

## Was the Logos Melchizedek?

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## Why Must Satan Be Released?

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## Articles

### **Was the Logos Melchizedek?** (Copyright 2008) by Bryan T. Huie (Dennard, Arkansas)

There has been a lot of confusion over the meaning of the seventh chapter of Hebrews. The recent position of most of the Churches of God has been that the **Logos** was Melchizedek before his human incarnation as Jesus (Yeshua) in the first century C.E. A close examination of this Scripture is necessary to understand what the author of Hebrews was really trying to say.

The overall purpose of Hebrews 7 is to explain that for Jewish Christians, the Levitical priesthood had been superceded. To illustrate the transition of the priesthood from the Levites to Yeshua the Messiah, the writer uses Melchizedek, priest of God in the Old Testament, to typify Christ's new position as High Priest.

The first biblical reference we find to Melchizedek is in Genesis 14:18-20.

GENESIS 14:18 Then **Melchizedek** king of Salem brought out bread and wine; **he was the priest of God Most High**. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; 20 and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. (**NKJV**)

**Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary** says the following about Melchizedek:

A king of Salem (Jerusalem) and priest of the Most High God (Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6-11; 6:20-7:28). Melchizedek's appearance and disappearance in the Book of Genesis are somewhat mysterious. Melchizedek and Abraham first met after Abraham's defeat of Chedorlaomer and his three allies. Melchizedek presented bread and wine to Abraham and his weary men, demonstrating friendship and religious kinship. He bestowed a blessing on Abraham in the name of El Elyon ("God Most High") and praised God for giving Abraham a victory in battle (Gen. 14:18-20).

Abraham presented Melchizedek with a tithe (a tenth) of all the booty he had gathered. By this act Abraham indicated that he recognized Melchizedek as a fellow-worshiper of the one true God as well as a priest who ranked higher spiritually than himself. Melchizedek's existence shows that there were people other than Abraham and his family who served the true God.

In Psalm 110, a messianic psalm written by David (Matt. 22:43), Melchizedek is seen as a type of Christ. This theme is repeated in the Book of Hebrews, where both Melchizedek and Jesus are considered kings of righteousness and peace. By citing Melchizedek and his unique priesthood as a type, the writer shows that

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Christ's new priesthood is superior to the old Levitical order and the priesthood of Aaron (Heb. 7:1-10; Melchisedec, KJV).

Attempts have been made to identify Melchizedek as . . . an angel, the Holy Spirit, Christ, and others. All are the products of speculation, not historical fact; and **it is impossible to reconcile them with the theological argument of Hebrews**. Melchizedek was a real, historical king-priest who served as a type for the greater King-Priest who was to come, Jesus Christ. (p. 819, "Melchizedek")

**The Erdmans Bible Dictionary** gives this interpretation of the seventh chapter of Hebrews:

Within the interpretation of Ps. 110 that occupies much of the epistle to the Hebrews, Heb. 7 builds on Gen. 14:18-20. Abraham's acknowledgment of the legitimacy of Melchizedek's priesthood becomes an argument for the priority of that priesthood over the "descendants of Levi" (vv. 4-10). The messianic ruler of Ps. 110 is, therefore, a priest of a line prior to the levitical priesthood ("after the order of Melchizedek"; Heb. 7:11-19; KJV "Melchisedec"; cf. 5:6, 10; 6:20). That the narrative of the king-priest Melchizedek is introduced so abruptly into Genesis becomes an argument for Melchizedek's being "without father or mother or genealogy," i.e., beginning or end (7:3), and so not only a predecessor but also a type of Christ as "a priest for ever" (cf. Ps. 110:4). The legitimacy of the levitical priesthood depends on its descent from Levi; as it has a beginning, so it has an end in the understanding of the author of Hebrews. (p. 707, "Melchizedek")

The caves where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found yielded a series of thirteen fragments on Melchizedek. From these, it appears the belief that Melchizedek was the Messiah was a strongly held conviction among the Qumran community, as well as among some other Jewish and Gnostic sects in the first century C.E.

Some branches of the sabbatarian Church of God have also held this view. They have used the depiction of Melchizedek in Hebrews 7 not only to connect him to Christ but also as support for the co-eternality of Christ with God the Father in the Binitarian model of the Godhead.

In Hebrews 6:20 we find the premise of chapter 7 established, which is that Jesus Christ is now our High Priest in heaven. As such, he is of the order of Melchizedek, which is contrasted with the Levitical priesthood.

HEBREWS 6:20 Where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever **according to [kata]** the order of Melchizedek. (NKJV)

The **New Analytical Greek Lexicon** says that **kata** means "after the fashion or likeness of."

HEBREWS 7:1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," 3 without father, without mother, **without genealogy** [*agenealogetos*]<sup>1</sup>, having neither beginning of days nor end of life<sup>2</sup>, but **made like** [*aphomoiomenos*] the Son of God, remains a priest continually<sup>3</sup>. (NKJV)

The belief that Melchizedek was Christ rests on three erroneous assumptions about Hebrews 7:3, shown by the superscripted numbers in the passage above.

The first is the argument that since Melchizedek is said to be without father, mother, and genealogy, he has to be eternal and therefore the Son of God. However, many have failed to see that the author does not use the terms "without father" (**apatoor**), "without mother" (**ametoor**), and "without genealogy" (**agenealogetos**) literally in this passage.

The concept presented by the author is not that Melchizedek lacked an actual father, mother, or family tree, but that there is no record of his parents and lineage. The Mosaic law required that all priests be descendants of the tribe of Levi. Those who were not Levites could not be priests under the law. Melchizedek is introduced in Genesis 14:18-20 as priest of the Most High God, but no details about his lineage are given. Under the law, he was not qualified to be a priest.

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Nehemiah 7:61-64 shows that priests had to be able to trace their lineage when the priesthood was reestablished after the Babylonian captivity. Those who were unable to do so were disqualified from the priesthood.

NEHEMIAH 7:61 And these were the ones who came up from Tel Melah, Tel Harsha, Cherub, Addon, and Immer, but they could not identify their father's house nor their lineage, whether they were of Israel: 62 the sons of Delaiah, the sons of Tobiah, the sons of Nekoda, six hundred and forty-two; 63 and of the priests: the sons of Habaiah, the sons of Koz, the sons of Barzillai, who took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called by their name. 64 These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but it was not found; therefore **they were excluded from the priesthood as defiled.** (NKJV)

**The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (ISBE)** comments about this statement in the seventh chapter of Hebrews:

The argument of He. 7 is similar to the rabbinic argument from silence, which assumed that nothing exists unless Scripture mentions it. Since Genesis says nothing of Melchizedek's parents, genealogy, birth, or death, he serves as a type representing the eternal Son of God (v. 3). (p. 313, vol. 3, "Melchizedek")

In Jewish rabbinic logic and reasoning, conclusions could be drawn and supported by an "argument from silence." If the Bible didn't specifically say something about a person, place, or incident, various determinations based on the silence of Scripture could be reached to support the claim being made. The author of Hebrews (probably Paul) was clearly well-versed in the Law, the Temple service, and forms of rabbinic discourse. He uses the rabbinic method of arguing from the silence of Scripture in verse 3.

**Harper's Bible Commentary** says of this passage:

Formally, the chapter [Hebrews 7] constitutes an exegetical discussion of Ps. 110:4 based upon the only other OT text that mentions Melchizedek, Gen. 14:17-20. This exegesis, emphasizing the heavenly character of Christ's priesthood, may have been inspired by the abundant contemporary speculation on Melchizedek as a heavenly figure, examples of which are found in the Alexandrian Jewish writer Philo, at Qumran, and in Gnostic sources. Whatever the inspiration, Hebrews is quite restrained in its comments on Melchizedek, utilizing only what is necessary to make the Christological point (p. 1265).

**Harper's** goes on to say that "from the pregnant silence of Scripture is deduced Melchizedek's status as 'fatherless, motherless, without genealogy' (v. 3)" (p. 1265). Thus, Melchizedek could be said to be "without father, without mother, and without genealogy" because the Scriptures didn't identify his lineage. While this argument might seem unconvincing to the modern mind, it would certainly have been understandable and reasonable to a religious Jew in the first century C.E.

The second mistaken assumption is that Melchizedek had no beginning or end, and therefore must be the immortal Son of God. The term "beginning of days and end of life" refers to the lack of information in the Scriptures regarding his origin or demise.

The **Abingdon Bible Commentary** says that in Hebrews 7:3, the author –

. . . Makes a very remarkable use of the argument from silence. Nothing is said in Genesis about the parentage of Melchizedek. We are not told anything about his father or his mother. There is no reference to the beginning of his life or to its end - to his birth or to his death . . . In view of the writer the silences of Scripture are as significant as its statements . . ." (p. 1310)

About Hebrews 7:3, **Halley's Bible Handbook** says:

What is the meaning of 'without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life'? Not that it was actually so, but that it appeared so in the Old Testament Records. Levitical Priests were Priests Because of their Genealogy. But Melchizedek, Without Genealogy, was the Recognized Priest of the Human Race at that time. Hebrew tradition is that Shem, who was still alive in the days of Abraham, and, as

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far is as known, Oldest Living Man at the time, was Melchizedek. A mysterious, solitary picture and type, in the dim past, of the Coming Eternal Priest-King. (p. 652)

The third erroneous assumption is that Melchizedek continues as a priest to this day. One might conclude from the statement -- "Melchizedek remains a priest continually" -- that he is still alive and holding the office of priest. Again, this is not the point the author of Hebrews is trying to make. In effect, he is using the argument from silence to say that "since the Bible is silent about the death of Melchizedek, we can figuratively contend that he is alive and remains in the office of priest." In this way he is an appropriate type of the priesthood of Yeshua the Messiah.

Now let's look at some of the Greek words used in this verse to corroborate the above explanations. The first is **agenealogetos**. *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* says this word "denotes 'without recorded pedigree' . . ." *Vine's* goes on to say that "the narrative in Gen. 14 is so framed in facts and omissions as to foreshadow the person of Christ" (p. 262, "NT").

The abridged *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT)* says **agenealogetos** "occurs only in Heb. 7:3, where Melchizedek is said to be 'without genealogy.' Unlike the Aaronic priests, he has no traceable descent" (p. 114).

*Word Meanings in the New Testament* states that this word "is compounded of alpha-negative and the verb *genealogo* (found in NT only in v. 6), 'to trace ancestry.' So, it clearly means 'without genealogy' (NASB, NIV) that is, without a recorded pedigree. We should not assume, as some have wrongly done, that Melchizedek was without human ancestry" (p. 424).

In their book *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Conybeare and Howson write that this word means "without table of descent." They go on to explain, "The priesthood of Melchisedec was not, like the Levitical priesthood, dependent on his descent, through his parents, from a particular family, but was a personal office" (p. 800).

Next let's look at the word **aphomoiomenos**. *TDNT* says that "this verb [the root *aphomoiōo*] means 'to copy,' rarely 'to compare,' and in the passive 'to be or become like' or 'make oneself out to be like'" (p. 686).

Regarding the usage of **aphomoiomenos** in this passage, *ISBE* states:

Some have thought that Melchizedek was a Christophany rather than a historical character and thus understood vv. 2b-3 literally rather than typologically. A major objection to such an interpretation is the statement that Melchizedek resembled (Gk. *aphomoiomenos*) the Son of God (v. 3). The verb *aphomoiōo* always assumes two distinct and separate identities, one which is a copy of the other. Thus, Melchizedek and the Son of God are represented as two separate persons, the first of which resembled the second." (p. 313, vol. 3, "Melchizedek")

So, as you can see, the underlying Greek in verse 3 supports the assertion that Melchizedek was **not** Christ before his incarnation. The meaning of the Greek verb utilized to describe the comparison made between them demonstrates that they cannot be the same being. To claim that they are contradicts the specific meaning of **aphomoiomenos**.

HEBREWS 7:4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. 5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose **genealogy is not derived** [*genealogoumenos*] from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. (**NKJV**)

In these verses the author seeks to demonstrate the superiority of Melchizedek (and by implication Christ) to the Levitical priesthood. His assertion is based on the fact that God designated that the Levites would receive all the tithes of the people under the old covenant. However, because Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, the progenitor of the Levites, his priesthood is declared to be greater than theirs.

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The use of **genealogoumenos** in verse 6 shows that Melchizedek has lineage, but it is not through Levi. Let's examine the Greek word **genealogoumenos** in verse 6 closely.

**Vine's** says that this word means 'to reckon or trace a genealogy' (from *genea*, 'a race,' and *lego*, 'to choose, pick out'), is used, in the passive voice, of Melchizedek in Heb. 7:6, RV, 'whose genealogy (KJV, 'descent') is not counted" (p. 262, "NT").

**TDNT** says "this derives from *genealogos*, 'one who draws up a genealogy.' It occurs in the LXX only in 1 Chr. 5:1 and in the NT only in Heb. 7:6: Melchizedek does not 'derive his descent' from the descendants of Levi" (p. 114).

The **Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (EDNT)** says this word means to "trace one's descent. In Heb. 7:6 of Melchizedek, who 'does not trace his descent' (NEB) to the sons of Levi" (p. 242, vol. 1).

Verse 8 also causes some to relate this chapter to Yeshua. It says that the tithes were received by mortal Levites, but when Melchizedek received them they were obtained by one who lives. The author's use of the phrase "it is witnessed that he lives" here **clearly** shows that he is employing the argument from silence as the basis for his claims. Genesis 14:18-20 does not state that Melchizedek remains alive to the writer's time; therefore, the witness is one derived from silence. Hebrews 7:11 and 15 (shown below) both specifically say that Christ arose as **another** priest.

HEBREWS 7:11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that **another** [*heteros*] **priest** should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law. 13 For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. 14 For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. 15 And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises **another** [*heteros*] **priest** 16 who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. (**NKJV**)

Verses 11 and 15 clearly state that Yeshua is **another, different** priest of the order originated by Melchizedek. There is no suggestion here that Melchizedek and Christ are the same entity. If they were, the writer of Hebrews surely would have stressed that point. But the use of **heteros** plainly indicates that Yeshua, although he came in the likeness of Melchizedek, was **not** Melchizedek.

Let's analyze the word **heteros**, found in verses 11 and 15. **TDNT** says: "In the NT *heteros* is used in much the same way as *allos* . . . It denotes the new member in a series that either continues (Lk. 14:18ff.) or concludes it (Acts 15:35). It may denote others either of the same kind (Acts 17:34, Lk. 4:34) or of another kind (Lk. 23:32) . . ." (p. 265).

**Vine's** says that **allos** and **heteros** "have a different meaning, which despite a tendency to be lost, is to be observed in numerous passages. *Allos* expresses a numerical difference and denotes 'another of the same sort'; *heteros* expresses a qualitative difference and denotes 'another of a different sort'" (p. 29, "NT").

**EDNT** says of this word that "approximately half of the occurrences have the connotation of something additional: a further or additional instances of a type. . . . Passages that speak of another as a replacement or successor also have an adversative association (Acts 1:20; 7:18; Rom 7:4; Heb 7:11, 13, 15)" (p. 66, vol. 2).

In the rest of chapter 7, the author makes his primary point: the Levitical priesthood has been superseded by our eternal High Priest, the risen Jesus Christ. Even though he traced his lineage through the tribe of Judah, he was the King-Priest God had promised in Psalm 110. For believers, he began a new covenant, one that will eventually cover all the House of Israel and the House of Judah. The reason for the argument from silence begun in verse 3 is to substantiate the author's assertion in this passage.

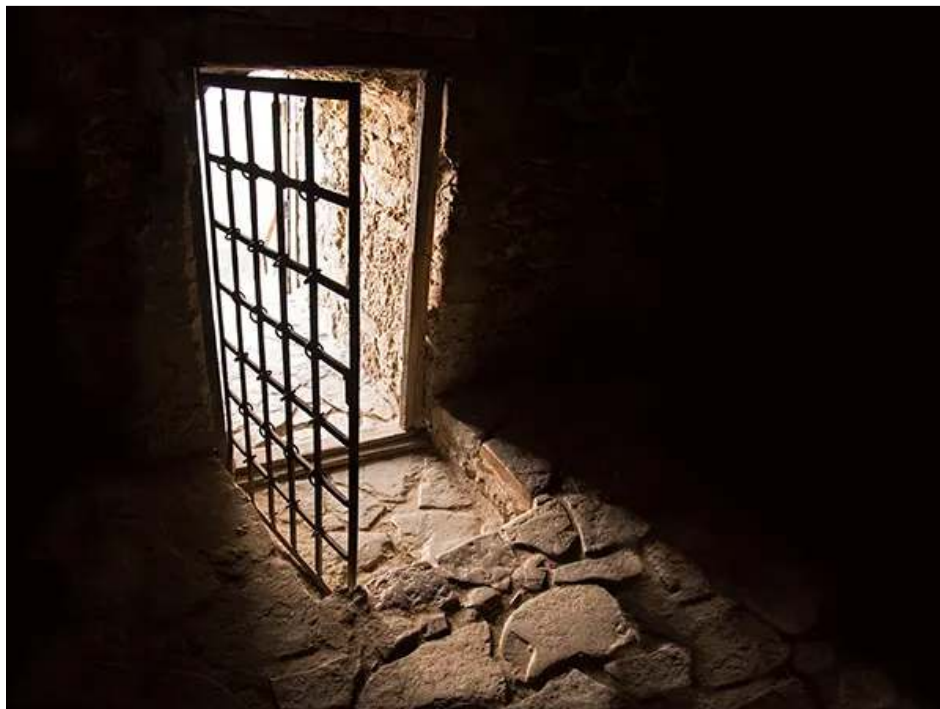
## CONCLUSION

It's plain from the original Greek text, from an understanding of rabbinic forms of argument, and from what the Bible reveals elsewhere, that Melchizedek was not Yeshua before his human birth. Melchizedek was a historical figure, the priest of Almighty God who lived in the days of Abraham. Very little is known about him other than the fact he was the

priest-king of Salem (Jerusalem). Obviously, he was named to the office of priest by God and not by the requirements of the law. Therefore, he is a fitting type of the spiritual priesthood of Messiah.

## **Why Must Satan Be Released?**

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The great hope of Christians—and the essence of the gospel message—is that Jesus Christ will return to establish His Kingdom on earth. He will be King of kings and Lord of lords, governing mankind in a way that has never happened before. In addition, He will depose Satan from his current rulership of this world, thus silencing the malignant, unseen influence that has snared the unwary from the time of Eve.

English theologian Richard Baxter wrote, “The devil is always the governor where God’s government is rejected,” an observation that speaks to why the world continues to produce such misery. Humanity has spurned God’s government from the very beginning, choosing to follow that cruelest of governors.

Conversely, we can glimpse in Baxter’s statement why the prophets speak of the Millennium in such extravagant terms. They foretell a time we can hardly imagine now, as we live and work in a spiritually bombed-out culture. We are surrounded by masses of human brokenness, urged on, and tricked by the Deceiver, and as men further oppose God, the suffocating darkness deepens. But the Millennium will be glorious precisely because God will flip this order on its head. Satan will no longer rule, and God’s government will no longer be rejected.

### **Satan Bound**

Revelation 20:1-3 describes Satan’s future binding, when he will not be permitted to deceive the nations for the duration of the Millennium:

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little

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while.

We have no frame of reference for what life will be like for humankind without the constant spiritual pressure, the unending broadcast of falsehood and rebellion against God. For the first time in human history, the Devil will not be whispering in man’s ears to do it his way.

Some have speculated that the binding and sealing of Satan means that sin will not occur during the Millennium, but that is not the case. The pulls of the flesh exist wherever there is flesh, and those pulls always—eventually—break out in sin (see James 1:14-15). Even the apostle Paul observed that nothing good dwelled in his flesh, and that he had sin and evil indwelling simply by virtue of having flesh (Romans 7:18-23). He nowhere suggests that the solution to indwelling sin is to bind Satan. It is not until man becomes spirit that he puts on incorruptibility (I Corinthians 15:42-54).

Scriptures show that people will be sinning during the Millennium. Ezekiel’s vision shows the priests making sin offerings during that time (see Ezekiel 40-46), and Zechariah 14:18-19 prophesies that some nations will sin by choosing not to attend the Feast of Tabernacles. Christ will rule with a rod of iron precisely because that is how carnal—sinful—people must be ruled (Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15).

Even though Satan’s binding will not destroy carnality and sin, consider how much easier it will be for humans to make right decisions when he is not continually receiving the persuasions of the Serpent. What an incredible blessing that will be!

#### **Reserved for Judgment**

Verse 3 contains a curious statement: “. . . after these things [Satan] *must* be released for a little while” (emphasis ours throughout). Satan’s release is a necessity in God’s plan, as we will see. Revelation 20:7-10 describes Satan’s release after the Millennium:

Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Before considering Satan’s release, we will examine some aspects of his binding. Notice Jude 6:

And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode, He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day . . .

While referring to the rebellious angels in general, this example shows that the chains that bind sinning angels are not their final judgment. A measure of judgment is involved but note that Jude explains that the chains *reserve* them for the judgment of the great day. When Satan is bound, it certainly will be a punishing experience for him, but it will not be *the* punishment—it is not his final judgment. The Bible clearly states that Satan’s judgment, written in advance, is to be burned (Ezekiel 28:18-19).

In Peter’s parallel account, the apostle describes the false prophets who are manifestations of Satan’s image: “By covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words; for a long time, their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber” (II Peter 2:3). He writes about the false teachers and the spirit influences—including Satan—behind them. God has already handed down the verdict; He has determined their punishment and set the date.

In addition to being chained, Satan is also cast into the pit. He is totally immobilized, and moreover, he is shut up with a seal that restrains him from deceiving. He is completely powerless for a thousand years while he awaits the judgment of the great day.

#### **“The Powers of the Heavens”**

The prophet Isaiah also foretells a future binding of spirit beings:



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**In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.** They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory. (Isaiah 24:21-23, *New International Version*)

Verse 23 mentions the moon and sun being dismayed and ashamed, providing a time reference. Revelation 21:23 describes the New Jerusalem descending from heaven sometime after the Millennium. When it does, those in New Jerusalem have no need of the sun or the moon. Those magnificent heavenly lights are figuratively disgraced and ashamed by the superior light of God. Isaiah 24:23, then, corresponds to the time after the Millennium.

**But before that, the “powers in the heavens and the kings on the earth” will be shut up for a long time and *then* punished.** The “powers in the heavens” refers to demonic principalities, including Satan (see Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15; I Peter 3:22). The New Kings James Version calls them “the host of exalted ones.”

Isaiah then refers to “the kings on the earth.” However, those kings—mentioned in parallel with the “powers in the heavens”—do not have to be human. Scripture alludes to spiritual rulers throughout its pages: The king of Babylon (Isaiah 14:4), the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:12), and the princes of Persia (Daniel 10:13, 20) and Greece (Daniel 10:20) are a few examples. “Gog . . . the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal” may be another demon (Ezekiel 38:2, *English Standard Version*). See also Ezekiel 38:3; 39:1; Revelation 20:8).

These powers—these kings—will be shut up in prison, but their punishment does not come until “after many days” (Isaiah 24:22). (The word “days” is not restricted to 24-hour blocks of time; it can be used as a general marker of the passage of time.) *Their binding serves as a prelude to their punishment.*

Likewise, Satan’s binding is not his actual punishment. Its primary purpose is to protect the nations from deception, and then his punishment follows. The prophets describe him as being gazed upon by men during his imprisonment (Isaiah 14:16; Ezekiel 28:17). At this time, he is not on trial but on display because God has already reached His verdict.

Psalms 2:2-3 speaks about the kings of the earth and the rulers, saying, “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.” The spirit rulers are chafing at their chains, causing the nations to rage. Yet when Christ returns, these powers and kings will be shut up in prison.

### **Released for Rebellion**

This situation parallels Paul’s experience of binding in Acts 21-22, but there is also a marked contrast. The apostle was arrested at the Temple and subsequently bound for allegedly provoking a riot. He was later released from his bonds so that he could appear before the council for judgment. In fact, Paul was mostly in chains through chapter 28, not for punishment, but to keep him from getting into any more trouble.

Similarly, Satan will be arrested, as it were, because he provokes mankind to rebel, and God will intervene to silence him. The Devil, too, is bound, and he will be released in anticipation of God’s final judgment on him. In Matthew 12:37, Jesus delivers the universal principle that “by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Since Paul’s words were true, he was justified before God. But Satan begins deceiving humanity as soon as the seal is removed, and he condemns himself with his lying words.

We may wonder why God waits a thousand years after Satan’s binding before judging him or why God did not judge the sinning angels as soon as they sinned. God shows us a consistent pattern that He allows deplorable circumstances to drag on as a testimony that His way is the only way that works, and all other ways bear only miserable fruit. God uses our experiences with sin to teach us what does not work. Likewise, rather than exact immediate justice, God will use Satan’s post-Millennium rebellion as a powerful lesson.

However, we should also understand that even though God uses Satan’s activities as part of humanity’s education, He in no way depends on Satan. During the Millennium and after, God will bring many more sons and daughters to glory *without* Satan being around than *with* Satan being around. Satan is not integral to God’s plan, but he does serve as an extraordinary warning against high-mindedness. His reservation for the judgment of the great day illustrates God’s

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perfect sovereignty. His plan did not require the angels to rebel, but neither was His plan thwarted by it.

Satan is released so he can commit his final rebellion. We catch a glimpse of his first rebellion in Genesis 1:2, where the earth became without form and was void and in darkness. God did not create it like this, but it became that way. Rebellion against God is introduced at the beginning of the Book, which rebellion Revelation 20 resolves—in God’s good time.

### **History Written in Advance**

The prophesied release of Satan after the Millennium teaches us significant lessons. God says, “For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done” (Isaiah 46:9-10). What Satan does after he is released is history written in advance. His deceptions and warmongering are the future, recorded thousands of years before they happen.

This fact is remarkable to consider. Mankind desires to know the future; we look to news analysis and weather forecasts to glimpse an idea of what lies ahead so we can respond appropriately. We use such indicators to prepare for the future or perhaps to work to change the course of events.

What is astounding is that the Adversary also knows the Scriptures, and he sees his future written in advance. This reality provides vivid testimony of Satan’s nature—that he simply will not change, even knowing how disastrous the end will be for him. The advanced knowledge makes no difference. So, in addition to God giving Satan his freedom so he can commit his final rebellion, a second reason He must release him is to provide us with this final, powerful lesson about the Serpent’s nature.

When God releases Satan, the Deceiver does what he has always done. Even after a thousand years of stasis, his nature remains unchanged. After a millennium of reflecting on his plight, calculating his ideal course of action, and contemplating his spiritual navel, as it were, he reaches the conclusion he started with: He knows better.

Maybe he will not be aware of the peace and prosperity as it blooms outside the pit, but when he is released, he will be able to see that goodness and abundance with his own eyes. Yet even with all the years of mankind under Christ, living the best that people can live, and all the good humanity will produce in cooperation with God, Satan will emerge, discount the evidence, and continue to act in the way that seems best to him, even though it destroys the lives of others.

Isaiah 14 reveals this attitude when it speaks of Helel ascending, exalting his throne, and trying to become the Most High. His image of self-perfection is written in stone. In his heart, he is convinced that he deserves more and better than God gave him.

### **In Satan’s Image**

We shake our heads at this most wretched of creatures, and rightfully so, for his existence is miserable. His removal will bring relief to the whole earth because even without making anybody sin, his presence always spawns turmoil. His fruits are always chaos, sin, misery, and destruction.

But before we become self-satisfied, consider substituting the phrase “carnal human nature” for Satan in Revelation 20:7-9. When our carnal nature is released, it immediately does what it has always done. Our carnality retains the spiritual image of Satan, and in type, it always produces the same things, even though we, too, have been told the end in advance!

Therefore, a third reason Satan must be released is to remind us that even as our Adversary never changes, human nature is always ready to choose spiritual blindness. In Revelation 20:7-9, the nations fall for the deceptions, just as Eve did because Satan easily manipulates the natural inclination of the human heart toward self-centeredness. It hears the siren song of getting more, of asserting itself over others, and it begins dancing to the tune.

Satan’s spirit permeates this world, and it works in those who disobey, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:1-3. Such was our condition before God regenerated us and endued us with His Spirit. However, the indwelling of God does not mean that our former selves have been banished. Thus, the epistles urge us to put off the works of the flesh, the hidden things of darkness, and the old man. Corruption will remain until the day of our resurrection or change when we finally put on incorruption. Until then, we wrestle with the law of sin and death at work in our members, struggling to keep our old man bound in chains.

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But when we let down, we release our old man for a little while. Like Satan, he goes to war against God and man just as soon as his chains slacken. What remains of Satan’s image in us is ever-ready to spring forth and risk all the spiritual abundance we have received.

Once let loose, our old man resists God. He bends the truth or even lies boldly for camouflage, self-preservation, or self-advantage. He radiates pride, antagonism, competition, selfish ambition, and unflinching confidence in his own rightness, even if it means God Himself would be wrong. He challenges God’s sovereignty in his thoughts, perhaps in his words, and even in conduct.

Our old man has no problem using people for his own ends—even sacrificing them like Satan does the nations—because his ends always justify his means. Just as Satan gambles that he can skirt the consequences that always fall, our old man also bets that it will be different for us and the consequences the Bible foretells will not happen. God recorded the effects of sin for us millennia ago, yet when we are in the moment, we still convince ourselves that His Word is not absolute—that all those bad things will never happen to us. Yet Revelation 20 tells us—just as it tells Satan—where those choices lead. We, too, know the result of sin, for it is written in advance.

**A Test for the Nations**

Consider this: Once the generation of those who live through the Day of the Lord dies, no human will have ever experienced Satan’s broadcast. Think about having a 1,000-year history when nation will have never lifted up sword against nation, never learned how to make war. The nations will reap the abundance of Christ’s rule, especially the blessing of peace.

Despite this, human nature in the nations will cast aside everything they have achieved because it believes it can have more, even though “having more” will mean opposing God’s perfect will. Their human nature will wager that attacking is better than submitting.

As a test for the nations in the four corners of the earth, God releases Satan so those who are inclined to listen to him can be separated from those who listen to God, as chaff is separated from wheat. The Almighty finally judges the Adversary for his never-ending opposition, and He will judge the nations who follow the Deceiver for choosing to heed his poisonous message. Clearly, Satan is the instigator of the rebellion, but the root problem is human nature’s unchanging proclivity to find common cause with his self-centeredness. If mankind possessed the character and heart of Jesus Christ, the Devil’s fiery darts would have nothing to hit.

While Satan’s influence and work amplify the perversity of human nature, carnality is a malignant force on its own. The real solution to sin is to replace human nature entirely with God’s nature—one that is incorruptible, will not follow Satan’s urgings, and will never become another adversary of God. This is what God is doing, and when the divine purpose has been fully worked out, nothing will ever again defile the Eternal’s magnificent creation.

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**Thank You Everyone!**

## 'Tis the Season: Help for Our Young People (Copyright 2022) by Staff (Charlotte, North Carolina)



Almost everyone knows that members of God's church do not celebrate Christmas or New Year's Day for several reasons. Among them are the absence of a biblical command to do so and the divine command to have nothing to do with pagan practices, something these holidays possess in great numbers.

In some respects, the Christmas season seems to get easier for God's people as each year goes by— and in other ways, it seems to get harder! Maybe it is because those in advertising are working earlier and more diligently to promote the "Christmas spirit" and to rake in higher profits for their clients. Society seems to be making more of it than ever before. Maybe Satan is working harder to get his enemies off track!

Local charities report that donations have been down in recent years, yet local businesses selling high-priced electronic luxury items say that they have enjoyed bumper Christmas seasons! What does that say about the "season of giving"?

Sometimes we forget that this time of year is especially difficult for the young people in the church. With God's Holy Spirit dwelling in us, we adult members have learned to reject this season with its pagan trappings. We may have diligently passed these teachings on to our children, but because of their natural, youthful need to "belong" to a circle of friends at school and in the neighborhood, the holiday season is much harder for them to handle. To them, being thought of as "different" is worse than getting the plague!

We need to let our children know that we appreciate their courage in what they must endure at this time of year. It never hurts to give them a few tips on how to make it through these few difficult weeks without giving in. During a church kid's struggle with peer pressure, he can use all the appreciation and encouragement he can get!

### **We Care!**

We can begin by saying to the young people of God's church: We love you!

We really do care about you, and we do not want anything to hurt you. We do not want you to be negatively affected by any of the ways of Satan's world, including the lure of the Christmas and New Year's season.

We truly appreciate your courage in enduring the hardship of being different from the other kids in your school and neighborhood. We adults understand how hard it is for you in school when all the other kids are participating in Christmas

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parties, plays, concerts, and crafts, when you have to separate yourselves and go do something else—and everyone knows it. Many of us experienced it when we were in school.

We understand how hard it is for you to be the only one on your block without Christmas lights adorning your house. One son of a church member felt guilty about thinking how pretty the lights look. There is no need to feel guilty about such feelings! They do look pretty! To deny it would be a lie! One of Satan's traits is to make his ways and his holidays attractive, especially to children: "And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light" (II Corinthians 11:14). So, recognizing the allure of Christmas can be a first step in realizing that the Devil is trying to manipulate us.

We understand how hard it is to return to school after the Christmas break when all your friends tell each other what they got for Christmas! You feel left out, different, and cheated. That can be hard to take.

But you are not alone! You have the support of your parents—plus the help of other members of your local congregation or group—people who feel and believe the way you do. They will help fill the void if you let them.

The prophet Elijah once felt as if he was all alone in his true beliefs and ways of worship. God helped him by connecting him with other true believers (I Kings chapters 19 and 20). So, if you feel like an alien from another planet when around your non-church friends at this time of year, seek the support of your parents and get together with some of your church friends. They will not make you feel odd or alone.

#### **Points to Remember**

When we think about celebrating these holidays, we must keep certain *facts* foremost in our minds. Arguments from *feelings* or emotions only tend to cloud the issue, but with facts on our side, we can be decisive about keeping Christmas and New Year's Day. We will consider three facts that prove we are doing right by not keeping Christmas:

1. Jesus was not born on December 25.
2. Jesus, the apostles, and the early church did not keep Christmas.
3. God will bless you for keeping His way.

The date of December 25 to celebrate Christ's birth was chosen to conform to the old, pagan Roman holidays called "Saturnalia" and "Brumalia." The ancient Romans kept these holidays around the time of the shortest day of the year, the winter solstice. Here are some excerpts about this festival from *The Book of the Bible* by Riedel, Tracy, and Moskowitz:

Because the Roman emperor Aurelian fixed December 25th for the winter solstice holiday in AD 274, it is thought that the early Christians adopted this day for their Christ-mass so that they would be less conspicuous in the observance of their holiday.

Most scholars believe that the birthday of Jesus was never known and that the December date was chosen solely for convenience.

The earliest known observance of Christmas on December 25th was the year AD 336 in Rome, as recorded in a calendar of the period.

Throughout antiquity other dates for the birth were advanced: March 25, April 19, November 17, among others, but there is no evidence, literary or historical, that supports any of these dates.

Almost everywhere in Europe, in both Roman and Teutonic [northern European] countries, the period around the winter solstice was celebrated with lights, to celebrate the increase of sunlight to come, and with greenery, usually evergreens, to represent the coming of spring and eternal cycles of growth. At the Saturnalia festival (December 17-24), Romans would present each other with sprigs of holly as gifts for the holiday. When Teutonic tribes began to usurp power from the Romans in Europe, they brought their Yule, or winter feast, traditions with them. The Yule log and wassailing (i.e., toasting each other's health with alcoholic drinks) are two of these traditions.

The origin of the Christmas tree is usually traced to Saint Boniface, who in the eighth century persuaded the Teutonic tribes to abandon the worship of the sacred oak of Odin, a remnant of Druidism, and to confer it instead on the fir, a more

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appropriate symbol of Jesus and eternal life. [Trees, however, have been used in pagan, idolatrous worship for many thousands of years. Numerous references to this can be found throughout the Old Testament (I Kings 14:23; II Kings 16:2-4; 17:10; II Chronicles 28:4; Isaiah 40:18-20; 57:5; 66:17; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:6; 10:1-5; Ezekiel 6:13).]

Surprisingly, Christmas was not celebrated in New England until a hundred years ago. The Puritans were suspicious of its pagan origins. Likewise, Charles II abandoned the practice of Christmas in England in 1644.

What does God's Word have to say about the timing of Jesus' birth? "Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night" (Luke 2:8). Not in late December! Even in Israel, December nights can be cold and wet with occasional snowfall. Shepherds in that area were known to have brought their sheep from the fields into the folds in the autumn. The evidence currently available indicates that Jesus was born in the fall of the year 4 BC—perhaps on one of its feast days.

#### **No Clear Date or Instruction**

If God wanted us to celebrate the birthday of Jesus Christ, He would have given us a clear date and instructions on keeping it, just as He did in Leviticus 23 for His true holy days:

And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, 'The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, these are My feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. These are the feasts of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at their appointed times. **On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. (Leviticus 23:1-5)**

God continues throughout this chapter, giving His people detailed instructions on when and how to keep His feasts.

Because God's church does not observe Christmas, some get the impression that we do not believe in the miraculous nature of the human birth of Jesus Christ. But that is not so. We believe that the biblical record of Jesus' human birth is absolutely true. We can read it with interest and believe that it happened precisely the way Matthew and Luke tell us. Nowhere in the whole Bible, though—Old Testament or New—can we find any command to observe and celebrate Jesus' birthday.

The world has the whole event twisted around. They have the wrong year, the wrong date in the year, and even if God wanted His people to observe His Son's birth, it certainly would not be kept with a myriad of symbols from pagan, heathen, idolatrous religions:

When the LORD your God cuts off from before you the nations which you go to dispossess, and you displace them and dwell in their land, take heed to yourself that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed from before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, "How did these nations serve their gods? I also will do likewise." You shall not worship the LORD your God in that way; for every abomination to the LORD which He hates they have done to their gods; for they burn even their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods. Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it: you shall not add to it nor take away from it. (Deuteronomy 12:29-32)

#### **No New Testament Practice**

Jesus, the apostles, and the early church kept the same holy days we keep. God's church in the modern era should endeavor to preach and practice the same things that the early church did. When anyone asks what our church believes, it is helpful to tell them that we study the Bible to find out what Jesus and His early church believed and practiced, and as well as we can, to emulate them.

Jesus and the members of His early church kept the weekly Sabbath and the holy days that God commanded in Leviticus 23. The biblical writers refer to these feasts throughout the New Testament. If other holidays like Christmas, Easter, New Year's Day, and Halloween were being kept—or were to be kept—then the New Testament writers would have mentioned those holidays prominently. But they did not!

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Notice the overwhelming evidence of Scripture. Jesus and His early church kept:

- » Passover (Matthew 26; Mark 14; Luke 2 and 22; John 2; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13; I Corinthians 5:7; Acts 12:4).
- » The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Matthew 26:17; Mark 14; Luke 22; Acts 12:3; Acts 20:6; I Corinthians 5:7-8).
- » Pentecost (Acts 2:1; 20:16; I Corinthians 16:8).
- » Atonement (Acts 27:9).
- » The Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2, 14).
- » The Last Great Day (John 7:37).

We are to keep the holy days God commanded us to celebrate forever (Leviticus 23:14, 21, 31, 41). These are the same holy days Jesus kept, and the same ones the apostles and other members of the early church kept. In fact, as annual Sabbaths, they are signs of God's true church throughout the ages (Exodus 31:12-17)!

**Blessings Unmeasured!**

Even though it is tough for young people to go through these trying Christmas seasons, God will richly bless you for having the courage to stand up for what you believe about His truth and holy days!

And all these blessings shall come on you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the country. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, the produce of your ground and the increase of your herds, the increase of your cattle and the offspring of your flocks. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God is giving you. . . . The LORD will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. (Deuteronomy 28:2-8, 12)

What wonderful promises! We will have God's blessing and protection wherever we go. Our children will be strong and healthy, and our work will be successful. Our enemies will be no match for God's strength. We will have enough to give to others in need, and we will not need to get heavily into debt. Any amount of discomfort now is worth receiving these blessings in the future!

So young people of God's church, please remember these things:

- » We adults are very proud of you for enduring what you do at this time of year.
- » Jesus Christ was not born on December 25—nor anywhere near that date!
- » Jesus and His early church kept the holy days God had commanded His people to keep—the same ones we in the church keep today.
- » God will richly bless you for rejecting the wrong holidays and keeping His true holy days.

So let us all help each other to make it through this Christmas and New Year's season. Thankfully, it lasts only about two months! Through it all, we can look forward to the resumption of God's days—which fall only about three months later—and all the joys of keeping God's feasts!

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**Have a Great Sabbath!**

## Mishandling Marriage & The Sin of Uzzah (Copyright) by Gary Johnson (Arkansas)

The divorce rate has skyrocketed. Kids are shooting up schools. Homosexuality is taught as an "alternative lifestyle" and promiscuity among teenagers and even pre-teens is commonplace. The family is definitely under attack. As a result, the last decade and a half has seen the rise of the pro-family Christian message. Pastors, churches, books, Bible studies and even whole movements are, with the purest of intentions, working feverishly to strengthen the family. Seeking to rouse apathetic husbands and indifferent dads, they have anointed men "Prophet, Priest and King", "Point Man" and "High Priest of the Home." The only problem is that's not scriptural.

It reminds me of Uzzah. 2 Samuel 6 recounts the infamous fall of this well-intentioned Levite. The Ark of the Covenant, representing the very presence of God, was finally headed back to Jerusalem. And David was leading the way with shouting, singing, and dancing as all of Israel celebrated. But when the oxen which were carrying the Ark approached the flat threshing floor of Nachon, what should have been smooth sailing turned very ugly very fast. The oxen stumbled, nearly upsetting the Ark, and – only wanting to help – Uzzah reached out to lend a hand. But before you could say, "Don't do it!" he lay dead on the ground. What did Uzzah do that was so bad? How could this man of good intentions – who was merely reacting naturally - have met with such punishment and wrath? What exactly was the sin of Uzzah?

To understand, we first have to acknowledge that God and His Word are irretrievably entwined. In fact, John 1:1 states that the Word of God is, basically, an incarnation of Jesus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In other words, when you disobey the Word you are opposing God, regardless of your good intentions. And this is what Uzzah did—while seeking to help God and steady His presence - he actually opposed God and disobeyed His commands by touching the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>1</sup> And just like Uzzah, many of these well-intentioned pro-family Christian messages have ended up opposing God because their teachings about family order are unscriptural, forcing husbands to become 24-hour "Supermen" and completely benching the wives.

The heart of God has always been the "restoration of all things,"<sup>2</sup> and Jesus has definitely restored Christian marriage to its former glorious state of equality and mutual submission. And as Christians, it is vital that we understand this, accept it and operate accordingly. The Bible tells us plainly that before the fall of mankind both husband and wife were made in the image of God and both were given dominion and rule.<sup>3</sup> In fact, this first man and wife were so completely "one flesh"<sup>4</sup> they even shared the same name! "He created them male and female, and He blessed them and named them Adam in the day when they were created (emphasis added)."<sup>5</sup>

Without a doubt, the fact that you and I have never known anything but a fallen world--a sin-filled mankind--makes it difficult for us to grasp the depths to which our species has fallen. What was perfect and incorrupt in the Garden became twisted and marred as fallen men and women struggled to walk out their days on this earth. Even good men, righteous men, treated women like they weren't much better than cattle. Just look at "righteous"<sup>6</sup> Lot. When God sent two angels to visit Sodom before destroying it, Lot thought they were ordinary men and insisted they stay the night at his house. The men of Sodom, filled with perverse lust, cried out for Lot to throw the two angels out to them. And what did Lot do? Demonstrate the self-sacrificing character of Christ and say, "Leave them alone. Take me instead!"? No, he says, "Here, take my daughters!" Two girls that had kept their virginity in the midst of a depraved and wicked city were being offered to a bunch of sexual perverts by their father. "Let me bring them out to you and do to them whatever you like," Lot shouted.<sup>7</sup> What?! It was okay with Lot if this crowd raped and sodomized his daughters just so long as they didn't touch his guests?! There was definitely nothing righteous about this mind-set towards women--a fallen mindset which had taken deep root in the cursed ground of Earth. But in the "fullness of time"<sup>8</sup> God sent forth His Son, born under the Law to redeem us from the curse of the Law. And the bitter result of the fall which is seen in Genesis 3:16 has been nailed to the cross; and today "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>9</sup>

Growing up in the Arkansas Delta, hunting, fishing, football and fighting were as natural to me as breathing. And if Christianity were a natural fight--and whippin' the devil as easy as chasing down some little fella with a pitchfork and pointy tail who likes dressing in red suits--well then, you could just stick me and my buddies on the frontline, and we'd take care of it all. But this is not a natural fight. Ours is a spiritual battle, a to-the-death struggle "against principalities,



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against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”<sup>10</sup> And in this battle the baddest warrior on the line often weighs no more than 100 pounds, dresses in high heels and gets her hair done every Thursday!

The testosterone-driven Gospel of today is very appealing to the carnal, fleshly nature of mankind. But it is an unscriptural Gospel in many ways, and one that would have benched legendary Christian soldiers such as Corrie Ten Boom and Mother Theresa simply because they were women. Men, we may have been taught growing up, “you never hit girls,” but this is not a principle the devil abides by. He launches as many vicious attacks against our daughters, our wives, and our sisters as he does against us. And if we’ve insisted, they live out some fairy tale existence-- forever in the tower awaiting their knight in shining armor--they’re gonna get slaughtered. These women of God have to arm themselves with the breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith and take up the sword of the Spirit as they wade into the battle beside us.

Yes, the family is under attack. And yes, restoration is critical. But the desire of pro-family advocates to turn back the clock 60 years to Father Knows Best and Ozzy and Harriet is not the answer. We need to go back alright... but we have to go back 6,000 years not 60! Back to the Garden of Eden, back before the fall of mankind--it is here that we discover the perfect will of God for Christian marriage: equality, respect, and mutual submission.

Notes \_\_\_\_\_

- [1] Numbers 4:15
- [2] Acts 3:21
- [3] Genesis 1:26-28
- [4] Matthew 19:6
- [5] Genesis 5:2
- [6] 2 Peter 2:8
- [7] Genesis 19:8
- [8] Galatians 4:4
- [9] Galatians 3:28
- [10] Ephesians 6:12

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**Spiritual Power**  
**(Copyright 2022) by Zac Poonen (Bangalore, India)**

One great danger of the last days is that of having “*a form of godliness without the power*” (2 Tim.3:5). It is very easy to be satisfied with the power that we have because of our gifts and talents. Soul power is manifested in intellectual power, emotional power and will power. But none of these is the Divine power that Christ and the Holy Spirit have come to give us.

*“If your goal and ambition in life is only to please and glorify God, He will give you His power readily.”*

Intellectual power is seen in great scientists, scholars, and clever preachers. Emotional power is seen in rock musicians - and in many preachers too. Will-power is seen among yoga experts and other ascetics - and also among preachers who seek to dominate others through their personality. We must not mistake any of these three for spiritual power.

Spiritual power primarily makes us obey God in everything. Consider the power of God displayed in the planets and stars that have moved within their orbits in perfect timing, for millenniums. The reason for that perfection is that they have *obeyed God’s laws implicitly*. These heavenly bodies are a mute testimony to the fact that the best thing to do is to obey God totally.

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Jesus did not overcome Satan with brute physical power, but with spiritual power. When tempted by Satan, Jesus refused to turn stones into bread, even though He could have done that; and this, in spite of the fact that His body longed for food, after 40 days of fasting. What a contrast that was to what Eve did, who satisfied her bodily longing immediately in the paradise of Eden, even though she was not hungry. The desire for sex is another desire that resides within our bodies, like the desire for food. That also craves for gratification constantly. When we have spiritual power, we will be like Jesus Who said He would live by "every Word of God" rather than satisfy the cravings of His body.

Samson had great physical power to tear physical lions apart. But the lion of sexual lust within him tore him apart repeatedly. This proves that sexual lust is far stronger than any lion. Joseph however was a stronger man than Samson, for he could tear the lion of lust in pieces, again and again, day after day (*Gen.39:7-12*).

Our motives determine whether God will give us spiritual power or not. If your goal and ambition in life is only to please and glorify God, He will give you His power readily. "You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives" (*James 4:3*).

A job or a profession is only to be a means of earning our living. Our ambition in life must however be only to please God - and not to live for ourselves or to be great in this world. Satan tried to tempt even Jesus with the glory of this world. So, he will certainly offer this to us too. But we must constantly refuse it (like Jesus did) because we can get that glory only by bowing down to Satan in some way. We have to be especially careful that the love of money does not lure us away from fulfilling God's plan for our lives. We must have no regrets over our choices, 2000 years from now.

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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: Why Must Satan Be Released?

Article by David C. Grabbe  
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

Before I start, I want to say this was an excellent article. I do have a few comments and some things I disagree with, but the overall premise of the article was excellent. Within the article you will find the highlighted areas below also highlighted in yellow.

Number 1-

**In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.** They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be dismayed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders—with great glory. (*Isaiah 24:21-23, New International Version*)

In my opinion the New International Bible leads people to believe that the LORD will be punishing some powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below.

Where it says "the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above..." is not backed up by all bible versions.

**Isa 24:21** It shall happen in that day that Yahweh will punish the army of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. (World English Bible)

**Isa 24:21** And it hath come to pass, in that day, Jehovah layeth a charge on the host of the high place in the high

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place, And on the kings of the land on the land. (Young’s Literal Version)

**Isa 24:21** And it shall be in that day, Jehovah shall punish the army of the high place on high, and on the kings of the land on the land. (Literal Translation of the Holy Bible)

**Isa 24:21** And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. (Revised Standard)

**Isa 24:21** And it shall come to pass in that day *that* the LORD shall visit *punishment* upon the host of the high ones *that are* on high and upon the kings of the earth on the earth. (Jubilee Bible)

Look at the wording of the Jubilee Bible which says, “the LORD shall visit punishment upon the host of the high ones that are on high.” It doesn’t mention the powers of heaven as if in heaven at all. It is clearly in context talking about Satan and his minions who have all exalted themselves on high with a haughty attitude.

Only the righteous are in heaven. When iniquity was found in Satan he was tossed from heaven. God does not allow sin in heaven. So, there are no unrighteous powers in heaven to punish.

So, the verse is talking about Satan and his minions and the kings who ruled the earth under the influence of Satan. If you read Isaiah 24:21 in context of the entire chapter of Isaiah 24, I think what is being said is Satan is haughty and has exalted himself on high along with his army of minions and they are the powers who will be punished. Pagan religions led by Satan worshipped in high places so it could mean that also.

Number 2-

But before that, the “powers in the heavens and the kings on the earth” will be shut up for a long time and *then* punished. The “powers in the heavens” refers to demonic principalities, including Satan (see Romans 8:38; Ephesians 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Colossians 1:16; 2:15; I Peter 3:22). The New King James Version calls them “the host of exalted ones.”

**Rom 8:38** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, **Rom 8:39** Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It does not say anything about demonic principalities in heaven here.

**Eph 1:20** Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*, **Eph 1:21** Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

This is talking about Christ being in the heavenly places far above all principality and power... It does not say that Satan is in heaven or that Satan’s power is in heaven.

**Eph 3:9** And to make all *men* see what *is* the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: **Eph 3:10** To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

I am pretty sure this is talking about good principalities and powers in heavenly places and not about Satan or his minions.

**Eph 6:12** For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high *places*.

This is talking about Satan being in this world. When it says high places, it is not necessarily talking about heaven where God resides with Christ. Remember those following Satan worshipped in high places on earth.

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**Col 1:16** For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

Christ did not create Satan as he is, Christ created a beautiful angel named Lucifer and Lucifer decided he wanted to be God. All of the angels including Lucifer had free will and now he is Satan. What Christ created originally was all perfect. And again, this verse does not say Satan is in heaven.

**Col 2:15** And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

This is talking about the crucifixion of Christ where he died for our sins and wiped out the death penalty. By doing this he spoiled the plans of the devil and his minions. It still says nothing about Satan being in heaven.

**1Pe 3:21** The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ: **1Pe 3:22** Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

In other words, Christ is in heaven but this says nothing about Satan being in heaven.

Number 3-

Satan is released so he can commit his final rebellion. We catch a glimpse of his first rebellion in Genesis 1:2, where the earth became without form and was void and in darkness. God did not create it like this, but it became that way. Rebellion against God is introduced at the beginning of the Book, which rebellion Revelation 20 resolves—in God’s good time.

There is no place in scripture that ever speaks or implies that the earth was ever re-created after it was destroyed by Satan. This is called the gap theory and is not in scripture. People who believe in the gap theory have one scripture they use and that is Genesis 1:2.

**Gen 1:2** And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.

Just because something is started without “form and void” does not mean it was once destroyed. God started his creation from nothing. It started out without form and was void of anything in it yet.

The Gap (or Ruin-Reconstruction) Theory aims to fit the alleged millions of years of Earth and universe history into a postulated gap between the first and second verses of Genesis Chapter One.

This theory did not arise from contemplation of Scripture but was an attempt to ‘harmonize’ the Genesis account with belief in long ages, only after secular thinkers started to promote the belief that the world was very old.

In its most common form, God originally created a perfect world, but then in this supposed ‘gap’, Satan fell, and God judged the world by a catastrophe, which formed most of the fossils. Thus, gappists translate Genesis 1:2 as ‘the earth became formless and void’. Then the six days of creation become a re-creation of this fallen world.

From: [The Gap Theory](#) by Jonathan Sarfati (Read the Entire Article)

## Holy Days 2023

Passover – April 6, 2023 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)

Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 6-12, 2023

Pentecost – May 26, 2023

Trumpets - September 16, 2023

Atonement – September 25, 2023  
Tabernacles –September 30, 2023 to October 6, 2023  
Last Great Day – October 7, 2023

## In regard to: 'Tis the Season: Help for Our Young People

Article by Staff

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

This is a great article and I only have one comment to make:

The article says:

On the fourteenth day of the first month at twilight is the LORD'S Passover. (Leviticus 23:1-5)

Lev 23:1 And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Lev 23:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Lev 23:3 Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings. Lev 23:4 These are the feasts of the LORD, even holy convocations, which ye shall proclaim in their seasons. Lev 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover.

In verse five "at even" means the end of the day and is talking about the sacrifice of the Passover Lambs. In other words, Christ was crucified with the Passover Lambs on the afternoon of the 14 of Nisan.

Many translations use the term "between the two evenings" for "at even"

Verses 5 and 6 are meant to run together:

Lev 23:5 In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the LORD'S passover. Lev 23:6 And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

When the word "In" is used at the beginning of verse 5, it is showing that the day has been well spent or in other words we are well into the fourteenth indicating the afternoon rather than the beginning of the day as many want to claim. In verse 6 the word used is "on" to indicate from the beginning of the fifteenth day.

The verse should have been translated "In the fourteenth day of the first month between the two evenings is the LORD'S Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread.

Between the two evenings is the time Christ was crucified, between twelve noon and 6 PM. After the lambs were sacrificed, they were then eaten on the first day (evening) of unleavened bread.

There were never any sacrifices made after sunset in the temple and if someone can prove there were, I would love to see that proof.

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.

Look closely at the use of the word "In" which means the time is well spent. For example "In the first month", Passover takes place half into the first month. "In the fourteenth day of the month" For example we are well into the fourteenth day of the month when the sacrifice happens in the afternoon.

Passover week and Unleavened Bread are the exact same week and start at the exact same time, after the sacrifices of the Passover lambs, at even as the fourteenth turns into the fifteenth.

## In regard to: Mishandling Marriage & The Sin of Uzzah

Article by Gary Johnson  
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

This was an interesting article, but I did have a problem with this paragraph:

But in the "fullness of time"<sup>8</sup> God sent forth His Son, born under the Law to redeem us from the curse of the Law. And the bitter result of the fall which is seen in Genesis 3:16 has been nailed to the cross; and today "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

The law is still in effect today, it has not been done away or nailed to the cross as many believe. The curse of the law was death. What was nailed to the cross was the death penalty. When Christ was crucified and died for our sins and then was resurrected, he conquered death that we may live if we repent of our sins.

1Jn 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin *is* death; but the gift of God *is* eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Genesis 3:16 is not a law, it is a result of law breaking and it was not nailed to the cross. The result of sin Genesis 3:16 will be with us until Christ returns and sets up His Kingdom here on earth.

Gen 3:16 Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

For those who repent and keep God's laws they are "all one in Christ Jesus", but for those who do not repent of their sin and do not keep God's laws they are still living with the result of sin even if they do not see it that way.

### Other Items

## Benjamin Franklin's Wisdom

(Copyright 2023) by Dwight Fleming (Oroville, California)

Lance Wallnau covers Benjamin Franklin's appeal to seek God's guidance in their efforts to draft a Constitution for their new nation. Likewise, the Declaration of Independence was also an appeal to God for guidance and protection. As Lance reads and comments on Franklin's appeal, it becomes **self-evident** of the wisdom that was inspired by God.

Thankfully, our Founding Fathers were willing to **humble** themselves and seek God's council rather than be blinded by any **pride** in their own accomplishments.

For those today who wantonly take pride in their wicked deeds and reject any notion of a Creator God, God warns that He will "break the **pride** of their power" (Leviticus 26:19).

Let the month of July be known as "Humble Month" that all may repent and turn to the true God who has graciously given our nation the blessings of Liberty.

Here is the link to Lance's video: [Benjamin Franklin's Invisible Friend | Lance Wallnau \(rumble.com\)](#)

## **The Red Skelton you never knew about - Fabulous interview!** (Copyright 2023) by James Steinle (Swanville, Minnesota)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6z2ojfveL-I> 44 min.

Best of Dini Petty: Red Skelton (80 years old) June 19, 1992: This is the only in depth sit down interview Red Skelton did in his entire career. This interview won the Iris Award for Best International Show.

### **Announcements**

**Announcement from Zac Poonen (July 10, 2023)**

**MESSAGES FOR THIS TIME**

Here is a message that all brothers and sisters should listen to.

God Needs Women Leaders

<https://cfcindia.com/sermon/god-needs-women-leaders>

Please circulate this to your church members or play it in your church - if convenient.

CFC Bangalore

<https://cfcindia.com>

### **Notes**

## Notes