

## Sunday – The Catholic Sabbath

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**Publisher:** Church of God, Bismarck, Darwin & Laura Lee, **Editor:** Laura Lee, **Assistant Editor:** Darwin Lee We do not necessarily agree with all contributors, or their works submitted and printed in this newsletter. It is up to you to get out your Bible and see whether these things are true. Iron sharpens Iron

**Contributors:** David Antion, Gregory Diaz, Dwight Fleming, Darwin Lee, Laura Lee, James Lloyd, James Steinle, Rich Traver, Charles Whitaker, Craig White, Avram Yehoshua, Warren Zehrunge

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**1Co 14:26** How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.

## Sunday – The Catholic Sabbath

(Copyright 2021) by Avram Yehoshua (Tulsa, Oklahoma) **Article**

There is nothing in the New Testament, and certainly nothing in the Old, that supports Sunday as a day that has replaced the 7th day Sabbath of Creation (Gen. 2:1-3), which God gave to His chosen people Israel (Ex. 16:22-26; 20:8-11). There are three New Testament texts which the Church uses to try and support Sunday as the new day for the new faith, but these texts, once examined, do not prove Sunday observance, nor that Sunday has replaced the 7th day Sabbath.<sup>1</sup>

There is scant writing about the first day of the week, as all the writers of the New Testament called Sunday. From just the perspective that the 7th day Sabbath had been part of God’s Law for Israel for 1,400 years before Yeshua (Jesus) was born in Bethlehem would seem to indicate that if a change had been made, there would have been ample New Testament Scripture to support it. There’s not one word that says that the 7th day Sabbath has given way to Sunday.

Trying to equate the Lord’s Day with Sunday is also a futile task because nowhere in the New Testament is the first day of the week (i.e., Sunday) equated with the Lord’s Day.<sup>2</sup> Some try to explain why the Sabbath has given way to Sunday by pointing to the resurrection, but this, too, cannot be substantiated. There’s no Scripture that declares that because Yeshua rose on Sunday, the Sabbath has changed to Sunday.<sup>3</sup> The original theological reasons for why the Roman Catholic Church altered Sabbath to Sunday can be read in an article called *Sabbath Denigration*.<sup>4</sup>

The Roman Catholic Church openly declares that there is nothing in the New Testament that supports a change from the 7th day Sabbath to Sunday and mocks the Protestant churches whose motto is *Sola Scriptura*, which means that *only Scripture* has divine authority to determine one’s faith and practice. The Roman Catholic Church, though, declares that it has the authority to change the day, and it did. Nowhere in the Word of God, though, does God delegate that kind

<sup>1</sup> For those three texts (and why the 7th day Sabbath is still valid) see Samuele Bacchiocchi’s, *From Sabbath To Sunday* (Rome: The Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977), pp. 90-131. It’s the definitive work on the issue of Sabbath and Sunday.

<sup>2</sup> Nowhere in Scripture is the ‘Lord’s Day’ is equated with Sunday. The Lord’s Day in the Old Testament was the 7th day Sabbath (Ex. 16:23, 25, 29; 20:10; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Dt. 5:12-14; Is. 58:13; Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Luke 6:5) and would also come to be seen as a term for Judgment Day (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Jer. 46:10; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; 1st Cor. 5:5; 2nd Cor. 1:14; 1st Thess. 5:2; 2nd Peter 3:10).

<sup>3</sup> See [The Resurrection and Mark 16:9](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [Sabbath Denigration](#).

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of authority to Man (or a church). For instance, if God’s Word had said, ‘If you want to change the Sabbath day to another day, you can’ or something to that effect, then the Roman Catholic Church would have had the authority to do so, but there’s nothing in the Word like that.<sup>5</sup> Unless it is in God’s Word, Man is breaking God’s Word by changing what God has instituted—welcome to Christian Pharisaism.

**CATHOLIC WORDS ABOUT SUNDAY**

John Stoddard in 1826 points out the fact that the Bible gives no Scripture about Sunday replacing the Sabbath day:

‘A striking instance of this is the following: The first positive command in the Decalogue is to ‘Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,’ and this precept was enforced by the Jews for thousands of years. But the Sabbath Day, the observance of which God commanded, was our Saturday. Yet who among either Catholics or Protestants, except a sect or two, like the ‘Seventh Day Baptists,’ ever keep that commandment now? None. Why is this? The Bible, which Protestants claim to obey exclusively, gives no authorization for the substitution of the first day of the week for the seventh. On what authority, therefore, have they done so? Plainly on the authority of that very Catholic Church which they abandoned and whose traditions they condemn.’<sup>6</sup>

Statements and confessions by Catholic dignitaries and official Catholic papers, along with Protestant realizations of the unbiblical tenure of Sunday, abound and some will be presented in quote form for all to see what the Catholic Church and a number of Protestants have said.

Cardinal Gibbons, a famous 19th century Catholic archbishop in the USA, is quoted as saying,

‘is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify.’<sup>7</sup>

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274), a revered ‘Father’ and pillar of the Roman Catholic Church and a priest of the Dominican order, wrote,

‘In the New Law the observance of the Lord’s Day (Sunday) took the place of the observance of the Sabbath (Saturday), not by virtue of the precept (of God), but by the institution of the Roman Church and the custom (tradition) of Christian people.’<sup>8</sup>

Gaspar de Fosso, the Archbishop of Reggio, remonstrated the Protestants in 1562 saying:

‘The Protestants claim to stand upon the written word only. They profess to hold the Scripture alone as the standard of faith. They justify their revolt by the plea that the Church has apostatized from the written word and follows tradition. Now the Protestants’ claim, that they stand upon the written word only, is not true. Their profession of holding the Scripture alone as the standard of faith is false. PROOF—The written word explicitly enjoins the observance of the seventh day as the Sabbath.’

‘They do not observe the seventh day but reject it. If they do truly hold the Scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the Scripture throughout. Yet they not only reject the observance of the Sabbath enjoined in the written word, but they have adopted and

<sup>5</sup> Some might try and point to Jesus giving Peter the keys of the Kingdom (Mt. 16:9), but those keys didn’t authorize Peter nor anyone else from changing God’s Word. Those keys were symbols of authority to properly teach God’s Word, adjudicate between two or more grieved parties, and to legislate or make rules for the believing community, which of course would not mean to change, do away with, or pervert God’s laws (Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Luke 16:17; 2nd Tim. 3:16-17).

<sup>6</sup> John L. Stoddard, *Rebuilding a Lost Faith By An American Agnostic* (New York: P. J. Kennedy and Sons, 1826), p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> James Cardinal Gibbons, Archbishop of Baltimore, *The Faith of Our Fathers*, originally published in 1876, pp. 111-112 (63rd edition); p. 86 (76th edition); republished and copyright 1980 by TAN Books and Publishers, Inc., pages 72-73.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theological* SS Q[122] A[4] R.O., paragraph four.

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do practice the observance of Sunday, for which they have only the tradition of the (Roman) Church. Consequently, the claim of ‘Scripture alone as the standard,’ fails, and the doctrine of ‘Scripture and tradition’ as essential, is fully established, the Protestants themselves being judges.’<sup>9</sup>

In the doctrinal catechism by Rev. Stephen Keenan, officially endorsed by the then Archbishop of New York, the question is asked and answered:

‘Have you any other way of proving that the church has power to institute festivals of precept?’

‘Had she not such power, she could not have done that in which all modern religionists agree with her— she could not have substituted the observance of Sunday the first day of the week for the observance of Saturday the seventh day, a change for which there is no Scriptural authority.’<sup>10</sup>

Karl Keating, a prominent Catholic apologist, and author, writing under the Imprimatur of the Catholic Church said,

‘After all, fundamentalists meet for worship on Sunday, yet there is no evidence in the Bible that corporate worship was to be made on Sundays. The Jewish Sabbath, or day of rest, was, of course, Saturday. It was the Catholic Church that decided Sunday should be the day of worship for Christians, in honor of the Resurrection.’<sup>11</sup> On 25 August 1900, the Catholic Press wrote:

‘Sunday is a Catholic institution, and its claims to observance can be defended only by Catholic principles. From beginning to end of Scripture there is not a single passage that warrants the transfer of weekly public worship from the last day of the week [Saturday] to the first.’<sup>12</sup>

The Catholic Mirror, the official publication of James Cardinal Gibbons, Sept. 23, 1893, stated:

‘The Catholic Church...by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday.’<sup>13</sup>

Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Converts Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (1957), p. 50 wrote:

‘Question: Which is the Sabbath day? Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.’

‘Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday? Answer. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday.’<sup>14</sup>

Lest<sup>13</sup> some think that the Catholic Church replaced the 7th day Sabbath with Sunday because of the resurrection, there is nothing in Scripture that speaks of Sunday replacing the Sabbath because of the resurrection. In other words, even though Yeshua rose on Sunday, Scripture does not speak of changing the Sabbath to Sunday because of that, meaning that it’s not God’s will to replace the Sabbath, even because of the Sunday resurrection, which actually was First Sheaf (First Fruits). God had already taken care of the celebration of His Son on First Sheaf, which falls on the Sunday of

<sup>9</sup> J. H. Holtzman, *Canon and Tradition*, published in Ludwigsburg, Germany in 1859, p. 263. Archbishop of Reggio’s address in the 17th session of the Council of Trent, Jan. 18, 1562, in Mansi SC, Vol. 33, cols. 529, 530. The Archbishop of Reggio (Gaspar [Ricciulli] de Fosso) made this speech at the last opening session of Trent (17th Session) reconvened under a new pope (Pius IV) on 18 January 1562.

<sup>10</sup> Rev. Stephen Keenan, *A Doctrinal Catechism*, Imprimatur by John Cardinal McCloskey, Archbishop of New York, Copyright 1876 by T. W. Strong, page 174.

<sup>11</sup> Karl Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*, copyright 1988 by Ignatius Press, San Francisco, bearing the Nihil Obstat and Imprimatur of the Catholic Church, page 38. Writing ‘in honor of the resurrection,’ is a noble thought, but like the Pharisees before Rome, traditions based on noble thoughts are struck down by Jesus when they negate His Father’s commandments (cf. Mark 7:9).

<sup>12</sup> Taken from [http://www.nisbett.com/sabbath/sunday\\_not\\_lords\\_day.htm](http://www.nisbett.com/sabbath/sunday_not_lords_day.htm). <sup>13</sup> Taken from

<http://www.biblesabbath.org/confessions.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

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Passover Week.<sup>14</sup> Peter R. Kraemer, Catholic Church Extension Society (1975), Chicago, Illinois, wrote:

‘Regarding the change from the observance of the Jewish Sabbath to the Christian Sunday, I wish to draw your attention to the facts:’

- a. ‘That Protestants, who accept the Bible as the only rule of faith and religion, should by all means go back to the observance of the Sabbath. The fact that they do not, but on the contrary observe Sunday, stultifies<sup>15</sup> them in the eyes of every thinking man.’
- b. ‘We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say, this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday. We frankly say, yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance, the Friday abstinence, the unmarried priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulation of Catholic marriages and a thousand other laws.’

‘It is always somewhat laughable, to see the Protestant churches, in pulpit and legislation, demand the observance of Sunday, of which there is nothing in their Bible.’<sup>16</sup>

T. Enright, C.S.S.R., in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, Feb. 18, 1884, said,

‘I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says: ‘No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.’ And lo! The entire civilized world bows down in a reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church.’<sup>18</sup>

### **PROTESTANT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ABOUT SUNDAY**

An Anglican Archbishop of Quebec speaks about Sunday:

‘Toronto, Canada, Oct. 27 (BUP). —Rev. Philip Carrington, Anglican Archbishop of Quebec, sent local clergymen into a huddle today by saying outright that there was nothing to support Sunday being kept holy. Carrington defiantly told a church meeting in this city of straight-laced protestantism that tradition, not the Bible, had made Sunday the day of worship. He quoted the biblical commandment which said the seventh day should be one of rest, and then stated: ‘That is Saturday.’ ‘Nowhere in the Bible is it laid down that worship should be done on Sunday,’ the Archbishop told a hushed, still audience. Local parsons read his comments today with set, determined looks. They refused comment.’<sup>17</sup>

### **Anglican Episcopal**

Isaac Williams in *Plain Sermons on the Catechism*, vol. 1, pp. 334, 336, writes:

‘And where are we told in the Scriptures that we are to keep the first day at all? We are commanded to keep the seventh; but we are nowhere commanded to keep the first day... The reason why we keep the first day of the week holy instead of the seventh is for the same reason that we observe many other things, not because the Bible, but because the church has enjoined it.’<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> See [First Sheaf](#).

<sup>15</sup> Stultify means, ‘to cause someone to appear absurd or foolish’ (from the Latin *stultus* ‘foolish’).

<sup>16</sup> Taken from <http://www.biblesabbath.org/confessions.html>.

<sup>17</sup> News Item, Albertan (Calgary, Alberta, Canada), Oct. 28, 1949.

<sup>18</sup> Taken from <http://www.biblesabbath.org/confessions.html>.



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Canon Eyton in *The Ten Commandments*, pp. 52, 63, 65 writes:

‘There is no word, no hint, in the New Testament about abstaining from work on Sunday ...into the rest of Sunday no divine law enters... The observance of Ash Wednesday or Lent stands exactly on the same footing as the observance of Sunday.’<sup>21</sup>

Bishop Seymour in, *Why We Keep Sunday*, says,

‘We have made the change from the seventh day to the first day, from Saturday to Sunday, on the authority of the one holy Catholic Church.’<sup>22</sup>

### **Baptist**

Dr. Edward T. Hiscox, in a paper read before a New York ministers’ conference, Nov. 13, 1893, reported in New York Examiner, Nov.16, 1893, said,

‘There was and is a commandment to keep holy the Sabbath day, but that Sabbath day was not Sunday. It will be said, however, and with some show of triumph, that the Sabbath was transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week...Where can the record of such a transaction be found? Not in the New Testament, absolutely not.’

‘To me it seems unaccountable that Jesus, during three years’ intercourse with His disciples, often conversing with them upon the Sabbath question...*never alluded to any transference of the day*; also, that *during forty days of His resurrection life*, no such thing was intimated.’

‘Of course, I quite well know that Sunday did come into use in early Christian history ...But what a pity it comes branded with the mark of paganism, and christened with the name of the sun god, adopted and sanctioned by the papal apostasy, and bequeathed as a sacred legacy to Protestantism!’<sup>23</sup>

William Owen Carver in, *The Lord’s Day in Our Day*, p. 49, states,

‘There was never any formal or authoritative change from the Jewish seventh-day Sabbath to the Christian first-day observance.’<sup>24</sup>

### **Congregationalist**

Dr. R. W. Dale in *The Ten Commandments* (New York: Eaton &Mains), p. 127-129, wrote,

‘...it is quite clear that however rigidly or devotedly we may spend Sunday, we are not keeping the Sabbath...(the) Sabbath was founded on a specific Divine command. *We can plead no such command* for the obligation to observe Sunday...*There is not a single sentence in the New Testament to suggest that we incur any penalty by violating the supposed sanctity of Sunday.*’

Timothy Dwight in *Theology: Explained and Defended* (1823), Ser. 107, vol. 3, p. 258, writes,

‘...the Christian Sabbath [Sunday] is not in the Scriptures and *was not by the primitive Church called the Sabbath.*’

### **Disciples of Christ**

Alexander Campbell in, *The Christian Baptist*, Feb. 2, 1824, vol. 1, no. 7, p. 164, wrote,

“‘But’ say some, ‘it was changed from the seventh to the first day.’ Where? When? And by whom? *No man can tell.* No; it never was changed, nor could it be, unless creation was to be gone through again: for the reason assigned must be changed before the observance, or respect to the reason, can be changed! It is all old wives’ fables to talk of the change of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day. If it be changed, it was that august personage changed it who changes times and laws ex officio—I think

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his name is Doctor Antichrist.<sup>25</sup> (cf. Daniel 7:25)

In, *First Day Observance*, pp. 17, 19 it states:

‘The first day of the week is commonly called the Sabbath. This is a mistake. The Sabbath of the Bible was the day just preceding the first day of the week. *The first day of the week is never called the Sabbath anywhere in the entire Scriptures.* It is also an error to talk about the change of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday. There is not in any place in the Bible any intimation of such a change.’<sup>26</sup>

**Dwight L. Moody**

Dwight L. Moody, in *Weighed and Wanting* (Fleming H. Revell Co.: New York), pp. 47, 48, wrote,

‘The Sabbath was binding in Eden, and it has been in force ever since. This fourth commandment begins with the word, ‘remember,’ *showing that the Sabbath already existed when God wrote the law on the tables of stone at Sinai.* How can men claim that this one commandment has been done away with when they will admit that the other nine are still binding?’<sup>27</sup>

**Lutheran**

In the *Augsburg Confession of Faith*, art. 28, written by Melancthon and approved by Martin Luther, in 1530, and as published in, *The Book of Concord of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, Henry Jacobs, ed. (1, 91, 1), p. 63, it states,

‘They (Roman Catholics) refer to the Sabbath Day,’ having changed it ‘into the Lord’s Day, contrary to the Decalogue, as it seems. Neither is there any example whereof they make more than concerning the changing of the Sabbath Day. Great, say they, is the power of the Church, since it has dispensed with one of the Ten Commandments!’<sup>28</sup>

Dr. Augustus Neander, a well-respected Lutheran theologian, in *The History of the Christian Religion and Church* (1843), p. 186, wrote,

‘The festival of Sunday, like all other festivals, was always only a human ordinance, and it was far from the intentions of the apostles to establish a Divine command in this respect, far from them, and from the early apostolic Church, to transfer the laws of the Sabbath to Sunday.’<sup>29</sup>

In, *The Sunday Problem*, a study book of the United Lutheran Church (1923), p. 36, it states,

‘We have seen how gradually the impression of the Jewish sabbath faded from the mind of the Christian Church, and how completely the newer thought underlying the observance of the first day took possession of the church. We have seen that the Christians of the first three centuries never confused one with the other, but for a time celebrated both.’

John Theodore Mueller in, *Sabbath or Sunday*, pp. 15, 16, writes,

‘But they err in teaching that Sunday has taken the place of the Old Testament Sabbath and therefore must be kept as the seventh day had to be kept by the children of Israel ... These churches err in their teaching, for Scripture has in no way ordained the first day of the week in place of the Sabbath. *There is simply no law in the New Testament to that effect.*’

**Methodist**

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church, in *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley*, John Emory, ed. (New York: Eaton & Mains), Sermon 25, vol. 1, p. 221, writes,

‘But the moral law contained in the ten commandments, and enforced by the prophets, he [Christ] did not take away. It was not the design of his coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken... Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not



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depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.<sup>19</sup>

Harris Franklin Rall, in the *Christian Advocate*, July 2, 1942, p.26, wrote,

‘Take the matter of Sunday. There are indications in the New Testament as to how the church came to keep the first day of the week as its day of worship, but there is no passage telling Christians to keep that day, or to transfer the Jewish Sabbath to that day.’<sup>20</sup>

**Presbyterian**

T. C. Blake, D.D., in *Theology Condensed*, pp. 474, 475, writes,

‘The Sabbath is a part of the decalogue—the Ten Commandments. This alone forever settles the question as to the perpetuity of the institution...Until, therefore, it can be shown that the whole moral law has been repealed, the Sabbath will stand...The teaching of Christ confirms the perpetuity of the Sabbath.’<sup>32</sup>

**SOME POINTS ABOUT SUNDAY**

1. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that states Sunday is the Sabbath or the Lord’s Day.
2. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that states that the 7th day Sabbath has been altered, changed, abolished or replaced. On the contrary, Jesus speaks of being Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).
3. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that commands Christians to keep the first day of the week (Sunday) as a day of rest, worship or holiness.
4. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that states that Jesus ever kept the first day of the week (i.e. Sunday) as the Sabbath or even hinted at the Sabbath’s alleged nullification.
5. There is not a single verse in the New Testament that applies to the first day of the week any sacred title (e.g. blessed or holy; Gen. 2:1-3) or pronounces any penalty for its non-observance (as does the Sabbath; Ex. 31:12-17).

**CONCLUSION**

It’s truly astonishing that the whole of Protestantism has followed in the Roman Catholic tradition of Sunday when, as Gaspar de Fosso, the Archbishop of Reggio said, If the Protestants “do truly hold the Scripture alone as their standard, they would be observing the seventh day as is enjoined in the Scripture throughout.”

From both Catholics and Protestants come facts and confirmations that God has never replaced the 7th day Sabbath with Sunday. This was done by the fiat and audacity of the Roman Catholic Church. It’s perverse enough, and sin aplenty, for Rome to have changed the day, but to boast about it reveals the shamelessness of Rome. The Roman Catholic Church has led billions of Christians astray over the last 1,900 years, but God is restoring His holy 7th day Sabbath to

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. The ‘indications’ that Rall refers to are Act 20:7 and 1st Cor. 16:1-3, neither of which speak of anyone keeping Sunday. Acts 20:7 speaks of the disciples meeting ‘on the first day of the week,’ at night, which would be Saturday night. The first day of the week, as do all the days of the biblical week, begin in darkness the night before; Creation Week being the model for the Bible week. In other words, the disciples met on Saturday night; Paul preached until midnight when Eutychus fell to his death (Acts 20:9-10f.). Paul raised him from the dead and continued to teach until dawn, when he left to travel away from Troas. Luke writes of this incident, not to say that Sunday had become the new Sabbath, but to reveal that Paul had the same power to raise the dead as Peter (see Acts 9:40). 1st Cor. 16 has Paul directing the Corinthians to put aside in their homes, not in the church, a weekly special gift for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, so that when he comes to collect it they will have something to give (cf. 2nd Cor. 9:1f.).

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those who desire His Truth over sinful Catholic traditions. Does any man (or church, which is made up of men) have authority from God to change His ways? Not according to God (Dt. 4:2; 12:32; Rev. 22:18).

There isn't any biblical support for honoring Sunday above other days. The 7th day Sabbath of the Lord God of Israel is still very much in effect. It's not only a time of assembly and worship, it's a full 24 hour day of holiness set apart to God that He has given to those who believe in His Son so that they can be refreshed by both not working and by seeking His Presence and praising Him and His Son.

Daniel, 570 years before Jesus rose from the dead, wrote about what the Catholic Church would do in altering and destroying God's holy Sabbath and Law:

“He (the Pope) shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall wear out the holy ones of the Most High, and shall attempt to *change the sacred seasons (the Feasts of Israel) and the Law (Sabbath, etc.)* and they Christians) shall be given into his power for a time, two times, and half a time.” (Dan 7:25 NRSV)

The ‘time’ is over! The deception is being revealed for what it is—a satanic plot that has blinded the eyes of Christians for 1,900 years.<sup>21</sup> Jesus is calling all those who believe in Him to lay down their traditional interpretations for why Sunday, Easter and Christmas are kept and to pick up His Word and learn to walk in *His Ways*.<sup>22</sup> This is what ‘the Voice’ is wanting: Christians to come out of Rome's pagan days and ways:

“And I heard another Voice from Heaven saying, “Come out of her, My people! *Lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues!*” (Revelation 18:4)

Some might say that I can't leave the ways (i.e., Sunday and Xmas) of my parents and friends, but Jesus said, “He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Mt. 10:37). God told Father Abraham, who is the Father and example of our faith in Christ (Rom. 4:12; Gal. 3:7), to leave his father, etc., and to separate himself from all he was familiar with (Gen. 12:1-3) so he could be blessed by God.

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<sup>21</sup> See [The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21](#) by Avram Yehoshua. *The Lifting of the Veil* reveals the New Testament's position on the Law of Moses. The Church interprets the four rules of James (Acts 15:20) as table fellowship and completely misses God's point. Understood from its Hebraic perspective the four rules are the theological foundation that establishes Mosaic Law for every believer.

<sup>22</sup> See [Law 102](#) for why many church interpretations against the Law of Moses are not biblical, and also, [A Snapshot of Church History and Mosaic Law](#), [The Feasts of Israel and the Church](#), [Grace, Holiness and the Pharisaic Church](#), [Hebrews and the Change of the Law](#), [Nailed to the Cross—Col. 2:14](#), [Romans 14 and the Dietary Laws](#), [Take the Quiz! Five Quick Questions about the New Testament](#), [Ten Ways Yeshua Fulfilled The Law](#), and [The Sabbath and Yeshua](#). See [Christmas—Its Origin](#) for why Christmas is not Christians. The celebration of [Easter](#) is pagan and has absolutely nothing to do with the resurrection of Christ. Revised on Sunday, July 4, 2021.

## The Footwashing Service (Copyright) by Warren Zehrung (Little Rock, Arkansas)

*Jesus poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the servant's towel wherewith He was girded. Jesus said, If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.*

The footwashing ceremony that Jesus gave us is filled with deep symbolism and meaning for the Church of God. The footwashing helps us to understand the Will of God and the Mind of Jesus Christ. The fact that the footwashing is associated with Passover gives special weight to the meaning of the footwashing.

Jesus carried out the greatest act of service to mankind, and He fully intends that we serve one another as He did (John 10:15). He gave us the annual footwashing ceremony to teach us how we are to be servants to one another - just as he came to serve all mankind. When we go to a restaurant, our waitress serves us. But true Christian service to one another entails so much more than being a cordial host or hostess.

On the evening before He died, Jesus instituted the footwashing service for New Testament Christians. Passover was not abolished, as the world believes, in fact it was greatly enhanced for the Church of God. Jesus fulfilled Passover by becoming our sacrificial Passover Lamb. Passover is a timeless memorial that Jesus will partake of when He returns to this earth in great power to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Speaking of the Passover wine representing His blood shed for many, Jesus told His disciples that He looked forward to that future day: *"I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom."* (Matthew 26:29)

As that last Passover arrived, the disciples were arguing over who would be greatest among them (Luke 22:24). The attitude displayed by the disciples was the exact opposite of Jesus' approach of being least, and servant of all. Adding the footwashing ceremony to the Passover service was not a spur of the moment notion that came to Jesus because of the strife among the disciples. The contrast in mindsets – greatest or least - helps us to grasp the lesson of the footwashing. Jesus had long planned to institute the footwashing on that last evening.

Jesus, having Godly authority, was able to modify the way the Old Testament Passover was conducted. *"Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God."* (John 13:3) Jesus was about to do something so momentous that John records that Jesus had been given all the authority of God to perform what He is about to do! On that evening, Jesus instituted the footwashing ceremony in a very formal way for the Church of God.

Notice the symbolism that John presents to us. We were not around to be eyewitnesses of the first century miracles that the early Church experienced, but we are privileged to see and experience the profound meanings of the words and actions of Jesus. *"He rose from supper and laid aside his garment; and took a servant's towel and girded himself."* (John 13:4)

Jesus laid aside His cloak. He was symbolically divesting Himself of His customary role as Master and Lord to reveal His great transcendent role as the One who came to this earth for the purpose of serving mankind. Jesus took off His cloak to demonstrate that He was functioning in an entirely different capacity – that of a common servant!



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There is no greater act of service than saving mankind from his sins. Jesus is the good shepherd who gave His life for the sheep (John 10:11). Jesus said, *“For which is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as He that serves.”* (Luke 22:27) *“After that Jesus poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the servant’s towel wherewith He was girded.”* (John 13:5)

Why did Jesus wash the disciples feet, and why did He tie the footwashing command to the New Testament Passover? What is the spiritual lesson that must be drawn from the footwashing? In washing the disciple’s feet, Jesus was setting an example for us to emulate – to perform – so that we would learn the spiritual lesson that accompanies the ceremony of the footwashing.

It is a “spiritual lesson” because it is not the physical act of footwashing that cleanses us. Since we have all sinned throughout the year, the footwashing is a yearly renewal and rededication of our baptismal covenant and washing of regeneration. We “dirty our feet,” - we go places in our minds and hearts we should not go, and we dirty our feet. Dirt on the feet represents a spiritual problem – a sin. As Christians, we are not dirty all over because the blood of Christ has washed us all over. We are still in that covenant relationship with Jesus Christ as long as we have not turned our backs on God and walked away.

Is the footwashing optional, or is it commanded? Jesus said, *“If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet.”* (John 13:14) When Jesus said, *“You also ought to wash one another’s feet,”* He was giving us a most important instruction. Right there, Jesus established the footwashing as an ordinance for Christians – for us.

Why must we wash the feet of others? *“Being found in fashion as a man, Jesus humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”* (Philippians 2:8)

Some people think that the footwashing is for the sole purpose of teaching us to be humble. The footwashing does require that we have a humble attitude, but it means much more than merely humbling ourselves by physically washing the feet of others. We must be careful not to fall into the trap of acquiring a false humility as a result of the footwashing ceremony. Let’s not say, “I have washed someone’s feet; therefore, I am humble.”

By His example, Jesus was teaching us how to serve others just as He has done. The footwashing is about learning to spiritually serve one another. Not having yet received God's Holy Spirit, the disciples could not understand the spiritual aspect of the ceremony Jesus was establishing. *“Then came Jesus to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, is it for you to wash my feet?”* (John 13:6)

Peter was saying, “Don’t you have it backward Lord?” We know footwashing today as a religious ceremony - it was different back then – it was an everyday occurrence. In the time of Christ, it was a part of the hospitality at people’s homes, and was practiced by rich and poor alike. Sandals and bare feet caused feet to get dirty.

The rich had servants who performed the task of washing guest’s feet when they arrived at their home. When Jesus took a servant’s towel and began washing the disciples’ feet, it was reversing the order they were accustomed to. Not only was it out of the ordinary for Jesus to wash their feet, it was strange and unacceptable behavior to the apostles. Here was Jesus, their Lord and master washing their feet.



The footwashing and Passover are central in our relationship with God. The footwashing shows a number of pictures beyond the obvious washing of dirty feet. **During this last Passover with Jesus, the disciples, including Peter, did not fully understand the meaning of the footwashing.** Jesus answered and said unto Peter, *“What I do, you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.”* (John 13:7)

It would only be after they had received God's Holy Spirit at Pentecost that the apostles would understand the meaning and importance of the yearly Footwashing. Jesus made the footwashing a requirement for our salvation! *“Peter said unto Jesus, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus*

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*answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.” (John 13:8)*

Those were very stern words to Peter, “no part.” If we reject the footwashing, we, too, have no part in the Body of Christ. *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.”* [“particular” here, is the same word that we see in – “no part”] (1Corinthians 12:27) Jesus was saying that without the footwashing there is no part for us in the Plan of God, no part for us in the Kingdom of God, and no part for us in the Body of Christ.

The footwashing, when performed in the spirit in which Jesus established it, assures our place in the Body of Christ, the Family of God, the Kingdom of God and eternal life. Immediately, Peter changed his tune! *“Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”* (John 13:9)

At this point in the institution of the footwashing service, Jesus makes the important distinction between baptism and the yearly footwashing. *“Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.”* (John 13:10) Baptism is a total cleansing that takes place only once in our lives. Baptism is our covenant relationship with God. But, because we are weak and come short throughout the year, we are sinners and need the cleansing of the footwashing. Therefore, the footwashing ceremony was instituted to symbolize a yearly renewal of and rededication to one’s initial conversion and resulting cleanness through baptism.

Jesus establishes that Peter has been forgiven - washed all over - cleansed from sin through baptism. When Jesus said, *“He that is washed, need not wash except his feet, but is clean every whit.”* Jesus was alluding to baptism which cleanses a sinner completely of all past guilt. And Jesus shows here that the yearly footwashing is still necessary and required. When Peter suggested that Jesus wash him all over, Jesus told Peter in effect – I’m talking about “feet only” right now!

This is very clear in the Greek. The King James translators could have utilized a little more selection here. This verse contains two different Greek words *louo* and *nipto*. One refers specifically to baptism, while the other refers only to footwashing. *“He that is washed [‘louo’ = baptized] needeth not save to wash [‘nipto’ = cleanse by footwashing] his feet but is clean every whit: and you are clean, but not all.”* (John 13:10)

This verse, John 13:10, clearly makes the distinction between initial baptism and the footwashing which is an acknowledgment of our continual need for cleansing. At baptism, a Christian convert receives God’s Holy Spirit, which dwells in him and leads him as he follows God’s way of life. The truly converted person has turned around in his mind and heart. We have forsaken our former selfish way of life. But because we are still in the flesh, we occasionally stumble and sin.

What does a converted person do when he has sinned? The first thing that we must do is acknowledge our sin before God. *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”* (1John 1:9-10) We do not wait until Passover to acknowledge our sins – we do that immediately. We must deal with our sins on a daily basis. At the annual footwashing ceremony, we acknowledge our need, desire, and thankfulness for the continual cleansing of our sins that Jesus has made possible.

Judas Iscariot had discarded his baptism vow. His heart and mind were not pure. *“For Jesus knew who should betray Him; therefore said He, You are not all clean.”* (John 13:11) Besides the obvious reference to Judas Iscariot not being clean because of the betrayal - there was another more important meaning in Jesus’ words. **There is a deeper meaning in the footwashing episode than is at first apparent. In the same way that the disciples’ feet had become soiled as they walked to the Passover supper, we, too, become soiled by sin after our initial cleansing at baptism.** We need the footwashing because we are not all clean.

*“He that is washed is clean every whit.”* Jesus establishes here that Peter’s sins had been forgiven when he was baptized - washed all over. This applies to all who have been baptized – they are cleansed from sin through baptism. Jesus has a double meaning to His words as He continues in this verse. *“...and you are clean, but not all.”* When Jesus said that they were not all clean, He was referring to Judas Iscariot, and to the fact that the disciples were not totally clean because of the sins that had occurred since baptism.



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This statement by Jesus, in addition to being a reference to Judas Iscariot, illustrates that a yearly footwashing is still necessary and required. Though we were once washed at baptism, the footwashing symbolizes our renewed commitment to walk in the newness of life that we made at our baptism. Because we are in the flesh, we are not perfect.

How can we take Passover, which represents Christ in us, when we are sinful – when we are not clean? Our sins separate us from God (Isaiah 59:2). Even after baptism we need to go to Christ to be washed by Him. We cannot ask Jesus to come into a home (our body) that has not been spiritually cleansed. We de-leaven our homes – we put sin out of ourselves. We do it by being washed by Jesus Christ in the footwashing. We put sin out by washing one another's feet. **The footwashing of each other's feet – cleans our house – these earthly tabernacles and prepares us to receive the bread and wine.** The footwashing reinforces in us, the serving and repentant attitude that we must have to be able to come into God's presence. The footwashing helps us to examine ourselves before we invite Jesus in.

The footwashing, baptism, and Passover are intricately connected. Sin can and does occur after baptism, and must be acknowledged, repented of, and forgiven. The footwashing is a needed spiritual cleansing because we come short throughout the year - we are sinners - and Jesus Christ is our advocate, comforter, intercessor, and consoler. The footwashing helps us to worthily partake of the symbols of the bread and the wine – the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

*"If any man sin, we have an advocate [parakletos] with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."* (1John 2:1) Because we are yet sinners, the yearly footwashing indicates our desire to "clean our slate," so to speak, in a reaffirmation of our baptismal vow. But this explains only having our own feet washed.

*Jesus said, If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to **wash one another's feet**.* Why is it necessary to wash the feet of others? Some people, in a demonstrable lack of spiritual courage conclude, "We don't help to clean the slate of others. I mind my own business, and everybody else should do likewise." This attitude demonstrates a considerable lack of spiritual understanding.

Not coming to the support of one of our brethren in spiritual distress is like Cain saying, "Am I my brother's keeper?" - inferring that he wasn't - when he should have been! It is too often overlooked that our faith, and our salvation are intertwined and interlocked with the faith and salvation of others.

*"So after He had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, He said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought [a must, obligated, duty-bound] to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."* (John 13:12-15)

In the same way that we want to be clean before Him, God requires us to help other brethren to be clean before God in our common spiritual quest. In the same way that we want our "own slate clean" before God, He requires us to help "clean the slate" of others.

Jesus taught, *"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."* (John 15:12-13) Jesus laid His life down for us, so we must lay our lives down for others - but how do we do that? It is only with God's help and the power of His Spirit that we are able to renew our mind, patiently endure the trials of this life, and live as Christians must by laying down our lives for one another.

When a brother or sister has strayed and allowed a serious sin to enter into their life - we must serve them by going to their **spiritual rescue**, no matter what it takes - that is laying down our life for them.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, refers to himself as a "bond servant" – a slave: *"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ."* The removal of dirt off the feet of others is the picture of the footwashing ceremony. What is the spiritual reality of this ceremony? The dirt on the feet represents a spiritual problem in the life of a converted person. The footwashing teaches us that we are responsible for intervening in our neighbor's situation to help him eliminate his spiritual problem. This is what "laying down our life" entails. We must involve ourselves, even at great personal risk.

James gives us a perfect example of the spiritual application of the footwashing. *"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him [turns him around], Let him know, that he which converts [turns him around] the sinner from*



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*the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20)*

Being a living sacrifice is not asking too much of us – it is our reasonable service to our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the spiritual sacrifice of which Paul spoke: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”* (Romans 12:1)

What is this reasonable service? The answer is to risk friends, social status, job, and even life itself to restore our wayward brethren to the path which leads to eternal life. *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”* (John 15:13)

As influential as the apostle Peter was, his personal sin placed him in danger of losing his eternal salvation. Peter had been showing partiality to some Jewish men of reputation to the exclusion of the other Christians. Peter’s improper conduct would have eventually cost him his eternal life - if he continued in that sin. Paul became aware of Peter’s sin.

Would Paul help Peter in Christian Love, or would he stand idly by and watch Peter lose his salvation? What was Paul’s Christian responsibility? Paul must have been tempted to do what was politically expedient and socially acceptable – let it go – sweep Peter’s sin under the rug. However, Paul realized that his intervention in the matter was not optional. Paul’s Christian responsibility – before God – was to turn Peter around.

James tells us how we are to go to the rescue of every brother or sister in Christ who is experiencing a spiritual problem. This is the epitome of Christian love. We are to lay our life down for the brethren – even if it means going against the tide of popular opinion – even if it means going against the lackadaisical methods of many brethren in the Church, and risk being ostracized. This is what washing our neighbor’s feet is all about.

This question of our Christian practice, interaction, love and concern for one another is a major salvational issue. *“We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother abides in death.”* (1John 3:14)

This “love” is coming to the spiritual aid of anyone and everyone in God’s Church. If we do not love our brother, if we do not provoke him to good works, we abide in death. This love is Godly care. It is not mere sentiment. This is not the kind of “love” which is sung about in music. *“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* (1John 3:16) These are such soft words, but so strong. Those who refuse to step in because they are afraid to dirty their hands by washing someone’s feet, lack spiritual discernment. It is a great virtue to come to the rescue of a brother or sister who is spiritually in jeopardy.

We are not laying down our lives for the brethren if we do not reconcile, if we do not come to their aid, if we do not open our hearts and minds to them, if we do not share our deepest concerns with them, or when we do not provoke them to good works. We must awake a desire in others to tear down the walls that separate brethren. Being open and involved with others is difficult at first because it makes us vulnerable. But Jesus set the example for us by being a servant who washed away all our dirt and saved us.

We may face a kind of personal crucifixion because we choose to be a friend and a neighbor to those in spiritually difficult situations. Even those in our own circle of acquaintances may ostracize us. Laying down our lives in a Godly way will bring about costly ramifications. It is for this very reason that we have been called by God, *“Jesus Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow his steps.”* (1Peter 2:21)

Throughout the year, we all come short of God’s perfect standards – we sin and fall short of the perfection of Jesus Christ. The footwashing represents the constant renewal of grace required to cover one’s daily sins after the initial justification brought through Christ’s sacrifice. We, therefore, must wash the feet of one another. Not only must we have an attitude of being willing to lay our life down for others, we must actively intervene in “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”

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## The Fugitive Folk of Jacob's Trouble

(Copyright 2023) by Charles Whitaker (Charlotte, North Carolina)



Most of us understand that the various scatterings of Israelites over history are prophetic types of the scattering to occur shortly, in the time called Jacob's Trouble. For example, the Assyrian-led scattering of the House of Israel in 722 BC is typical of the impending scattering of Israel by the Beast Power.

Christ described this approaching scattering as a time of distress like no other in human history (see Matthew 24:21). Something about this scattering-to-come makes it unique, different from its predecessors. What characteristic will set this future scattering apart from past ones? We will address that question by looking at some Hebrew verbs with the meaning "to scatter."<sup>1</sup>

### ***Pûş***

Deuteronomy 28:64 contains the first of these words, *pûş*,<sup>ii</sup> the verb most commonly translated "scatter": "Then the Lord will *scatter* you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other . . ." (see also Ezekiel 20:23; emphasis ours throughout).

While *pûş* can mean "to scatter" in a non-violent sense (see I Samuel 14:34), it can also refer to a violent dashing to pieces. For instance, Jeremiah 23:29: "'Is not My word like fire?' says the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks [*pûş*] the rock in pieces?'" (see also Job 16:12). Here, God likens His Word to a sledgehammer capable of crushing rocks. After a few blows, even granite can become highly fragmented. Quarry-grade rock-crushing equipment, made of iron and steel,

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makes quick work of stone. *Pûş* can refer to the breaking up of the apparently durable, the evidently robust.

**Nāpaş**

Daniel 12:7 uses a second word often translated with the verb “scatter”:

He replied, with both hands lifted to heaven, taking oath by him who lives forever and ever, that they will not end until three and a half years after the power of God’s people has been crushed. (*The Living Bible* [TLB])

The angel dressed in linen tells Daniel that the wonders will continue until the “power of God’s people has been scattered,” as the Hebrew is translated in the King James Version. The Hebrew verb here is *nāpaş*.<sup>iii</sup> Other translators of this passage modify the verb with the adverb completely, as “completely shattered.”<sup>iv</sup> In other passages, the King James translators render *naphats* as “break in pieces”<sup>v</sup> and “dash in pieces.” Its first use, in Genesis 9:19, speaks of widespread dispersion, at God’s behest, but without violence: “These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were *scattered* [populated, NKJV] over the whole earth” (*New International Version*).

However, in Psalm 2 is a poetic use of *nāpaş*, which joins this notion of widespread geographic dispersion with two other essential elements: disintegration and violence<sup>vi</sup>:

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them [*nāpaş*] like earthenware. (Psalm 2:8-9, *New American Standard Bible* [NAS])

Shattering a vase with a hammer gives one a graphic idea of the meaning of *nāpaş*.

**Nûa´**

We find a third and even stronger verb for “scatter” in Amos 9:9 (*The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition* [AMPC]): “For behold, I will command, and I will *sift* the house of Israel among all nations and cause it to move to and fro as grain is *sifted* in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth and be lost [from My sight].”

*Nûa´*,<sup>vii</sup> appears twice in this verse.<sup>viii</sup> Its first use, in Genesis 4:12, refers to Cain. Here the translators have used the noun “*fugitive*”: “When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a *fugitive* [*nûa´*] and a wanderer on the earth.” We should keep this word choice in mind. Making a person a fugitive is fragmentation to the point of isolation.<sup>ix</sup> A fugitive is often on the run, moving about, an image enforced by grain moving to and fro in the wind.<sup>x</sup>

**Pāzar**

In Jeremiah 50:17, we see yet a fourth verb for “scatter,” *pāzar*<sup>xi</sup>:

The Lord says, “The people of Israel are like sheep, chased and *scattered* [*pāzar*] by lions. First, they were attacked by the emperor of Assyria, and then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia gnawed on their bones. (*Good News Translation* [GNT])

The image here is of a flock of sheep totally broken up as predators chase its individual members in every direction. The idea of a fugitive appears again here. Each sheep is alone, pursued, and endangered as he is separated from his fellows. The sheep are still there, but the flock is gone.

This passage illustrates the level of fragmentation yet to take place in Israel. Importantly, it speaks to modern Israelites, not ancient ones. For that, consider Jeremiah 50:4-5, where the prophet establishes the timeframe of his comments as the regathering of Israel at the conclusion of the Day of the Lord:

“In those days and in that time,” declares the Lord, “the people of Israel shall come, they and the people of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, ‘Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten.’”

That did not happen in the days of the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser (see I Chronicles 5:26) or the Babylonian

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Nebuchadnezzar.

**Zāra´**

The fifth word for “scatter” is *zāra´*,<sup>xiii</sup> found in Ezekiel 5:12. Remember that the prophet Ezekiel wrote to future Israel, as the kingdom had already been taken into captivity more than a century before. His words do not pertain to those earlier scatterings. When Ezekiel wrote, the Assyrians had already deported—scattered—the House of Israel to northern Persia (Iran). Since then, the Babylonians had deported the House of Judah from Jerusalem and its surrounds.<sup>xiii</sup> So, the fulfillment of this prophecy is yet future:

One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will *scatter to every wind*, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. (Ezekiel 5:12, NAS)

The naked sword carries the image of pursuit, the chase, as one hunts a fugitive. *Zāra´* has much the same connotation as *nūa´* (“to sift”), as it can mean “to winnow or spread widely.” Its first use, Exodus 32:20, stresses the granularity of spreading. There, we read that Moses “ground to powder” the golden calf and scattered (*zāra´*) the dust on the water for the Israelites to drink. This is a clear image of pulverization.<sup>xiv</sup>

Consider that Ezekiel himself was among those deportees from Judah in some sort of concentration camp, as he says in Ezekiel 1:1, “among the captives by the River Chebar.” That is an important detail: He was not isolated. However, Ezekiel 5 looks forward to a highly granular scattering, where people become widely separated—“to every wind.”

The typical, historical scatterings of God’s people were not notably granular. All the children of Israel, en masse, migrated to Egypt during the time of Jacob. More than two million of their descendants migrated from Egypt about 215 years later. The Assyrians deported virtually all the folk of the House of Israel. In the Babylonians’ three principal deportations of Judah, “None remained, except the poorest people of the land,” according to II Kings 24:14. It appears that much the same happened in the diaspora of AD 70 under the Romans.

While some families were certainly broken up in these various typical scatterings, by and large, the deportees did not become completely isolated from kith and kin. For lack of a better term, it is a “chunky” scattering. For example, Jewish Israelites today, though scattered around the world, live in huge enclaves, such as the State of Israel or the metropolis of New York City. God indeed scattered Israel, but He did so in huge chunks.<sup>xv</sup>

But, looking carefully, we see this in the words describing the scattering to come: powder, not chunks. God prophesies that the final dispersion will be gross fragmentation, pulverization, atomization, isolation. In it, we are looking at images of grains of wheat blown by the wind, fugitives, vagabonds, pottery fragments, and crushed rock. We see people spread about geographically and on the run, alone, or at least almost so. “Fugitives” seems to describe them. The granularity of the final scattering, the one hovering over national Israel today, will be far more significant than in the typical dispersions of her history. The chunks will be much smaller—powder. The surviving Israelites will be spread extremely thin.

**A New Thing**

If we look for this extreme level of fragmentation in history, we will find it only exceptionally, uncommonly. The Nazis penned the Jews of the holocaust in concentration camps. Atomization was the exception, not the rule then. We do not see widespread pulverization in history; it awaits the time of Jacob’s Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), a time without precedent. This level of pulverization will be a new thing on the earth. This intense level of granularity is the new characteristic of the future scattering.

A new thing,<sup>xvi</sup> but for all that, we see the outlines of such atomization today. Where? Amazingly, we are experiencing it in type in the present church of God. What has begun in spiritual Israel will eventually manifest as a roaring lion in modern physical Israel.

In the closing moments of the twentieth century, God pulverized the church of God. Like folk in Babylon centuries ago, remembering Zion’s heady days, we too remember the old church, with congregation after congregation of upwards of 200 people, often 300 or 400 or more. We recall choosing from many Feast sites, many of which boasted more than 3,000 attendees. Those days are gone. Our children today cannot conceive of the church we knew only a few decades ago.



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Today, congregations are small, many of only a handful of people. Feast sites of even 2,000 people are scarce. If it were not for technology, communication would be exceedingly difficult. God has pulverized His church, and frankly, it is only getting worse. Some leaders in the greater church forbid social intercourse between their congregants and those in other flocks. These leaders are increasingly pounding the church, amplifying the level of atomization, aggravating the isolation.<sup>xvii</sup>

We in the church face continued and worsening isolation. Physical Israelites can look forward to experiencing the pulverization, the pounding, of their secular civilization, as they are forced into highly isolated situations, alienated from kith and kin, hated by everyone, fugitives in hiding, starving, sick, and apparently abandoned. They may not be concentrated in camps, but at least metaphorically, placed in isolation chambers, perhaps an emblem of the scattering to come.

It will be amazing to behold how God will bring unifying order out of the *tohu* and *bohu* soon to come, collecting each lonely grain, “one by one and one to another,” as the prophet puts it in Isaiah 27:12 (AMPC), restoring each sheep to His fold. No wonder those witnessing that restoration will not speak of the first exodus, the second being so much more astonishing!<sup>xviii</sup>

### End Notes

i Old Testament verbs for “scatter” not discussed here include the following:

- *Pā`ā* (*Strong’s* #6284) appears only once (Deuteronomy 32:26), where the King James translators render it “scatter into corners.” The verb means “to cleave in pieces” and “to break into pieces.”
- *Bāzar* (*Strong’s* #967) appears twice, both times as “scatter” (Psalm 68:30; Daniel 11:24). It means “to disperse” or “to scatter.”
- *Zāraq* (*Strong’s* #2236) appears 35 times (e.g., Exodus 9:8). The translators render it as “sprinkle” (31x), “scatter” (2x), “here and there” (1x) and “stowed” (1x.)
- *Bedar* (*Strong’s* #921), an Aramaic word, appears only once (Daniel 4:14), translated as “scatter.” It is related to the Hebrew *pārad* (*Strong’s* #6504), which is rendered as “separate” (12x), “part” (4x), “divided” (3x), and once each as “scattered about,” “dispersed,” “joint,” “scattered,” “severed,” “stretched,” and “sundered.”

ii *Pûš* (*Strong’s* #6327) appears 67 times, mostly translated as forms of “scatter.” It is the word in Genesis 11:9 that refers to God’s scattering the people building Babel. It is also used in Zechariah 13:7 to describe the scattering of Christ’s disciples, pictured in the metaphor as sheep.

iii *Nāpaš* (*Strong’s* #5310) appears 22 times, strongly carrying the idea of pulverization (see Isaiah 27:9).

iv Examples include the *New King James Version* (NKJV), the *Names of God Bible*, and the GWT.

v Such as the *World English Bible* (WEB) and the *American Standard Version*.

vi This verb appears in the well-known incident where Gideon’s men broke the pitchers in their attack on the Midianites (see Judges 7:19).

vii *Nûa`* (*Strong’s* #5128) appears 42 times in the Old Testament. It is translated six times each as “shake,” “move,” and “wander”; “promoted” (3x); “fugitive” (2x); “sift,” “stagger,” and “wag” (1x each); and 13 other miscellaneous translations.

viii A fascinating use of *nûa`* appears in Isaiah 24:20. In verse 4, “haughty people of the earth” may be the elite, the rich, or a more general reference to Israel. Elsewhere, “haughty” (*mārôm*, *Strong’s* #4791) is rendered “highest,” “high ones,” “lofty,” and “elevated.” It appears twice as “heaven” in Isaiah 24:21. Hence, the “haughty people” may refer to Israel, “the chief nation” (Amos 6:1; see also Jeremiah 31:7). It is no accident that the United States’ international dialing code is 1, much to the consternation of the Russians.

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With those preliminaries in mind, Isaiah 24:19-21 (WEB) reads:

The earth is utterly broken. The earth is torn apart. The earth is shaken violently. The earth will stagger [*nûa*] like a drunken man and will sway back and forth like a hammock. Its disobedience will be heavy on it, and it will fall and not rise again. It shall happen in that day [probably the Day of the Lord] that Yahweh will punish the army of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth.

Hidden in most English translations is the repeated Hebrew words here, mostly verbs. The figure of speech employed is *Polyptoton*, or “Many Inflections,” which refers to the repetition of the same parts of speech (a repetition of nouns, adjectives, or verbs), usually with different inflections. English examples include: “Judge not that you be not judged” and “Absolute power corrupts absolutely.” Polyptoton does not require the word to be repeated exactly, only its root. That is, the inflections of the repeated words may be different.

A good example of Polyptoton is Isaiah 24:19-20, where “earth,” Hebrew *’ereš*, appears four times, but after each use, a verb appears twice. So, the Hebrew reads, *’ereš*, verb, repeated verb; *’ereš*, verb, repeated verb; *’ereš*, verb, repeated verb; *’ereš*, verb, repeated verb. For example, the first in the sequence is *’ereš ra’ ra’* (“destruction” or “damage”) in Hebrew. This duplication of verbs continues into verse 20, “the earth shall reel to and fro,” which is *’ereš nûa’ nûa’*. God’s duplications of these four verbs are certainly for emphasis: The earth is really broken, split open, shaken, and reeling. This repetition suggests double-portion time, like “Babylon is fallen, is fallen,” as written in Revelation 14:8 and 18:2. (On double portions, see Deuteronomy 21:17; II Kings 2:9; and Isaiah 61:7.)

**ix** *Nûa’* can carry the idea of dispersion as well. See Psalm 109:10 (NAS), where David sings of the sons of the wicked: “Let his children wander about and beg; and let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes.” *Nûa’* appears in the phrase “wander about.” In context, the children of the wicked are dispossessed of the homes of their forefathers, begging for food far from those ancestral homes.

**x** Reference also Isaiah 16:3-4 (WEB), where the topic is Moab:

Give counsel! Execute justice! Make your shade like the night in the middle of the noonday! Hide the outcasts! Don’t betray the fugitive! Let My outcasts dwell with you! As for Moab, be a hiding place for him from the face of the destroyer. For the extortionist is brought to nothing. Destruction ceases. The oppressors are consumed out of the land.

The subject is probably people in the true church (verse 4: “My outcasts”), the members of which are fleeing. Noteworthy is the reference to fugitives and wanderers—outcasts. The noun “outcasts” is the Hebrew verb *nādaḥ* (*Strong’s* #5080), here informed by the notion of their being driven out (see Deuteronomy 4:19; Isaiah 27:13; Jeremiah 49:36). The last of these is intriguing as it stresses how widespread the dispersion will be: “And [I] will scatter them toward all those winds; there shall be no nations where the outcasts of Elam will not go.”

*Nādaḥ’s* verbal relative is *nādad* (*Strong’s* #5074). Its first use is in Genesis 31:40, where it appears as the verb “departed”: “. . . my sleep departed from my eyes.” Of special interest is the last clause of Jeremiah 49:5 (*English Standard Version*), where *nādad* is rendered with the noun “fugitives”:

Behold, I will bring terror upon you, declares the Lord God of hosts, from all who are around you, and you shall be driven out, every man straight before him, with none to gather the fugitives [*those who wander off*, NKJV].

**xi** *Pāzar* (*Strong’s* #6340) appears in Esther 3:8, where Haman, talking to the Persian king, describes the Jews as “scattered.”

**xii** *Zāra’* is *Strong’s* #2219.

**xiii** Incidentally, Jeremiah 50:11, where God addresses the “plunderers of His heritage,” is highly instructive. Through the term “My heritage,” it connects latter-day Babylon with Israel. Babylon is not the heritage of God but the creation of mankind under Satan. Israel is God’s heritage. Yet, in Jeremiah 50:1-3, God is plainly describing the fall of Babylon. In fact, Israel falls at or near the time of Babylon’s fall, as the two have become highly intertwined, virtually synonymous in



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practice. For all practical purposes, Israel is today’s Babylon.

Germany is an excellent example of the amalgamation that has taken place between Israel and Babylon. Many Germans, especially those blond types of Prussia, are Israelites, while others seem to be descendants of Assyria/Babylon/Chaldea. For all that, the German society, like the American, is Babylonish in nature.

**xiv** The second use of *Zāra* ‘ also reflects the Ezekiel 5 passage: “I will scatter you among the nations and draw out a sword after you” (Leviticus 26:33).

**xv** A good example is the scattering of Israel into the North American continent. Notable cases aside, migrants came to these coasts with their families more commonly than as individuals.

**xvi** In the context of ancient Israel, I Kings 19:18 (GWT) suggests significant fragmentation among His people. God tells Elijah, “But I still have 7,000 people in Israel whose knees have not knelt to worship Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.” It appears that, up until this time, Elijah knew nothing of the existence of these 7,000 people. It is hard to hide that many people. They were likely scattered, living as fugitives, hiding in fear of Ahab and Jezebel, probably in tiny enclaves.

**xvii** The atomization to come to Israel will undoubtedly have a strong economic basis. Notice Deuteronomy 28:68 (GNT): “The Lord will send you back to Egypt in ships, even though he said that you would never have to go there again. There you will try to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will want to buy you.” The scattering to come will involve geographical spread, as it always has. Moreover, people will be unable or unwilling to provide work for migrant Israelites.

**xviii** See Jeremiah 16:14-15: 23:7-8.

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**See Charles Whitaker’s other articles at:**

**[Whitaker, Charles – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)**

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**The Elders<sup>23</sup>**  
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(extracted from *Synagogue and Church: Comparative Structures* by Craig M White)

*Easton’s Bible Dictionary* explains the origin and role of elders:

**“The Jewish eldership was transferred from the old dispensation to the new.** The creation of the office of elder is nowhere recorded in the New Testament ... [this office] was transmitted

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<sup>23</sup> Detailed information about elders, their ordination, criteria etc are not covered to any great extent in this article. Instead, much has been written about them in works such as *Biblical Eldership* by A Strauch and *Qualifications for the Evaluation of Elders and Deacons* by J Keathley. Note also Strauch, *Biblical Eldership Study Guide’s* insights based upon historical research. “From all the evidence we have, the deacons—like the elders—formed a collective leadership council. The New Testament reveals that the pastoral oversight of many of the first churches was committed to a plurality of elders. This was true of the earliest, Jewish-Christian churches in Jerusalem, Judea, and neighboring 14 countries as well as many of the first Gentile churches.” (pp. 13-14)

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from the earliest times."<sup>24</sup>

"The "elders" of the New Testament church were the "pastors" (Eph. 4:11), "bishops or overseers" (Acts 20:28), "leaders" and "rulers" (Heb. 13:7; 1 Thess. 5:12) of the flock. Everywhere in the New Testament bishop and presbyter are titles given to one and the same officer of the Christian church. He who is called presbyter or elder on account of his age or gravity is also called bishop or overseer with reference to the duty that lay upon him (Titus 1:5-7; Acts 20:17-28; Phil. 1:1)."<sup>25</sup> [emphasis mine]

And Thayer's Greek Lexicon:

"4245 presbuteros (pres-boo'-ter-os) comparative of presbus (elderly); TDNT - 6:651,931; AV - elder 64, old man 1, eldest 1, elder woman 1; 67  
adj

- 1) elder, of age,
  - 1a) the elder of two people
  - 1b) advanced in life, an elder, a senior
  - 1b1) forefathers
- 2) a term of rank or office
  - 2a) among the Jews
    - 2a1) members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from elderly men)
    - 2a2) of those who in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice
  - 2b) among the Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches) The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably.
  - 2c) the twenty four members of the heavenly Sanhedrin or court seated on thrones around the throne of God"

Thayer clearly demonstrates that a parallel term that is used in the New Testament for elder is *presbyter* = *presbuterion* (see also *Strong's Concordance* #4244 and also #4850). The term is used interchangeably with elder in Acts 22:5; ITim 4:14.

Among their many duties was to anoint the sick (James 5:14)<sup>26</sup> and be ordained in new congregations (Titus 1:5). They were also to be of a good reputation (Acts 6:3) – which infers that if they are of a bad reputation due to their lifestyles, abuse, unfairness, nepotism and so on, they should not be elders.

They did not rule the brethren and expect them to be obeyed as if the synagogue was the military; instead, they gently guided them. Men without that ability were simply not ordained or removed from office. Re-training them was futile.

As an aside, some use Hebrews 13:17, 20 and 24 as proof that they can *rule* over people where the Greek word *hegeomai*

<sup>24</sup> Ferguson (1975) throws further light on this: "The above perspective brings the subject of an elder's "authority" into sharper focus. An elder's service or ministry is that of "pastoring" (a shepherd), of oversight (a bishop), of management (a steward), of judgment and example (**an elder on the pattern of Jewish elders**). The church, in order to be a community and in order to function smoothly, has need of such leadership ... If a man loses his qualifications, ceases to serve, or no longer has the support of the congregation, he can no longer be an elder. "**Once an elder, always an elder" has no biblical support**. It is proper to admit charges against an elder and rebuke him, provided appropriate procedures are followed (1 Tim. 5:19f.). As the approval is given by all, so the rebuke is "in the presence of all." That implies that the congregation which gave its approval may also withdraw that approval. Obviously this must be for a good cause." (pp 144, 148) [emphasis mine] NB: many ancient synagogues practiced 1, 3 or 5 year term limits on office-holders.

<sup>25</sup> Easton 1897: art. "Elder"

<sup>26</sup> Praying for the sick was practiced in the synagogue community according to F. F. Bruce 1979: 1546. It is obvious that the ordained ministry continued this into early Church. Apparently, there was no system for medical education among the Jews at that time and given that many new converts were gentiles from pagan backgrounds, it was important for James to mention this. Otherwise, some may have reverted to their superstitions.

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is used. You can look up this word in *Strong's Concordance* (#2233) where one finds it has a meaning which includes “to go before” or “to lead” or “esteem” which would align it more with IICor 1:24 and Matt 20:25-26.

The same word is used in Phil 2:3; 3:8; IThess 5:13.

Similarly, the word for *obey* in Heb 13:17 is *peitho* (Strong's #3982) which should be translated in this context as *persuade* or *convince*. After all, ministers do not employ the members nor are they military rulers over the members.

As we have seen, this office had ancient roots according to numerous sources. *Smith's Bible Dictionary* succinctly outlines the roots of this office:

“The term elder, or old man as the Hebrew literally imports, was one of extensive use, as an official title, among the Hebrews and the surrounding nations, because the heads of tribes and the leading people who had acquired influence were naturally the older people of the nation. It had reference to various offices. #Ge 24:2; 50:7; 2Sa 12:17; Eze 27:9| As betokening a political office, it applied not only to the Hebrews, but also to the Egyptians, #Ge 50:7| the Moabites and the Midianites. #Nu 22:7| The earliest notice of the elders acting in concert as a political body is at the time of the Exodus. They were the representatives of the people, so much so that elders and people are occasionally used as equivalent terms; comp. #Jos 24:1| with #Jos 24:2,19,21| and #1Sa 8:4| with #1Sa 8:7,10,19| Their authority was undefined, and extended to all matters concerning the public weal. Their number and influence may be inferred from #1Sa 30:26|ff. They retained their position under all the political changes which the Jews underwent. The seventy elders mentioned in Exodus and Numbers were a sort of governing body, a parliament, and the origin of the tribunal of seventy elders called the Sanhedrin or Council. In the New Testament Church, the elders or presbyters were the same as the bishops. It was an office derived from the Jewish usage of elders or rulers of the synagogues.” (article “Elder”) <sup>27</sup>

Burtchaell also explains:

“The evidence before us says that during the organization of a new community the elders were appointed by the apostle or founder ... The pastoral epistles seem to imply that the selection of elders was a prerogative of Paul's major deputies after the time of founding. There is a hint that prophets may have played a part in validating candidates for community office ...”<sup>28</sup>

However, later, in the embryonic Great False Church, the local churches chose their own elders as the selection became a matter for local choice.<sup>29</sup>

Another synonym for elder is *poimen* which means shepherd (Acts 20:28-30) practising pastoral gentleness (IPet 5:2-4). And in similitude to the synagogue, they are sometimes called *archontes* or notables.<sup>30</sup>

Burtchaell lists some of the duties of the elders which they have ultimate responsibility and authority for in the congregations or assemblies:

- preaching and teaching
- community finances
- admonition and rebuke when unity was at risk
- appointment of officers and, in the opinion of Burtchaell, some way of endorsing the Apostles
- caring for the sick and the community's dependents
- their office deserved honour

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<sup>27</sup> *Smith's Bible Dictionary online*, article “Elder”

<sup>28</sup> Burtchaell 1992: 293-94

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> Burtchaell 1992: 299

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They are often described as an organised group which gives the clear impression that there are at least three in each congregation of a reasonable size.

“They are a *presbyterion*, like a *synedrion* or an entourage. They are visualized as a council in session with the community chief, and thus a ruling council for the full assembly.”<sup>31</sup>

The traditional synagogue title for elders was *presbyteros* or alternatively *episkopos* which means overseer; this latter word still has overtones of the synagogue wherein they formed a college or council. In other words, each local congregation had a group of elders to assist the senior elder (pastor). This was not a ‘democratic’ system, but one of consensus in local administration, brotherhood, and joint assistance to nurture their brothers and sisters in the Church.

It would also appear that the council or college of local elders worked with similar colleges of other assemblies to form a synodal unit which was not answerable to a single assembly but to the corporate authority.<sup>32</sup>

“The main point is this: no form of Church government created by Christians should violate the spirit of Jesus’ own teaching about “lording it over” the people of God. The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation, “*Not that we have dominion over your faith, but are fellow workers for your joy; for by faith you stand*” (II Cor. 1:24). The word translated “dominion” in this verse could also be translated “rule.” In short, Christian leaders are not to be “rulers” or policemen over their congregation’s faith. They are not to be tyrants, dictators and authoritarian banty roosters reveling in their sense of pre-eminence over God’s heritage.”<sup>33</sup>

Prospective elders were very carefully selected by the local elders<sup>34</sup> from the congregation, as was Timothy:

“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift you have, which was given you by prophecy **when the council of elders laid their hands on you.**

Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress. Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers.” (ITim 4:13-16)

There was to be no nepotism and cronyism. No one grooming their incompetent friend as a successor and slipping them into a position under the radar. No permanency or sort of priesthood status so that it is next to impossible to remove the imposter and deceiver. No “we are so inspired” as if God speaks through them as if they are prophets or patriarchs or local level apostles. And no “because we have had hands laid upon them, ‘hey presto!’ we are filled with the holy spirit and inspired by God and as such, do not have to follow due process, can appoint our friends and sycophants into positions and do whatever we want without being questioned”. Those that see the deception are expelled or pushed out by them or their friends.

Yet this is how apostasies commence as the wrong people begin to fill positions until they gain control.

Most of us have seen such behaviours in business, bureaucracy, clubs, non-Church of God groups, let alone within our own ranks. It is appalling and an affront to God.

As one non-Church of God booklet, *The Elder. Character and Duties*, states appropriately:

“... the problems dealt with are common to the office-bearers of every Church ... the difficulty of finding the right individuals to take up positions of responsibility...

They have not been changed by Christ...

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<sup>31</sup> Burtchaell 1992: 298

<sup>32</sup> Burtchaell 1992: 332

<sup>33</sup> Knowles 2010: 21

<sup>34</sup> Refer to Conner’s *The Church in the New Testament*, pp. 199-200 which discussed plurality of local elders.

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All down the centuries, from the days of Christ to our own, these are the people who cause most trouble in the Church. To try to live the Christian life without Christ is impossible. To attempt any work for Christ and his Church before Christ has changed us is simply heading for disaster...

After the resurrection of Jesus, when the Church came into being, the office of the elder was recognized in the early Church. It was adopted with any other features of the synagogue. Elders were appointed in all the churches.”<sup>35</sup>

**Suggested reading:**

- *Are Ministers Priests or Elders?* by C White
- *A Genuine Minister with the Heart of a Shepherd? Or Fudging it?* by C White
- *Polity and the Elder Issue* by R Decker
- *Biblical Eldership* by A Strauch

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**See Craig White’s other articles at:**

**[White, Craig M. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)**

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## How a Pagan Celebration Became a “Christian” Holiday

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How did the birth of Christ become celebrated? How did Christmas come to be a major holiday in what is called “Christianity”?

There is no doubt that the birth of Jesus Christ is part of the Gospel story. There are complimentary accounts in two of the Gospels – Matthew and Luke. The story of Christ’s birth is both thrilling and interesting. The nativity stories are filled with uplifting and important spiritual understanding.

So, why not celebrate Christ’s birthday? This has been a greatly discussed topic in the early times with most of the “early church fathers” coming down on the side of not observing it.

As important as the story of Christ’s birth is, it is mentioned in only two of the four gospels. By contrast, the crucifixion is mentioned in all four Gospels. Furthermore, even in Matthew and Luke where the story of Christ’s birth is detailed, there is no further mention of His birth again in either of these Gospels.

Now let’s examine some of the histories about how December 25th came to be celebrated as Christ’s birthday. December 25 was a pagan celebration. It had its pre-Christian origins and according to the Catholic Encyclopedia, the word for Christmas was in Old English, Cristes Maesse or Mass of Christ. This phrase was first used in 1038 A.D.

Furthermore, the Encyclopedia states “Christmas was not among the earliest festivals of the Church.” Early church fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Origen omit Christmas from their lists of church feasts. Origen, disgusted with the birthday celebrations of high Roman officials, commented that “in the Scriptures sinners alone, not saints, celebrate their birthday.”

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<sup>35</sup> MacDonald 1958: 1, 4. Strauch agrees: “The eldership of government, there-fore, was very familiar to the Jewish Christians.” (1986: 123)

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In the third century (200's A.D.) some theologians in Egypt became curious and tried to find out not only the year but also the day of Christ's birth. Nearly every month of the year was proposed with several dates.

The Gospels themselves are of little or no help in determining the day or month of Christ's birth. Some have tied it to the Feast of Tabernacles, as did Professor Lightfoot. Some used Zacharius' order of temple service -- being the 8th order -- to calculate that Christ's birth was somewhere between October 2-9.

However, it was the “well-known solar feast of Natalis Invicti” (the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun) that is responsible for the December 25th date. It was the birthday of the Sun God. Many hailed it as the day the Sun was born and thus they merely had to change it from the birthday of the sun god to the birthday of the Son of God. Tertullian tried to fight against the adoption of this pagan day of sun worship by stating that Sol was not the Christians' God. Augustine and even Pope Leo, I bitterly said it was heretical to identify Christ with Sol (Sun).

But it was Emperor Constantine, a lifelong pagan, who was baptized on his deathbed, who did the trick. During his reign, Rome's official religion was sun worship – the cult of Sol Invictus or the Invincible Sun. Unfortunately for him, a growing religious turmoil was gripping Rome. Three centuries after Jesus' crucifixion, the number of professing Christians multiplied exponentially. Christians and pagans were warring to such proportions that it threatened to tear Rome apart.

Constantine decided something had to be done. In 325 A.D. he decided to unify Rome under a single religion – Christianity. Historians marvel at the brilliance with which Constantine converted the sun-worshipping pagans to “Christianity.” By blending pagan symbols, dates, and rituals into the expanding Christian tradition, Constantine created a hybrid religion that was acceptable to both pagans and professing Christians alike.

The vestiges of pagan religion in Christian zymology are undeniable. Egyptian sun disks became the halos of Catholic saints. Pictures of Isis nursing her miraculously conceived son, Horus, became the blueprint for modern images of the Virgin Mary nursing baby Jesus. Virtually all elements of the Catholic ritual – the miter, the altar, the doxology, and even the communion – the act of god-eating—were taken directly from earlier pagan mystery religions.

The pre-Christian god, Mithras – called the “Son of God: and the “Light of the World” – was born on December 25. December 25 is also the birthday of Osiris, Adonis, and Dionysus – all pagan deities! A book documenting much of this is titled, *4000 years of Christmas*.

Originally Christianity honored the 7th day Sabbath – Saturday. But Constantine shifted it to coincide with the pagans' veneration of the day of the sun. To this day, most churchgoers attend services on Sunday morning with no idea that they are there on account of the pagan sun god's weekly worship day – Sunday! The average person does not understand nor does he or she care.

**Our Behavior:**

In time past, many of us in the Churches of God who understood the pagan origins of Christmas became intolerant of relatives and other people who celebrated Christmas. It became a badge of righteousness to condemn others – their homes, their Christmas trees, their presents, and their music.

I remember well how my Aunt (my mother's sister) sent me a box of Roca candy at Christmas time while I was attending Ambassador college. I felt I had to be a witness and explain “the plain truth” about Christmas. I sent back the candy with a letter explaining much of the information contained in this email article. My aunt was extremely hurt. She didn't understand. She took it as a personal rejection of her.

I talked the situation over with several students who handled their situations differently – they kept the candy and goodies sent to them!

A worse result of our actions was this. Many of us became so disgusted with anything to do with Christmas that we transferred that disgust over to Christ's birth. Thus, the early chapters in Matthew and Luke were to a large degree omitted from sermons and Bible readings in the churches of God. I remember the feelings of not wanting to read the account of Christ's birth in the gospels of Mathew and Luke.



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I now realize the tremendous miracle – God’s greatest miracle – “the Word became flesh” and tented among us (John 1:14). Nowadays I seek the richness of the Scriptures regarding the Biblical accounts of Christ’s birth and the many things that accompanied that event.

No one knows the exact date of Christ’s birth. Some believe it was in the fall. Dr. Bullinger, in his *Companion Bible*, theorized that Christ was born in the fall but was conceived on or around December 25th.

There is no command in Scripture to observe Christ’s birth or his conception. One of the things I know and believe is that whether or not He was conceived around December 25th, His birth was not on December 25th!

I have come to realize that many people who observe the festivities of what is called “Christmas” have a variety of reasons why they do it. Many are not religious but merely celebrate it as a fun national holiday. There are many Jews who join in celebrating a national holiday with some of the decorations, customs, etc.

There are also many sincere people who believe they are celebrating the birthday of Christ. Maybe some of them are your own relatives.

Many of us in the Churches of God often became upset and harsh to someone who merely wishes us a “merry Christmas.” Somehow, we feel a duty to let this person know we don’t “keep Christmas” or explain the pagan origins of the celebration. Most people neither want to nor are ready to hear about it. A church member I knew in Oklahoma used to reply to a “merry Christmas” comment like this, “You stay sober too, will ya?”

Most of us in the Churches of God don’t have a tree, we don’t decorate our homes with “Christmas lights” or put wreaths on our doors or have a Christmas tree in our houses. In short, we do not celebrate Christmas. But we can and should appreciate and understand the wonderful meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ. We should not shrink from showing love, courtesy, and understanding to others who are not enlightened and, therefore, do observe Christmas. We can be, as Jesus said, “...wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matthew 10:16).

It is your personal decision how you handle or deal with people who observe Christmas. Each of us has to decide how to approach mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, sons or daughters, and friends in order to be a light to them and at the same time respect the fact that they either don’t understand or don’t care about the pagan origins of the Christmas celebration.

Whatever you do should be done according to your own conscience. Don’t judge others if they handle their relatives differently from you or, as some of my fellow students did, “keep the goodies.”

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**See David Antion’s other articles at:**  
[Antion, David – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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<http://daveantion.com/>

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**The Jonah Sign**  
**(Copyright 2023) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)**

The scribes and Pharisees wanted to see a sign from Jesus. This was His reply to them:

"A wicked and adulterous generation demands a sign, but none will be given it except the **sign** of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three

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nights in the heart of the earth" (See Matthew 12:38-40).

Did Jesus fulfill that sign? Traditionally, it is believed that Jesus died and was buried on a Friday afternoon, then rose from the dead early Sunday morning before sunrise. How do you get "three days and three nights" during that timeframe? You don't.

An alternate theory says that Jesus died and was buried on a Wednesday afternoon and then rose from the dead 72 hours later on a Saturday afternoon before sunset. This 72-hour theory proposes that the resurrection took place on the Sabbath rather than on the first day of the week as millions believe.

Please watch the short video linked below which explains the timeline of the 72-hour theory and attempts to show how Jesus fulfilled the Sign of Jonah by being in the tomb for "three days and three nights."

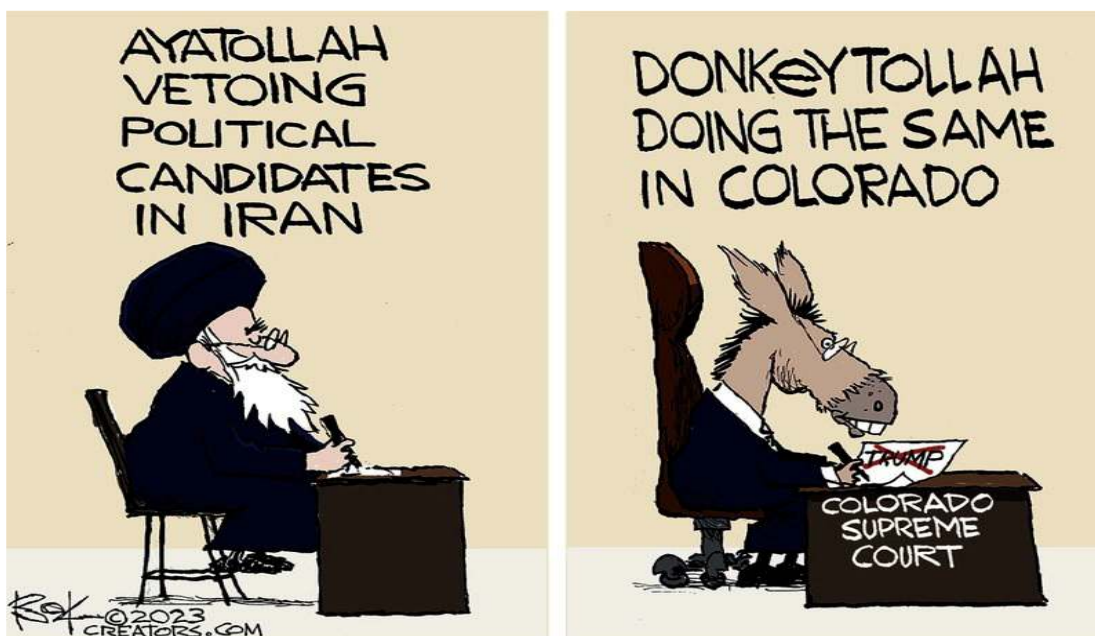
There is a problem with this 72-hour theory which needs to be addressed. You probably won't notice the problem by watching the video.

Note: The English word "day" can have various meanings. This may be true in other languages. It can mean the daylight portion of a calendar day as well as a calendar day of the month or week. See Genesis 1:3-5. While a calendar day may start at sunset, there is still daylight for a period of time after sunset. Be aware of the various meanings that are intended by the context of scripture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmtyYqq11Qc> 72-Hour Theory

See Dwight Fleming's other articles at:  
[Fleming, Dwight – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

**The Wicked Know Not at What They Stumble – Proverbs 4:19**  
(Copyright 2023) by James Lloyd (Medford, Oregon)



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**THE WICKED KNOW NOT AT WHAT THEY STUMBLE – Proverbs 4:19**

The foolish course of America’s current inept leadership is seen in the Bible as a “Script” that has historically repeated, as the attached humorous cartoon describes. Using a system called *Sequential Recapitulation*, a Bible Prophecy ministry has actually predicted many of the recent events in America, but the Christian “establishment” is censoring prophecy information that contradicts each doctrinal platform. The Scriptures describe the stages of the end times in Bible Prophecy, but most of the Christians have been taught what the Bible calls “Another Gospel” (*Galatians 1:6*) and unfortunately, most have not studied the truth for themselves.

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine...[because] there [will] come a falling away [from the truth]” (*II Timothy 4:3, II Thessalonians 2:3*).

Although they know that **Jesus Christ** is indeed the LORD, the bulk of Protestant and Catholic believers in America do not understand the **Holy Bible** predicted this time of “Strong Delusion” (*II Thessalonians 2:11*), when the *sequence* of end times events has been misrepresented. All say they “just want the truth,” but obviously with so many doctrinal divisions, *somebody* is deceived. However, a small group is aware of the Biblical prophecies that forecast each step of the path we’re on, but the maverick Christian ministry that has found these prophecies in the Bible has been censored by the “Christian” media, so most of the believers are unaware of the prophecies being fulfilled.

See James Lloyd’s other articles at:

[Lloyd, James – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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**Great American Eclipse of 2024**  
**(2024) Sent by James Steinle (Swanville, Minesota)**

**14 Things That Everyone Needs To Know About The Great American Eclipse Of 2024 April 8 by Michael Snyder.**

<https://michaelsnyder.substack.com/p/14-things-that-everyone-needs-to?r=2hre0o>

“We are just a little bit more than three months away from what many believe will be the most dramatic total solar eclipse in U.S. history. It is being called “the Great American Eclipse of 2024”, and millions of Americans will take time off in order to travel so that they can personally see it. Between now and April, the mainstream news will be filled with stories about this eclipse, and so it is going to be difficult for anyone to ignore what is going on. In this article, I am going to share 14 things that everyone needs to know about the Great American Eclipse of 2024...”

A previous eclipse over the Madrid Fault in 1811 resulted in **great** earthquakes a few months later...

See James Steinle’s other articles at:

[Steinle, James – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

## Betrayal

(2024) Sent by Rich Traver (Clifton, Colorado)

Betrayed by government and sciences.

<https://expose-news.com/2024/01/01/let-a-scientist-speak-presentation-goes-viral-because-its-true/>

See Rich Traver's other articles at:

[Traver, Rich – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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## Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

## In regard to: Azazel: Observations and Questions

Article by Pat Higgins

Comments by Darwin Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

### What Does the Live Goat Represent

If the live goat bears the guilt of all sin, then that goat would indeed represent Satan bearing the guilt of sin.

Pat Higgins quote, paragraph five from bottom of last page, last sentence, "obviously, it bore the guilt for the sins of the people."

Laura Lees's quote: Iron sharpening iron, last paragraph-first sentence, "It seems to me that the live goat represents carrying sin from the people".

Therefore, the live goat would more fully symbolize carrying away sin rather than carrying the "guilt".

**Jer 31:34** And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, **and I will remember their sin no more.**

Second thought: However, if Satan bears the guilt for the sins of all, then the live goat in God's court of law would also have had been put to death, NOT for payment of sins death penalty as that of the goat that represents Jesus dying in our stead BUT put to death for co-conspiring (in the two-goat symbolism) of Day of Atonement. As Pat Higgins says, (not a direct quote), "the person instigating the sinful act is just as guilty as the person who did it, as in our own court of law".

Sense the live goat bears the guilt of the sins of the people, then why is it not put to death also?

I am only left with one observation and that of scripture that references Satan (I think): **Jude (v.6)** And the angels which

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kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (v.13) Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. See also: **Re 20:10** “And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever”. How can one be tormented for ever and ever if that one is dead? Those scriptures appear to me to show that the symbolism of the live goat is backed up by the scriptures mentioned above.

However, there are scriptures that hint otherwise perhaps and that is: **Mr 1:23 ¶** And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, **Mr 1:24** Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? **art thou come to destroy us?** I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. **Heb 2:14 ¶** “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he (Jesus) might destroy him (Satan) that had the power of death (again Jesus), that is, the devil”. **This looks like Satan is to be destroyed.**

**Destroy in Greek, Strongs concordance #622 meaning to die-parish etc. Also, Strongs # 2673; “to put away, vanish”.**

**I believe that Laura’s view is the more correct view that the live goat symbolically carries away forever even from God’s mind the sins of all mankind never to be remembered, forgotten as though no one ever sinned. After all, if I forgot something it’s just as though it never was? (Jer. 31:34)**

**Then we have the scripture to address and that of: 1Co 6:3** Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

I’m not sure that anyone knows what that will entail and to what degree that is going to be accomplished.

## In regard to: Sunday – The Catholic Sabbath

Article by Avram Yehoshua

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

We are re-printing this article for what it says about the Seventh Day Sabbath not being changed to Sunday and I believe there is ample proof for that in this article.

One thing I need to comment on however is when this article speaks of Christ’s resurrection being on Sunday. There is no place in scripture that speaks of a Sunday resurrection. Christ died and was put in the tomb on a Wednesday just before sunset and He rose 3 days later on a Saturday Sabbath just before sunset.

## In regard to: The Footwashing Service

Article by Warren Zehrung

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

This is an excellent article in regard to footwashing but there are within the article a couple of things we do not agree with and I feel I need to point them out so people can look and decide for themselves.

**From the article:**

During this last Passover with Jesus, the disciples, including Peter, did not fully understand the meaning of the footwashing.



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The meal that Christ and His disciples ate the night before Christ was crucified was not a Passover meal. It was an important meal, but it was not a Passover meal. Christ used this meal to introduce the wine, bread and footwashing but He did not change the date of Passover. Christ was killed with the Passover lambs because He was the Passover Lamb. You can't eat the Passover meal until the lambs are killed. Christ died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan and the Passover lambs were eaten on that evening as the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan turned into the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nisan.

**Joh 13:1** Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. **Joh 13:2** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him;

As you can see from John 13:1-2 Christ's last supper took place before the seven-day feast of Passover.

**Eze 45:21** In the first *month*, in the fourteenth day of the month, ye shall have the passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

**From the article:**

There is a deeper meaning in the footwashing episode than is at first apparent. In the same way that the disciples' feet had become soiled as they walked to the Passover supper, we, too, become soiled by sin after our initial cleansing at baptism.

Again, the last meal that Christ ate with His disciples was not a Passover meal. (See Above)

**From the article:**

The footwashing of each other's feet – cleans our house – these earthly tabernacles and prepares us to receive the bread and wine.

On this one there seems to be a mixed consensus. The custom was generally to wash people's feet as they entered a home so perhaps according to this article Warren is correct in regard to the symbolism represented here and that the order should be footwashing first and then the bread and the wine. If anyone has written an article in regard to the footwashing being before or after the meal, please send it over for consideration to print. We here have been doing the footwashing after the meal but after reading this, it seems to make more sense to do it before the meal. So I am looking for articles that can prove this from scripture.

**Joh 13:2** And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him; **Joh 13:3** Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; **Joh 13:4** He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. **Joh 13:5** After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe *them* with the towel wherewith he was girded. **Joh 13:6** Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? **Joh 13:7** Jesus answered and said unto him, **What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.** **Joh 13:8** Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, **If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.** **Joh 13:9** Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head. **Joh 13:10** Jesus saith to him, **He that is washed needeth not save to wash *his* feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all.** **Joh 13:11** For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, **Ye are not all clean.** **Joh 13:12** So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, **Know ye what I have done to you?** **Joh 13:13** **Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am.** **Joh 13:14** If I then, *your* Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. **Joh 13:15** For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. **Joh 13:16** Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. **Joh 13:17** If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

**Thank you Everyone!**

## In regard to: The Jonah Sign

Article by Dwight Fleming  
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

I see no problem with the 72-hour theory as that is how we get 3 days and 3 nights.

**Joh 11:9** Jesus answered, **Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world.**

The time period between sunset and actual darkness is considered to be part of the night. In Jewish law they had what is called a Relative hour. See the following web page: [Relative hour - Wikipedia](#)

How this works is that there are twelve hours in a day and twelve hours in a night. The entire day is 24 hours long and that part does not change. What changes is how the day and night are figured. The daylight portion of a day starts at dawn when the sun comes up and it ends when the sun goes down. The night portion starts when the sun goes down and ends when it rises at dawn.

The sun rising and setting is what determines a day or night regardless of, if light is seen before the sun rises or after it sets.

What makes the day relative is that in different seasons of the year the day is shorter, and the night is longer and at other times of the year the day is longer, and the night is shorter. However, during the Holy Day season in spring and fall the day and night in Israel is divided pretty equal as in 12 hours and 12 hours.

## Letters

**Letter from Gregory Diaz (January 4, 2024)**

Hi Laura,

Here is another article. I believe this is the shortest one I have written. I am not sure. There is more that I could have written but I wanted to keep it reasonably short.

Thank you very much for your website.

Greg

## The Millennial Worship System (Part 9A)

(Copyright) by Rich Traver (Clifton, Colorado)

***Amazing and intricately detailed prophecies in the Book of Ezekiel describe a future Religious System few have ever heard about. Major proponents of "New Covenant Theology" exclude what this clear Biblical Prophecy reveals, avoiding disturbing Theological Questions these explicit passages expose.***

Few subjects attract as much interest as Bible Prophecy. It's the rare individual who doesn't find the subject 'interesting' at least, and among Bible literates, more often than not, the subject can provoke animated discussion, and usually drawing rapt attention, when it's knowledgeably presented.

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Most ‘Prophecy Buffs’ are quite familiar with what is known as ‘the longest prophecy’, found in the Book of Daniel, Chapters 2 and 11. (Longest in terms of the covered span of history.) These are the passages that deal with the actions of successive world empires: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome, with Rome’s seven restorations, extending down to the present. (In fact, the passages in Daniel 11 contain such accurate detail, that some ‘scholars’ insist that the book must have been written after those events described actually took place, not before!)

**Longer in Terms of Chapters.**

But, in terms of chapter after chapter of incredibly specific detail, there’s a prophecy stream that’s much longer, that few church-goers are remotely aware of. It’s rarely mentioned. This one continues for thirteen whole chapters and deals with the time period of the Millennial Kingdom, which is the literal Kingdom of God on Earth. You’d think this prophecy would be of extreme interest to Bible students, yet it remains and is consigned to the remotest regions of our consciousness. Why? Not just because of its subject matter, but also because of its clear and present emphasis on an aspect of God’s Law which ‘New Covenant’ theologians, almost unanimously, have concluded to have been totally ended for all time.

As a result, this subject is held by them and their peers in adamant repudiation and near total contempt.

**Why a Ceremonial System?**

It’s the uncomfortable conclusions, which would logically have to be drawn, which accounts for the widespread disdain in the religious community. It’s what these chapters portray, in such explicit detail that evokes a near total rejection. In just these few chapters, powerful challenges are posed to the cherished conclusions of nearly all ‘New Covenant’ theologians, drawn and espoused since the latter decades of the first century. Their conclusions, once defined, have skewed succeeding theological thought processes in such a way as to leave certain important questions unanswered, and even unanswerable! One example:

Why was God’s Law given in the first place? (We should always remember; salvation was not earnable! Not then, and not since!) Few can offer an answer.

The primary component threaded all through these prophecies found in the final thirteen chapters of the Book of Ezekiel is the practical performance of God’s Ceremonial System. More specifically: those aspects of God’s Law which involve Sacrificial performances, which most regard, with great relief, as having been thoroughly “done away” for good and for all time.

But among those who hold this opinion, it’s the rare individual who can clearly explain exactly WHY it was that God gave us the Ceremonial or Sacrificial System in the first place.

Without these several chapters in Ezekiel, we might never have known of the restored worship system, because we never would have thought to consider such things. Here we are presented with a scenario that falls far outside of the realm of accepted theology, yet the pointed questions raised within these passages remain inescapable.

In the spring of 1995, under the doctrinal revisions being vigorously imposed upon the Church of God under its major ‘paradigm shift’, I can remember taking strong exception to a number of the illogical conclusions one would have to embrace in order to accept what was then being passed off as a ‘whole new belief system!’ (It wasn’t really ‘new!’) To the statement from the podium of there being no literal Kingdom of God on Earth, as is so clearly stated in such places as Zechariah 14 and Revelation 20 and 21, the local ‘minister’ responded to a direct challenge by pointing out the obvious reference to there being some sort of sacrificial offering mentioned in Zech.14:21 and since any and all sacrificing was ENDED in Christ, those passages could **not** be referring to any real future event.

In other words, the idea being posed was that since sacrificing was ‘all done away’, then this prophecy must be disregarded as well, as it alludes to such performances! (Does this approach represent sound theology?)

Rejecting a substantial Biblical statement outright because we aren’t comfortable with what it implies?)

**Is it ALL NOT True?**

Hearing his allegation, the question came to mind, then, what are these thirteen chapters in Ezekiel all about? Will there actually be some sort of restored Sacrificial System in the Millennium? I’d known of these thirteen chapters for years,

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but never had reason to focus on their actual meaning, let alone their obvious and profound implications upon ‘accepted’ Christian theology!

Another minister in New England in 1972, when pointedly asked about this matter, admitted quite plainly, that he believed there **would** be sacrificing in the Millennial Age, but we couldn’t draw-out any further definition from him at the time as to the reason he thought such practices would again be reverted to.

This remains the basic question. Is there to be some sort of restored Sacrificial System in the soon-coming Kingdom of God under His Christ, and if so, for what possible reason?

### **Three Problem Areas!**

Before we pose an answer, we need to be aware that this consideration creates at least THREE major dilemmas within the ‘accepted’ theological establishment.

#### **Could it be NOT ‘Done Away’?**

**First**, the obvious thing, that of the Sacrificial and Ceremonial Systems NOT being permanently ‘done away’, as most allege. **Second** being the impact upon what is regarded as “New Covenant” theology, that not only does the Moral Law remain in effect, but potentially some form of the Ceremonial and Sacrificial System will be used as well! This idea would be particularly unsettling among those who advocate that ALL “Old Testament Law” is ‘done away’, that all of the Old Testament requirements have no real application to us under this New Covenant Era.

But **third**, is a problem for the greatest majority of Christians, who hold that the Kingdom of God is here and NOW, not a REAL literal future Kingdom here on Earth. Rather, they hold that upon death, Christians go to heaven forever, “...*to be with the Lord*”! What possible need would there be for a Millennial Kingdom, particularly one that practices some form of “Old Testament”, ceremony involving sacrificing and ritual? What possible purpose could there be for such a contradictory scenario?

Perhaps from these, we can begin to see why there is such automatic and universal rejection of and revulsion against any consideration of Ezekiel’s prophecy, and to what it reveals. Its basic allegation is gravel in the gears of fundamental Christian theology. It violates our traditional belief systems! We, like the first century Jews, are put in the position of having to choose between our cherished traditional views, or the clear Word of God? (Mark 7:9) It’s not a comfortable experience. Most will seek comfort within their traditional understandings.

There are a number of New Testament passages that make reference to this matter. Many have been used to illustrate the inapplicability of Old Testament practices in the Christian Life. If, in fact, the Old Testament does present a certain degree of relevance to the Redemptive Experience, and has a useful place in the implementation of the Plan of God, as it facilitates the salvation of all mankind, then we need to consider, what doctrinal modifications would be necessary in ‘modern day theology’ to accommodate this?

#### **Fulfilling the Law and Prophets**

Certainly, this consideration would enliven Christ’s statement in Matthew 5:17-18, “*Think not I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*” What did He mean by the term: “Fulfill”?

Another statement, that the ‘Elijah Work’ and Jesus Christ would “restore all things”,<sup>36</sup> would be similarly disturbing, if it was regarded as referring to His restoring the religious practices of past ages. After all, how do you “restore” something that never before existed? The “times of restitution”? What’s to be restored? Certainly not something entirely NEW! Could these mentions be referring to some sort of sacrificial or ceremonial system? Something similar to what was practiced in the distant past, in, say, the patriarchal era, or **gasp!** even under the Old Testament Levitical System?

None of this would make logical sense to our way of seeing things, as defined by accepted theology. That, largely because the regard most theologians have for God’s Law precludes our understanding just why God gave the Ceremonial and Sacrificial Laws in the first place. Loosely, many people have sort of thought that “the Law” was the way they acquired or earned their salvation, or at least, how they dealt with their sins, whereas, simply accepting Christ’s sacrifice

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<sup>36</sup> Matt. 17:11, Mark 9:12 (Mal. 4:5) Acts 3:21, Acts 1:6,

is how we acquire ours.

The error of that kind of thinking should be obvious. You see, salvation was never earnable! Not then, not now! That is not what the Law of God is for!! The Law did not provide them means for salvation, nor did it provide them any degree of remission of sins! Once that is realized, the obvious question then emerges, “Then, why was the Law given?” What was it all for? This is the answer we were never given by our esteemed theologians!

Even perfect Law keeping does not and did not affect remission of sins in the least! If adhering to the Law did not result in salvation, then what was it all for? New Covenant theology, as most hold it, cannot provide a full and logical answer to that essential question. Perhaps it doesn’t want one! There has to be something inherently wrong with a theological process that obfuscates our even asking this most obvious question, let alone having where-withal to provide us a true and logical answer. It seems to some, that the only reason God gave mankind His Law, was to provide Himself the opportunity to ‘do away with it’ as soon as He could!

What is it that is so objectionable about the Laws God gave to Israel at Mount Sinai, and in the years following? Why do these Laws evoke such disdain and disregard, even such open contempt among ‘God loving’ people? Why did God give us Laws? What was His objective? What good did they ever do? But an even more profound question, what possible purpose would there be for a restored sacrificial and ceremonial system, like the one Ezekiel describes, for the future? Our New Testament **does** offer clear and understandable answers.

#### **Restoring the Kingdom to Israel?**

After His resurrection, the disciples asked Christ a potent question. They asked, “**Will you at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?**” (Acts 1:6) We tend to regard their question as addressing the political situation. Did their question also involve national reunification considerations? Couldn’t they also have been considering the prophesied religious implications of a God-restored Kingdom? A religious system overthrow as well, not just an overthrow of the Roman yoke? (In fact, Roman domination may not have been the intent of their question at all!

Having previously been eyewitnesses to the powerful diatribe against the religious establishment at the Temple, just hours before His Olivet Prophecy was given, <sup>37</sup> how can the religious implications be left out of their question? Were they referring to the reunification of Israel? Were they referring to a restoration of that True Priesthood to the nation, called for in the Book of Malachi, <sup>38</sup> as opposed to the corrupt system, so well described in Matthew 23:1-39? Were they looking for that Messianic Kingdom, (seeing that His Messiahship was well established: (see Acts 1))

All of these are the major themes of Ezekiel’s Millennial prophecy!

#### **What Ezekiel Says of the Millennial Age**

Before discussing this matter further, it might be good at this point to review these several chapters, to get a general idea of the specific information they contain. The Millennial Kingdom passages begin in Chapter 36 and end with the end of the Book, in Chapter 48. Thirteen chapters in all!

After relating Israel’s desolation in the end-time, an oath is uttered by God <sup>39</sup> of their restoration and national repopulation. Continuing, we find: Ezek. 36:22-28 Israel is brought back to the land, is given God’s Spirit, begins keeping God’s Statutes and Judgments; (The physical nation of Israel).

36:29-38 Israel is restored to exemplary status among nations;

37:1-25 Israel is resurrected, and is reunited as a Godly nation;

37:26-28 God makes the “Everlasting Covenant” with them, His Sanctuary is now to be established among men;

39:29 God’s Spirit is poured out upon Israel after their return from captivity;

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 23:1-39

<sup>38</sup> Malachi 3:3-4

<sup>39</sup> Isaiah 36:7



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- 40: & 41: Physical description of the Millennial Temple and the City of Jerusalem;
- 42: North Court and three-tiered galleries and the Priests areas are described;
- 43:7-12 The place of God's Throne is forever among a purified people;
- 43:13-27 The Altar for Millennial Sacrifices is described in detail;
- 44:9 Spiritual OR physical circumcision is required in order to obtain access into God's Sanctuary; **(an important revelation!)**
- 44:10-14 Unconverted ministers to officiate over these Millennial Sacrificial Services;
- 44:15-31 Faithful ministers are to perform Holy Service and to keep God's Laws and Sabbaths;
- 45:1-25 Division of the land, weights and measures, Sacrifices appropriate for the Sabbaths and Holy Days;
- 46:1-10 East Gate is to be open for Sabbaths and Holy Days;
- 46:11-24 More explicit details concerning performing Offerings and Sacrifices;
- 47:1-12 River of Life flows from the Sanctuary, watered trees yield food and medicine;
- 47:13-23 New Israel's territorial extent;
- 48:1-29 Apportionment of tribal territories;
- 48:30-35 City spreads 4500 measures, named: The LORD is There!

**How Do We Know this is Millennial?**

All of this is too incredible for some people to believe. They dismiss it outright as only an idea of what the people of that time would have expected in the days before Christ's first coming. How do we know these passages are referring to God's Millennial Kingdom? How do we establish that this is not just referring to sometime in the distant past, as the New King James version (Nelson, 1985) and other versions attempt to suggest, by means of their interposed paragraph headings?

**Clear, Undisputable References.**

There are many indisputable references in this lengthy narrative, that clearly limit the timeframe to being AFTER Christ's second coming. For examples:

- 36:25-27 God's Spirit is to be offered on a nationwide basis;
- 37:3-13 A general resurrection of both houses of Israel: (Judah and Israel: The southern and the northern kingdoms, which have been divided since the days just after Solomon's reign ended.)
- 37:17-22 Both houses are to be reunited as a single nation for the first time since King Rehoboam, son of Solomon;
- 37:24 The Resurrected King David is to be their national King!; (see also Luke 22:30)
- 37:26-28 God's Sanctuary is permanently set among them;
- 39:1-16 The Asian military forces are to be thoroughly defeated;
- 43:7 The NEW Temple is to be God's Holy Dwelling Place;

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47:1-6 A ‘Living River’ is to flow out from the Temple area.

Not only these, but many other details are evident, which have NO historical precedent. This period can be nothing other than the New Millennium under God’s returned Christ. The TRUE Messiah!

**What Possible Reason?**

But WHY is this religious system to be set up? Why is such a kingdom necessary? What possible purpose could there be for a formal and structured government, both civil and religious. Why the need for a newly purified priesthood, <sup>40</sup> why a ceremonial system and why restored sacrificing?

Here’s where traditional religion is largely ignorant, and more than ignorant, it is also extremely ill-at-ease, having rejected a pointed Biblical Truth. These things can’t be understood within the framework established by any traditional theological persuasion. Religion generally understands the essence of the Plan of Salvation, but it DOES NOT understand the overall Plan of God, which has been pre-determined to extend the opportunity for salvation to all. **“God is not willing that any should perish...”** (2 Pet.3:9). It’s not only His WILL, it happens to also be His PLAN! The massive numbers of ‘lost’ individuals we see everywhere are not what He wants ultimately?

God has a pre-determined plan through which He will extend the opportunity for Salvation to all who have ever lived. The Millennial Kingdom is essential to the implementation of that Plan. The fundamental Biblical doctrine, the resurrections from the dead, <sup>41</sup> represents the second essential. Much about these is revealed thru God’s Holy Day pattern, that’s why so much is said about their observance in Ezekiel’s last thirteen chapters.

**What Possible Purpose?**

It’s here we need to consider a profound question. Could the Millennial Sacrificial System be a component of that PLAN by which all who have ever lived, both the Tribulation’s survivors and their descendants, and even all those of past ages, by means of a general resurrection toward the end of that age, are to be processed thru God’s **ultimate educational program**? A program which will bring them into a Spiritual condition where they are finally **capable** of truly repenting and accepting Christ’s Sacrifice, and undergo a full and TRUE Conversion, ultimately undergoing a personal flesh-to-Spirit CHANGE <sup>42</sup> ?

Actually, the New Testament has much to say on this matter!

It’s without doubt, the Old Testament Sacrificial System has been discontinued since Christ’s crucifixion. He ‘fulfilled’ what those ceremonial rituals pictured. But the persistent question remains, “What was that system for in the first place?” It was **not** to provide them with a means to achieve salvation. Salvation WAS NOT its resultant product nor its purpose in Old Testament times! This question is not modern! The Apostle Paul recognized and addressed the question, and it is his answer to it that produces enormous insight.

**The Law, Our Schoolmaster!**

The answer Paul gave us, has been largely mis-recognized for centuries. So much so, that people today hardly fathom its real point. In Galatians 3:24 we read, **“Therefore, the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.”** This particular statement is Paul’s answer to his own question, the same one we posed and he posed five verses earlier: *“What purpose does the Law serve?”* (Gal.3:19) We need to point out that Paul’s question and answer considers the purpose for the Ceremonial and Sacrificial Law. He’s referring to those components that were ADDED because of transgressions (of the Moral Law) not the moral law itself! (Same verse).

**Contemptuous Regard**

Unfortunately, the subject he presents in these verses has been viewed thru the prism of contempt by so many, for so long, that most can hardly hear what Paul is really telling us! Understanding the vital essence of this particular passage is KEY to understanding the purpose of the Millennial Sacrificial System. It is that revealing!

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<sup>40</sup> Malachi 2:7-9, 3:3

<sup>41</sup> Hebrews 6: 2

<sup>42</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:52, & 15:22-26

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Paul, here, in Galatians 3:19 – 29, ties-in the inter-relationships of the Promises, Eternal Life, Faith, Righteousness and Justification. Too few have noticed. Most, in their zeal to discredit and discard any degree of ‘Law-keeping’ amplify verses 24 and 25 to be saying that the Law is merely an ‘old schoolmaster’, (reading that in the sense of ‘taskmaster’), which we are justified in despising, as we as grade-schoolers despised those who taught and disciplined us. The idea being that once we got thru our schooling, we can now forget all that, as just a bad experience, just a phase, inapplicable and totally unnecessary in our current life. What is called New Testament theology generally projects a view much like that, distorting the point Paul was really trying to make.

Actually, there is something very revealing in the ‘contempt attitude toward the schoolmaster’. First, it exposes the ‘natural’ attitude of enmity toward God’s Law that Romans 8:7 so well describes. Secondly, it isn’t logical to dump everything we learned from the educational system in which we grew up. Graduation, (and the release from the rigorous demands of an educational regimen), does not justify holding that educational system in contempt once we graduate! It makes even less sense to repudiate everything we learned from it once we graduate.

Anyone who has earned a college degree realizes that life is different afterward. The demands on our attention, our energy, our mental discipline changes dramatically after ‘commencement’ into our real lives. The college experience organized and focused how and what we learned. To go thru all that intensive study and expense, and then after graduation, to despise all that was acquired, and to deliberately forget it, or to deliberately never use what was learned, or even to REPUDIATE it, is just plain STUPID! (Not referring to the woke indoctrination.)

Our perception of what Paul is saying should not be from that point of view. Paul does not suggest we despise that schoolmaster, though many take it as though he does. “Schoolmaster” was not a derogatory term!

#### **An ADDITIONAL Law?**

There are interesting points Paul brings out in Galatians 3:19-25. First, after asking the question, “*What purpose does the Law serve?*”, he states that *it* (the Law) *was ADDED* (added to what?) *because of transgressions...!* That poses a very profound consideration: “*The Law was added because of transgressions!*” In other words, because one Law was broken, another was added to it as an after-remedy!! There’s the Moral Law, which defines what sin is (transgression),<sup>43</sup> and there is another set of ‘Laws’, deemed necessary on account of man’s transgression of that Moral Law. Most theologically oriented people tend to overlook this clear distinction. They are more comfortable with the idea that any mention of Law must be the same Law, and if any part of it is rendered irrelevant, all Law is rendered irrelevant, all-together, entirely!

Let’s interject a consideration at this point, by asking, “Where would a person BE who disregarded (broke) the Moral Laws, yet was faithful in all the Ceremonial and Sacrificial Laws?” Under this consideration, many familiar statements of the Apostle Paul on the subject take on a new vividness, particularly as to the effectiveness of the added Sacrificial / Ceremonial System in providing remission of sins (thus attaining justification).

#### **No Law Can Give Life?**

For example, his statement in Galatians 3:21, “*For if there had been a law which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the law*”. Then in verse 23, “*...we were kept under guard (protected) by the law, kept (preserved) for the faith which would afterward be revealed*”. The added Ceremonial and Sacrificial Laws focused and oriented one’s way of life preparatory to receiving that faith which would eventually be made available. It was for a time a stop-gap imposition. It taught life lessons by illustration.

Before God’s Faith was offered, the Ceremonial Law served to orient a person’s thinking and his conduct, making him a suitable candidate for a future calling, under which calling those Ceremonial and Sacrificial elements would be rendered no longer necessary. (Not that they would ever have lost their educational values.)

When a person’s compliance with the Moral Law failed, (due to human inadequacy), the Ceremonial System provided a safety net by providing a means of maintaining access to God, and by illustrating that person’s failings, keeping his mind in clear focus on what needed to be done about it! Many specific details within the Ceremonial format point directly to the functional role of Christ. The New Testament theologian will even admit that much!

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<sup>43</sup> 1 John 3:4

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**What Advantage Then Hast the Jew?**

Paul addresses another aspect of the question in Romans 3: that increasingly manifested itself in attitudes of his day. He asks, *“What advantage then hast the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision?”* (That ritual formality essential for being able to enter the Temple and to participate in their Ceremonial activities). He then acknowledges, *“Much in every way, Chiefly, because to them were committed the oracles of God.”* They had possession of what God had said, not that such possession gave them any advantage other than an awareness of the right way. But, at least, it oriented their thinking (if they knew God’s oracles) to be able to accept the Atoning Sacrifice of Christ when He later came to fulfill what those observances up to that point had only pictured.

That’s what those added aspects of Ritual Laws were for! To orient the mind of the sincere worshipper to The Standards of God’s Righteous Character, and where a failure to keep within His moral guidelines occurred, the added Ceremonial and Sacrificial Laws impressed on the sinner what needed to be done about it.

But yet, those ritual performances remained merely ineffective representations of the justification process which would later be brought into full existence when God’s Anointed Paschal Sacrifice was finally offered, once for all. (And that ‘all’ includes those who died without having access to that sacrifice.

**Shedding of Blood IS Required!**

This explains what the Levitical Ceremonial and Sacrificial Laws were for. Not to provide the worshipper with a means of salvation, but rather, it was a ‘schoolmaster system’ to teach and prepare (and preserve) the worshipper for that future faith-based system, in the fullness of its time. Yet, the essential element remains, *“...without the shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Heb.9:22) Under BOTH the Old and New Covenants, this single requirement remains an absolute essential.

So, the Old Testament System did have an important purpose. It dealt with the issue of sin, impressing upon the unconverted worshipper what needed to be done about it, and allowing him, in his unregenerate state, access into God’s Holy presence.

**Further Consideration.**

There’s a scripture in Ezekiel that is very revealing in this regard. It is found in Chapter 44, verse 9. In it we find two different kinds of worshippers being represented! This is perhaps the most over-looked consideration of all. The verse says, ***“Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh shall enter into my sanctuary...”*** Here we are introduced to what **ought** to be obvious. That there are going to be two different kinds of worshipper in the Millennial Age. Those circumcised of heart, and those not. Of those not, in order to worship God acceptably, and thus be admitted into His Holy Sanctuary, (figuratively or literally) it will be necessary to at least become circumcised of the flesh!

In other words, we’re here talking about converted people and unconverted people! Two different kinds of physical worshippers living together: The Regenerate and the Unregenerate!

At Christ’s return, all forms of religion will be discontinued, excepting for God’s True religion. There will no longer be any false religion of any kind. Yet, all people will then be required to worship God. What will be the form of that worship? Those who worship *“...must worship Him in Spirit and in Truth”*. (John 4:24) Not only with right information, but in the right Spiritual mindset!

Further, at the outset of the Millennial Kingdom, all converted Saints will have been changed from a fleshly existence to a Spirit existence. Those alive at Christ’s return will instantly be made Spirit, moments after the resurrected Saints are.  
<sup>44</sup> This will leave all others remaining alive at that point in time still unregenerate! In other words, unconverted and still physical. Yet all will be required to stop how they’re doing it and to begin worshipping God in an acceptable manner. The question is, what is that acceptable form of worship?

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**See Rich Traver’s other articles at:**

**[Traver, Rich – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)**

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<sup>44</sup> 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 and 1 Corinthians 15:51-54

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## Holy Days 2024

Passover – April 23, 2024 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 23-29, 2024

Pentecost – June 12, 2024

Trumpets - October 3, 2024

Atonement – October 12, 2024

Tabernacles –October 17, 2024, to October 23, 2024

Last Great Day – October 24, 2024

## Notes

## Notes