not

“let is be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (3:15-18).

Their obedience to God was unconditional. Nebuchadnezzar

saw four men walking in the fire, the fourth “like the Son of God.”

Daniel served 70+ years in the palace for the Babylonians and then for the Medo-Persians. Toward the end of his life, enemies conned Darius into decreeing the lion’s den for anybody worshiping anyone other than the king.

Faced with this deadly threat, Daniel “knelt down on his knees three times that day [like David, Psalm 55:17], and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was *his custom* since early days” (Daniel 6:10). The king was angry with himself for being duped and spent the night fasting. Most importantly, God saw to it that the lions spent the night fasting!

Reminiscent of Joseph, God gave Daniel “understanding in all visions and dreams” (1:17). God controls history and determines which nations and leaders rise and fall and when (2:21).

When Nebuchadnezzar had a troubling dream, he troubled everybody else including Daniel and his three friends by threatening to put them all to death if nobody could tell him not only what the dream meant—but what it was!

Lions & leopards & bears, oh my!

God gave Daniel the strange dream and its explanation, which agreed with a later vision involving four beasts coming up from the sea.

Four successive Gentile kingdoms:

♣ Neo-Babylonian empire [625-539 B.C.], head of gold, lion. It ended when



Belshazzar saw the infamous handwriting on the wall. The message “MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN” was probably not as scary as seeing the hand doing the writing!

♣ Medo-Persian empire [558-330 B.C.], chest & arms of silver, bear.

♣ Greek empire [332-146 B.C.] (divides into four parts after death of Alexander the Great), belly & thighs of bronze, leopard with four heads).

♣ Roman empire [31 B.C.-A.D. 46], two legs of iron, 10-horned beast and a “little horn”—three uprooted horns (kingdoms of Vandals, Heruli and Ostrogoths) and seven resurrections of the Holy Roman Empire (Justinian, Charlemagne, Otto the Great, Charles V, Napoleon, Hitler-Mussolini, and the final yet to come with 10 rulers [two feet with 10 toes of iron and clay] united for a short time by a Beast and False Prophet.

The good news is the final oppressive kingdom is smashed on the toes and replaced by Jesus Christ the stone setting up God’s Kingdom on earth from then on! When would Jesus come?

The 70 weeks prophecy!

While Daniel was making “request by prayer and supplications, with fasting” for 21 days and humbly acknowledging “we have sinned and committed iniquity ... done wickedly and rebelled, even by departing from Your precepts and Your judgments” (9:5), the command went out for Gabriel to give Daniel a vision, but this powerful archangel had to first overcome the prince of Persia demon with Michael’s help! We battle “spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places! (Ephesians 6:12).

Seventy weeks calculates to 70 weeks x 7 days per week = 490 years [day for a year principle (Numbers 14:34, Ezekiel 4:6)]. This is subtracted from 457 B.C. [the decree of Artaxerxes I in Ezra 7:6]—resulting in A.D. 26. But no year zero means A.D. 27 for “Messiah the Prince” (9:25). Jesus was baptized and began his 3-1/2 ministry in the autumn of A.D. 27. Other calculations proceed: He was born in 4 B.C. in the autumn and was crucified in A.D. 31 at Passover.

Significant is a problematic “he” in 9:27. Does it refer to the Messiah or the beastly prince? “In the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering.” Jesus would be crucified just before sunset on a Wednesday, and His sacrifice will be the only one needed from then on (Hebrews 10:12).

Chapter 11

This amazing prophecy is the longest in the Bible, covering from the 500s B.C. until the Second Coming, and so far has been precisely fulfilled. What’s that tell us about what to expect for the rest of it! No human could predict this and certainly not bring it to pass!

The crucial part for us is “At the time of the end the king of the South shall attack him; and the king of the North shall come against him like a whirlwind ... enter the Glorious Land ... but news from the east and the north shall trouble him” (verses 40-45).

Current events fine tune what this might be. The King of the North [of Jerusalem] will be a European 10-nation Beast. The King of the South seems to be Sunni Muslims. Twice Muslims invaded Europe and were stopped at the door—by Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in A.D. 732 and in the Battle of Vienna A.D. 1683, and Islam believes that denial makes the target theirs the third time’s the charm! How do

they push at the north? Oil? Immigration? Something else yet to come? In the news now we see up to 10 Arab nations making pacts with Israel because of their fear of Iran. Finally the Beast fights the 200 million army hordes from the east. Today we see China and Russia rising in power and cooperation. Then they all fight the returning Christ and “come to [their] end!

The book of Daniel ends mysteriously with

Three time periods having their “end” at the first resurrection (12:7-13):

- 1—the 1,260 days [the Great Tribulation, the Times of the Gentiles, the Place of Safety and the Two Witnesses].
- 2—the 1,290 days [Though the Bible says nobody knows the day nor the hour of Christ’s return—your clock should start ticking when you see the sacrifices taken away and the Abomination of Desolation set up]. This event should be obvious, so we should be able to count the exact time until Christ’s return! Or from all the huge events marking the start of 1,260 days if we should somehow miss the 1,290!
- 3—the 1,335 days [some guess the blessing is when the righteous are called to go to the Place of Safety].

Without the book of Daniel, we couldn’t really understand the book of Revelation, which quotes Daniel more than any other book. Daniel has been dubbed “the Apocalypse of the Old Testament.”

Verse 13 indicates all three periods end with Daniel and his three friends in the First Resurrection. May you be part of “those who are wise (verse 3) ... purified, made white, and refined” (verse 10)!

Return from Babylon & Build My Temple!

It's very likely that Daniel, serving in the Persian government as prime minister of Babylonia, showed Cyrus the Great what God prophesied about him through Isaiah more than 150 years before he was born! The first century Jewish historian Josephus said Cyrus read what Isaiah wrote (Isaiah 44:28-45:1-4). And just as satan broadcasts attitudes and thoughts to humans through their Spirit in Man (Ephesians 2:2), "the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus" (Ezra 1:1) to make the Edict of Toleration in 538 B.C. Cyrus said God "has commanded me to build Him a house at Jerusalem."

As Jeremiah foretold (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10), the Babylonian captivity and desolation of Jerusalem lasted 70 years from the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of Solomon's temple in 586 B.C. to the rebuilding of the temple in 516 B.C. The Babylonian empire lasted 70 years from 609 B.C. to its conquering by Cyrus in 539 B.C. Jeremiah 27:22 specified that the temple artifacts would be returned after the fall of Babylon.

Not the 10 tribes of Israel

Judah, Benjamin and Levites, "all whose spirits God had moved, arose to go up and build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:5). Note that these three tribes were not the 10 Tribes of Israel which had been deported by Assyria and became "lost."

Josephus says the vast majority of Jews chose to remain in Babylon. What an amazing parallel to the "little flock" (Luke

12:32) who must be specially drawn by God (John 6:44) to come out of spiritual Babylon (Revelation 18:4)!

Zerubbabel, grandson of the former Jewish king Jeconiah, and Joshua [the high priest] led these 42,360 returnees in rebuilding the temple. About 1/10 (4,289) were priests excited about serving in a new temple. It's significant that first they built an altar and began sacrifices. In the end time sacrifices will begin, be taken away, and the man of sin "sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:4). The Temple Institute in Jerusalem is all set to quickly build a temple and begin sacrifices as soon as allowed!

Back then, they began sacrifices on the Feast of Trumpets and also kept the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles. What a picture of when all Israel will be regathered in Jerusalem at Christ's return and begin keeping God's Holy Days (Zechariah 14:16)!

Samaritans [foreigners planted in Israel by Assyria to take the place of those taken captive (2 Kings 17:24)] thwarted the plans to rebuild the temple. Plus the people were discouraged that this second temple seemed second-rate compared to Solomon's temple. Rebuilding was stalled for 15 years.

"Build the temple"

"So the Lord stirred up the spirit" of the workers through His prophets Haggai and Zechariah (Haggai 1:14), and they finished the temple in four years and dedicated it in 515 B.C.—and kept the Passover.



What an accomplishment, but today we know that it's really not about tabernacles and temples for God to dwell in. The two God Beings are calling family who individually and collectively as God's Church are His temple of the Holy Spirit! (1 Corinthians 6:19). This is the latter temple that will be greater than the former (Haggai 2:1-9)!

Haggai's message should stir us to action today: "Build the temple, that I may take pleasure in it and be glorified" (1:8). And it must still be done the way God told Zerubbabel: "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6).

From 486-465 B.C. Xerxes was the Persian king who made Esther his queen without knowing she was a Jew because her uncle Mordecai had wisely instructed her to keep it hidden. But when wicked Haman swayed the king to make a decree that would end up wiping out the Jews, Mordecai charged her:

"Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

God is never mentioned by name in the book of Esther but when the king could not sleep, he ended up reading that Mordecai had not been rewarded and set off an amazing chain of events that rescued the Jews. "Here is a remarkable instance of the veiled providential control of God over circumstances of human history. Upon the king's insomnia, humanly speaking, hinged the survival of the chosen nation, the fulfillment of prophecy, the coming of the Redeemer, and therefore the whole work of redemption. Yet the outcome was never in doubt; for God was in control, making the most trivial of events work together for Haman's defeat, and Israel's preservation" (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 693). It's interesting that Haman was an Agagite whom Saul failed to wipe out as commanded!

In 457 B.C. King Artaxerxes issued a decree so Ezra could go to Jerusalem and restore temple reform. Ezra proclaimed a fast “that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions” (Ezra 8:21). Fasting is a power tool for seeking spiritual growth and character, best described in Isaiah 58, but there is a time for seeking physical needs.

In 444 B.C. Nehemiah, a cupbearer for King Artaxerxes, heard of the plight of Jerusalem. The king appointed him Governor of Judah and he rebuilt the broken down walls. Eleven times the book of Nehemiah records that this effective leader was praying. He and Ezra both tried to stamp out intermarriage with pagans, just as Paul would later command “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14). The Bible does not forbid interracial marriage, but family and social pressures counsel against it.

This book records the last historical events in the Old Testament, bringing us to the pivotal intertestamental period of about 400 years.

The *three* sections also totaled *seven* subsections:

- ◆ Law = 1
- ◆ Prophets (former, major and minor) = 3
- ◆ Writings (former poetic, Megilloths and 3 latter restorations) = 3

In modern Bibles there are 39 Old Testament books + 27 New Testament books = 66 books (not a good Bible number!). In the Hebrew canonized version, there are 22 books, making 22+27 = 49 books (7 x 7).

Twenty-two is a significant Bible number because there are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet. Acrostics are special writings in the Old Testament where each line begins with successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the treatment signifies that the subject is therefore perfect. Examples are Proverbs 31:11-31 (the perfect woman—a 22, not a 10) and Psalm 119 (God's perfect law).

Similarly, the Old Testament is perfectly complete with 22 books:

- ◆ Law of Moses [Torah=teaching, instruction] = 5 books
- ◆ Prophets [former (Joshua-Judges is one book), book of the kingdoms (Samuels, Kings is one book), 3 major prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel) + 12 minor prophets is one book] = 6 books
- ◆ Psalms [3 poetic: Job, Psalms and Proverbs), 5 Megilloths that were read on festivals (Song of Solomon, Passover; Ruth, Pentecost; Lamentations, 9th of Ab; Ecclesiastes, Feast of Tabernacles; and Esther, Purim) + 3 later restoration books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah and Chronicles)] = 11 books

The 22 canonized books were recognized in the temple and synagogues—and most importantly by Jesus Christ in Matthew 23:34-35. He referred to “all the righteous blood

shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel [Genesis] to the blood of Zechariah” [Chronicles]. Although modern Bibles with 39 books have the same content as the 22 books—just divided differently—Jesus recognized the bookends of the Old Testament and also the inspired order which has Chronicles last rather than Malachi.

Sorry, there are no additional books inspired by the authority of God including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha [Jewish writings ascribed to patriarchs and prophets that were actually composed within about 200 years B.C.]. The “pig” should be a red flag!

The living Word of God was more than capable to see to it that His written Word of God has

No missing books!

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God *may be complete, thoroughly equipped* for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

But in captivity and in Diaspora (the dispersing), the synagogue and the Torah became the foundation of Jewish life. Herod the Great ruled as king of Judea from 37-4 B.C. and remodeled Zerubbabel’s temple around which Jewish religious and political life would center.

Josephus says Alexander the Great visited the temple in Jerusalem and saw prophecies in the book of Daniel that he would be victorious over Persia. He acted as conquering evangelist of Greek culture and thought, revering Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle, and Hellenism would sway people with its secular humanism that still deceives people today. Still the same old choose-for-yourself-what’s-

right-and-wrong from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil!

The Septuagint (LXX) translation of the Old Testament in Koine Greek began about 285 B.C. Two great sects would arise—the Pharisees who strictly upheld the Torah and oral law, and the Sadducees, the priestly wealthy class. They wanted to create a hedge around the Sabbath and the Law so they would never go into captivity again. They created “a mass of tradition, comment, and interpretation, known as *Mishna Gemarta* (formerly the *Talmud*), Midrashim and Kabbala, that was so superimposed upon the law that obedience was transferred from the law itself to the traditional interpretations” (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 1292).

The Old Testament is the foundation and introduction to the New Testament. The Bible is

One book with one message

—the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God coming to earth—and one way of salvation which God will offer all His children at the best time for them. Now it’s time for the Word to come to earth as a human which changes human history and future!

“The Word Became Flesh & Dwelt Among Us”

God and the Word gave breath-taking opportunity to Adam and Eve and their progeny for 4,000 years. The Word was the God of the Old Testament whom they saw, talked with and wrestled with (John 5:37).

Now it was time for the Word to come to earth as a human

—as the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45)—to take on the challenge of committing no sin for 33-1/2 years, and reveal the Father to those He chose (Matthew 11:27).

Elohim always was a family name, but now God and the Word became actual Father and Son. And we humans now have the purpose of becoming the Father’s sons and daughters, with Jesus Christ being our older Brother. God is building His Family and Kingdom!

“Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being” (Philippians 2:6-7 *NLT*).

“I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God,” wrote C.S. Lewis. “You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great

human teacher. He has not left that open to us” (*Mere Christianity*, 1996, page 56).

Mary wasn't the only one expecting

Thanks to Daniel's 70 Weeks Prophecy (Daniel 9), that pinpointed the Messiah starting His ministry in A.D. 27, many people were watching for the promised Messiah when Jesus was born in 4 B.C.

New Testament writers cite Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah more than 130 times. The Old Testament contains 300 prophetic passages about the coming Messiah. The probability of any person fulfilling all of them in exquisite detail is so astronomically high as to prove the inspiration of the written Word of God. But it was easy for the Living Word of God to inspire men to prophesy what He was going to do—and then come and do it (Isaiah 46:9-10)!

The New Testament contains 300-400 references hinting back to the Old Testament since many people could quote whole passages of the Old from memory.

Matthew gives the genealogy of Jesus through Joseph back to Abraham (Matthew 1:1-16) while Luke gives the Messianic line through Mary back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). It's interesting that Luke's goes through David's son Nathan rather than Solomon (verse 31) since he wasn't as wise as he should've been in upholding David's dynasty.

The angel Gabriel announced to Joseph that his virgin Mary would conceive a son “of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 1:20). This is one of many proofs that the Holy Spirit is not a third person of the Godhead—or it would have been the Father, still leaving only two! Countless scriptures call the Holy Spirit the power, essence, character and nature of God.

Maybe because parents sometimes disagree about what to call their new baby, Joseph and Mary were both told by Gabriel to name Him “Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21, Luke 1:31). Jesus is the Greek form of *Jehoshua*, meaning “Jehovah is salvation.” Christ is a title meaning “Messiah, The Anointed One.” As Isaiah prophesied in 7:14, He was also Immanuel, meaning “God with us.”

Birth & manger myths

Bible scholars know that there was no way Jesus was born in a Judean winter in December. While it’s true that the birth of Jesus was hugely important, the Bible nowhere endorses Christmas. A simple google search easily reveals its pagan origins. You can’t syncretize sun worship into Son worship when God outright forbids it (Deuteronomy 12:30-32). Why would you want to do “abomination to the Lord which He hates”! It really is time to Baal out! Christ is the reason for the season only for the three seasons of His Holy Days. You’re up a tree if you think you can put Him back into paganism (Jeremiah 10:1-5).

Jesus was born in the autumn at the time of the fall Holy Days. This can be deduced from the interesting detail in Luke 1:5 that John the Baptist’s father Zacharias was serving in the eighth course of Abijah. Jesus’ birth could have been on the Feast of Trumpets since He could then complete 6,000 years when the Seventh Trumpet blows (Revelation 11:15). It could have been during the Feast of Tabernacles picturing His millennial rule on the earth since John says “the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us” (John 1:14). Jesus’ righteous parents kept the same Holy Days He had commanded as the Word in the Old Testament (Leviticus 23), and Jesus kept them from a little bitty baby!

Micah 5:2 prophesied that the Unleavened Bread of Life would be born in Bethlehem (“House of Bread”). Joseph led Mary on a donkey there because of the taxation decree to go register in your hometown every 14 years (Luke 2:1). Again, no way would people travel on treacherous December roads! The perfect time to register people was at the time of the fall Holy Days when families would gather together.

Joseph and Mary did not irresponsibly arrive at midnight to find the Motel 6 full! They went to their hometown to stay with family, but there was no room in “the inn” (Luke 2:7). The Greek is *kataluma* (guest room), not *pandocheion* (where the Good Samaritan took the wounded stranger in 10:34). A typical one-room home was built over a cave to provide a protected manger for animals. Jesus was not born in a drafty, dirty barn!

On the eighth day Jesus was circumcised, when Vitamin K for blood clotting is at its peak. When Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to God, homage was paid to Him by Simeon, to whom it was revealed by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he would see the Christ, and then by Anna, a prophetess who had been serving God in the temple “with fastings and prayers night and day” (2:37).

When wise men came following a star (angels are called that in the Bible), they didn't crowd around the crib with shepherds. By then Jesus was a “young child” not a babe (Matthew 2:11). Herod had boy babies up to two years old



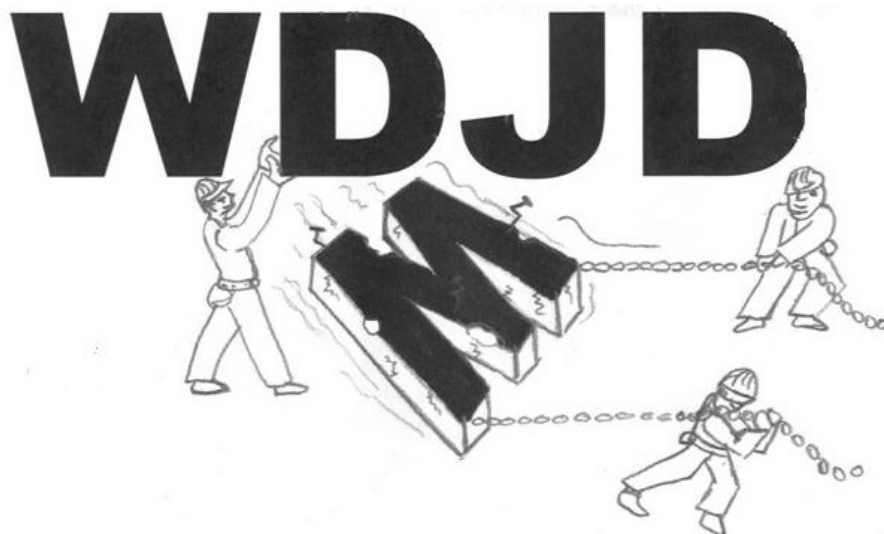
killed because he wanted to be sure and kill any new king. People assume there were three wise men from the east because they brought three kinds of gifts. The 10 lost Tribes of Israel had settled in countries like Parthia, and upon hearing about the birth of the new King, representatives—probably with a huge royal entourage—came to pay homage and maybe in hopes of coaxing the King of David to be their leader. They didn't give gifts to each other!

“Unto us a child is given” (Isaiah 9:6)

Thanks to His life to come, He and the Father will be able to joyfully shout that many times as They bring many sons and daughters to glory (Hebrews 2:10)! Two Gods become billions!

WDJD?

We text and tweet and soon “What Would Jesus Do?” becomes WWJD. But a better question is WDJD—“What Did Jesus Do?”



artwork by Heather Curry

He actually did set an example for all of His creation to follow! Instead of guessing what they think Jesus might do,

It's clear from the four Gospels what Jesus did

◆ Matthew, also called Levi, was called from being a hated tax collector for the Romans. Writing about A.D. 50, he presented Christ as King *to the Jews*. Seven times he spoke of Jesus as “the Son of David.” “Kingdom” appears more than 50 times, and his book is the only place in the Bible saying “kingdom of heaven” (30 times) because the Jews don’t speak the name of God. Christ represented the Kingdom and would bring the Kingdom of God from heaven

to the earth at His return. More than the other three Gospel writers, Matthew showed the Old Testament's inspired introduction to the New Testament by connecting Christ's words and actions back to the prophecies. Matthew and Luke established Jesus' credentials.

◆ That Luke was “the beloved physician” (Colossians 4:14) supports proper understanding that people seeking healing should also avail themselves of the best medical help available. Hezekiah's great miracle concluded with putting a lump of figs on his boil (2 Kings 20:7). Luke was Paul's companion and scribe and wrote the longest of the Gospels, in about A.D. 60, *primarily to the Greeks*, presenting Jesus as the Son of Man and emphasizing His perfect humanity and His ministry to women. Also the author of Acts, Luke was the first historian of the early Church and wrote more words of the New Testament than even Paul.

◆ Mark, the shortest of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), written about A.D. 68, presents Jesus as the Servant, *principally for the Romans*. In 1 Peter 5:13, Peter referred to Mark as “my son” and it's thought that his Gospel reflects Peter's view of Jesus. It strongly emphasizes Christ's miracles. Mark along with his uncle Barnabus went with Paul on his first missionary journey, but fell out of graces with Paul when he turned back at Perga (Acts 13:13). Their relationship was restored at the end of Paul's life.

◆ John, written A.D. 85-90, is the Gospel in a class by itself. John's said his purpose in writing was “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:31). By the time John wrote, heretics were arguing against God's Holy Days, and so it's huge that 19 of this Gospel's 21 chapters are interwoven with and centered on the Holy Days. The “disciple Jesus loved” (John 19:26), John was referred to by Paul as one of the three “pillars” of the Church (Galatians

2:9) along with his “Sons-of-Thunder” brother James, and Peter—the three who got to see the transfiguration.

Did you notice that I listed these four Gospels out of Bible order, but in order of when they were likely written? In surveys it’s astounding how many who call themselves Christians can’t even name the four Gospels!

A Nazarene not a Nazarite

Jesus spent his boyhood in Nazareth, working with Joseph who was a carpenter and probably more like a builder, that He might be called a Nazarene as prophesied (Matthew 2:23). This leads some to erroneously think He was a Nazarite but He didn’t take that vow. Probably so critics would be able to call him a winebibber and drunkard!

Luke gives the few Bible details about Jesus’ boyhood. “And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him” (Luke 2:40).

About His Father’s business!

When Jesus went up to Jerusalem with his parents for the Passover at age 12, they trusted Him so much that they went a day’s journey confident He was with relatives and acquaintances. After three days “they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, both *listening to them and asking them questions.*” Jesus respectfully but directly answered His anxious mother: “Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” Even then Jesus said that what He really cared about was doing what His Father *did* (John 5:19).

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52).

The Gospels will tell us what Jesus did during the action-packed 3-1/2 years of His ministry. Having given up His divine power (Philippians 2:6-8), He worked miracles but He said He could “do nothing” of Himself (John 5:19). He said the Father did supernatural works through Him by the Holy Spirit. Jesus claimed He was the “I Am” of the Old Testament who was before Abraham (John 8:58). He forgave sin (Mark 2:5-7). He accepted worship (Matthew 14:33), and He raised the dead such as Lazarus (John 11:25).

“Anyone who says he is a Christian should live as Christ did” (I John 2:6, *Living Bible*). Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you” (John 13:34). That’s what’s new about it!

So the big question for us is: WDYD—What Do You Do?

Do & Teach

John the Baptizer is called the bridge between the Old and New Testaments since Malachi ends with a promise to send Elijah the prophet and Jesus said John was “Elijah who is to come” (Matthew 11:14). Jesus’ cousin, six months older than He, was the one Isaiah 40:3 said would “Prepare the way of the Lord.” Jesus came in the flesh to bridge God and man.

Forget altar calls and just as I am without one plea. John preached “bear fruits worthy of repentance” (Matthew 3:8) and “a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4).

Jesus had no sins to remit! But He was baptized by John to set an example since later He would inspire Peter to state “what shall we do”: repent, be baptized and receive the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (Acts 2:38).

Most remarkable about John was his humble willingness to decrease and give way for Christ to complete His 3-1/2 year ministry on earth (John 3:30) to which we must pay utmost attention: What did Jesus do and teach?

First, victory over satan’s temptations!

A newly baptized Christian commonly confronts a barrage of temptations and trials because satan, who is committed to keeping us out of God’s Family, focuses foremost on firstfruits. He hopes we’ll be the seed with no depth of earth, no root, choked on thorns, or devoured by birds (Matthew 13:3-8).

Jesus showed what to do when He faced temptation in the wilderness.

Though already “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 4:1), Jesus fasted for humility and to be closer to God His Father. God in the flesh lived the power of humility!

It’s easy to overlook that Jesus was tempted for 40 days (Matthew 4)—surely more than three temptations. I guess satan thought these three were his best pitches, though any man would expect a more compelling curve of the feminine variety.

Jesus overcame the devil, as all Christians must face him and do, and qualified to replace him as ruler of this earth when He returns. In the interim, satan rules this evil confusion (2 Corinthians 4:4) with God’s permission. When he offered Christ all the kingdoms of this world, it was his to offer it, and he thought Christ might sucker for bypassing the excruciating suffering.

Jesus showed how to overcome temptation: The Word of God quoted His written Word of God.

“It is written ...”



If Christians would only let the Bible guide their actions and teachings, how could anybody think God forbids moderate drinking when Jesus’ first miracle was turning 120-180 gallons of water into fine wine at the Cana wedding (John 2:1-11).

Firkins for kin!

Jesus called 12 men to become His Apostles and train to lead

His Church He would build (Matthew 16:18). He already knew these men who often worked together or were family. They didn't just drop everything to follow a wide-eyed stranger.

Proof that Jesus has never been in some desperate struggle for souls with the one He had already defeated, at the end of His ministry there were only 120 Disciples (those who aim to become just like their teacher—Luke 6:40). Unlike in modern times where the fad is to see how many you can squeeze into a VW, the 120 were in one Accord! (Acts 2:1).

Jesus told Nicodemus, a Pharisee who knew He was “a teacher come from God” (John 3:2), that we “must be born again” to inherit the Kingdom of God. Jesus said this spiritual birth from above is *genao*—a Greek word for the conversion process stretching from being begotten by “water [baptism] and the Spirit [laying on of hands]” (verse 5) and lasting until being born at the resurrection from flesh to Spirit Being (verse 6). “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). If we wonder if we're born again now, just administer the pin test!

Do we go to heaven when we die?

Satan the father of lies (John 8:44) told Adam and Eve they were an immortal soul that wouldn't die. He had tried to swoop up to heaven and wanted them to think they'd go there. People would rather believe Plato and philosophers, false ministers, family and friends than what Jesus Christ, the Son of God, *said as plainly as it can be said*: “No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven” (3:13).

After 4,000 years of human history and death, Jesus said nobody had been to heaven except Him! That goes for

Enoch and Elijah! Acts says “David did not ascend into the heavens” (2:34), and we know “a man after God’s own heart” didn’t go the other direction!

Of course, Jesus also said “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5). Whoa, we’d better not be meek then! Let’s make this Beatitude a mere platitude.

No, let’s believe Jesus and His Bible! At His return Jesus will establish His Kingdom on this earth, and His saints will arise from their “sleep” in the grave to serve with Him for eternity on earth.

When little children were brought to Jesus “that He might put His hands on them and pray” (Matthew 19:13), the Disciples tried to turn them away. But Jesus said “Let the little children come to Me ... for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). God’s kids must have childlike attitudes of humble trust and being quick to forgive!

Following Jesus’ example, today Churches of God have a Blessing of Little Children ceremony usually on the second Sabbath after the Feast of Tabernacles.

Will we believe what Jesus did and taught?

“Why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to Me, and *hears My sayings and does them*” will be building his house on a rock—on the Rock! (Luke 6:46-47). We must *do and teach* as Jesus exemplified (Matthew 5:19).

Jesus' Gospel—Not What You Probably Think!

Most say the Gospel—the good news—means accepting Christ into your heart as your Savior. But what gospel did Jesus preach? See the shocking answer for yourself in Mark 1:14 and Luke 8:1!

Every kingdom has a territory, a king, laws and subjects.

Jesus said His Kingdom was “not of this world” (John 18:36) so His servants would not be fighting frantically to save this present evil age (Galatians 1:4). That goes for military and politics.



He said “The kingdom of God is at hand” because He was the King in their presence (John 18:36-37) who would set it up *on earth* at His Second Coming. He told them not to come as they are but to “Repent, and believe in the gospel.”

If you need healing

you could wish you had been in the Bible because Jesus healed everybody who crossed His path, some who had faith that even Jesus marveled at, and others where He helped their unbelief. Jesus did not go out looking for people to heal or to disperse money to the poor as part of some social gospel. Jesus said that He didn't do miracles and spiritual actions on His own power but through the Father working in

Him (John 5:30). Both Master Timers were working out Their plan for man!

Jesus healed people even on the Sabbath, saying that day was the one He was Lord of (Mark 2:28). His custom was to keep the Sabbath (Luke 4:16) and the Holy Days He had commanded in Leviticus 23 (John 7-9).

Those who accused Him of breaking the Sabbath because He violated one of their added “fence” laws should have been diligently trying to learn how to keep the Sabbath from the One who created it! In contrast to the two big love commands of Christ, the Pharisees created a system of 613 laws [365 negative commands and 248 positive ones]. They prohibited 39 Sabbath activities involving baking bread, making a garment or leather, or building a structure. As a few silly examples, you could not:

- ◆ look in a mirror because you might be tempted to pluck out a grey hair—reaping!
- ◆ wear jewelry—carrying a burden!
- ◆ spit on the ground—making mud ... plowing!

Why should it be a surprise that Christ opposed such burdensome rules! If we do what He did and taught, we’ll be doing good.

Sermon on the mount

The Beatitudes are the timeless basic spiritual attitudes we should be in—if we want to be “blessed”—favored by God and be in His Kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is Christianity 101 and the perfect standard of righteousness. We should hang on every verse and live each nugget. It’s interesting that the first seven Beatitudes match up in order with the seven Holy Festivals: poor in spirit—Passover; mourn from sin—Days of Unleavened Bread; meek—

Pentecost; hunger and thirst for righteousness—Feast of Trumpets; merciful—Day of Atonement; pure in heart—Feast of Tabernacles; and peacemakers—Eighth Day. And the corollary: If you don't keep God's Holy Days, you will be lacking in those Beatitudes.

False teachers say Jesus said He would fulfill the law, meaning He would keep it for us and nail it to the cross. But Jesus actually said "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law" (Matthew 5:17). Maybe you've noticed by now that people pretty much think whatever Jesus tells them not to think! It looks like people go to great lengths to see what the Bible forbids so they can do just that!

He said that "whoever does and teaches [one of the least of these commandments] ... shall be called great in the kingdom" (verse 19).

When a rich young ruler asked Jesus "what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?", most religious teachers say "Do? Jesus did it all for you!" But Jesus answered: "If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matthew 19:16-17).

Jesus showed by the examples of murdering (if you even have hate in your heart) and committing adultery (if you only look at a woman to lust) that we must keep the law not only in the letter of it but also in the more demanding spirit. Yes, Jesus magnified the law (Isaiah 42:21) that will be eternally the basis of the Kingdom of God. Not one "jot or tittle" actually passes from the law if the stated conditions exist, and the Bible gives the shocking news that sacrifices will resume after Christ returns (Jeremiah 33:18, Zechariah 14:21)—and apparently serve again as a great school teacher (Galatians 3:24) that the enormity of sin costs life—of a beloved animal and of the Lamb of God.

Jesus had compassion on all, and not wanting to send a large crowd away hungry late in the day, fed them all from five loaves and two fishes. The lesson is give God something to bless. My guess is that the 12 baskets of leftovers went to the lad who donated all he had because nobody outgives God (Luke 6:38).



The Son of Man who grew up helping Joseph as a builder and walked the dusty roads of Israel was not the effeminate long-haired dreamy-eyed icon popularized in Bible art and

movies. Isaiah prophesied He would not be a Brad Pitt (Isaiah 53:2), and in fact several times He blended out of sight into a crowd because He looked just like any Jew of His day—who didn't have long hair which Paul would later write is a shame for a man (1 Corinthians 11:14).

Olivet prophecy

When his Disciples asked Jesus “when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3), every word He gave is important for us understanding what is coming in the end time. Jesus gave the key to understanding the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse as religious deception, wars, famine and disease.

He warned that the Great Tribulation would be so bad that “no flesh would be saved [alive]” unless He returns to cut these days short! (verse 22). He said we must endure to the end to be saved (verse 13) and be found “so doing” (verse 46) when He returns.

Doing what?

The Great Commission! “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations ... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20).

“And this gospel *of the kingdom* will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:14).

Jesus said He was sent “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24) and that’s where He sends His servants (10:6). Some historians say Jesus traveled to Britain, Ireland and Israelitish locales between age 12 and starting His ministry. Delivering Jesus’ message to the House of Israel is being accomplished yet today primarily by the Philadelphia era of His Church teaching, publishing and living what Jesus taught and did.

Christ’s Kingdom will be staffed by followers who live as servant leaders (20:25-28).

Besides preach the Gospel, Christ who was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8) would “give His life a ransom for many” as Savior and become the first of the firstfruits (1 Corinthians 15:23) resurrected into the Kingdom of God.

For God So Loved You

For God so loved [you] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not *perish* but *have everlasting life*” (John 3:16). This may well be the most oft-quoted scripture, but few notice that it says through Christ you can have everlasting life—you do not already have it as an immortal soul. And few notice that it says without Christ we will perish—not burn forever in hell.

Lamb slain

God and the Word had planned “from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8) that the Word would become flesh as the second Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45)—fully human and called the Son of Man [how Jesus preferred to call Himself about 80 times]—and willingly be sacrificed as the Lamb of God for you (Philippians 2:6-8).

The first prophecy in the Bible, the Word told the serpent that he would “bruise His heel” (Genesis 3:15). The Word knew that in 4,000 years He would be crucified with nails hammered through His heels. The Bible (Psalm 22) described Christ’s crucifixion long before the Romans created such torture!

In the Garden of Gethsemane, three times He prayed for the strength to overcome His pure raw dread of the betrayal, rejection and suffering more than any man—that He knew was just ahead. Each time He passed the final test we will all face: “nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will” (Matthew 26:39). The Father did not actually forsake Jesus, as people assume because Jesus cried out ‘why have you forsaken Me?’ (Psalm 22:24); He had to let Jesus complete His dreadful task as They both planned.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13). Jesus calls us friends! “God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:7-8).

His life—as the Creator of all human life—could pay the death penalty each of us earned for our sins. His death justifies your past sins.

And by His stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24). To be healed, Paul instructs us to call for the Elders of the Church (James 5:14-15). With God so merciful, sometimes healing comes after we die or when we can only leave a message!

Resurrected Back to God

The excruciating [from the word crucifixion] suffering would have all been for nothing if God the Father did not resurrect His Son. “If Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

But Jesus rose from the dead! The Father answered Jesus’ real Lord’s Prayer: “And now ... glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5).

“For if ... we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son ... we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10). God the Father and Jesus Christ live in us through the power of the Holy Spirit to sanctify us—change us to think and live like They do (Philippians 2:5).

When crucified & resurrected?

As you learn the truth of the Bible, eventually you will find yourself thinking “Whatever the subject is, just see what everybody believes, and know that the truth is something

else. That's because "narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:14).

The foundational scripture is: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Count for yourself—You can't possibly get three days and three nights between Friday 3 p.m. and Sunday sunrise. Jesus gave this as the only sign of His Messiahship. As for the length of a day, Jesus said "Are there not 12 hours in a day?" (John 11:9). In the re-creation of Genesis 1, each day was an evening and morning of 24 hours. Those who argue that Hebrew days can sometimes be parts of days know that isn't so when it specifies days *and nights*. Jesus plainly declared He would be 72 hours in the grave.

In John 2:19-21, Jesus said "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up ... He was speaking of the temple of His body." In some places the Bible says the third day or after three days. A key principle of the Bible is that it is a book of addition. Seventy-two hours is the only way for all the time expressions to comply with Jesus' own "only sign."

Holy Days & the Hebrew calendar

The key is the Holy Days that reveal God's plan of salvation. And the only way to know when the Holy Days occur is the Hebrew calendar which God gave the Jews to control as part of "the oracles" of God (Romans 3:2). Jesus kept the same Holy Days as the Jews in Jerusalem were doing by observation and calculation.

The 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9 prophesied that "Messiah the Prince" would begin His ministry in the autumn of A.D. 27. Jesus began at about age 30 (Luke 3:23)

when priests began their service. He would be “cut off” in the middle of the week, and this fits two ways. First, Jesus’ ministry lasted 3-1/2 years instead of a “week” of seven years. The four Gospels confirm that Jesus kept three Passovers and then the final one. So this dates Jesus as being crucified in A.D. 31. Second, Jesus was cut off in the middle of the week—crucified on a Wednesday. The Hebrew calendar confirms the Wednesday timing.

“Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7). He kept the Passover with His 12 Disciples on Nisan 14 as it was beginning on Tuesday evening. He was captured about midnight, scourged and crucified, and died about 3 p.m. on Wednesday, still Nisan 14. Because the Jews had come to observe their Passover Seder at the beginning of Nisan 15, talk about Master Timing resulting in lambs being slit right at the time the Lamb of God’s blood was poured out for YOU!

Joseph of Arimathea hurried to entomb Jesus’ body by sundown which would begin a Sabbath. This does not justify Good Friday because this was not a regular Sabbath. This was a “high day” (John 19:31)—the first Day of Unleavened Bread of Nisan 15 on Thursday. Mark 16:1 says women bought spices after the Sabbath but Luke 23:56 says they prepared spices and then rested the Sabbath. Sounds contradictory, but not when they bought spices after the Holy Day ended Thursday at sunset and then prepared them on Friday and rested on the Sabbath. The Greek word for Sabbath in Luke 28:1 means “Sabbaths.”

When the women came to the tomb early Sunday, the angel said Jesus was already risen. Of course! Put into the tomb barely before sunset late Wednesday, Jesus was there until exactly three days and three nights later—exactly 72 hours later—just before sunset late Saturday.

Somehow you'd have to know that Jesus Christ would not be resurrected on the pagan day of Astarte [Easter] when worshipers face the sun (Ezekiel 8:16-17) but rather on the Sabbath that He is Lord of!

In John 9:14, an incredibly crucial detail is that the Eighth Day was also a weekly Sabbath. A.D. 30 is the only year during the possible ones for Jesus' ministry where the Eighth Day was a Sabbath and the next Passover is on a Wednesday.

The ancient custom of fasting on Wednesday comes from "the day on which Jesus was betrayed" and "on which the Sanhedrin decided to kill him" (*Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, "Fasting").

Backing this, "References in the *Didascalía*, in Epiphanius, in Victorinus of Pettau ... [Catholic writers] support the Tuesday [night] Passover dating and the subsequent arrest of Jesus in the morning hours of Wednesday"—James A. Walther, "The Chronology of Passion Week," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, June 1958.

So Jesus Christ was crucified on Wednesday, April 25, A.D. 31 and resurrected on Saturday, April 28.

Jesus waved

After His resurrection, Jesus fulfilled the symbolism of the Wave Sheaf offering that was waved on the morrow [after the weekly Sabbath so Sunday] that falls during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Jesus told Mary not to touch him because He had not yet ascended to His Father in heaven to be accepted by Him. Jesus no doubt accomplished that at the speed of thought and then later that same Sunday appeared to others who touched Him. Those who believe in going to heaven upon death don't seem to notice that after three days in the grave Jesus had NOT yet been up in

heaven. He was actually DEAD in the grave. His Spirit in Man had gone up for safe-keeping, and the Father used its record of Jesus to resurrect Him.

Having witnessed these incredible events, what would the Disciples do? That God so loves you, what do you do?

The Primitive Church Witnesses to Us

“I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7). The Disciples in the Garden all fled. Peter denied Jesus three times, but at least he had courage to follow nearby.

After His resurrection, Jesus appeared to His Disciples during 40 days, still “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). Not about His person and just believing on Him! Believing what He taught! It inspires Christians to this day that “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

To His Disciples on the road to Emmaus

and in the village, “He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45). When with Him the Disciples mostly didn’t have a clue! Now it was time to open their eyes so they could teach others. That’s why today we should pray for understanding before starting Bible study.

This important encounter at Emmaus was on Sunday, the third day after guards had been posted at the tomb on Thursday, the High Day after the Wednesday crucifixion, to ensure it “be made secure until the third day” (Matthew 27:63-64). How beautifully the Bible explains itself when you put all the scriptures together!

Some say this proves the crucifixion was on Thursday, but then they have to explain away Matthew 12:40, which as Jesus’ “only sign” is the key to the chronology. And they

have to claim that the Hebrew calendar is wrong, which says there was no Passover on a Thursday during the possible years of Christ's ministry. The Hebrew calendar keeps God's people worshiping in unity on the Holy Days.

Jesus charged His Disciples that "repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Not come as you are!

Later Jesus told them "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Then they saw Jesus taken up to disappear in a cloud "into heaven" [the first one], and two angels told them Jesus will come in "like manner" (Matthew 24:30).

Acts "is of highest importance

because it is the only inspired account of the beginning and early work of the Church" (*The Scofield Study Bible III*, page 1491). This "Primitive Church" is the example for God's spiritual Church down through the ages and also today. Do we and our church do what the first Christians did?

God chose His Holy Day of Pentecost on June 18, A.D. 31 to start His New Testament Church and provide the power of His Holy Spirit, which is referred to more than 50 times in Acts. Divided tongues of fire appeared above the Disciples and the crowds heard them speak in their own "language"—not gibberish nonsense!

The crowd was "cut to the heart, and said ...

What shall we do?

Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be

baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit [when minister's hands laid on them—Acts 8:17]. For the promise is to you and *to your children*, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts. 2:37-39, John 6:44). Peter is inspired to say that children of members are called now, having access now if they choose! They are holy now (1 Corinthians 7:14). Most were blessed while a baby (Mark 10:16).

God blessed the new Church with explosive growth—3,000 on that day of Pentecost. God did “many wonders and signs” through them. They joyfully fellowshiped together, “broke bread” [shared meals—not referring to what’s done annually at Passover], and for that special time of persecution in Jerusalem, shared by *willingly* selling a house or *possession* to meet a need [decidedly not socialism or communism!] (Acts 2:41-47, 5:42). “God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them” (4:33-34 *NIV*).

They preached the return of Christ which would bring “the times of restoration of all things” (3:21). They proclaimed that there is no salvation in any other name than Jesus Christ (4:12), which points to the Holy Day called the Eighth Day (Leviticus 23:36) when those who have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ will have their opportunity for salvation!

When the Disciples were thrown in prison, an angel busted them out and told them to go speak in the temple. When the Sanhedrin ordered them to stop, they boldly replied “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) and rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame [and a beating] for His name” (verse 41).

Stephen, ordained a deacon along with six other “men of

good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,” witnessed to the Sanhedrin. He rocked their world, and they returned the favor! His dying words were “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit [his Spirit in Man] ... do not charge them with this sin” (7:59-60).

At this time “a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria (fulfilling 1:8!), except the apostles ... those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (8:1, 4). God wants us all to witness appropriately! What door will He open for you? “May he give you the power to accomplish all the good things your faith prompts you to do” (2 Thessalonians 1:11 *NLT*).

Philip, a deacon, preached in Samaria “the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12).

Simon the sorcerer

of whom the people raved “This man is the great power of God,” believed and was baptized. But when he tried to buy the office of Apostle and the Holy Spirit [the origin of the word “simony”], Peter perceived that his heart was “not right in the sight of God” (verse 21) and denied him the Holy Spirit. Justin Martyr wrote that Simon went to Rome, started a cult and was worshiped as a god. Obviously his coverage in Acts 8 shows he was a very influential counterfeit force. Simonians developed into one of the gnostic sects that troubled the true Church for four centuries.

In Joppa, a beloved sister in Christ named Tabitha [Dorcas] “was full of good works and charitable deeds” (9:36-37). During His ministry Jesus often took unusual steps to honor women and show how important they are to God. Peter caused a stir by raising Dorcas from the dead—one of nine

occasions where somebody was raised back to physical life in the Bible.

The Gospel goes to the Gentiles

In Acts 10, God called Cornelius, a Roman centurion, who “feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always” (verses 1-2). An angel told Cornelius to send for Peter.

But first a miracle was needed on Peter’s end because Christian Jews were not ready to welcome Gentiles! So God gave Peter a startling vision of a sheet that included unclean animals and told him to eat! False teachers claim by this culinary vision that God who changes not (Malachi 3:6) was trashing His laws of clean and unclean meat though pigs had not stopped being trash collectors!

Notice Peter’s reaction more than a decade after He had lived with Jesus and after Jesus’ resurrection: “Not so, Lord! For I have *never eaten* anything common or unclean” (Acts 10:14). Rather, the revelation Peter got from the encounter was “God has shown me that I should not call *any man* common or unclean” (verse 28).

To further make plain His will, God gave the Holy Spirit accompanied by speaking in tongues to the Gentiles exactly as He had empowered the Disciples! They glorified God that He “also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (11:18).

It was time for the Apostle Paul and his Gentile helpers.

“Imitate Me, Just As I Also Imitate Christ”

Those who stoned Stephen “laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul” (Acts 7:59).



Saul, “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord,” was on the road to Damascus to round up any of “the Way” (9:2) when Jesus struck him down with three days of blindness. God told a wary Disciple in Damascus named Ananias to go lay hands on Saul so

he would receive sight, be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. “What?! You want me to go anoint who?!”

“Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name’s sake” (verses 15-16). Did it raise any red flags for Paul when Luke the physician became his traveling companion!

Saul went to Arabia [probably Petra] where he received “the gospel” not from man but “through the revelation of Jesus Christ” for three years (Galatians 1:12-17). Will Jesus Christ teach us in the Place of Safety, in person or in Spirit, the training we’ll need to serve in His Millennium?

The Disciples in Jerusalem were deathly afraid of their

former persecutor, but Barnabas [whose name means “son of encouragement”] persuaded them that Saul was a changed man now going to be powerfully used by God.

Saul of Tarsus was “of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews ... a Pharisee” (Philippians 3:5), taught at the feet of the most renowned rabbi Gamaliel. Showing His power and humor, God chose to send a zealous SuperJew to become Apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13). Saul went on to become the most impactful Christian of all time second only to Jesus (Philippians 4:13).

In Antioch, where Disciples were first called Christians, the leaders were fasting and God inspired them through the Holy Spirit to “separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (Acts 13:2). They laid hands on them and sent them out. This is still the process for ordinations. Saul had undergone training, testing and preparation for about 14 years. Dual names were common then, and soon Saul [“asked for”], also called Paul [“small”], went by Paul to relate better to the Gentiles as he would teach in 1 Corinthians 9:22.

Paul gave crucial understanding about how receiving the Holy Spirit enables a person to know the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:11) by combining with the Spirit in Man which only enables a person to understand the things of man. That’s why a Christian must have the Holy Spirit and be led by it (Romans 8:9, 14).

People say

Paul changed everything: the law to grace; unclean meat to eat anything you want; and the Sabbath to Sunday. Imagine that: God letting Paul change everything Jesus Christ as the Word had established in the Old Testament and lived and taught during His 3-1/2 year ministry!

See for yourself that Paul kept and taught the Sabbath even to Gentiles. In Acts 13:42, “the *Gentiles* begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath.” Paul didn’t tell them, “No, now that Christ is resurrected, we meet on Sunday.” “On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear *the word of God.*”

In Thessalonica, “Paul, *as his custom was ...* for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (17:2). In Hebrews 4:9 the author who was likely Paul wrote “There remains therefore a [*Sabbatismos* = “Sabbath-keeping”] for the people of God.” There does despite what people say!

Clearly Paul imitated Jesus by keeping and teaching the Sabbath Jesus was Lord of!

Peter said people twist Paul’s writings “to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16). We should be like the Bereans (Acts 17:11) rather than like Chubby Checker!

Study for yourself that Paul kept the Holy Days. He gives crucial instruction regarding the Passover and says “let us keep the feast” [the Days of Unleavened Bread] in 1 Corinthians 5 and 11. He hurried to be in Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Christians marked time and counted down how many days to the Holy Days such as the Day of Atonement (27:9). In Colossians 2:16 Paul told the Christians not to let others judge them *for keeping* festivals and Sabbaths.

On the first of three major journeys, Paul was stoned at Lystra and dragged out of the city, “supposing him to be dead” (Acts 14:19). Maybe they didn’t have to suppose too hard! Miraculously revived, Paul showed

His courage and commitment

—going to Derbe and then right back to Lystra!—saying “We must through many tribulations enter *the kingdom of God*” (verses 22). Paul knew what he was talking about! (2 Corinthians 11:23-27). What kept him going was his passion for preaching the same gospel Jesus taught him (Acts 19:8, 28:30-31) and his “deep concern for all the churches.”

Paul’s prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) exude the joy and peace from being content in whatever state we find ourselves. OK, so we Coloradoans have an advantage!

Paul and Barnabus gave crucial input for

The Jerusalem council

The Apostles and Elders were inspired by God to rule that physical circumcision, sacrifices and rituals were not required for salvation.

Gentiles did NOT have to adopt Judaism. Hebrews 9:10 says that “foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances [were] imposed until the time of reformation.” In Romans 2:29 Paul said “he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter.”

In many of the 14 books of the Bible written by Paul

People say

he did away with the law, especially in Romans and Galatians. A principle of sound Bible study is that since the Bible never contradicts itself, and you have to put all of the

scriptures on a subject together for the whole picture, you must pay *foremost attention to the crystal clear statements*. Like where Paul said “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good ... For we know that the law is spiritual” (Romans 7:12, 14). Like where Paul wrote “Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law” (7:7).

Paul taught law *and* grace. We are under grace and not under *the penalty* of the law. All of the law-keeping in the world won’t save us; only the free unmerited pardon of our merciful Father through the blood of His Son. But God won’t save anybody who isn’t committed to keeping His law through the power of the Holy Spirit living inside.

We are justified for past sins by the blood of Christ and saved by His life—through daily, continued sanctification by Christ in us (Romans 5:10). It’s as simple as

Faith *and* works

“For by grace you have been saved through faith [as the premier example of proof texting, Martin Luther added without God’s permission the word “alone”], and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). We need the faith of Christ; we can’t work it up! “Not of works, lest anyone should boast” (verse 9). All of the works in the world won’t save us, but “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (verse 10). No obedience to God’s law? No fruits of repentance (Acts 26:20)? Then no faith. No grace. No salvation. We should be “His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Because when each of us is resurrected, changed to God by grace, “He will reward each one according to his works” (Romans 2:6 *NET Bible*)—according to what we do with our talents, time and effort.

Don't miss the fact that Paul refutes the belief in the Trinity, starting his books with greetings mentioning only God the Father and Jesus Christ. What a slight that would be if the Holy Spirit were a God Being rather than the power, essence, nature and character of the two God Beings.

People say

Paul did away with the need to worry about clean and unclean meats, for example, "I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself" (Romans 14:14). Before scarfing down a ham sandwich, carefully study whether the Greek word is *koinos* ["common, polluted or defiled ceremonially"]—as it is here—or *akathartos* [unclean meats listed in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14]. The issue in the Primitive Church was meat offered to idols in the marketplace!

In his emotional farewell, Paul warned the Elders at Miletus, charged to shepherd "the church of God"—given as the name of God's true spiritual Church 12 times in the Bible. Christ is the head of the Church but Paul said it's the Father "from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named (Ephesians 3:15). Paul alerted the Elders, "from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:28-30).

Paul wrote Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus. To each of us Paul exhorted "I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you ... For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

"And the things that you have heard from me ... commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2:2). Hope that's you! Let's be the real deal and imitate Paul because He imitated Christ.

Faith, Hope & Love

Paul said a Christian must have the Holy Spirit and be led by it (Romans 8:9, 14). He listed nine fruits of the Holy Spirit, with love leading the way (Galatians 5:22-23). He spelled out how love acts (1 Corinthians 13:4-8). This special “Love Chapter” concludes “now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love” (verse 13).

GENERAL EPISTLES



Paul’s words make a perfect introduction for the seven letters called James (faith), 1 and 2 Peter (hope), 1, 2 and 3 John (love) and Jude. James, John and Jude were brothers of Jesus. Imagine how hard it must have been to grow up with Jesus as your older brother! Hope Joseph and Mary didn’t exclaim in exasperation: “Why can’t you be more like your brother!” Yet, look how good they all turned out!

James: “Faith without works is dead”

James agrees perfectly with what Paul taught about faith *and* works (2:17-24). James’ teaching (“that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”) was the last straw for Martin Luther so he foolishly called it a book of that. That included Abraham being “justified by works” when he obeyed God and received God’s free unmerited gift of mercy. Faith worked together with his works and by works his faith was made perfect (Hebrews 11:6). Plain truth if God opens your mind to understand it!

Your spiritual ears should perk up to reject anybody who claims you don’t have to keep God’s law or show good works. Same goes for anybody claiming either of those will save you.

You need God's grace and faith. You can only repent because "the goodness of God leads you" to it (Romans 2:4).

James was written to "the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad" (1:1). It's dumbfounding that so many say James was writing to scattered Jews. James and Josephus knew where the 12 tribes were, and we can know where the "lost" Tribes of Israel are today in addition to the Jews over in the Middle East. The main ones are the Anglo-Saxon peoples of the United States and the British Commonwealth (Genesis 35:11, 48:19). By God's choice and grace, they are exceptional—and with that come responsibilities to model God's way of life to the rest of the world.

James shares gems about how to build the Family of God:

- ♥ Ask in faith for wisdom from God, defined in 3:17, which is the solution for how to tame the tongue (verse 8).
- ♥ Practice "pure and undefiled religion before God ... visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and ... keep oneself unspotted from the world" (1:27).
- ♥ The 10 Commandments are a "law of liberty" (2:12).
- ♥ "You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss" (4:3)—biblical proof it's tough to be a bachelor!
- ♥ "Submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (verses 7-8).

Peter: the Apostle of hope

Though he was the one sent to Cornelius, first taking the Gospel to Gentiles, Peter ministered to the Jews (Galatians 2:9).

- ♥ "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ... has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Peter 1:3).

♥ “You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people ... now the people of God ... sojourners and pilgrims ... having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:9-12).

♥ “To this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (verse 21).

♥ “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you ... your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (5:5-8).

John: family letters from the Father to His “little children”

♥ “Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” [Still only the two God Beings John described in His Gospel—no trinity!] (1 John 1:4).

♥ “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves ... If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (verses 8-9).

♥ “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar” (2:3-4).

♥ “Do not love the world or the things in the world ... For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life ... but he who does the will of God abides forever” (verses 15-17).

♥ “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself” (3:1-3).

♥ “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we

keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (verse 22).

♥ “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (verse 18).

♥ “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome” (5:3).

Jude: false teachers invading the Church with gnostic heresy

♥ “Contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (verse 3).

♥ Jude warned about rejecting authority and speaking evil of dignitaries”—so common today!

♥ “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints” (verse 14). Hopefully YOU!

John would probably interject, “Hey, that’s for me to reveal!”

The Two Planners Reveal!

The last book of the Bible takes its name from the Greek *apocalypsis*, meaning “revealing” or “unveiling.” We must “read ... hear ... and keep the words of this prophecy (Revelation 1:3) so we can be unveiled as part of the Bride!

This is “the Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God [the Father] gave Him to *show His servants* [the spiritual Church of God]—things which must shortly take place” (verse 1). God told Daniel, “the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.... the wise shall understand (Daniel 12:9-10). That should include us!

The two God Beings created Their plan together and here They reveal together the grand finale!

The Father & Christ

John saw visions of Christ in His glory (Revelation 1:13-15) and the third heaven throne room (chapters 4 and 5) with the Father and the Lamb. The Bible ends as it begins, with *no God Being of the Holy Spirit anywhere!* That’s good news for you because it means the godhead is not a closed triangle but rather the two God Beings will add billions to their Family!

Jesus gave crucial information for understanding this enigmatic book in His Olivet Prophecy (Matthew 24). And to understand Revelation, we must compare with the entire written Word of God—especially the book of Daniel.

Revelation features lots of sevens—the number of perfection and completeness—and the first three chapters feature

The Seven Churches

Jesus wrote seven love letters to His Bride.

He picked out seven local churches (out of many more) to illustrate His messages—which admonish all churches in all time. They give the successive eras of the Church from Ephesus the Apostolic Church down to our end time which still has Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea in existence. The Seven Churches speak to each Christian of all times “who has an ear to hear” and wants the seven rewards promised “to him who overcomes.”



Laodicean attitudes will be dominant at the end time: thinking you are rich and increased spiritually when you are blind and naked. Before accusing anyone of being Laodicean, about which Jesus has nothing good to say, we should be looking in a mirror. As one sister in Christ put it so aptly, “We’re all Laodicean.”

We want to be Philadelphian, the Church about which Jesus has nothing bad to say. It has the “key of David” (Revelation 3:7) because Jesus through the Holy Spirit opens doors for it to complete the Great Commission (Matthew 24:14, 28:18-20) and to teach about the 12 Tribes of Israel. Jesus through the Holy Spirit is the key to eternal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

The Father holds a scroll with seven seals, and only “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David”—Jesus Christ the Lamb—can loose the seals and open it (Revelation 5:5). He unrolls the scroll, and Revelation follows



mostly in chronological order of seals, trumpets, woes and vials. Some inset chapters [2-3, 12-14 and 17-18] catch the reader up with necessary background.

The six seals

The first five seals describe conditions that go back to John’s time (1:19) but escalate like birth pains (Matthew 24:8) in frequency and intensity. The first four are the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse which Jesus identified as false religion, war, famine and disease resulting in a fourth of the earth killed! (Revelation 6:8). How appropriate that first rider to this discussion! The whole world is deceived until the fifth rider—Jesus Christ—saddles up in Revelation 19!

The fifth seal is the Great Tribulation, “such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved [alive]; but *for the elect’s sake* [you, I hope!] those days will be shortened” (Matthew 24:21-22). This is the time of “Jacob’s trouble” (Jeremiah 30:7) for spiritual Israel and for the physical 12 Tribes of Israel. I hope it shocks us into repentant obedience that Ezekiel 5:1-4 and Amos 5:3 indicate only a tithe [one-tenth] of physical Israel will survive the coming captivity! This is the time of satan’s wrath because for the second time the accuser of the brethren will be cast down, and he knows his time is short (Revelation 12:10, 12).

◆ **The Great Tribulation** is the same period of time as four other major events which are said to last 1,260 days, 42 months, or times/time/1/2 a time. These are the same amount of time and roughly at the same time because all are ended by the first resurrection and second coming of Jesus Christ (Daniel 12:13).

◆ **The Beast and False Prophet.** A 10-nation powerhouse in Europe, led once again by Germany (modern “Assyria, the rod of My [God’s] anger (Isaiah 10:5)”, the seventh resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire called Babylon the Great, led by a charismatic political/military leader [a German probably] and the great spiritual leader, a Pope presiding over the Catholic Church and her Protestant daughters (Revelation 17:5). Watch out!—they “deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24). It’s been said that a Fatima vision says the most persuasive miracle will be the Virgin Mary appearing in the sky, visible to the whole earth, saying of the false spiritual leader, “This is my Son, worship Him!”

◆ **The Times of the Gentiles.** The lost Tribes of Israel will be taken into captivity by the Beast—Britain [not great anymore!], Canada, Australia, South Africa—and even the United States! The King of the South will push [Oil? Immigration?] and the King of the North invades Jerusalem like a whirlwind (Daniel 11:40-41). Thirty days before the Great Tribulation starts (Daniel 12:11), the Beast stops the sacrifices in Jerusalem—which the Temple Institute is eager to start today along with building a temple—and sets up the Abomination of Desolation which parallels what Antiochus IV Epiphanes did on Dec. 16, 168 B.C. when he desecrated the temple by sacrificing swine’s blood on an altar of Zeus (Matthew 24:15).

◆ **The two witnesses.** Two powerful figures command worldwide attention as they confront the Beast and False

Prophet and witness for God with power like Moses and Elijah wielded. They are the two olive trees and lampstands of Zechariah 4:11-14. The whole world will tune in to see their dead bodies lying in Jerusalem for 3-1/2 days, which is possible now through worldwide communication of this modern Tower of Babel. Then they are resurrected—apparently the first ones at the Seventh Trumpet (Revelation 11:11-15). Through their leadership hopefully brethren will unify if they're not in ...

♦ **The Place of Safety.** The Church will be silenced, “cancelled” in today’s jargon, resulting in a famine of “hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11). Famine can be from no food available but also from people refusing to eat what God has provided. The Philadelphia Church was promised “I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). In 12:14 “the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place ...” Though this sounds like going by airplane, God says He took Israel out of Egypt by “eagles’ wings—40 years of walking! What if He parts the Atlantic for us! I can’t blame you for thinking that idea doesn’t hold water. But God promises the Second Exodus will make people forget the first! (Jeremiah 23:7).

Zephaniah, meaning “hidden,” wrote “It may be that you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger” (2:3). Recall how in the book of Exodus the last seven of the 10 Plagues were only inflicted on Egypt. Of course, God says that He will have some special witnesses who can handle the pressure and martyrdom (Daniel 11:33-35). A Christian has to be willing to lose his life for God (Matthew 16:25), but I know where I’m hoping God takes me! It sounds like 3-1/2 years to receive special training for serving in the Millennium—like when Saul was specially taught by Christ for his mission—in Arabia, probably Petra!

The Bible doesn't say where the Place of Safety is, but if it isn't Petra in Jordan, where would it be! People have tried to place dibs on the best caves, especially one with a two-camel garage! I've been there twice, and you wouldn't survive without God's protection. It's going to take watching and praying (Luke 21:36) and being close to God and His Church to know when and where to flee and to have faith to do it.

The sixth seal: the heavenly signs

show up immediately after the Great Tribulation and before the Seventh Trumpet (Matthew 24:29-31). Today's blood moons and solar eclipses that arrive as calculated are NOT these supernatural terrifying signs from God. Joel prophesied of these signs "before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord ... [when] whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (2:30-32). Trouble is, Revelation says people hide in caves and beg mountain rocks to "fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For *the great day of His wrath* has come, and who is able to stand?" (Revelation 6:16-17). It'd be better to kneel!

It's time for the Day of the Lord, and humble submission.

The Day of the Lord Changes Everything!

John writes, “I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Revelation 1:10). He was mentally transported to

The Day of the Lord

mentioned directly or indirectly more than 50 times in the Bible. John was not referring to worshipping on Sunday; Jesus said the Lord’s Day is the Sabbath (Luke 6:5), and the *Bible Knowledge Commentary* says “Lord’s” is an adjective never used in the Bible for the first day of the week.

While the Great Tribulation will be the time of Satan’s wrath, the Day of the Lord—the time of God’s wrath—is the Seventh Seal consisting of Seven Trumpets. About two-thirds of Revelation is devoted to this seal.

The Day of the Lord lasts one year (Isaiah 34:8). Since 1 Corinthians 15:52 clearly states that Jesus Christ comes back and resurrects the saints “at the last trumpet,” Churches of God believe that the Day of the Lord will last one year from the First Trumpet through the Seventh Trumpet.



The Second Coming has been called the greatest headline waiting to be written! Naturally, human curiosity craves to

know when Jesus Christ is returning. “Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” (Matthew 24:3). When Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection, they still wanted to know: “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). And who of us doesn’t want to know!

But, we must never forget that Jesus stressed

“Of that day and hour no one knows,

not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only” (Matthew 24:36). Now that Christ is up with the Father, is He in on the secret?

Psalms 102:13 says the Father has “the set time” and Daniel 8:19 and Acts 17:31 say an “appointed” time. How else could Jesus start the Millennium exactly at the end of 6,000 years, at the start of a Jubilee year, cutting time short lest nobody be saved alive, but giving scoffers ammunition to think He delays His coming. All of that can only be fulfilled by one specific time, and only the Father knows which time fulfills all that! Do we believe Jesus, He says nobody else knows besides the Father!

History has seen plenty of predictions end up in “great disappointment” like in 1844. Likely you’ve had one! I’m guessing it will turn out that nobody knew! Just like the Father says!

With few exceptions, Church of God brethren today were taught by God’s Apostle of the Philadelphia era who wrote: “And perhaps the glorious second coming shall occur, in whatever year it may be, on this very day of the Feast of Trumpets—who knows? While we cannot say for certain, yet

cannot we see this possibility?... Repeatedly Jesus warned us to watch, regarding His second coming! Could it be possible that, unless we are observing the Feast of Trumpets, as the first-century Church of God was observing Pentecost, that we shall not be ready, or caught up to meet Him? We do not—we cannot, of course, say; but we do ask the question. Is it not possible? Let us humbly and willingly yield to walk obediently in all the light” (Herbert W. Armstrong, *Pagan Holidays or God’s Holy Days—Which?*, 1976 edition, page 40).

Since Passover pictures the Lamb’s crucifixion and it occurred on a Passover, and as many as five big victories over sin occurred on the Last Day of Unleavened Bread [Sodom and Gomorrah, Exodus, Jericho, Gideon and Esther], and satan and his demons will surely be banished on a coming Day of Atonement, Christ returning on a Feast of Trumpets seems so likely that it’s tempting to believe it has to be so.

Up until recently, I would argue: Yes, we don’t know the hour. But we know the day—just not which Feast of Trumpets!

And, thanks to Daniel 12 indicating that from when the Abomination of Desolation is set up and the sacrifices taken away, it will be 1,290 days until the first resurrection, we should be on high alert when we see the sacrifices begin, and it sounds like when we see them taken away, we will be able to start counting down its then-no-longer-secret arrival! If we somehow miss that, how could we miss all the powerful events beginning 30 days later at 1,260 days such as the Two Witnesses squaring off against the Beast and False Prophet! It sounds like simple counting will pinpoint when the Seventh Trumpet will blow about 3-1/2 years before!

Well, “No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation” (2 Peter 1:20), though the book of Revelation especially tempts us all to feed the urge! Paul pleaded with us to “all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you” (1 Corinthians 1:10). Remember that the understanding of Revelation is given to God’s Church, and thanks to understanding His Holy Days which is crucial to the timing of the events of Revelation, the Churches of God generally agree on the trunk-of-the-tree events. Revelation states clearly the big foundational events.

- ◆ Revelation 11:15—Seventh and last Trumpet sounds. The saints are resurrected.
- ◆ Revelation 15-16—The Seven Last Plagues.
- ◆ Revelation 19:7-9—The Wedding Supper.
- ◆ Revelation 19:11-20—The Return of Jesus the fifth horseman, the angels, and the saints to conquer the earth, the Beast, the False Prophet, the false Church.

None of these is an insert chapter; therefore these big events seem chronological, based on the seals, trumpets and plagues being sequential. Believing that the book of Revelation is chronological except for the inset chapters is crucial for timing the events.

The Day of the Lord will be the last year of the 3-1/2 years. Since that is the time of God’s wrath and also the last year of satan’s wrath, how desirable to be in the Place of Safety!

The Day of the Lord begins in Revelation 6:17 and ends when God’s wrath is “done” (Revelation 16:17) with a great earthquake and 100-pound hailstones. Actually, all will be “done” when Jesus Christ and His heavenly army complete the Seventh Last Plague when they ride down, conquer and finish putting away all rebellion in 19:21. That would complete the Seventh and Last Trumpet so that “The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our

Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!” (Revelation 11:15). That whole process will be as good as complete when the Seventh Trumpet sounds because God will fulfill His announced plans (Isaiah 46:9-10).

When you think “Day of the Lord,” think WHOA! An angel stops the lips of the trumpeters about to blow (Revelation 7:1), including the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh Trumpets called “WOES” in which a third of mankind is killed (Revelation 9:18)! One-fourth had already been killed so good math would say [$1/3 \times 3/4 = 1/4$] so only one-half is left. To be spared God’s wrath we must all rein ourselves in from being involved in modern Babylon (Revelation 18:4). OK, enough *punishment!*

Before the trumpets blow, two special groups are discussed:

The 144,000 & a great innumerable multitude!

Who are these? Ask two Christians and you’ll get three opinions!

The 144,000. These are sealed out of “all the tribes of the children of Israel” (7:4), 12,000 of each tribe except Dan (Revelation 7:3-8). Dan was a center of idolatry (1 Kings 12:28-30). Modern Dan includes Catholic Ireland, and Jewish tradition believed the Antichrist would come from Dan. Genesis 49:18 prophesied Dan would wait for his salvation, apparently for the Great White Throne period [see page 219].

Some reason: how can there be only 12,000 from the big tribes of Israel like Manassah (United States) and Ephraim (British Commonwealth) and how could you gather 12,000 from tribes like Issachar (Finland)? So they conclude 12 is the number of organization so it’s symbolic—12 Apostles, 12 Tribes of Israel, 12 New Jerusalem gates.

God states, “For surely I “will sift the house of Israel among all nations, as grain is sifted in a sieve; yet not the smallest grain shall fall to the ground” (Amos 9:9). I see no indication in the Bible that God can’t count!

It would seem this group of 144,000 also comes out of the Great Tribulation since they are discussed at the same time as the Gentile multitude. The Seven Trumpets are held up until they are sealed. Christians are sealed with the Holy Spirit upon repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands! (Ephesians 1:13-14). Righteous saints from Abel up until the time of the first resurrection will have already been sealed with the Holy Spirit. That these in Revelation 7 are called “servants of our God” (verse 3) certainly sounds like they are in the process of conversion and sanctification—set apart! God will make sure that physical descendants of Israel will live into the Millennium to become His model nation to the Gentiles. They are specifically promised protection from the Fifth Trumpet which will torment the earth for five months (Revelation 9:4-5).

The other five Trumpets don’t specify how long they last, appropriately denying the ability to pinpoint exactly when the Seventh Trumpet will blow. The Father knows how to keep a secret!

This group seems to differ from the 144,000 of Revelation 14 [see page 199]. This group is by tribe of Israel, called and converted out of Great Tribulation.

The Great Innumerable Multitude. These are of “all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues” (Revelation 7:9) “who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (verse 14). The Church of God carries out the Great Commission as a witness and example in hopes that many would “glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12). Apparently this multitude

has to prove themselves in martyrdom. This sounds like the final Church era of Laodicea that Jesus Christ counseled to “buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments that you may be clothed” (Revelation 3:18). After the Church as a whole is taken to the Place of Safety, the enraged dragon comes after those “who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (12:17); perhaps some just didn’t have the faith to go to the Place of Safety and leave family and possessions behind. After the great multitude, how sad that Revelation records nobody repenting—they’re too busy cursing and blaspheming. The lesson is to repent now (2 Chronicles 7:14)!

John sees this Great Innumerable Multitude “standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9) [see page 210].

Before unleashing the trumpeters, God considers “the prayers of the saints,” perhaps all that had ever been uttered (8:3). I hope you’re adding to the sweet savor!

The Seventh Trumpet, which includes the Seven Last Plagues, especially changes everything. It’s blowing is

The turning point of history

Jesus Christ will come like “lightning from the east and flashes to the west” (Matthew 24:27). “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). How reminiscent of when Joshua and the Israelites blew the trumpets and shouted (Joshua 6:15-16), and the walls of Jericho fell flat!



All the earth “will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory [just as He was seen leaving in Acts 1:11]. And He will send His angels ... and they will gather together His elect from the four winds” (Matthew 24:30-31). This is when they carry Lazarus in Christ’s parable of Luke 16:22 up to Abraham’s bosom. “The Father of the Faithful” and all faithful are resurrected into an intimate relationship for all eternity at this time!

No doubt this will be the rapturous feeling of a lifetime! But hardly a secret! A loud shout and a trumpet blast! All the earth will see! They mourn (Matthew 24:30)!

And saints are not going to be saved up in heaven from the Great Tribulation because Christ’s coming is after the Great Tribulation. The Secret Rapture heresy is satan’s twist on God’s people being taken to the Place of Safety where they will be protected from the Great Tribulation.

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet* ... the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

“And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them *in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Those who stay dead won’t know they’re missing anything (Ecclesiastes 9:5) until they come up in a future resurrection. But could there be a greater disappointment for the living who expect to rise but they’re not leaving the ground! The bridegroom came when five virgins were out of Holy Spirit and told them “I do not know you (Matthew 25:12). Could there be worse words to ever hear! But oh, the joy unspeakable for those made full of glory! Because they are ready! You can be! We must be!

For those left behind, probably there will be too much chaos for anybody to be driving anyway, and by then all cars may be driverless. God is so merciful, I believe He will work out circumstances so a plane will not suddenly be without a pilot. Probably most of the living changed to Spirit will be rising from the Place of Safety. Onlookers saw Jesus ascend into the clouds (Acts 1:11), but the Bible doesn't say people will see the saints rising.

Revelation 14 also mentions 144,000

Is this a second batch? This one is the completed, resurrected, glorified Church of God! The firstfruits from righteous Abel on down to those who are in the first resurrection. Us!

Is this precisely 144,000? This has been a thorny issue for some big false churches with way more members! But when the Philadelphia era of the Church of God started approaching that magic number, suddenly heresy hacked it down to about one-tenth and back to being God's "little flock" (Luke 12:32) on the difficult path that "few find" (Matthew 7:14). God counts the stars by name and knows the number of hairs on our head. He says 144,000 firstfruits (Revelation 14:1-5) so argue with Him!

These are undefiled spiritual virgins who follow the Lamb wherever He goes and "were redeemed from among men, being *firstfruits* to God and to the Lamb ..."

Since the Second Coming is rated the biggest event of human history, no wonder there are varying ideas about the branches and twigs. The controversial chapters are Revelation 14, 15 and 19. Rather than ignore these out of unreasonable fear to avoid division, let's humbly hold them up to Scripture and analyze Berean-like whether these things be so (Acts 17:11). God expects us to grow in grace and

knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). God tells His faithful “not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers [but] be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:14-15). Yes, be careful and honest with the Holy Scriptures, but boldly look at what the Bible says in these key chapters! For months now, I have been asking God to guide me to put this together correctly, compiling, comparing and evaluating with Scripture what Churches of God teach, and especially asking God to inspire me to include what He wants but especially to stop me from writing anything I should not. The God who spoke through a jackass is quite capable of this!

Three big issues

All in one day? It makes a tidy package to think that all of these Second Coming big events would take place on one day. Since 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 1 Corinthians 15:52 and Matthew 24:31 all say the resurrection occurs at the Seventh Trumpet, and Zechariah 9:14-15 links together the Lord devouring and subduing the earth when the trumpet is blown, that means the two big parts—the resurrection and the conquering—are linked to the Seventh and Last Trumpet. Remember how the Great Tribulation, Place of Safety, Times of the Gentiles, Beast and False Prophet, and Two Witnesses last the same amount of time, 3-1/2 years, and at first glance you’d think they’d end on the same day: “the end” when Daniel will arise for his inheritance, at the First Resurrection (Daniel 12:13). But technically, the Place of Safety and the Two Witnesses end with the resurrection, and the Great Tribulation, Times of the Gentiles, Beast and False Prophet will end when Jesus Christ conquers the rebellious earth.

It looks like all the facets of Christ’s Second Coming can’t possibly squeeze into a 24-hour period. Take just the Sixth Plague where “kings of the earth and of the whole world

assemble for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (Revelation 16:14) and then mobilize to Jerusalem to fight Christ and His heavenly army. And women readers might appreciate all the complexities of pulling off the most important wedding of all time!

Of course, with God a 1,000 years of events could be as if a day (2 Peter 3:8). If He wills, God can drag out a long day that makes Joshua’s look like the blink of an eye! You’ve probably had one of those!

Some believe that all the action between the blowing of the Seventh Trumpet in Revelation 11:15 and the putting away of satan in Revelation 20:2 will be up to nine days rather than just one. Jesus Christ and His army of saints and angels would come down to the Mount of Olives on or just prior to the Day of Atonement—so we wouldn’t know exactly which day, that’s good. There would be nine days between a resurrection on a Feast of Trumpets (Tishri 1) and the following Day of Atonement (Tishri 10).

A delay between the time earth saw Christ coming in clouds to resurrect saints and when He comes to conquer explains why the Beast and False Prophet might be able to alarm the earth, conditioned by popular movies like “Independence Day,” into repelling an invading alien. You’d think they would not be foolish enough to fight God! Until we honestly consider our own proclivity to resist God! Revelation 19 ends with Christ conquering the armies and casting the Beast and False Prophet into the Lake of Fire. Next immediately follows satan and his demons being put away in chapter 20 which surely will occur on a Day of Atonement which starts a year of Jubilee. No doubt Christ’s Millennium will begin with a year of Jubilee (Isaiah 61, Luke 4:16-21). How fitting for Christ, who qualified to replace satan as ruler of the earth during 40 days of temptation (Matthew 4), to actually

replace him on the Day of Atonement that features his removal!

Critics of the idea that the resurrection and the conquering return wouldn't occur on the same day deride it as "the rapture heresy" or "a flyby." God has a knack for confounding critics!

Conclusion: We can't say enough that Jesus said only the Father knows the day or hour of His coming (Matthew 24:36). If everything does not finish in one day, the Father will be quite capable of adjusting and completing the various time periods to bring His Son at the right time. For example, perhaps the Two Witnesses will begin 3-1/2 days earlier than the other 42-month periods to make their witness last 3-1/2 years though they lie dead in Jerusalem for their last 3-1/2 days. It should be easy for us to trust the Master Timer to take care of the big details for such hugely important events! Likely, only the Father knows exactly how long the Seventh Trumpet events will last.

One day? A few? Nine? Do I hear four months?

Pentecost rather than Trumpets? A growing number believe these big events will be spaced out between the first resurrection occurring on a Pentecost and the return to conquer being on the following Feast of Trumpets about four months later.

Proponents argue that Pentecost is a harvest feast, one of its names being Feast of Harvest, while Trumpets is not. Trumpets often blow in conjunction with war. Harvesting the saints and trampling "the great winepress of the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:19) seem like separate days' work.

Secondly, the Wave Sheaf on the Sunday during the Days of Unleavened Bread begins the inclusive count of 50 days for

how long the firstfruit harvest lasts—until the Wave Loaves are offered on Pentecost. This second elevated offering represents the end of the firstfruit harvest. So proponents ask why wouldn't the resurrection of firstfruits take place then?

These resurrected firstfruits are the two wave loaves that were baked with leaven [sin], typifying the Church, and waved on Pentecost (Leviticus 23:17-20). Bible students have long guessed that perhaps the two loaves represent Old and New Testament, Old and New Covenant, Israelite and Gentile, male and female. It's interesting that the Bible is one book with one way of salvation, and "there is neither Jew nor Greek ... slave nor free ... male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28).

A newer thought is that the two loaves of leavened bread along with the two lamb quarters might have been bulky and heavy enough to require the priest to make two wavings, paralleling the resurrection of the dead followed by those alive. Perhaps Paul might have been thinking of this when he wrote that we are "raised with Christ" (Colossians 3:1).

The Scofield Study Bible III [page 183] comments, "The Feast of Firstfruits ... is typical of resurrection—first, of Christ, then of those who are His at His coming (1 Corinthians 15:23; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)."

Thirdly, since Jesus Christ appeared for acceptance to God the Father at His throne at the very time on Sunday morning as pictured by the Wave Sheaf Offering, why wouldn't the saints be resurrected and appear before the Father at His throne—on Pentecost when the Wave Loaves are waved? This sounds logical, but so does the common argument that since Jesus Christ was changed from God to man and then died, God might choose to change satan and the demons to physical and burn them up in the Lake of Fire; logical! But

the Bible clearly sentences them to remain “wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13). Satan and his demons are the ones who will go to Hell like he deceived Adam and Eve and their progeny into fearing! God’s thoughts and plans are higher than our best logical deductions! (Isaiah 55:9). Human reasoning is rightly labeled one of the four enemies of faith [along with doubt, fear and worry].

At the least, Pentecost pictures the firstfruits from the seven Church eras [paralleling the seven weeks counting up to Pentecost] who keep the Law of God given at Mt. Sinai on Pentecost through the power of God living in them through His Holy Spirit given in Acts 2 on Pentecost, and they are trained and prepared to be accepted by the Father to become His children in the first resurrection at the return of Christ. The firstfruits are sowing a harvest—fulfilling the Great Commission Christ gave His Church to prepare a people (Matthew 24:14, 28:18-20).

It’s interesting that while the two loaves are leavened, representing that humans will sin right up until they are finally changed from flesh and human nature (1 John 1:10), the Work of the Church is likened positively to God’s “woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened” (Luke 13:21). The Bible teaches three main resurrections that are all explained in the one chapter of Revelation 20. All humans who have ever lived will have their opportunity for salvation!

When you hear somebody arguing that the resurrection will be on a Pentecost, your automatic rebuttal is: The resurrection is plainly stated to occur at the Seventh Trumpet. So it has to be on a Feast of Trumpets!

Not so fast! Proponents state that trumpets are blown on all of the Holy Days. A trumpet blasted on Pentecost when the

10 Commandments were given at Mt. Sinai so loud it made the people tremble! (Exodus 19:16, Hebrews 12:19). However, appearing to mute the argument, Acts 2 mentions no trumpet being blown at this most famous Pentecost ever. Numbers 10 seems to indicate silver trumpets are blown on Holy Days rather than a ram's horn shofar that would be blown for the Seventh and Last Trumpet. However, the trumpet blown in Exodus 19:16 was a shofar.

The fact that both epoch Pentecosts of Exodus 19 and Acts 2 involved whirlwinds seems to have significance. Ezekiel 1 describes YHWH coming as a whirlwind in His portable throne, and this passage is read in synagogues on Pentecost. So it's very interesting that Isaiah 66:15 and Zechariah 9:14 prophesy that whirlwinds will accompany Jesus Christ's return.

But just when you "aha! ... that settles the issue!", Isaiah says He is coming in anger to judge and Zechariah says He will "defend ... devour and subdue." In the Pentecost scenario, He's supposed to do that on Trumpets and be resurrecting on Pentecost! Nobody argues that the return is on Pentecost or that all of the significant events would take place on Pentecost!

And if the Seventh and Last Trumpet blows on Pentecost, the one that would blow on the following Feast of Trumpets for the conquering of the earth would seem upstaged.

Conclusion: The simple truth appears to be that Pentecost and Trumpets both represent the big events of Revelation. And even though sincere brethren make compelling cases for both dates, I expect we'll find out that nobody except the Father knows the hour or day! Jesus will confound: "I'm here! And you didn't know when! Like a thief in the night!" How easy it would be for the Father to have the Seventh

Trumpet blow on a day other than a Feast of Trumpets or a Pentecost.

Where will the resurrected saints be between the resurrection and the return to the Mount of Olives?

The Bible teaches that nobody goes to heaven when they die and nobody will live for eternity in heaven. John 3:13 could not be any plainer! The saints will rule with Jesus Christ on earth (Revelation 5:10).

The Bible says the resurrected saints “shall be caught up together ... in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and they will accompany Him from the clouds down to stand with Him on the Mount of Olives (Zechariah 14:4, Acts 1:11).

Will all the action occur there in the clouds? Where will the saints be during the Seven Last Plagues and where will the Wedding Supper take place? Where will the saints be rewarded for their works? Where will they receive their assignment for the Millennium and how to accomplish it?

Newborn babies need a few years as a toddler protected for and taught by father and mother. Will God’s born-again sons and daughters at the First Resurrection need intensive instruction and training in how to be a God and manage and control all the newfound POWER? While human family has always provided good parallels with God Family, God’s children will have already learned to talk godly and walk in righteousness. And they won’t need potty trained!

Obviously, immortal spirit beings, then Gods themselves, not bound by time or space, could go anywhere God has planned, probably at the speed of thought! Resurrected God Beings will inherit “all things” [the universe!] (Revelation 21:7).

A big question is, where will the Father be? The Bible is clear that nobody except Jesus Christ has ever seen God the Father or heard His voice (John 5:37) because “your sins have hidden His face from you so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2). God the Father will come down to the new earth only after all physical, material, wicked humans and sin have been burned away in the Lake of Fire (Revelation 21:1-3). Most of us have been up into the clouds and even above them in airplanes. Twelve astronauts have walked on the moon. Perseverance is roving Mars and transmitting high-definition pictures of the Red Planet, along with a helicopter hovering about! The Father waits untouched in the third heaven and won’t come down to sinful territory where humans have long visited until the New Earth.

But can you imagine Him not wanting to officiate at His Son’s wedding! Can you imagine Him waiting over 1,000 years to see His born-again sons and daughters! I was blessed to watch the birth of my last two daughters and soon hold them. Fathers who don’t have that privilege press their noses up to the nursery window to get a first look at their new child! How could God our loving Father do any less?

And who of us won’t wait any longer than necessary to hug our Abba Daddy!

All agree that the firstfruits will “follow the Lamb wherever He goes” (Revelation 14:4). “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The resurrected firstfruits will be intimately one with Christ, and Christ and the Father are one (John 17:22). All we have to do is keep our eyes on Christ and follow where He goes! He is preparing a place for us, and at that time He will place us (John 14:2)!

Revelation 14:1 mentions 144,000 standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion. In so many scriptures Mount Zion in

Jerusalem is where Jesus Christ will make His eternal home. Psalm 2:6 is a good example: “Yet I have set My King on My holy hill of Zion.” In Hebrews 12:22 Mount Zion refers to the Church of God and “the heavenly Jerusalem.” So is verse 1 referring to the resurrected saints on earth or up in heaven? John didn’t help when he used the Greek word for “heaven” [*ouranos*] which can refer to “sky” (the first heaven) or “abode of God” (the third heaven). We will have to look at context, which is a vital principle of proper Bible study. Too bad John didn’t do like Paul did and specify the Greek word for “third” when he wrote that he was carried up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2).

Saying “standing on the sea of glass” is not conclusive since Christ’s portable throne has one (Ezekiel 1:22). And it has four Living Creatures. But proof that the third heaven is being talked about is when a passage says the 24 Elders are there. I guess there isn’t room for them on the portable one! Another proof that the third heaven is being discussed is when it says the Temple is there.

So, John is vindicated because Chapters 11 (verse 16), 14 [verse 3] and 19 [verse 4] specify the throne where the 24 Elders are.

Chapter 15 is the key chapter showing that the resurrected firstfruits will not be confined in the clouds but will follow Jesus Christ up to be with the Father in the third heaven. Verse 2 places the resurrected saints who achieved victory over the Beast on the sea of glass along with seven angels in verse 1 having the seven last plagues in “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony” (verse 5).

In all the critical sections regarding where the saints are after they rise up into the clouds to meet Christ in the air, the heaven is the third one where God the Father’s throne is.

Chapter 14 is challenging in several ways. Being an inset chapter, does that mean it doesn't have to be in chronological order? In due time Jesus will be ruling with the saints from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. But other inset chapters seem to be in chronological order within themselves. In verse 14, the Son of Man is "on the cloud" brandishing a sharp sickle to reap the earth—clearly before riding down to Jerusalem. So it would seem more likely that in verse 1, the 144,000 are standing at the heavenly Jerusalem.

Yes, but the wording in verse 2 seems like a change of location. And does "They" in verse 3 refer to the 144,000 or to the "sound of harpists" in verse 2. Does the statement that only the 144,000 can learn that song prove it's them actually singing before God's throne, or does it mean that only they on earth in Jerusalem can learn what the heavenly angelic choir is singing?

Some claim the clinching argument is that verse 4 differentiates God from the Lamb, and then verse 5 positions the 144,000 "before the throne of God." But, oh that it could be so plain ... NU-Text and M.Text omit this crucial phrase and modern translations leave it out. Churches of God have advised relying upon the KJV and NKJV for doctrinal matters, and these include "before the throne of God."

That being the case, chapter 14 would substantiate what seems crystal clear in chapter 15: that the resurrected saints "who have the victory over the beast" (verse 2) are standing at the third heaven sea of glass (Revelation 4:6, 5:8, 14:2)--playing harps like the group in chapter 14. Churches of God have tended to make fun of the notion of playing harps in heaven as how could anything be more boring! But it certainly appears as if we might get a crash course in learning to play before we come down to earth with Christ to

establish His Kingdom! Maybe we should stop harping about that!

This is clearly at the third heaven where seven angels are on alert to dispense the Seven Last Plagues, and they come out of the “temple of the tabernacle of the testimony.”

Revelation 14:9-10 notes that the Seven Last Plagues will be dispensed in the presence of the Lamb and of the angels. The saints are following Christ where He goes, and are protected from the dispensing of the plagues, though resurrected God Beings wouldn't be hurt by them anyway. The saints will ride with Christ down to earth as He completes the Seventh Last Plague by conquering all rebellion.

Now we can understand how the Great Innumerable Multitude (GIM) are “standing before the throne and before the Lamb (7:9). As in all the other significant chapters, this is the Father's throne in the third heaven because the 24 Elders are there (verse 11). The language that the Father sits on the throne and the Lamb is right by fits 4:6. Those martyred will be raised with all the righteous dead in the First Resurrection and follow Christ up to the Father's throne. Will the GIM be counted as part of the 144,000 firstfruits? Innumerable counted?

One of the 24 Elders says in verse 15 that the GIM “are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.” The description in verses 16 and 17 is the language of Revelation 21:3-4 where the Father has come down to the New Earth to dwell for eternity. The GIM could be “His servants” specified in 22:3. Revelation 21:22 says there is no temple there except that the Father and Jesus are its temple. Of course, even today we are God's temple. The Philadelphia Church was promised they'd be a pillar in the temple (3:12).

Not an actual column, of course, but an indispensable support of what God will do!

Two Gods have now expanded the God Family! The first resurrection is “a better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). The firstborn get “a double portion” (Deuteronomy 21:17). Probably the greatest fulfillment of this awesome promise is that those in the first resurrection get to be

The Bride of Christ!

Revelation 19:7-9 says “the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” Wise virgins have their lamps trimmed with Holy Spirit (Matthew 25:1-13) and their minds like Christ (Philippians 2:5). They are actively engaged now in preparing to marry their returning Husband (2 Corinthians 6:14). Paul said marriage between a husband and wife pictures the relationship between Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:32).

Again showing the huge importance of God’s Holy Day of Pentecost, the Megilloth book of Ruth, read in the synagogues on Pentecost, tells the fairytale story of Boaz and Ruth, picturing the wedding of Christ and the Church. The chronology in Revelation 19 places the wedding after the 10 Last Plagues (Revelation 15-16) and before Christ’s ride to punish and reclaim the earth. Since Jewish wedding celebrations lasted a week, some think the wedding will be celebrated during the Feast of Tabernacles at the start of the Millennium.

Revelation 19 clearly places Jesus Christ in the third heaven where the 24 Elders are (verse 4). This is further proof that the engaged Bride will follow her Groom up to be with God the Father at His throne in the third heaven, just as the waving of the two loaves on Pentecost indicate.

Obviously the wedding of the Bride to Christ won't be anything like a physical wedding. The groom lifting 144,000 veils and kissing the bride! Half of them males! Ych! A fate worse than Jacob discovering he wasn't with Rachel! And an unusual honeymoon to say the least! Let's go slay the earth—how romantic!

Jesus is the fifth horseman—the Word of God—on a white horse accompanied by “the armies in heaven” [saints and angels] on white horses (Revelation 19:13-14). Angels may be the horses (Psalm 18:11). Hi ho, Michael!

Jude 14 says “ten thousands of His saints”—“called, chosen, and faithful” (Revelation 17:14)—will come with Christ and His angels (Zechariah 14:5). Are we choosing and becoming faithful?

If Revelation is in chronological order, then this ride in chapter 19 isn't the one where the whole earth sees Jesus like lightning coming to round up the saints in Matthew 24:30. Hold your horses, there are none mentioned there.

This is where He and His “Just married” Bride ride down on cherubs to punish the earth. Proof is that verses 17-19 show this is when They confront the armies that back in the Sixth Plague gathered in Megiddo and mobilized to Jerusalem for “the battle of that great day of God Almighty” (16:14). Technically, the Battle of Armageddon is the battle that will not exist. The victims only assemble at HAR MEGIDDO (hill of Megiddo) about 55 miles north of Jerusalem. There will be nothing laughable about it!



“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives” (Zechariah 14:4). So far I've been privileged to stand there twice as a tourist, pictured in my tennis shoes, and the third time will be the charm, in my feet of bronze!

The armies will fight the returning Jesus Christ [plus angels and saints] in the Kidron Valley, called the Valley of Jehoshaphat in Joel 3:12-14, meaning “the valley of decision.” Anyone who foolishly assembles in Megiddo and goes down to fight Christ has made the wrong decision!

Blood flows up to horses’ bridles for 184 miles! (Revelation 14:14-20). “Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues ... in their mouths!” (Zechariah 14:12). Pity the vanity of men thinking their doomsday weapons are any match for the Creator!

Jesus captures the Beast and the False Prophet and casts them alive into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 19:20-21). Babylon falls for the second time (18:2) with Christ smashing all of its worldwide spiritual/military/economic system! “Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!” (verse 6).

Conclusion: Yes, I hope you, like me, can’t wait for the Seventh and Last Trumpet to sound, and regardless of which day the Father chooses to make that blast, we’ll be thankful to be rising! And then regardless of where Jesus Christ goes after we rendezvous in the clouds, we’ll be thrilled and content to go with Him forever!

As minister Rex Spears so aptly put it: “Be there and find out!”

Everything has changed!

Jesus Christ, assisted by His saints, will establish His Kingdom on the earth for the meek to inherit. Bring on the Millennium and Great White Throne and our part in it!

1,000 Years to Get Ready

“**T**hy kingdom come” you pray for daily ... comes! Jesus Christ sets up His Kingdom of God on earth for the initial phase to last 1,000 years (Revelation 20:4)—called

The Millennium

This is what Sabbath-keepers for 6,000 years have been seeking!



Utopian peace takes peacemakers! This will be the seventh-year land rest for the earth (Leviticus 25:4), but it won't be time for God's servants to rest because there will be so much to accomplish during this

crucial period in God's plan.

The big news is there's a new sheriff in town!

Satan and his demons are removed from rulership & influence,

“cast into the bottomless pit ... so that [they] should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:3). You'd have to *expect* this to occur on the first Day of Atonement of Christ's administration. Jesus Christ had long-ago qualified to replace satan when He rejected his 40 days of temptation (Matthew 4). This pivotal event was acted out on this annual Holy Day sending the

“goat-of-departure” alive into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man (Leviticus 16:21)—likely Michael the archangel.

A Jubilee year begins on a Day of Atonement (25:9). So a surprise to me after all these years, it appears that the Millennium actually begins on the first Day of Atonement rather than on the day the Seventh Trumpet blows. Good riddance to 6,000 years of evil misrule!

While Passover pictures individual forgiveness of sin, this Holy Day pictures at-one-ment for the whole earth! God disciplined His beloved children in love for their good, and the surviving people of the earth are softened to be ready for their opportunity for salvation and to build the Family of God.

As the returning Christ conquers Jerusalem, He restores Judah to its place of leadership (Zechariah 12:7).

When “the great trumpet will be blown” (Isaiah 27:13), the 12 Tribes of Israel begin to come back in a Second Exodus that will make the first one all but forgotten! (Jeremiah 16:14-15). I always thought this referred to the Seventh Trumpet, but apparently it will be the Jubilee Year Trumpet on the first Day of Atonement of the Millennium when “each of you shall return to his possession, and each of you shall return to his family” (Leviticus 25:9-10).

Who survives all the end-time calamity isn't just lucky time and chance or great survival skills. Isaiah 27:12 says God gathers them “one by one.” Why wouldn't the Father continue being the Master Timer who decides when it's best to call each person for their opportunity. Are these the 144,000 of Revelation 7 who will be protected before the Seven Trumpets and now they are gathered—or additional Israelites?

Israel will at last live up to its mission to teach and model God's way to the Gentiles (Deuteronomy 4:5-8). Now God will put such a heart in them (Deuteronomy 5:29). Now He will "make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah ... I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people ... they all shall know Me ... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

King of Kings & Lord of Lords!

What Jesus is King of and Lord of will hopefully be YOU!—one of the resurrected saints to assist Christ in building the Family of God on this privileged planet! Besides being the better resurrection because those in the first one get to be part of the Bride, it's also better because those saints get in on the ground floor of the Kingdom. Hopefully those two awaiting double portions motivate us the firstborn now to "be even more diligent to make your call and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10)!

Jesus Christ will assume the throne of David that continued unconditionally as promised (2 Samuel 7:16). David will rule over the 12 Tribes of Israel (Ezek. 37:24-25), and under him will be the 12 Apostles (Matthew 19:28). As God Beings the saints will be kings and priests (Revelation 5:10), judges (1 Corinthians 6:2-3) and teachers (Isaiah 30:20-21)—servant leaders (Matthew 20:25-28) under Jesus. Saints, given eternal salvation through faith and grace, will be rewarded according to their works for what they did with their talents, time and effort. Some will be rewarded with "well done," rule over five or 10 cities (Luke 19:17).

Likely, children of members who have been blessed (Matthew 19:13-15) and are "holy" to God (1 Corinthians 7:14), who have grown up learning God's way, will be given

special opportunities to serve as princes and princesses (Psalm 45:16).

This godly administration will bring “times of refreshing ... restoration of all things” (Acts 3:19-21). They don’t wave a magic wand and change the earth hocus-pocus. For 1,000 years the godly administration will patiently, lovingly and authoritatively teach, example and enforce until “the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Isaiah 11:9). Peer pressure will be godly! Speaking one pure language will speed up worldwide communication (Zephaniah 3:9).

Representatives of nations will go up to Jerusalem so “He will teach us His ways” (Micah 4:1-3). Swords will be beaten into plowshares and they will learn war no more! No more West Points!

Keeping Sabbaths and Holy Days—which humans must keep to understand God’s plan of salvation—will no longer be optional. “From one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me” (Isaiah 66:23). Duh, shouldn’t we start now!

The Feast of Tabernacles

is a concentrated seven days of picturing the Millennium, and “everyone who is left” will be commanded to keep it. But human nature still resents being told what to do and God always allows free moral agency. If any nation, such as Egypt, refuses—no rain! (Zechariah 14:16-19). For those who refuse today, no reign!

Pity because at this time the earth is going to be blessed with deserts blossoming as roses (Isaiah 35:1) and such abundant crops that plowman overtake reapers and mountains drip with sweet wine (Amos 9:13).



The nature of animals will be changed so that a lion and lamb can be led by a little child, but the real news is that the nature of humans will be changed!

This is their time to have their minds opened to God's way and be judged.

The Bible doesn't say how long people will live during the Millennium and when they will be changed into God Beings. Perhaps the saints who work with them will play a big advisory role in this (1 Corinthians 6:2).

The Beatitude that matches up with the Feast of Tabernacles is "pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8)—including us (Isaiah 30:20-21)!

Those at the end of the Millennium will have to face a severe test from

Satan in his last hurrah

The deceiver will be released "for a little while" (Revelation 20:3), probably the amount of time he was deprived when "those days were shortened [lest] no flesh would be saved alive" (Matthew 24:22). In an unfair world, God is always fair! Some believe those born in the Millennium who were never tested by satan will live to face the end test.

How could people who had just experienced the Millennium sucker for Satan? We underestimate the deceiver of the whole world (Revelation 12:9) and are "ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11)!

Satan and his demons will be cast into the Lake of Fire "where the beast and the false prophet *are*. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Revelation 20:10). The "*are*" is in italics and the Bible shows it should

be “were” because the two physical fleshly beings were burned up into stubble and ashes (Malachi 4:1-3) 1,000 years earlier. But the devil and his demons go to Hell [Gehenna] like they conned humans into dreading (Jude 13).

Some believe that throughout the 1,000 years, those judged ready by Jesus Christ will be changed to God Beings, children from the marriage of Christ and His Bride.

For the people during the Millennium, as for Christians today, we are not in this just for our own salvation. We are building the Family of God. A huge mission for the 1,000 years is to get the earth ready to house the billions who will be resurrected back to physical life in the following Great White Throne.

You Need to Be There for Your Loved Ones!

What about loved ones you care most about who you worry died unsaved? What about all the people who have never heard the name of Jesus Christ, the only “name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12)? What about the millions of babies whose lives have been aborted [60 million since *Roe verses Wade* in 1973]?

Are so many lost forever?

The joyous answer is NO! All of your loved ones will have their opportunity.

The last Holy Day, the Eighth Day (Leviticus 23:36), immediately follows the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles just as the Great White Throne comes right after the Millennium. You won't find anybody other than the spiritual Church of God, thanks to keeping this Feast Day (Psalm 111:10), who understands the astounding truth about this.

The Second Resurrection

“The rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished” (Revelation 20:5). This isn't called the Second Resurrection, but that there's a first one (verse ?) means this is the second one. All who ever lived and never had their opportunity for salvation will be resurrected back to PHYSICAL life to have it with no Satan around!

So much for “you only go around once”!

Dry bones will rattle and receive sinew, flesh and breath, and stand on their feet (Ezekiel 37:1-14). This “exceedingly great army” is the whole House of Israel but also represents what will occur for the estimated *140 billion people* who have died since Adam and Eve and will suddenly populate the earth! It would seem like about half of those would be babies and children.



You’d have to think they resume right where they left off. Ponder that thought and you can see what a challenge it’s going to be to serve all these people! For example, if the person is still beset with the same dilemma that led them to commit suicide? Many resurrected will have to be healed so they can respond to their opportunity for salvation.

Since life begins at conception, stillborn and aborted will apparently be resurrected. What a shock for so many! New sons and daughters, brothers and sisters! How is God planning to care for them? It’s interesting to speculate but a just God has it figured out.

The Great White Throne

This is commonly portrayed as all souls appearing before The Judge for final sentencing to heaven or hell. Knowing the truth of God’s Holy Days sets us free from such errors!

“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened” [*biblion*]*—the Bible. And they were taught “by the things which were written in the books”* (Revelation 20:11-12). For the first time for these people, God removes the “veil” (2 Corinthians 3:16) and opens their minds to understand and choose His Way (Luke 24:45). His prodigal sons and daughters “come to themselves” (Luke 15:17).

“God” here is Jesus Christ, “for the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). Talk about fair, because Jesus lived as a human and became our High Priest who can “sympathize with our weaknesses” because He “was in all points tempted as we are ... He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray” (Hebrews 4:15; 5:2).

The Beatitude “peacemakers” matches up with this GWT because what could be more necessary when you bring together the Hatfields and McCoys, Hitler and the Jews he gassed, divorcees and their lawyers, and scads of others who couldn’t get along!

This has been called the Last Great Day (John 7:37). Though many argue this verse refers to the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, anyone who keeps the eight days knows that the last day of the Feast doesn’t get attention compared to the Eighth Day Holy Day. And the Eighth Day truly is the last great time period in God’s wondrous plan of salvation!

The Holy Spirit will be flowing with rivers of living water that was pictured by the water ceremony. Jesus will be the light that was portrayed each night of the Feast in the Court of the Women. To all the people resurrected, Jesus will say “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin not more” (John 8:11).

This is the time when Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15), Nineveh, and the Queen of Sheba than for cities like Capernaum that didn’t listen to Him.

This is the great fall harvest pictured by the Holy Days. This is when two God Beings become billions!



How long will it last? The Bible may hint at it lasting 100 years (Isaiah 65:20), bringing back memories of Monte Markham in the '67-'68 CBS sitcom "The Second Hundred Years."

We must be there to find out!

You'd have to think the God Beings will have the privilege and joy of participating in the resurrection of those special to us, and in working closely with them and others whom we rubbed shoulders with in this life. "Mom, you showed me the truth, and if only you would've had the courage to pursue it for yourself. Now you can!"

The Book of Life will be opened for these billions (Revelation 20:12) and names are added at baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit.

After the GWT, "Anyone not found written in the Book of Life [will be] cast into the Lake of Fire" along with death and Hades [the grave].

The Bible doesn't say whether those judged ready by Jesus will be changed to God Beings during the GWT or at the end of it.

The third resurrection



The words "Third Resurrection" are not found in the Bible, but this is necessary so that all wicked experience "the second death" in the Lake of Fire. God is so merciful but He is also

just. Unforgiven sin always demanded the penalty of eternal death (Romans 6:23).

Tragically, the comparative few who snub their noses at God and His Way and commit the Unpardonable Sin, will be mercifully and quickly burned up in this *Gehenna* Fire.

This Greek word refers to the Valley of Hinnom where Jerusalem trash was *burned up*. I've been to Hell and back twice on visits to Jerusalem! This will be eternal *punishment* not *punishing*. Thank God the supreme power of the universe is love—not sadistic! If you worry that you might have committed the unpardonable sin, you probably haven't!



The Lake of Fire purges the earth of all things physical, material and sinful. The only thing left is all spirit—God Beings! It's time for

The new heavens & new earth



And with sin gone that separates man from God (Isaiah 59), it's time for God the Father to come make His home on the earth. No wonder it was always privileged with such a worthy tenant coming! The best spot in the universe!

Thinking back to the Great Innumerable Multitude, John saw them in vision “standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9)—where God the Father, the Lamb, “the elders and the four living creatures are” (verse 11). “They are before the throne of God [the Father since this God is distinguished from the Lamb] and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will *dwell among them*” (verse 15). “The Lamb ... will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters” (verse 17).

When will this occur? Not likely before the Seven Trumpets begin because the first resurrection does not occur until the Seventh Trumpet (11:15). This vision could certainly apply to when the Father comes down to dwell with men on the new earth (21:3). “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (7:17) matches with 21:4.

The Holy City, New Jerusalem—prepared as a bride for her husband Jesus Christ—will be the eternal home of the saints. God paves His city (1,500 miles long, wide and high) in gold! The tallest place on earth now, Mt. Everest, is only 5.5 miles high! “The entire city will be [cubed] like the Most Holy Place. God’s people will experience his presence more fully than ever before” (*NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, page 2269). Read all the exciting details in Revelation 21-22! The Bible ends as it began—God offering access to the Tree of Life (Revelation 22:2) to “those who do His commandments” (verse 14).

Canonization of the New Testament

While the Old Testament was canonized in five steps, God canonized His New Testament in two remaining steps [for a complete and perfect seven] through His Apostles. Near the end of his life, Peter like Paul came to see that Christ wouldn't be returning in their lifetime. "I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease" (2 Peter 1:15). Evidently he had Paul collect "the books, especially the parchments" (2 Timothy 4:13, Acts 16:4).

Then God used the last of the Apostles, John, to conclude the canonization about A.D. 95 by warning: don't add to or take away from these words (Revelation 22:18-19). Now "all scripture" was inspired (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and "truth" (John 17:17)!

Two God Beings have increased their Family and Kingdom by billions of God Beings. You'll be there ... won't you ... what a shame if your loved ones are ... without you!

What Comes After the End of the Bible?

New heaven, new heavenly Jerusalem, new earth with God the Father dwelling there, billions of Spirit Beings! That's already exceedingly more than we can imagine as the Bible ends in the greatest grand finale ever!

Except it's just the beginning as the God Family takes on eternity!

Ninth Day plans? We don't know yet because God hasn't given us any additional Holy Days (Leviticus 23:36).

Revelation 23? Will God add to the book of Acts new exploits of the Church and influential shakers and movers? God said nobody better add anything to His Word (Revelation 22:18), but He can if He wants to.

What enticing hints does the Bible give?

God was "bringing many sons to glory" to have "all things [the universe] put under him" (Hebrews 2:8-10). God had warned Israel "Take heed, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and when you see the sun, the moon, and the stars,



all the host of heaven ... which the Lord Your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven *as a heritage*"

(Deuteronomy 4:19). The meek would inherit more than the earth if we don't sucker for astrology!

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:18-19).

God the Father and Jesus Christ have always worked (John 5:17), and God Beings will always work and produce. They may “sing aloud on their beds” (Psalm 149:5) but Gods don't slumber or sleep (Psalm 121:4) and there won't be any couch potatoes!

The latest estimate is that the physical ever-expanding universe is filled with 2 trillion galaxies and more stars than sand particles! And you'd expect the spiritual universe to be even grander. Isaiah 51:16 mentions “That I may

Plant the heavens”

A popular guess is that God Beings may be sent out to a far-flung part of the universe to renovate it like Lucifer and his angels were supposed to do on the earth.

A corollary to that is that they might even be commissioned to create their own Adam and Eve and go through the process God the Father and Jesus Christ did—except that they can be comforted knowing they don't have to be crucified because Christ's sacrifice was “once for all ... For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10, 14).

Will God be forever adding to the number of God Beings? Christ and His Bride's offspring going on to create endless generations of God Beings? I have to think the Father and

Jesus have had enough with humans and their nature! Does God have something better in mind?

You ain't seen nothin' yet!

We can be sure that the Father and Jesus Christ, who did such magnificent intricate planning for this temporary world, have thought up some wondrous plans that will be even grander.

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9 *NLT*).

God “is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us” (Ephesians 3:20). God has “given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4).

God has in store for us

"Such a great salvation" that we must not neglect (Hebrews 2:3)

For you to have read all this book, you are called, and you are responsible for what you have been given and what you know. Please choose and be faithful (Revelation 17:14). Make your calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

“In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Psalm 16:11).

So let's put nothing above “eternal life to those who *by patient continuance in doing good* seek for glory, honor, and immortality” (Romans 2:7).

Let's put nothing above building our relationship with God
and building the Family of God.



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