

**THE *MEANING* OF**



**GOD'S FALL HOLY DAYS**

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# Introduction

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WHY has God commanded us to *keep holy* certain annual Holy Days, which are listed, for example, in Leviticus 23? What possible relevance and meaning could these “ancient” Holy Days have for us today? In this booklet, you will learn the truth about the annual Holy Days and Festivals to be kept in the Fall of the year. These days carry a deep and rich meaning, actually revealing to us the great master plan of God for mankind. But just knowing about them academically is not enough! Blessed are those who *understand* them and actually **DO** them, *keeping them holy as God made them holy!*

As an introduction, we are setting forth a very brief summary of God’s annual Holy Days and Festivals that come in the Fall. We will then describe and analyze the meaning of each of these days and festivals in much more detail. The following summary is adapted from our free booklet, “**God’s Commanded Holy Days**”:

## ***Feast of Trumpets***

...only very few are chosen at this time to receive the gift of God’s Holy Spirit and to prepare for the time when God will replace Satan and restore His government over all the earth. These few who are chosen are called “firstfruits” (James 1:18; Revelation 14:4). They are being taught and trained by God so that they can later teach mankind to reject the rule of Satan and to submit to God’s authority. That time of massive re-education will begin when Jesus Christ returns—in great power and great glory—as the KING of kings and the LORD of lords. He is coming back to restore ALL THINGS on this earth. God wants us to keep the annual Holy Day of the ***Feast of Trumpets*** as a reminder of the monumental future event of Christ’s return. Those in Christ still alive when He returns will be changed to immortality, and those who have died in Christ, will be resurrected from the dead to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:49–54; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17; John 3:3–8).

## ***Day of Atonement***

In order to bring perfect peace and happiness to this earth,

Satan—who has become the arch-enemy of God and man—will have to be removed from his power over this earth (compare Revelation 2:13). Only then can man truly become “at one” with God. God created the annual Holy Day of **Atonement** to foreshadow the event of Satan’s removal in the near future (Acts 27:9; compare, too, Romans 16:20).

### ***Seven Days of Feast of Tabernacles***

Following the removal of Satan, Christ and His saints will begin the awesome task of restoring all things. Those who qualify, will rule with Christ on this earth for 1,000 years (the “Millennium”) (Revelation 20:4), governing those who survived the incredible time of suffering just prior to Christ’s return, as well as those who will be born during the Millennium. Under Christ’s leadership—and along with Him—the saints will restore what had been taken away through Satan’s rebellion and what Adam and Eve failed to restore (see Daniel 7:27). We celebrate this unique and unparalleled time in the entire history of mankind every year for seven days when we observe the **Feast of Tabernacles** (see John 7:2–14). The first day of that seven-day Festival is to be observed as an annual Holy Day.

### ***The Last Great Day***

God’s plan, as pictured in His weekly Sabbath and His annual Holy Days, will still not have been completed by the end of the Millennium. One tremendous event will still occur. It involves the masses of people who have died without ever having been called by God (John 6:44) or known about Jesus Christ, without whom none can be saved (Acts 4:12). God established that all of those people will be resurrected to physical life after the Millennium and will then have the opportunity to accept Christ and to live a godly life. It is the same opportunity being given to those being called by God today—an opportunity that will also be given to mankind during the Millennium. Virtually no one outside the true Church of God understands this vital aspect of God’s plan for mankind, but God has revealed it to His people. God is fair in His dealings with man, and He *had*

to make it possible that EVERYONE would be given an equal opportunity to respond to—accept or reject—God’s calling.

The final annual Holy Day of the **Last Great Day**, which immediately follows the Feast of Tabernacles, symbolizes a period of—most likely—100 years (Isaiah 65:20), called the “Great White Throne Judgment” (Revelation 20:11–12). This is that time during which all persons who had not been called before will be resurrected to physical life and, will then be given their first real opportunity to accept or to reject God’s calling (John 7:37).

Those who will have become immortal members in the very Family of God, will rule with God and Christ for all eternity over all things (Revelation 22:5). This will be the KINGDOM OF GOD ruling over creation, with God’s plan for mankind having been completed.

While the commanded observances in the Spring and early Summer—the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost—picture events of the past, those in the Fall picture events that are still to occur in the future. So then, all of the commanded annual Holy Days—Spring/early Summer and Fall—observed in their entirety, reveal to us God’s plan for His creation.

With this short summary of God’s Fall Holy Days and Feast of Tabernacles, we will now describe God’s awesome purpose behind each of these in much greater detail.

# Chapter 1 — The Feast of Trumpets

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The Biblical Feast of Trumpets is the first of the annual Holy Days to occur in the Fall of the year. As will be explained in this booklet, the meaning of the Feast of Trumpets includes the culminating event of Christ's return to this earth. A *literal trumpet* will be blown at that time. However, the Feast of Trumpets is not limited to that event. It points to, and includes the events *prior* to Christ's immediate return. It also addresses God's Church today and its commission to proclaim the fact that Christ is coming again to this earth, as well as to warn mankind of the prophesied catastrophic conditions that will dominate the world scene just prior to, and at the time of His return.

## **A DAY OF BLOWING**

We read in the eighth chapter of the book of Nehemiah about a sacred assembly on the Feast of Trumpets, which is to be kept on the “first day of the seventh month” (verse 2). On that day—the only annual Feast day that falls on a “new moon”—the priests and Levites would read and explain the Law of God to the people (verses 1, 3, 7–8, 12). The priest, Ezra, reminded the people that the Feast of Trumpets is “holy to the LORD” (verses 9 and 10), and that it is a day of joy (verse 10) because of what it *ultimately* pictures.

In Numbers 29:1, the Feast of Trumpets is described in this way: “And in the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation. You shall do no customary work. For you it is a *day of blowing* the trumpets.” In the Hebrew, the original expression for “day of blowing” is “*yom teruah*,” which literally means “a day of blowing or shouting.” (The translator supplied the English word for “trumpets”.)

Leviticus 23:24 gives us further details regarding the Feast of Trumpets: “... In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a Sabbath-rest, a memorial of *blowing* of trumpets, a holy convocation.”

The Hebrew for “blowing of trumpets” is “*teruah*.” This means that the Feast of Trumpets is a DAY (“*yom*”) or a MEMORIAL of blowing or shouting. Again, the translator supplied the English word



for “trumpets”. “*Teruah*” could best be translated as signal, sound of tempest, shout, blast of war, blast of alarm, or blast of joy. One could say that “*teruah*” describes an *awakening* blast.

In Old Testament times, God’s priests—Aaron and his descendants—blew real trumpets on that day, but not ONLY on that day. Since Christ is our High Priest and He has replaced the priesthood of Aaron, God’s Church today does not blow *literal* trumpets. Instead, the Church has been commissioned, by God, to blow *spiritual trumpets* by preaching the gospel message of Jesus Christ to this dying world and to God’s people, thus “sounding the alarm.”

## **BLOWING THE SHOFAR**

It is interesting to note what types of trumpets were blown on the Feast of Trumpets in Old Testament times. In general, the Bible speaks of two kinds of trumpets, namely silver trumpets and ram’s horns, or *shofars*.

Silver trumpets were blown on the Feast of Trumpets, as well as on all of the other Festivals and on every new moon (Numbers 10:10). Besides blowing silver trumpets, *shofars* or ram’s horns were also blown on the Feast of Trumpets. *Shofars* can only produce one sound, which can be described as a loud, piercing blast. It is often referred to in the Bible as a “noise” or a “shout.” This describes the meaning of the word “*teruah*.” The reference to the trumpets that were to be blown at the Feast of Trumpets mainly describes the ram’s horns, which produce an *awakening blast*.

## **THE MEANING OF THE RAM**

The symbolism of a “*shofar*” or “ram’s horn” being blown on the Feast of Trumpets is significant. As mentioned in Genesis 22:7–8, 13, God provided Abraham with a ram to sacrifice instead of his own son Isaac. This is an obvious symbolic reference to Jesus Christ who subsequently became THE sacrifice for ALL of mankind, **giving up His life to pay for our sins.**

Christ is described in the book of Revelation as the LAMB—a male sheep or a ram—even at the time of His return in the near future (compare Revelation 14:10). Christ became the Lamb of God who carried away the sins of the world, making it possible for Him to come

back to usher in the Kingdom of God here on earth. Foreshadowing the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the ancient Israelites had to sacrifice a “ram without blemish” as a trespass offering in order to obtain atonement and forgiveness for their trespasses (Leviticus 5:15). But as we read in the New Testament, these animal sacrifices did not really “take away” their sins at that time. Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ takes that away (Hebrews 10:4).

When the priests blew a *ram’s* horn on the Feast of Trumpets, they announced, perhaps inadvertently and unknowingly, Christ’s first coming, at which time He ultimately died for our sins. Today when we blow “spiritual trumpets” (to be discussed in more detail later in this booklet), we are reminded of the fact that **Jesus Christ already came and died for man, but it is also a reminder that He will come AGAIN to rule over man.**

The fact that ram’s horns were blown on the Feast of Trumpets is also symbolic of God’s people—the true followers of Jesus Christ—who are described as rams, too. They are to have a Christ-like attitude. Ezekiel 34:17 says: “And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.’” God’s people are not to be self-willed goats, but submissive and obedient rams. Furthermore, a RAM is a clean animal. God’s disciples must be clean, as Christ is clean, if they want to be instruments for His Work.

## **THE MEANING OF THE HORN**

There is further significance in the fact that priests were to blow ram’s HORNS on the Feast of Trumpets. Horns stand for rulership, power and kingship. Psalm 89:24 says: “But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, And in My name *his horn* shall be exalted.” The horn symbolizes the fact that Christ will come back to RULE this earth. In addition, the blowing of the ram’s horn reminds us that Christ’s disciples will share in Christ’s rulership, IF they develop a Christ-like attitude. Psalm 148:14 promises: “And He has exalted *the horn of His people*, the praise of all His saints.”

The horns of the rams tell us, too, that we *can* obtain SALVATION from God. Luke 1:68–69 says: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised

up a *horn of salvation* for us In the house of His servant David.”

In addition, horns are associated with God’s protection. In 1 Kings 1:51–53, Adonijah, who had rebelled against King Solomon, sought and found protection by taking hold of the *horns of the altar*. Today, we find God’s protection and help each time we appear boldly before His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16), in front of which is the altar with its horns, symbolizing spiritual and physical protection (Revelation 8:3).

## **SPIRITUAL TRUMPETS**

As previously mentioned, in ancient Israel, literal trumpets or ram’s horns were blown. Today, God’s Church is commissioned to blow God’s trumpets *spiritually* by proclaiming God’s message. That message, as it relates to the Feast of Trumpets, can be summarized in this way:

Living in sin leads to calamity, so be warned! Turn from your sins! Repent and get ready for your soon-coming King and your inheritance of the Kingdom of God (Luke 24:45–47).

## **WHY SHOFARS NEED TO BE BLOWN**

The Scriptures tell us very clearly the reasons why *shofars*—ram’s horns or trumpets—were blown, and why they are to be blown spiritually today.

Amos 3:6–8, for instance, tells us: “IF a trumpet [“*shofar*”] is blown in a city, will not the people be afraid? If there is calamity in a city, will not the LORD have done it? *Surely the Lord GOD does nothing Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.* A lion has roared! Who will not fear? The Lord GOD has spoken! Who can but prophesy?”

Isaiah 58:1 succinctly presents the ongoing and timeless mission of both the Old Testament prophets and God’s New Testament Church: “Cry aloud, spare not; Lift up your voice like a trumpet [“*shofar*”]; Tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.”

Ezekiel 33:2–6 adds the following responsibility for God’s servants at all times: “Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: ‘When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their

watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he *blows the trumpet* [“*shofar*”] and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet [“*shofar*”] and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet [“*shofar*”], but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life.

“But if the watchman sees the sword coming and *does not blow the trumpet* [“*shofar*”], and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I require at the watchman’s hand.”

## **ALL PEOPLE NEED TO BE WARNED**

Jeremiah 4:5 instructs the prophets of old, and more importantly, the New Testament Church today, to blow the trumpet [“*shofar*”] to warn *Judah and the city of Jerusalem* of impending disaster, calamity and war.

Hosea 8:1–2 contains a warning message of war and desolation via a trumpet [“*shofar*”] for the *modern house of Israel* (including the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand), as well as for the *New Testament Church*.

Joel 2:15–16 specifically addresses and warns the *New Testament Church* of the “great and very terrible” day of the Lord: “Blow the trumpet [“*shofar*”] in Zion, Consecrate a fast, Call a sacred assembly; Gather the people, Sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and nursing babes.”

But trumpets are also to be blown spiritually by God’s Church today to warn the other nations of the world. As the gospel of the Kingdom of God will be preached in the entire world as a witness, so also *the world* will have to be warned. This warning message is part of the gospel, as it shows that Christ will come back, and it explains WHY He has to return.

For instance, we read in the book of Jeremiah that God will use a mighty army from the east to destroy *modern Babylon*—a restored ancient Roman Empire, which is actually forming in Europe right now. Jeremiah 51:27 says: “Set up a banner in the land, Blow the trumpet [“*shofar*”] among the nations! Prepare the nations against

her, Call the kingdoms together against her... [including] the kings of the Medes [modern Russia]... For every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon.”

Modern Babylon needs to hear this warning message so that perhaps some will be motivated to repent and “leave” Babylon, spiritually, before it is too late!

In Zephaniah 1:16, the day of the Lord’s punishment of the nations is described as “A day of the trumpet [“*shofar*”] and alarm Against the fortified cities And against the high towers.” God continues to say that He will “bring distress upon men... Because they have sinned against the LORD” (verse 17). It is the DUTY of God’s Church today to warn of these events, which are going to happen because man is living in sin.

In the future, God will have angels blow seven trumpets to announce the terrible punishments to be brought upon a sinning, rebellious, God-defying world. We can find some of those events described in passages like Revelation 8:2, 6–13, and Revelation 9:1, 13. At that time, angels will blow *literal* trumpets [in Greek, “*salpigx*”]. Today, God’s Church must announce those events *in advance*, through God’s *spiritual* trumpets or *shofars*.

## **THE SEVENTH TRUMPET**

When the seventh or last trumpet sounds, Christ will return to establish the Kingdom of God here on earth. All peoples will hear that trumpet sound, as Isaiah 18:3 reveals: “All inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth: when he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see it; And when he blows a trumpet, you hear it.”

Revelation 11:15–18 adds the following: “Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!’... ‘You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come, And the time of the dead [better: nations], that they should be judged, And that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, And those who fear Your name, small and great, And should destroy those who destroy the earth.’”

Christ’s second coming will be visible to *EVERYONE* (Revelation

1:7; Acts 1:10–11). He says He will come back in the same manner as the apostles saw Him ascend to heaven. He will not come secretly; nor will He come figuratively, that is, only through His Holy Spirit. He departed from the Mount of Olives visibly, when He was “taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9), and He will return visibly, on a cloud, to the Mount of Olives (compare Zechariah 14:1–4).

## **RESURRECTION AND CHANGE**

In 1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 we read: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and *with the trumpet of God*. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.”

At the time of Christ’s return, those who died in Christ will be resurrected to eternal life; and those in Christ who are still alive, will likewise be changed to immortal life. All of this will happen *when the seventh or last trumpet sounds*, as 1 Corinthians 15:51–52 reveals: “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, *at the last trumpet*. *For the trumpet will sound*, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

Matthew 24:31 tells us that the returning Christ will send out His angels to gather together His elect from the four winds. The angels will then bring them to Christ, meeting Him in the air as He descends to this earth. Christ will apparently circle this globe a few times before He sets foot on the Mount of Olives, because we read that His return will be “as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west” (Matthew 24:27).

Hebrews 9:28 explains that Christ will appear to “those who eagerly wait for Him... for salvation.” He comes to bring salvation for His disciples, placing them as born-again members into the very Family of God. We read in 1 John 3:1–2 that they shall be like Him. They will have been changed to glorious, immortal God beings—just as Christ is an immortal God being today. Colossians 3:4 adds that when Christ appears in glory, His disciples will appear with Him in glory.

Christ will give them rulership over this earth, with Him, but under His authority (Revelation 2:26–27; 3:21; 20:4,6). The extent of their rule, their “reward,” will depend on how they lived their lives—how they responded to their calling and changed their unrighteous ways of living. If they did very well, they will receive higher rulership positions.

## **FREEDOM**

We are told that Christ will bring FREEDOM. He will free His disciples from death (1 Corinthians 15:54–55), so that they can never die again (Luke 20:36). He will also free them from sin, which leads to death (Romans 7:22–25), so that they can never sin again (1 John 3:9).

In addition, Christ will return to bring freedom to the remaining human beings who will have survived the end-time holocaust, but who will not be resurrected to immortal spirit beings at that time. Only those who are truly “in Christ” will be resurrected or changed at the time of Christ’s return; the others will not inherit eternal life *at that time*. But still, Christ will set them free from Satan’s influences that motivate man to sin (Romans 16:20; 2 Timothy 2:26).

When Christ returns, this world will be in catastrophic turmoil! Due to the influence of Satan and his demons, armies will be fighting against each other to the degree that if Christ did not to come back to stop this madness, **no person would survive** (Matthew 24:22). So then, Christ’s return will also set mankind free from war by showing man the way to peace (Psalm 46:9; Isaiah 2:4; 9:5–7). He will displace Satan and bind him for 1,000 years, and Satan will be unable to deceive anyone (Revelation 20:1–3). During that time, man will *finally* begin to experience real peace on earth—God’s way of peace.

In addition, Christ will free the modern houses of Israel and Judah, who will have been taken captive and subjected to literal slavery. He will bring them into the Promised Land (Isaiah 27:13).

## **MAN WILL LISTEN**

When Christ returns and begins to rule this world—sitting on the throne of David—the houses of Israel and Judah (Matthew 19:28), as well as the non-Israelite nations or “Gentiles,” will begin to listen

(Acts 15:16–17). They will have experienced how Christ rewarded the just and punished the unjust at His return, pursuant to the righteous law of God (Malachi 3:2, 5; Jude 14–15). They will learn that we can only have peace and happiness if we live by God’s law.

We read in Isaiah 2:1–4 that all nations will come to the mountain of the Lord; that is, they will accept His rule and government, and learn His laws for right living. As a consequence, they will beat their swords into plowshares and they will no longer learn the way of war (compare Micah 4:3). Rather, “of the increase of His government and *peace* There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom” (Isaiah 9:7).

## **THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS IN JEWISH LITERATURE**

In reviewing Jewish literature, we find that the ancient Rabbis believed that God created the world on the Day now known as the Feast of Trumpets. One purpose of the blowing of the trumpet on that day was a call to repentance. It was a call for the dead to arise and live again—to wake up from sin to regeneration, through repentance. Paul echoes this understanding, when he writes in Ephesians 5:14: “Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ shall give you light!” (compare Isaiah 26:19).

The Feast of Trumpets is known in Jewish literature under a variety of names, including:

The Day of *Repentance* (*teshuvah*)

The Birthday of the World (*Rosh Hashanah*—Head of the Years)

The Day of the Awakening Blast (*Yom Teruah*)

The Day of Judgment (*Yom Hadin*)

The Day of the *Coronation of the Messiah* (*HaMelech*)

The Time of Jacob’s Trouble or the *Birth pangs of the Messiah* (*Chevlai shel Mashiach*)

The Wedding Ceremony (*Kiddushin/Nesu’in*)

The Last *Trump* (*shofar*)

Following the Feast of Trumpets and what it symbolizes, we are introduced to another important event in God’s Master Plan, which is pictured by the Day of Atonement.



## Chapter 2—The Day of Atonement

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After Jesus Christ has returned, and before He begins His rule over man, an extremely important event will take place.

We find this event foreshadowed in Leviticus 16, where we are introduced to a remarkable ceremony, which occurred, in Old Testament times, on the Day of Atonement. That day is also called “the Fast” or “*Yom Kippur*.” On that day, two goats were chosen by lots. One lot was called “for the LORD,” or, “*La Adonai*,” and the other lot was called, “for Azazel,” or “*La Azazel*” (compare Leviticus 16:7–8). The *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* translate “Azazel” as “scapegoat,” which is a terribly wrong rendition. The first goat, the *La Adonai* goat, was killed and offered as a sin offering (verse 9). The second goat, the *La Azazel* goat, was sent away alive into the wilderness (verse 10).

### THE “LA ADONAI” GOAT

It has been long understood that the *La Adonai* goat pictures Jesus Christ—the Messiah—who gave His life as a sin offering and as a sacrifice for all of mankind. The Passover reminds us of those who are selectively and individually called by God in this life and who accept Christ’s sacrifice for the forgiveness of their sins. The Passover, then, has reference to the firstfruits.

### COLLECTIVE REDEMPTION

The Day of Atonement, on the other hand, pictures events, which, in time sequence, occur after the return of Christ. They relate to all peoples who have survived the horrors of global war. They will then be able, and willing, to accept Christ’s sacrifice. It should be noted here that while the Passover deals with individual reconciliation, the Day of Atonement pictures collective reconciliation. The Jews have placed important significance on the fact that the Day of Atonement is kept on the 10th day of the 7th month. The number 10 is viewed as representing a group or a congregation, as distinguished from separate individuals. The Day of Atonement primarily refers to *collective* redemption.

After the nation of Israel sinned against God by building a golden calf, Moses ascended a second time to Mount Sinai. Following 40 days of fasting and prayer, God again wrote the Ten Commandments on two tablets of stone. According to tradition, Moses descended from the Mount the second time on the Day of Atonement. He brought the tablets as a sign of God’s forgiveness and His reconciliation with the nation.

The Jews set aside 40 days, prior to the Day of Atonement, as a period of repentance. They call this period “*Teshuvah*,” meaning, “to repent” or “to return.”

## **THE AZAZEL GOAT**

It has also been long understood by some that the *Azazel* goat symbolizes Satan the devil. The Book of Enoch—a non-inspired Jewish mythology—represents the Jewish understanding of Azazel. In chapter 8, verse 1, it identifies *Azazel* as Satan, who has influenced people to invent and manufacture weapons of war and to commit those sins, as we find them described at the time of Noah.

Before the *Azazel* goat was sent into the wilderness, the High Priest—symbolic for Jesus Christ—laid both hands upon the head of that goat, confessing over it all of the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites (Leviticus 16:10, 21–22). The Torah comments that “the goat shall carry on it all their iniquities to an inaccessible region.”

## **CONFUSION REGARDING AZAZEL**

Some claim that *Azazel* does not symbolize Satan, but rather Christ. This confusion is important, as we will see in a moment. As mentioned, both the *Authorized Version* and the *New King James Bible* translate *Azazel* incorrectly as “scapegoat.” The *Nelson Study Bible* comments that this is a reference to Christ, the scapegoat, who takes away our sins. However, this interpretation is terribly wrong.

The German Commentary, *Rienecker*, explains that man’s forgiveness of sin can only be obtained through the shedding of blood, and that the goat for *Azazel* was not killed, but was sent away *alive*. So, *Azazel* could not represent Christ. We find that later in history, the Jews did kill the Azazel goat by throwing it off a cliff, which is

something that the Bible does not command. In doing so, they only added to the confusion as to what *Azazel* stands for. In addition, Aaron had to wash his body after touching the *Azazel* goat; and the man releasing the *Azazel* goat into the wilderness also had to wash his clothes and bathe his body (Leviticus 16:24, 26)—showing that the *Azazel* goat represented Satan, not Christ.

The Commentary of *Jamieson, Fausset and Brown* seems to confirm that *Azazel* represents Satan. The *Broadman Bible Commentary* adds that the intention was in no way to bring a gift to *Azazel*, but to carry away to destruction the sins of the people.

We should recall, too, that the identity of the two goats was determined by lot. God had to reveal which goat was to represent Christ and which goat was to represent Satan. There is a reason for this procedure. Man cannot determine who is the true God and who is a false god. God must REVEAL this to man. Man, left to himself, has chosen to worship and obey Satan—the *Azazel* goat—thinking that they are worshipping the true God!

That is why it is important to understand the confusion over the identity of the *Azazel* goat. As man confuses the worship of Satan with the worship of God, they think that the *Azazel* goat, which represents Satan, actually represents Christ. Is it just coincidence that some who once knew and taught correctly that the *Azazel* goat represents Satan, changed their doctrine in recent years to say that the *Azazel* goat represents Christ? Not likely!

## **ONLY SATAN'S SINS**

The *Azazel* goat carried those sins for which Satan is ultimately responsible, into the wilderness. Satan is not responsible for all sin, as man could and does sin without Satan's influence, but Satan has had a tremendous impact on man's sinful nature and conduct. Christ died for man's sin and what man has become because of it. Upon repentance, man receives forgiveness for sins committed by him—those for which he is responsible. But Christ did not die for Satan's evil influence on man, tempting him to sin, and Christ did not die so that *Satan* could obtain forgiveness. The reason for this is that **Satan does not want to repent. He does not want to change. Satan has committed the unpardonable sin, and Christ's**

sacrifice does not apply to those—Satan or man—who commit the unpardonable sin.

That part of sin for which Satan is responsible, was placed right back on him, as pictured by the High Priest placing his hands on the forehead of the *Azazel* goat. The *Azazel* goat, symbolizing Satan, was then sent with those sins into the wilderness, far away from the High Priest and the people. A man led the *Azazel* goat into the wilderness to see to it that the goat would not return to the camp of Israel.

## **TRUE RECONCILIATION**

Revelation 20:1–3 tells us that just prior to the beginning of the Millennium, an angel will take Satan away from mankind and bind him for a 1,000 years so that he cannot deceive the nations anymore. His role and influence will cease during that Millennial period of 1,000 years. At last, true *at-one-ment*, or reconciliation between God and all mankind, will have become possible.

In German, the expression for *Yom Kippur* or Day of Atonement is “*Versöhnungstag*.” It means, literally, establishing *reconciliation* between *father* and *son*. A son who has gone astray reconciles with his father and becomes again a true son in the fullest meaning of the word. This will be made possible for all mankind when the influence of Satan the devil has ceased.

## **FIGHT AZAZEL!**

Today though, Satan is still around, and those who are called in this day and age must still overcome him. It is a continuous struggle because Satan wants us to fail. Ephesians 4:27 tells us not to give place to the devil. James describes this struggle in James 4:7–8.

Once we submit to God, and *stay submissive* to His rule and government in our lives, Satan must flee from us, as we prove through our conduct that we have rejected his rule over us. We are no longer children of the devil, but are reconciled to God, if, in fact, we are responding to our calling and changing our lives. This is an AWESOME opportunity offered now only to those whom God is calling, but when Christ comes back to this earth, the whole world will be offered that same opportunity to become reconciled to God—this time without interference from Satan, as he will have been sent away for 1,000 years.

The world will learn that their sins can be forgiven through the sacrifice of Christ, while Satan's sins, and his responsibility for the sins of mankind, will be placed back on his head.

## **FASTING ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT**

There is only one specified time in Scripture during which we are commanded to fast, although voluntary occasional fasting is strongly encouraged in the Bible. A *prescribed* 24-hour fast is to occur on the Day of Atonement, referred to as “the Fast” in the Bible (compare Acts 27:9). It is important that we understand WHY we are to FAST on the Day of Atonement.

While there is not one particular passage that specifically states that we are to fast on the Day of Atonement, the requirement to fast on this day becomes clear when we read several passages together, as explained in the next sections.

## **PRESCRIBED FAST ON THE DAY OF ATONEMENT**

Leviticus 23:27–32 gives us the following command: “Also the tenth day of this seventh month shall be the Day of Atonement. It shall be a holy convocation for you; you shall *afflict your souls*... And you shall do no work on that same day... any person who is not *afflicted in soul* on that same day shall be cut off from his people... It shall be to you a sabbath of solemn rest, and you shall *afflict your souls*; on the ninth day of the month at evening [days start and end at evening or at sunset according to the Hebrew calendar], from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your sabbath.”

The Hebrew word for “afflict” is “*anah*.” It means, literally, “to lower” or “to humble.”

Deuteronomy 8:3 sheds more light on the meaning of the Hebrew word, “*anah*.” We read: “He humbled [“*anah*”] you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna...” We should note here the connection between being humbled and abstaining from food. Psalm 35:13 adds: “I humbled [“*anah*”] myself with fasting.”

When the Bible talks about humbling ourselves or afflicting our souls, it implies that we are to do so through fasting; that is, we are to abstain from food *and* drink (compare Exodus 34:28; Esther 4:16; Ezra 10:6).

## **ADDITIONAL CONCEPTS RELATED WITH FASTING**

Fasting is also associated with *mourning and weeping* (Esther 4:3; Psalm 69:10–11; Nehemiah 1:4; 1 Kings 21:27–29).

There IS a *reward* for fasting, but this reward should not be expected to be received from people. Rather, it must come from God the Father (Matthew 6:16–18). Also, fasting is done for a PURPOSE, but man should only see the FRUITS of fasting, rather than concentrating on the fasting itself (same passage).

Fasting should *not be done as a matter of routine*. It can be especially tempting to become routine on the Day of Atonement. Luke 18:9–14 contains an example of a Pharisee who fasted twice a week, out of routine and habit, but because of his self-righteous attitude, it did not help him spiritually in any way. True fasting and mourning must come from the heart. These cannot be rituals and cannot be done for the wrong reason. The Pharisee compared himself with others. He believed that his fast alone would make him righteous. He, in a sense, fasted for strife and debate, concluding that he was better than others because he fasted twice a week, while others did not.

Isaiah 58:3–4 tells us, however, not to fast or afflict our souls for strife and debate: “‘Why have we *fasted*,’ they say, ‘and You have not seen? Why have we *afflicted* [*“anah”*] our souls, and You take no notice?’ In fact, in the day of your *fast* you find pleasure, And exploit all your laborers. Indeed *you fast for strife and debate*, And to strike with the fist of wickedness. *You will not fast* as you do this day, *To make your voice heard on high.*”

The *New International Version* renders verse 4 as follows: “Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high.”

We should *not fast or afflict our souls* [again, note that fasting and afflicting our souls is the same thing] *to find pleasure* on the fast day. This means that while we are fasting, we should not concentrate on anything that clearly detracts from the purpose of the fast day. Otherwise, our fast day is nothing more than simply abstaining physically from food and water. This is especially important when we follow God’s instructions to afflict our souls, or fast, on the Day

of Atonement, one of the annual Sabbaths. We should *not focus on business concerns*, and we certainly are not to try to exploit our laborers and take unfair advantage of our competitors.

## **SPECIFIC REASONS FOR FASTING**

In order to please God when we fast, it is important to fast for the right reasons. Listed below are some very specific reasons for fasting, especially on the Day of Atonement:

### ***1. To obtain help from God***

We read in Ezra 8:21–31 how Ezra fasted to plead for God’s help, and God heard him and answered his plea. When we fast, we must seek God with our whole heart, realizing, acknowledging, and confessing that only He can give us help for our problems.

### ***2. To increase in faith***

Christ taught His disciples that we can receive more faith from God when we fast and pray (Matthew 17:14–21).

### ***3. To turn to God and draw closer to Him***

Joel 2:12–14 includes a striking example and admonition to draw closer to God through fasting and mourning.

In Daniel 9:3–19, Daniel fasted and prayed for the purpose of obtaining forgiveness from God for committed sins.

### ***4. To obtain power and strength from God to overcome problems***

During fasting, we learn that we need more than just physical things (Matthew 4:1–4).

### ***5. To learn how to love other people***

God looks at our hearts during and after the fast (Isaiah 58:6–11).

### ***6. To obtain guidance from God when faced with difficult and important decisions***

Acts 13:2–3 and Acts 14:23 show that the disciples prayed and fasted before they ordained someone.

## 7. To overcome Satan, society and ourselves

James 4:6–10 admonishes us to *humble* ourselves and to submit to God by *mourning and weeping* over our sins. The implication of that passage is, as we have seen earlier, that we need to do so *through fasting*.

Fasting on the Day of Atonement should help bring about our “at-one-ment” with God *and* fellow man. On the Day of Atonement, we are reminded of the time when we will be fully “at one” with God—when we will totally think as He thinks, totally live as He lives, and be totally perfect as He is perfect.

We read Christ’s words in John 10:30: “I and My Father are One.” Christ also said in John 17:11, 20–23, that we are to become ONE, as the Father and Christ are ONE. We are to be of ONE mind (Philippians 2:2). Galatians 3:28 even postulates that this oneness CAN already be achieved now, to an extent: “You ARE all ONE in Christ.”

Even though we *have already received* atonement through Christ, as Romans 5:11 tells us in the *Authorized Version*, Satan, self and society are still around today, influencing us to sin. We know that we have not yet achieved total “at-one-ness” with God and man. And so, the Day of Atonement pictures *for us*—those who are called NOW—a time when *we* will be completely at one with God. We will, in fact, be born-again Spirit members of the God Family, incapable of sinning.

Even though we do not teach at all that we are to endorse or adopt Jewish traditions, it is sometimes helpful to consider them, if they are supported or not contradicted by Scripture. The Jews set aside the ten days between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement as a period they call the Days of Awe (*Yamim Nora'im*), or the TEN DAYS of Repentance or COLLECTIVE redemption (compare Leviticus 16:21, 32–34, providing atonement for the transgressions and sins of *all* the people).

At the end of the Old Testament ceremonies on the Day of Atonement, the mood of the people shifted from solemn awe to joyful celebration. Now they were looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles. The Jews call the Feast of Tabernacles the “Season of Our Joy,” which follows the seasons of repentance and redemption.



When Christ comes back, the whole world will be offered the opportunity to reconcile with God—to become “at one with God.” Satan will be imprisoned for a thousand years. Finally, the rule of Christ over this earth can begin.

### **LIVING THE MEANING OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT**

Those of us who have been called into the truth have a duty to insure that we are living today the meaning of the Day of Atonement. We have been reconciled to God, and Satan should no longer have power over us (James 4:7). We also must be reconciled to one another in God’s Church if we want to teach the world, through our example, the meaning of the Day of Atonement—the true meaning of being at one with God and with fellow man—the true meaning of reconciliation.

## Chapter 3—The Feast of Tabernacles

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Following the Day of Atonement or the Fast, God enjoys the observance of a seven-day Festival—the Feast of Tabernacles. The true Church of God conducts an **opening ceremony** on the **evening** of the first day (compare Isaiah 30:29; Psalm 134:1), and we are to stay in temporary dwellings for the entire time of the Festival.

### TEMPORARY DWELLINGS

In Old Testament times, the Israelites had to create temporary dwellings. Leviticus 23:41–42 instructs us regarding the seven Days of the Feast of Tabernacles: “You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year... You shall dwell in booths for seven days...”

God commanded Israel to build temporary huts, booths or tabernacles out of tree branches, and to live in them during the Feast of Tabernacles.

In the Hebrew, the word for “booth” is “*sukkah*.” The word is used in Genesis 33:17, referring to booths that were built for Jacob’s livestock in order to provide temporary shelter. The word is also used in Job 27:18, where it is said that the wicked builds his house like a booth. The margin of the *New King James Bible* refers to it as a “temporary shelter.”

We also read in Jonah 4:5 that Jonah made himself a shelter. The *Authorized Version* translates “a booth.” That is what a booth is—a temporary shelter.

The word “*sukkah*” is translated 12 times as “tabernacle” in the *Authorized Version*. In most cases, it refers to the *Feast of Tabernacles* (compare Leviticus 23:34; Deuteronomy 16:13, 16; 31:10; 2 Chronicles 8:13; Ezra 3:4; and Zechariah 14:16, 18, and 19).

In Isaiah 4:4–6, we are told that in the future, God will provide a temporary tabernacle or “booth” for physical Israel. This booth will give shade in the daytime from the heat, and it will be a place of refuge and shelter. We are also told that the Israelites will dwell in tents or tabernacles again “as in the days of the appointed feast” (Hosea 12:9; compare the rendering in the *Authorized Version*).

Also, 2 Samuel 11:11 uses the word “*sukkah*” for “tents”: “The ark and Israel and Judah are dwelling in tents.” The word “tent” describes, of course, a temporary shelter or dwelling place.

The Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of booths, is associated with temporary dwellings, shelter and protection. During the Feast, God shelters His people from the dangers and troubles of this world. At the same time, God promises them protection for their homes and belongings during their absence to attend the annual Feast Days. Exodus 34:22, 24 says: “And you shall observe... the Feast of Ingathering [Feast of Tabernacles] at the year’s end... neither will any man covet your land when you go up to appear before the LORD your God...”

The *New Bible Commentary* remarks about Leviticus 23:40–42, on page 163: “The people are to live in booths for seven days that their generations may know that the Lord made the people of Israel dwell in booths, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt... The thought which is stressed is of course the frail and temporary character of the dwellings of the people during the wilderness sojourn. Thus Jerusalem is likened by Isaiah to a cottage (booth) in a vineyard (Is. 1:8).”

## **LITERAL BOOTHS NOT NECESSARY TODAY**

The Church of God has taught for decades that God’s people do not have to *build* literal booths of tree branches to dwell in them during the Feast. The spiritual point God wanted to convey to them at that time was that they were to live in *temporary dwellings* during the Feast. This principle still applies to us today.

*The Good News* of August 1980, published by the Worldwide Church of God, states on page 13: “It does not matter what the booths or dwellings are made out of. Back then they were made of branches. Today they may be canvas tents, aluminum trailers, brick motels, hotels or condominiums. The important point is that they be places of temporary residence.”

Another reference from the *Good News*, September 1983, page 7, states: “The modern counterpart of these booths would be hotels, motels and other places of temporary residence.”

Also, Lesson 30 of the *Ambassador College Bible Correspondence*

*Course*, published by the Worldwide Church of God in 1986, states on page 14: “A booth or tabernacle is a temporary dwelling. God commanded the ancient Israelites to live in temporary shelters made of tree branches while observing the Feast of Tabernacles. For God’s people who attend the Feast today in many different climates, tents, campers, motel or hotel rooms are appointed as temporary dwellings.”

## **WHY TEMPORARY DWELLINGS?**

What is the reason behind God’s command to stay in temporary dwellings during the Feast of Tabernacles?

## **A PILGRIMAGE**

Notice in Psalm 42:4 how the sons of Korah describe one of God’s festivals, which is, in all likelihood, the Feast of Tabernacles: “I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With the multitude that kept a *pilgrim feast*.”

They were literally keeping a pilgrim feast because they left their homes to keep the Feast in Jerusalem. They went on a pilgrimage, their destination being the city of Jerusalem. But this act of making a pilgrimage is also symbolic of our *spiritual* journey today—the pilgrimage of our lives.

Let us examine this principle a little closer.

What is a pilgrim? A pilgrim is a traveler, a sojourner. He does not settle down. As long as he is traveling—as long as he is a pilgrim—he does not have a permanent residence. He has not yet reached his final destination.

This is the way true Christians are described in the Bible.

Peter tells us in 1 Peter 1:1: “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the *pilgrims* of the Dispersion...” The margin of the *New King James Bible* defines pilgrims as “sojourners, temporary residents.”

Continuing in verse 17: “...conduct yourselves throughout the time of your *stay* here in fear [or respect for God].” The margin of the *New King James Bible* explains that the word for “stay” really means, “sojourning, dwelling as resident aliens.” *Moffat* translates: “Be reverent in your conduct while you *sojourn* here below.”

He goes on to say in 1 Peter 2:11: “Beloved, I beg you as *sojourners and pilgrims*, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.”

## PILGRIMS AND SOJOURNERS

All of God's people have been, and still are today, pilgrims and sojourners in this physical life. They are living *IN* this world, but they are not *OF* this world. They do not really belong to this world (compare John 17:11, 14). They are, spiritually speaking, separate from this world (Revelation 18:4). They are waiting for a permanent dwelling place, a place that will be given to them in the Kingdom of God. They are constantly looking forward to a better city and a better country.

Hebrews 11:9–10 tells us about Abraham: “By faith he dwelt [or “sojourned,” according to the *Authorized Version*] in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”

They were strangers in the Promised Land, as they had not yet received the inheritance.

Rather than being overly occupied with the affairs of this life, we must remember that we, as God's people, are to *look to God for temporary shelter—firmly bearing in mind that we are on a pilgrimage.*

Psalms 84:5 explains: “Blessed is the man whose strength is in You, Whose heart is set on *pilgrimage.*”

Our hearts must be set on pilgrimage, not on the things of this world. We are pilgrims and sojourners in this world, passing through this world on our way to a better world—the world tomorrow—the Kingdom of God here on earth.

We could compare our pilgrimage with that of the ancient Israelites who passed through the wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. God was with them the whole time. They longed to enter the Promised Land. They did not want to settle down in the wilderness and make that their final destination. While in the wilderness, they did not have permanent dwellings. In fact, they were always on the move, literally, never knowing how long to stay in one place. God led them by a cloud during the day and by a pillar of fire during the night. Whenever the cloud rose, they had to start walking, following the cloud (compare Numbers 9:21–22).

Like the Israelites who had to continually move through the wilderness toward the Promised Land, we also must continue to

move forward through the spiritual wilderness, ever onward to the Kingdom of God. We must follow God wherever He leads us. When He wants us to move, spiritually speaking, we must move, and when He wants us to stay, we must stay. And if He wants us to forsake everything that we have in order to follow Him, then we must be prepared to do that, too.

God's people are described in Revelation 14:4 in this way: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women [spiritually speaking—they did not engage in wrong religious practices], for they are virgins [their worship of God was pure and not mixed with pagan ideas]. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb."

God led ancient Israel through the wilderness to test them, in order to do them good in the end (Deuteronomy 8:1–9, 15–16). He hoped they would pass the test.

And so it is for God's people today. This world is their wretched wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions of hatred and war—a thirsty land without the water of God's knowledge. This world is something God's people must *pass through*, rather than become comfortable with. The values, ideals, customs, styles, philosophies, religions, national governments and their goals, entertainment, glamour, and the judicial and administrative systems of this world are nothing but a wilderness of spiritual emptiness and confusion that must never dominate, shade, influence or alter the Godly perspective of Christ's true disciples!

So then, rather than concentrating on, and beginning to love and embrace the things of this world during the time of our pilgrimage (1 John 2:15–17), we should focus on the tools God has given us so that we can successfully reach the destination of our pilgrimage. David said in Psalm 119:54: "Your statutes have been my songs In the house of my *pilgrimage*."

## **WHEN WE LIVE IN TEMPORARY SHELTERS...**

When we live in *temporary shelters* during the Feast of Tabernacles, we are reminding ourselves, and are conveying to others, that this life is only temporary. We are reminded that we are being tested on

how we live this life of pilgrimage, having our course set to reach the goal—to enter, as immortal God beings, the Kingdom of God.

As this physical life is fleeting, we need to act accordingly and place our whole trust in God (James 4:13–14; Luke 12:13–21). Sinful pleasures of this life, and even the lawful necessities of life, are passing (Hebrews 11:23–26; John 6:27). We are allotted only a limited time to prepare for the Kingdom of God, which is our final destination.

During the Feast, God’s people live for seven days *in temporary dwellings*, sheltered by Him from the pursuits of this world. This foreshadows a time when all of mankind will experience the same. In the Millennium, God will shelter all of mankind. Satan, the present god of this world, will be banned. All people will understand, then, that we all are pilgrims in this physical life.

As God’s people, we live *in temporary dwellings*, away from our jobs and our everyday surroundings. We come away from Satan’s world and his prevailing negative influence. During that time period, we ought to picture the universal freedom, happiness, joy and peace that will exist when Satan is gone and the Spirit of God is available to every human being. We ought to keep the Feast with gladness of heart. This life is only a training ground for a better life to come. We will soon experience a world of peace and happiness that this world has never experienced before.

Additionally, staying in *temporary dwellings* reminds us of the fact that there will come a time when we will no longer dwell in booths or tabernacles or tents of this physical flesh, as 2 Peter 1:13–14 points out: “Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must *put off my tent*, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.”

We, as human beings, are made out of dust. We are destined to die. Only God’s Spirit in us can give us hope for eternal life after physical death.

## **A BETTER CITY**

Hebrews 11:13–16 states: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that

they seek a homeland [*Authorized Version*: “a country”]. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared *a city* for them.”

The saints of old were waiting for the holy city of the New Jerusalem that will come down to this earth (Revelation 21:2). They were not focused on the here and now. Even though some of them were rich, they did not put their trust in riches, realizing that riches can make themselves wings and fly away (compare Proverbs 23:5; Matthew 6:19–21).

They understood that this life is very temporary. They understood that they were resident aliens in whatever earthly country they might have been living at the time, and that their real citizenship was somewhere else.

We today must have the same outlook on life. Hebrews 13:14 reminds us: “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.” As Christians, we are strangers and foreigners in this world, but we are no longer strangers and foreigners in the eyes of God. Ephesians 2:19 explains: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.”

## **OUR HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP**

Whoever we are and wherever we live, if we are converted members of God’s Church, then we belong to the household of God and we are fellow citizens with all the other saints around the world. But this citizenship is not an earthly one. Rather, it is in heaven, as Philippians 3:20 explains: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

## **A PERMANENT DWELLING...**

And so, it is our hope, confidence and conviction that our temporary, physical tent will be replaced with a permanent dwelling, as Paul explained in 2 Corinthians 5:1–4: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we



groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven... for we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that mortality may be swallowed up by life.”

The longer we stay in temporary dwellings, the more we tend to desire to live in a permanent place. After a few days in a hotel room, we want to sleep in our own bed again. God does not want us to become too comfortable with a temporary place; He does not want us to make a permanent home out of a temporary shelter. Our permanent home—God’s Kingdom—is still awaiting us, and the longer we live in this evil world of Satan, the more we groan for God’s Kingdom to come, to be freed from this body of sin and death and from our own human nature that tempts us to sin. We cry out with Paul: “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

God wants us to anticipate and earnestly desire permanency—the permanency of the everlasting Kingdom of God to be established here on earth.

It is no coincidence that the Feast of Tabernacles is kept in the seventh month—the month of “*Ethanim*” (compare 1 Kings 8:2). This Hebrew word means, “permanent things.” Instead of pilgrimage and sojourning, there will come a time of eternal inheritance.

## **THE ULTIMATE FULFILLMENT**

The ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles will be when God lives with man. We read about this awesome promise in Revelation 21:3: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.’”

## **What Will It Be Like... ?**

True Christians who qualify in this life are destined to become immortal Spirit beings—members in the Kingdom of God—actually, members of the very Family of God.

In order to be part of God’s Kingdom, converted Christians will

need to become God—changed to spirit at their resurrection. They will then have His divine nature, which is already given to them to a small extent—as a down payment or guarantee—at the time of their baptism and receipt of God’s Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:2–4).

In Scriptures like 1 John 2:25 and Titus 1:2, God promises His disciples ETERNAL life. Once changed, they cannot, and will not die anymore. His promise of eternal life is accompanied by the promise of an eternal inheritance (Hebrews 9:15)—the inheritance of the Kingdom of God (James 2:5; Hebrews 12:27–28).

It is a marvelous truth that Christ’s disciples will **BE** God, just as Christ also is an immortal God being! (For more information on this vitally important subject, please read our free booklet, “*God Is A Family.*”)

### **LIFE-GIVING SPIRIT BEINGS...**

In addition to this astounding truth, we are told in 1 Corinthians 15:45 that Christ is a *life-giving Spirit*. That is, **He can create LIFE!** In fact, that is what He did before He became a human being, and that is what He will continue to do after His return. We are told in Scripture, for instance, that all living things in the oceans will have died before His return (Revelation 16:3), but we also read that there will be fish in the Millennium. This shows that God will create new LIFE, and it is strongly suggested in Scripture that God’s children—the resurrected saints—will have a part in this, by assisting God the Father and Jesus Christ in that process!

Romans 8:20–23 tells us that God’s creation waits for the revelation of the glorious liberty of the children of God. It will be freed from corruption—it will become spirit, as we will discuss below. But that won’t happen until **after** *the new heavens and the new earth* appear, as we will read in the book of Revelation.

But what happens before that? The Bible says that God’s creation waits for the manifestation of God’s children as Spirit beings. They will, already, during the time of the Millennium, be working, under God the Father and Jesus Christ, to beautify and restore this earth, actually **CREATING life**. As Jesus Christ has the mind of God the Father and He never did anything contrary to God’s will, so God’s children will have the mind of God and Christ, and they will therefore always act in accordance with God’s will and desires—never contrary

to it. They will always be **under** God the Father and Jesus Christ. God will always be *their God*, and they will *always serve* Him (Revelation 21:3, 7; 22:5). They will *always follow*—and thereby *accept the lead of*—the Lamb, Jesus Christ, wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4; compare Revelation 3:4; 7:17).

Let us assume, then, that you will become an immortal God being, living with Christ in the Millennium. Notice that Christ said in John 7:37–38, that out of *your* heart will flow rivers of living water. That is, **God’s Spirit will flow out of YOU to create LIFE! Christ is a life-giving Spirit, and you also will be, because you will be God.**

## **PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL HEALING**

You will reign righteously and justly, bringing peace and happiness to this world. To rule justly over others means to help them—free them from pain, lift them up, bring them happiness and fulfillment in life. You will also be able to heal the sick in miraculous ways (Isaiah 33:24). When Christ healed, He did it supernaturally, and in most cases, with immediate effect. YOU will be able to do the same. When that time comes, every human being will be healed. No one will say anymore, “I am sick.”

## **BE WHEREVER YOU WANT TO BE**

As a God being, you can be wherever you want to be within a split second. After Christ’s resurrection, He went to God’s throne in heaven, received kingship over the universe from God the Father, and returned to earth to talk to His disciples—all within less than a few hours. You, too, will be able to “fly” with speed much faster than you can imagine. You can be wherever you are needed, immediately. You can stand next to those who need your help, manifesting yourself to them so that they can see you. At the same time, you can prevent things from happening in other places on this globe, since you will be God. Your powers will not be limited to the place where you are at the time. The Spirit of God the Father and Jesus Christ will be dwelling in you, and through the Holy Spirit, you can be, and will be, present everywhere.

## **CANNOT SIN**

God cannot sin. That is, He cannot lie. He cannot steal. We know that it is wrong to lie or to steal. But, weak as we are, we sometimes do. Since we know it's wrong, we hate ourselves for doing it. When you are a God being, it will be *impossible* for you to sin.

Imagine that! **YOU will not be ABLE to sin**, because you will have acquired a perfect *WILL* not to sin. As God, it will be against your Godly character to sin; therefore, you cannot sin anymore, because you do not **WANT** to sin.

## **NO ABUSE OF POWER**

With limitless powers at our command, unless our will is such that we *absolutely* do not want to abuse our powers for wrong reasons, we would blow up this world and destroy everything around us. If Satan would have had his way, this world would have been exterminated a long time ago. Satan is the destroyer. It is his nature to destroy. But Satan's rule will end. He, the destroyer, will have influenced man to be willing to totally destroy each other. Christ will come to stop this. Satan's rule will be taken away from him, and man will not be allowed to destroy anymore on Christ's holy mountain.

When you are God, you will not destroy. God is the sustainer. He sustains what He has created with His mighty word of power (Hebrews 1:1–3). As a God being, you will uphold and sustain the life that you will create—in accordance with the will and desire of God the Father and Jesus Christ—and you will sustain the life that God the Father and Jesus Christ will entrust to your care—as the Father created everything through Christ and entrusted it all to His care.

## **YOU WILL BE LOVE**

God IS LOVE. Love is outgoing concern for the good and welfare of others. As a God being, you *WILL BE* concerned for the good and welfare of others. You will experience, on an uninterrupted and a never-ending basis, why it is more blessed to give than to receive. As God, you will own everything, but it will be your greatest wish to share all that you have with others. Christ said that we will be HAPPY if we learn and practice the concept of giving and sharing.

Again, God IS love. He GIVES. He is HAPPY and filled with

joy because loving and giving produces joy (Psalm 16:11; Matthew 25:21). God's joy has a positive effect on others. God radiates joy, so to speak. When we are in God's presence, we feel happiness and joy. So also, when you are God, others will feel that same happiness and joy emanating from you (Isaiah 35:10; 61:7; Acts 2:28).

## **HOW TO RULE UNDER CHRIST**

Christ's disciples, who will by then be members of the God Family, are to "rule" with Christ here on earth during the Millennium. They will rule OVER the human beings who will have survived the horrible catastrophic events prior to Christ's return—a time referred to as the Great Tribulation and the Day of the Lord. Those people, including those of the modern houses of Israel and Judah who will have been brought back to the Promised Land, will continue to live and produce offspring, and God will teach them His Law and show them how to live (Isaiah 2:1–4).

Again, let us assume that you will be one of those who rule with and *under* Christ. Let us further assume that you will be ruling an entire city in a world no longer influenced by Satan and his evil forces, as they have been banished at that time. This does not mean that all of the citizens ruled by you will automatically become good people and do what is right. Not at all! Even though Satan will be gone, the carnal human nature and old destructive habits will still be there, and they will need to be overcome. It will be you—by then an immortal Spirit being—who will help the people to do that.

## **TEACHING GOD'S WAY**

Isaiah 30:20–21 tells us: "And though the LORD gives you The bread of adversity and the water of affliction, Yet your teachers will not be moved into a corner anymore, But your eyes shall see your teachers. Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, 'This is the way, walk in it,' Whenever you turn to the right hand Or whenever you turn to the left."

YOU will be *one of those teachers*—a member of the God Family—if you qualify in your lifetime for that job. You will teach God's standards of living to those in your care. Verse 22 continues to show the consequences and results: "You will also defile the covering of

your images of silver, And the ornament of your molded images of gold. You will throw them away as an unclean thing; You will say to them, ‘Get away!’” You will be able to effectively teach people how to overcome their wrong ways because you will have learned—at least to an extent—how to overcome your wrong ways in your physical lifetime, before you were changed to Spirit.

Some people will respond quickly to Godly teaching and guidance. Micah 4:1–3 explains that they will *want to learn* to do what is right. They will not want to learn the way of war any more; but rather, they will be willing to replace their weapons with useful tools. God’s rule will start in Jerusalem and will spread out from there, to include countries that had never heard, learned or understood the truth before (Isaiah 66:19, 23).

## **DEALING WITH DISOBEDIENCE AND REBELLION**

But not everyone will readily follow your guidance nor respond to your oral teaching when they hear your voice behind them telling them to go the straight and narrow way. Some will need to be dealt with in more drastic ways, such as the temporary withholding of physical blessings (compare Zechariah 14:16–19).

People will have to learn, just as you had to learn. They will have the Bible to learn from, but they will also have to go through the same decision-making processes as converted Christians go through today, except they will not have to overcome Satan. They will also live in a better environment, but still, *they won’t be forced* not to sin; otherwise, there would be no free moral agency and, thus, no character development.

Total rebellion will be dealt with quickly and thoroughly. Those who refuse to obey God will be destroyed. This will also serve as a lesson to others, so that they will not feel motivated to rebel also (compare Ezekiel 38:8–12, 15–23; 39:3–10). But even though you have the power to call fire down from heaven and devour your adversaries, that does not mean you will do so anytime someone disobeys or “gets on your nerves” (compare Luke 9:53–55).

## **ADMINISTERING RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT**

HOW will you judge? How will you determine whether someone

needs oral admonition or a more drastic penalty, such as the withholding of physical blessings, or even outright destruction? How will you know what decisions to make? Will you, once you are a God being, automatically know? Not necessarily! Even in this day and age, God has *decided* not to know, in certain respects, how someone will act. We read that He was surprised about the wickedness of man at the time of Noah. So then, you, as a Spirit being, will also learn by experience, by dealing with people. Also, since you will be ruling under Christ, you may consult with Him for advice anytime.

Isaiah 11:3–4 tells us how Jesus Christ will judge people and circumstances: “His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.”

Christ will judge with righteousness—not based on hearsay or circumstantial evidence (John 7:24). Assuming that you will be judging under Him, then you, too, will judge righteously (compare Proverbs 18:17; 29:14). Your judgment will be fair and without partiality. It will be carried out with mercy, compassion, patience and, when necessary, with strength. You will look at, and judge by, the motives and desires of the heart (compare Jeremiah 11:20; Proverbs 21:2).

Your judgment will be for the purpose of teaching man to live righteously and peacefully (Isaiah 26:9–10, 12). This means, you will be judging with mercy and executing deserved penalties quickly, so that righteousness can be established in the city (compare Isaiah 16:5; Ecclesiastes 8:11).

## **STANDARDS FOR JUDGMENT**

If someone violates the law of God, how will you deal with them?

Many Old Testament laws will be applied in the Millennium, including the commandments regarding the Sabbath, the Holy Days, clean and unclean meats, and the sacrifices.

When someone steals, he will have to make restitution. He will have to pay “an eye for an eye,” that is, he will have to restore the *value* of the eye (compare Exodus 21:24–25, 18–19, 22).

The *Soncino Commentary* states the following in regard to Exodus 21:24–25: “In all these cases monetary compensation is intended. Strict justice demanded the principle of measure for measure...”

The *New International Version Study Bible*, 1985, points to the parallel passage of Leviticus 24:19: “This represents a statement of principle. The penalty is to fit the crime, not exceed it. An actual eye or tooth was not to be required, nor is there evidence that such a penalty was ever exacted.”

The Old Testament “an eye for an eye” principle was never meant to be applied literally by actually maiming an offender. It was meant to outlaw the personal vindictive “self-help” approach and to allow, instead, a magistrate or a judge to consider the case and render righteous judgment by ordering the offender to pay just compensation to the victim. In Matthew 5:29–30, Jesus Christ addressed a misunderstanding on the part of His listeners who thought that they could avenge themselves. He cautioned them to be forgiving and kind, and He encouraged them to avoid fights and especially violence, even, if need be, at the price of foregoing their legal rights.

The true Church of God has taught consistently that the “eye for an eye principle” was not meant to be applied literally in the sense of maiming a person.

You might not allow it to go so far as an individual actually losing an eye, so that the offender would have to restore its value, but the law, and the penalty for breaking the law, will be taught. Even if you did allow such an offense to happen, you could immediately heal the person who lost an eye. Christ allowed Peter to strike the servant and cut off his ear, but then He healed the servant right away (Matthew 26:51; John 18:10; Luke 22:50–51).

## **WORSHIP SERVICES**

How will the people in your care keep the Sabbath and the Holy Days? Most of the worship services will be held locally, necessitating planning and organization. However, it appears that at least at the beginning of the Millennium, all will go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. How will they get there? There might very well be streets or highways (Isaiah 11:16; 19:23; 62:10), as well as transportation in the form of non-polluting cars and airplanes.



## **PAYING FAIR WAGES**

Assuming that you qualify in this lifetime to rule and guide people in the Millennium, how will you determine what salaries your laborers should receive? You will not pay someone if he refuses to work or to be trained (compare 2 Thessalonians 3:6–12). Employees will be paid fairly and promptly (compare Leviticus 19:13; Matthew 10:10; 1 Timothy 5:18).

Labor unions will not dictate to you how much a worker must be paid. This will be totally up to you, based on God's standards of fairness, as Godly standards differ from the standards of man, which are so many times motivated by greed, envy or jealousy (compare Matthew 20:1–16).

## **WHOM TO EMPLOY?**

What kind of people will you employ in the various functions required in order to administer your city? Remember, you will hire human beings to do some of that, thereby training them to qualify for the Kingdom of God.

Will you hire anyone who still has war in their heart, one who is willing to hit his neighbor with an iron fist, and who still believes that human wars can bring about solutions to our problems?

Absolutely not! If you did, you would allow irritation and confusion, which is against God's standards. The people under your care will not learn war any more. They will want to learn how to replace their weapons with useful tools. They will have to learn that man does not need to go to war, as long as he relies on God and His protection. There will be no draft and no standing army. People with war in their hearts will be re-educated to replace their feelings of war and hate with those of love and peace.

You will also train human beings to become ministers, preaching God's Word (compare Isaiah 61:6, 9; 66:21). Humans will also be used in the administration of animal sacrifices (Ezekiel 44:10–11, 23–24). Many ideas have been advanced as to why there will be animal sacrifices in the Millennium. The short answer is, Scripture does not reveal the answer. We know for a fact *that* animal sacrifices WILL be given, and we are suggesting a distinct possibility for the reason on pages 36–39 of our free booklet, "***And Lawlessness Will***

*Abound...*” Beyond that, we will not engage in speculation, since the Bible is silent on that issue.

## **TRUTHFUL JOURNALISTS**

If you employ a journalist, how will you want him to report facts and circumstances? In today’s world, you might read something like this in a “conservative” local newspaper:

“As has been predicted, the moral agency concept has again produced another theft, this time of two bottles of wine in a nearby grocery store by a 14-year old teenager. When will our mayor wake up to the fact that the granting of free will is dangerous and counterproductive? Only the strong enforcement of power and authority will guarantee the end of theft and the reality of freedom and happiness.”

In tomorrow’s world of the Millennium, you might read the following report about the same facts and circumstances:

“The 14-year-old teen, who was caught stealing two bottles of wine from a nearby grocery store, was sentenced to restore the goods and to pay the grocery owner an additional amount of five times the value of the stolen bottles of wine. The teen will have to work in the owner’s shop until his salary has compensated for the amount of the sentence. The government is very determined to have the sentence carried out immediately. An appeal by the parents to the effect that their son was too young to understand the gravity of his crime was dismissed. The parents were also strongly admonished to make certain that their younger children will not follow the bad example of their older brother.”

## **REBUILDING CITIES**

A great worldwide war, as well as natural catastrophes such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and meteorites crashing into the earth, just prior to Christ’s return, will have left the world in ruins. Cities will be utterly destroyed and will have to be totally **rebuilt**. Let us assume that the city you govern in the Millenium will be in ruins. The rubble will have to be removed and reconstruction will have to begin.

How will you DESIGN your city? You will not permit those under

you to build house next to house, until there is no more place to walk (Isaiah 5:8). Rather, your city will be designed and rebuilt in such a way that there is ample room for everyone to live in peace and tranquility (compare Zechariah 3:10).

## **PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT**

In tomorrow's world, man will not pollute the environment anymore, causing humans to suffer from unhealthy air. Big profit-making companies will not be allowed to endanger the lives of humans, animals and plants due to greed (Hosea 4:1–3; Revelation 11:18). There will be clean, fresh air, because the many causes of pollution will be stopped.

## **ENOUGH FOOD FOR EVERYONE**

Under your rule, you will make sure that food is available for everyone, that prices are fair, and that there will be no arbitrary price manipulations. You will not allow, as is so common today, food to be stored away, or even destroyed, just to keep the prices high, in spite of rampant hunger in the world.

## **NEW EDUCATION SYSTEM**

What school system will you have in your city? What will the school curriculum look like? Children will no longer learn the wrong things about the wrong people. They will no longer be deceived by human fairy tales of evolution or man-made religious holidays.

In addition, parents will learn to properly teach their children God's law and the right things children should be doing (compare Deuteronomy 6:1–9; 11:18–19).

*What a wonderful world it will be!* And YOU could be part of it—an *active* part as a born-again member of the Family of God—teaching others the good way of life and educating them by communicating to them true and lasting values. Isn't that something worth striving for?

## Chapter 4 — The Last Great Day

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In the Millennium, God will deal only with those people who will still be alive when Christ returns, as well as those who will be born during the 1,000 years of Godly rule here on earth. But what about all the people who died over the past centuries prior to Christ's return without ever having heard of, let alone accepted, the name of Jesus Christ? Are they lost forever? What about those who were told about Christ, but rejected Him? What about all of those who were not even professing Christians? Are *they* lost forever?

And what about those who professed Christ, but did not live in accordance with the standard of a true Christian? Are they doomed to eternal suffering in an ever-burning hell fire?

### **HUMAN IDEAS...**

Some people, realizing that such consequences would really cast God in a pretty unfair light, but at the same time, failing to understand the true Biblical teaching, conclude that as long as a person lives the way he or she believes to be right, they will still experience heavenly splendor and glory after their death.

Think for a moment what this would mean...

Who can doubt that Hitler was convinced of the righteousness of his cause? So were Alexander the Great, Caesar, Stalin and Napoleon, just to name a few. Does this mean, then, that they went to heaven when they died?

Now, some people realize the insurmountable problems with *such* a concept and they propose the idea of a place of limbo, or purgatory. According to that viewpoint, the souls of those who die have to be purged from sin for years, decades, centuries or millennia, before they can enter "heavenly bliss." And the more their loved ones pray for their dead and request organized prayer sessions or masses for them, the sooner those departed souls will be freed from purgatory and enter the heavenly realm.

Others reject that concept, but believe instead in reincarnation. They uphold the idea that the soul of a dead person returns to or reincarnates into another body. If a person lived a bad lifestyle, he

or she may come back as an insect or perhaps as a lowly mammal. A person who lived a pretty good life may come back as another person, with better qualities, and so on, until this cycle of birth and rebirth is broken, and the person, having reached perfection, enters Nirvana—another word for “absolute Nothingness.”

Interesting ideas, perhaps, but what is the truth?

What does the Bible tell us about the fate of those who were not converted to Christianity in this life?

The Biblical truth on that issue is understood by only very few.

### **ONLY ONE WAY TO OBTAIN SALVATION**

First of all, the Bible *does clearly teach* that one must accept Christ in order to be saved and become a partaker of the resurrection or change to immortal life. This fact rules out all those ideas that non-Christians could still inherit eternity, as long as they lived in accordance with their conscience—an absurd concept indeed, as a cannibal would be saved, as long as he remains and lives as a cannibal.

In Acts 4:12, Peter tells us, in no uncertain terms: “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

John 14:6 adds the very words of Jesus Christ Himself: “I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

But many people over the past centuries and millennia have never heard of Jesus Christ, and most people today do not even profess to be Christians at all. They are absorbed in totally different religions and philosophies other than Christianity. Still, God tells us in 1 Timothy 2:3–4 that “God our Savior... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

**The Bible absolutely rules out the possibility that man could be saved without accepting Christ.** What, then, is going to happen to those who died without hearing, or accepting, Jesus Christ as their Savior? They cannot be “lost” just because of that, since we read that God wants *ALL* men to be saved, including those who did not accept Christ in their lifetime. But still, in order to be saved, they **must accept Christ.**

This might seem to be a dilemma...

The only possible solution is that those who died without accepting Jesus Christ will have to be given a chance to accept Christ *after* their death.

But how can that be?

Certainly not through a reincarnation, and absolutely not by “purification” of their souls in limbo or purgatory! They can only be given a chance to accept Christ *after* their death, by and through their resurrection from the dead!

### **THEY WILL LIVE AGAIN...**

The Bible teaches that all of these people who died without hearing about or accepting Jesus Christ as their Savior will be resurrected—*after* the Millennium. They will then be given their *first opportunity* to accept Christ, an opportunity that they had not been given previously.

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:22: “For as in Adam ALL die, even so in Christ ALL shall be made alive.”

But there is an order—a time sequence—of the resurrections. And there is also a difference between the kinds of resurrections that will take place. Verses 23–24 continue: “But EACH ONE in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

The first Person who was resurrected to immortal life was Jesus Christ—the firstfruits. Next in order will be those who “are Christ’s”—those who died “in Christ.” They will be resurrected to eternal life at the time of Christ’s return. But this is not all. Paul spoke of another occurrence, which he called “the end.” As we will see, this makes reference to all of those who did not know of, or accept Christ in this life. They will come back to life and *then they will be given their first chance*.

### **MORE THAN ONE RESURRECTION**

Revelation 20:4–6 reveals this marvelous truth—a truth which is neither understood nor believed by many professing Christians, let alone the rest of the world:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished.* This is the FIRST RESURRECTION. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the FIRST resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.”

Verses 11 and 12 describe the SECOND resurrection—the resurrection of those who will live again AFTER the thousand years are finished—the time which Paul called “the end”:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, STANDING before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.”

Most of the dead, who were not in the first resurrection, will be in the second resurrection—a resurrection to physical life. (Some, however, will be destroyed in the “third resurrection,” as will be discussed below.) They will be taught God’s way of life and they will then be judged according to their works. Jesus Christ will be their Judge (Acts 17:30–31). It does not say here that they are judged based on the works that they did in their prior life, although this might be included. It does not say here, either, how long they will live. But we do read that they WILL live again. Other Scriptures will have to fill in the details.

## **THE SECOND RESURRECTION**

Some few commentaries understand and teach that there is more than one resurrection, although they are uncertain as to what will happen during the second resurrection.

Rienecker, *Lexikon zur Bibel*, points out, under “*Tausendjähriges Reich*” (“Millennium”):

“... a time will begin during which Satan is unable to influence man, and when Christ will rule. [Those who died in Christ] will be judges, rulers and priests [with Him]. Only they, not the rest of the dead, are included in the *first resurrection*. The duration of this time is given as 1,000 years. After that... the time for the *second, general resurrection* for the last and final judgment has arrived, which will end the present world age (emphasis supplied).”

*The Nelson Study Bible* makes the following comments pertaining to Revelation 20:

“...believers will participate significantly with Christ during His millennial rule (1:6; 2:26, 27; 5:10)... The resurrection of the dead will not encompass all people at the same time... there will be a *first resurrection* of dead believers before the thousand years of Christ’s reign and a *final resurrection* after the millennium is finished, before the great white throne judgment (vv. 11–13)... The first resurrection is assured for all believers... (emphasis supplied).”

*Halley’s Bible Handbook* states:

“The Millennial Reign... will last 1000 years... the expression, ‘The rest of the dead lived not till the 1000 years should be finished,’ seems to imply that there will be Two resurrections, one before, and one after, the Millennium... Jesus, in using the phrase, ‘The resurrection of the just’ (Luke 14:14), may have intended it as a hint that the resurrection of all would not take place at the same time. Paul, speaking of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23), says, ‘Each in its own order: Christ the firstfruits; then they that are Christ’s at His Coming; *then comes the end*’; as if the end might be some time after the [first] resurrection of His [Christ’s] people, as theirs will have been sometime after His [Christ’s] (emphasis supplied).”

Many have no idea, as they have never been taught, that the Bible teaches about more than just one resurrection. Most of those who believe in the resurrection from the dead think that everyone will be resurrected at the same time, when Christ returns. But this is not what the Bible teaches. Rather, we are told that there is more than just one resurrection.

When Christ returns, only those who are IN CHRIST will be resurrected. They will be resurrected to immortality. Not all of the dead will be resurrected at that time. Those who have not heard of



and who have not accepted Jesus Christ in their lives, will NOT be resurrected at that time.

## **FURTHER PROOF FOR MORE THAN JUST ONE RESURRECTION**

Paul makes this little-understood truth very clear in some of his other writings. For instance, he says in 1 Corinthians 6:14: “And God both raised up the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.”

The *New King James Bible*, as quoted above, does not accurately convey the meaning of the passage, as expressed in the Greek. Neither do most other English translations.

The Greek word for “raise up” is “*exegeiro*”—a combination of two words, “*ex*” and “*egeiro*.” The word “*egeiro*” means, “to waken,” “to rise,” or “to rear up,” and it is normally used in reference to the resurrection. The syllable “*ex*” means, “out of,” “from among,” or “out among of” (compare *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, #1537). So, Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 6:14 that God will raise up His converted disciples *from among* the dead.

The German *Elberfelder Bible* points out in a footnote that the literal meaning is that God will raise His people *out of* the dead; that He will bring them back to life *from among* and *out of* the dead. It thereby shows that not all the dead will be resurrected at that time.

The word “*exegeiro*” is a very unusual word. It is only used twice in the New Testament. The other passage is in Romans 9:17, where Paul says that God raised up Pharaoh to show His power in him. Although this is not talking about a resurrection from the dead, it shows that the word does not apply to everybody, but just to selected ones. In the case of Romans 9:17, it applies to just one specific individual.

The same concept of a selected, limited resurrection of those in Christ at the time of His return (excluding at that time the rest of mankind) is conveyed in Philippians 3:11, where Paul is expressing his desire to “attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Even in the translation of the *New King James Bible*, we might get a little bit of a hint here that Paul is not talking in that context about a universal resurrection of all mankind. Rather, the rendition says that Paul wanted to attain the resurrection “from the dead.” Unfortunately, the *Authorized Version* states here, “of the dead,”

thereby totally obscuring the intended meaning. The German *Menge Bible* translates, “resurrection *out of* the dead.” The *Elberfelder Bible* points out that Paul is talking about a resurrection *from among* the dead. In German, the word used is “*Heraus-Auferstehung*,” that is, “a resurrection out of the dead.”

In the Greek, the word for “resurrection,” which is used in Philip-  
pians 3:11 (and only in that passage), is “*exanastasis*”—a combination  
of the words “*ex*” and “*anastasis*.” The Greek word “*anastasis*” means  
“resurrection,” “standing up,” or “rise from the dead.” The additional  
syllable “*ex*”—in combination with “*anastasis*”—conveys the thought  
of a resurrection OUT OF the dead—it does not mean a resurrec-  
tion of all the dead.

## **THE RESURRECTION OF JUDGMENT**

The Bible confirms that there will be different types of resurrections  
at different times. John 5:28–29 quotes Jesus’ own words, as follows:

“Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which ALL who  
are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have  
done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil,  
to the resurrection of condemnation” [better: judgment; compare, for  
example, the renditions of the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Revised  
English Bible* and the *New Jerusalem Bible*].

As we saw, these two resurrections will not take place at the same  
time. They will be about 1,000 years apart.

## **EZEKIEL’S VISION**

The prophet Ezekiel had a vision of the *second* resurrection, de-  
scribing it as follows, in Ezekiel 37:1–13:

“The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the  
Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and  
it was full of bones. Then He caused me to pass by them all around,  
and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and indeed  
they were very dry. And He said to me, ‘Son of man, can these bones  
live?’ So I answered, ‘O LORD God, You know.’ Again He said to  
me, ‘Prophesy to these bones, and say to them, “O dry bones, hear  
the word of the LORD! Thus says the LORD God to these bones:  
‘Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will

put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the LORD.”””

“So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over; but there was no breath in them. Also He said to me, ‘Prophesy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, ‘Thus says the LORD God: “Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.”’ So I prophesied as He commanded me, and breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then He said to me, ‘Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They indeed say, ‘Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, and we ourselves are cut off.’”

“Therefore prophesy and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD God: “Behold, O My people, *I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves*, and bring you into the land of Israel. Then you shall know that I am the LORD, *when I have opened your graves*, O My people, and *brought you up from your graves*.”””

## **RESURRECTION OF THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL**

Here we see described a resurrection of all of the unconverted people of the house of Israel. It is a resurrection to *flesh and blood*, not to immortality. *They will hear the voice of Jesus Christ and come out of their graves in a resurrection to judgment* (compare again John 5:28–29).

Notice that, for example, the *American Bible* uses the word “spirit,” instead of “breath,” in its translation of Ezekiel 37:7–10. In Hebrew, both possibilities exist, as the Hebrew word “*ruach*” can mean “breath” or “spirit”:

“I prophesied as I had been told; and even as I was prophesying I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, bone joining bone. I saw the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them, but there was *no spirit* in them. Then He said to me, ‘Prophesy to *the spirit*, prophesy, son of man, and say to *the spirit*, “Thus says the Lord God, From the four winds come, *o spirit*,

and breathe into the slain that they may come to life.” I prophesied as He told me, and *the spirit* came into them; they came alive and stood upright, a vast army.”

The reference to “breath” or “spirit” is not describing the Holy Spirit. Rather, depending on the choice of words, the reference might very well be to the “spirit in man.”

The Bible teaches that every human being has a “spirit” within him, which is called the “spirit in man” or “the spirit of man.” This human spirit returns to God when a person dies (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Only as long as the spirit of man is within a person, is the person alive; once the spirit of man has left the person, the person is dead (compare James 2:26). This spirit of man is not the same as the Holy Spirit of God (note regarding the distinction, 1 Corinthians 2:11; Romans 8:16). When God resurrects a dead person to physical life, He again gives him his human spirit. We read in Luke 8:54–55 that the spirit of a twelve-year-old girl who had died, returned to her and she “arose immediately.”

In Ezekiel’s vision, the dead are resurrected to physical life by receiving the breath of life (Genesis 2:7) and the human spirit. They became again “living beings” (same Scripture).

## **ISRAEL’S CONVERSION**

When the dead Israelites are brought back to physical life, God will deal with them as He deals with His called and chosen disciples today. Once a person comes to understand and accept God’s way of life, repents of his sins, receives forgiveness, and believes in Christ’s sacrifice and the gospel, then God grants him forgiveness and offers him the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We see in Ezekiel 37:14 that the Holy Spirit is offered to the Israelites—obviously after they repented of their sins and became baptized: “I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken it and performed it,” says the LORD.”

Yes, Israel will KNOW God and will begin to live a life pleasing to God. If the people overcome and endure, they will receive immortality, just as those did who were resurrected to eternal life in the *first* resurrection, more than 1,000 years earlier.

Israel's conversion, including their heart-felt repentance and receipt of the gift of the Holy Spirit, is also described in Ezekiel 36:31, 26–27: “Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe [despise] yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will... give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”

Paul tells us in Romans 11:25–26 that today, “blindness in part has happened to Israel,” but that “*all* Israel will be saved.” He adds in verse 32: “For God has committed them ALL to disobedience, that He might have mercy on ALL.”

God will have mercy on the entire house of Israel—mainly in the future (excluding those from the houses of Israel and Judah, of course, whom God calls to salvation in this life, including Paul himself). The fulfillment of God's promise to have mercy on ALL of Israel will happen when the houses of Israel and Judah are resurrected in the *second* resurrection.

## **NOT ONLY ISRAEL...**

It will not be only Israel who will be resurrected at that time. Remember, God says that He wants ALL MEN to be saved; and we read that ALL who are in their graves will hear Christ's voice and awake from their sleep of death.

The Bible describes, very specifically, a physical resurrection of Israelites and of non-Israelites to judgment.

Matthew 10:14–15 quotes Christ's words to His apostles, when He sent them out to preach the gospel: “And whoever will not receive you nor hear your words, when you depart from that house or city, shake off the dust from your feet. Assuredly, I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah *in the day of judgment* than for that city.”

Both those who died in the terrible destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and those who lived at the time of Christ will rise again “in the day of judgment.”

Christ added the following in Matthew 11:21–24: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works which

were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say to you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the *day of judgment* than for you. And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades; for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the *day of judgment* than for you.”

Those who lived and died in Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, will be alive again, *together* with those Jews who lived at the time of Christ’s first coming. They will *ALL* be raised again, together, “in the day of judgment.”

Christ confirmed, in Matthew 12:41–42, that those who were not converted in this life, will *RISE* again in the “day of judgment”—the “second resurrection”:

“The men of Nineveh will *RISE UP IN THE JUDGMENT WITH THIS GENERATION* and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South *WILL RISE UP IN THE JUDGEMENT WITH THIS GENERATION* and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here.”

The people from ancient Nineveh and the queen of the South will *RISE UP*, or be *RESURRECTED*, at the time of judgment, together with those who lived at the time of Jesus Christ’s first coming.

The people of Nineveh and the queen of the South will not necessarily “condemn” the unrepentant Jews who lived at the time of Christ’s first coming, but they will rebuke and challenge them, asking them why they did not repent in light of such overwhelming evidence that Christ was the Son of God. The *Lamsa* translation says: “find it guilty,” and *Knox* says, “will leave it without excuse.” The German *Menge*’s translation uses the German word “*Verurteilung*,” (“find guilty, judge down”), rather than the word “*Verdammung*” (“condemnation”). The literal meaning of the Greek word is, “to judge down.” The same word is used in Matthew 20:18, where it is mentioned that Christ would be “condemned” or, better, “judged down” to death.

## **MORE DIFFICULT FOR SOME THAN FOR OTHERS**

Additional Biblical passages confirm that it will be more “tolerable” for some in the “day of judgment” than for others.

We read in Mark 12:38–40: “Then He said to them in His teaching, ‘Beware of the scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, who devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. These will receive greater condemnation” [or, judgment, compare the *Lamsa Bible*].

Many translations render the last phrase as, “the more severe will be the sentence they receive” (compare, for example, *the New Jerusalem Bible*).

In His parable of the faithful and evil servants, Jesus Christ addresses those in the second resurrection, in Luke 12:47–48: “And that servant who knew his master’s will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few...”

When those in the second resurrection appear before the “white throne” of God to give account, they will hear their sentence, that is, death. Then Christ will explain to them that, if they repent of their sins and obtain forgiveness, they will not have to die. Undoubtedly, many will repent at that time. But for some, it will be much more difficult to admit the errors of their ways than for others. Some who knew what to do, and did not do it, will receive “many stripes,” while others—the ignorant ones—will only receive a “few stripes.”

The Bible does not say, exactly, what those stripes are, but there are certain clues. Even in today’s use of the English language, we might say, “it suddenly hit me,” when we come to realize or recognize a certain truth. Similarly, it will “hit” people in regard to the wrong that they did. They will come to the realization of their sins and will become disgusted with themselves. At the time of Peter, some of those who realized that they were responsible for Christ’s death “were cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37), willing to DO what had to be done.

In the parable of the “lost son,” he “came to himself” or he “came to his senses” (Luke 15:17; compare *New International Version*), and being repentant, was willing to return to his father. Deep down in his

heart, he knew better, but he experimented with an “alternate” lifestyle, until he was brought to his knees—it “hit” him and he was able to see “clearly.” Those who know better and still disobey, might have to be “hit over the head” more severely before God can reach them.

It is often easier to repent of doing something wrong when a person had not really understood how wrong his conduct was. In that case, only a “few stripes” may be necessary, and it will be “more tolerable” for him in the judgment than for others. For example, the “self-righteous” Pharisees and hypocrites who refused to repent at the time of Christ, as well as those Jews who *rejected* the signs of the time and the fact that Christ was their Messiah, will receive a “more severe sentence” and “many stripes” before they will come to repentance.

## **DURATION OF THE JUDGMENT PERIOD**

There is a possible hint in the book of Isaiah that shows us how long the judgment period in the second resurrection will last.

Isaiah 65:17, 20 reads, in the *New Jerusalem Bible*: “For look, I am going to create new heavens and a new earth, and the past will not be remembered and will come no more to mind... never again will there be an infant there who lives only a few days, nor an old man who does not run his full course; for the youngest will die at a hundred, and at a hundred the sinner will be accursed.”

The implication of this passage is that those who will be resurrected in the second resurrection will live for one hundred years, to be judged by the Word of God in the same way that true Christians today are being judged (compare 1 Peter 4:17). After that, they will either be thrown, as accursed, into the lake of fire (as discussed below), or they will be changed to immortal life. The “youngest” or “the child,” as the *New King James Bible* renders it, is a symbolic reference to a Christian who has to receive the Kingdom of God as a child (compare Matthew 18:1–4). He “dies” when he is hundred years old—when his human existence and his physical body cease to exist—as he will then be changed to immortality.

## **THE THIRD RESURRECTION**

Sadly, though, there are those who have had their chance, but have rejected it. At one time, they knew and understood perfectly well



that they had to submit to Christ, but they permanently refused to do so. They became bitter, hateful, resentful and malicious. They made the unchangeable decision NEVER to repent! If a person has reached the stage that he can no longer repent, because he has made a firm decision NOT to repent, then God will not force repentance on such a person. God grants repentance, but a person must want to receive it. A person who maliciously rejects Christ, would only continue to live in misery and pain, and that is why God will save such a person from eternal misery, by destroying him in a lake of fire.

After those described in Revelation 20:11–12 are resurrected in a second resurrection, a third category of people is addressed in verses 13–15. These will be raised in a third resurrection, to receive their sentence and be thrown into the lake of fire—to be exterminated, permanently.

We read: “The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

In the book of Daniel, the third resurrection is described as well. Daniel 12:2–3, in addressing the *first* and the *third* resurrection, states: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth *shall awake*, Some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Many Scriptures reveal that the wicked—those who have committed the unpardonable sin for which there is no forgiveness—will be resurrected in the third resurrection, only to be cast into the lake of fire that will burn them up, destroying them permanently. They will not be punished for all eternity in that lake, but their destruction will be swift, with eternal consequences for them.

Obadiah, verse 16, says that it will be “as though they had never been,” and Malachi 4:3 tells us that they shall be “ashes” under the feet of the righteous. We believe that Paul wrote the letters to the Hebrews. He says in Hebrews 10:26–27 that for those who sin willfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, there is only “a certain fearful expectation of judgment [or condemnation; *Moffat* says: “an awful outlook of doom”], and fiery indignation which will *devour* the adversaries.”

In spite of what many teach today, the Bible clearly reveals that some will be destroyed by, and in, the lake of fire, because they did commit the unpardonable sin.

We are certain, however, that most will not die the second death. They will come to their senses when God shows them—in the second resurrection—what they did, and when He offers them the possibility of inheriting eternal life.

## ...And Beyond — New Heavens and a New Earth...

Let us now look at a time which goes beyond the meaning of the Last Great Day—but which is, nevertheless, important to understand in order to grasp the entire meaning of God's Master Plan for His Creation. Revelation 21:1 tells us that God will create new heavens and a new earth. This will take place *after* the Millennium, *after* the time period called the Great White Throne Judgment, and *after* the third resurrection; that is, AFTER all human beings have either been changed to immortality OR burned up and destroyed in the lake of fire. By that time, DEATH will no longer exist (Revelation 20:14; 21:4–5).

### **PRESENT HEAVENS AND EARTH WILL BE DESTROYED**

We read in 2 Peter 3:7, 10 that the heavens and earth, as we know them today, are “reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men,” and that “the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.” Peter continues to emphasize in verse 12 that “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat.” Then, according to verse 13, God will create “new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.”

We are also told in Isaiah 51:6 that the heavens will vanish away like SMOKE.

But how could this happen?

How, for instance, could our physical earth, with two-thirds of it consisting of *water*, be burned up *in fire* and dissolve? And what about the other planets, even those in our galaxy? How could they vanish

away like smoke? Scientists tell us that this is very possible—in fact, inevitable. *Reader's Digest*, “Why in the World?”, copyright 1994, tells us on page 10 what will happen when the great fire of the sun dies. They say that this might happen in about 500 million years (but obviously, according to Scripture, God will bring this about much sooner):

“The Sun will turn into a red giant, bloated to about 100 times its current size. First, it will engulf Mercury and then Venus, the nearest planets. The Earth’s atmosphere, which normally shields it from the intense heat of the Sun, will drift away. Then the Earth’s oceans will boil and vanish in steam. Without the cooling effects of its atmosphere and oceans, Earth itself will turn into a massive ball of fire. Mars will disintegrate next.”

Finally, the sun will first become a white dwarf, and then a black dwarf, disappearing from sight. The sun will become dark, and since the moon does not shine by itself, but only because it reflects the sun’s light, the moon will become dark, too.

## **SUN AND MOON WILL BE DARKENED**

It is interesting that Isaiah 13:10 prophesies: “For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light. The sun will be darkened in its going forth, and the moon will not cause its light to shine.”

## **HEAVENS SHALL BE ROLLED UP**

Isaiah 34:4 tells us that all the hosts of heaven will be **DIS-SOLVED**, and that the heavens shall be **ROLLED UP** like a scroll. Isaiah 40:22 also tells us that God **STRETCHES OUT** the heavens **LIKE A CURTAIN**, and that He **SPREADS THEM OUT LIKE A TENT**.

Scientists have theorized that the universe is expanding. They also believe that, at one given moment, the expansion of the universe will have reached its maximum, and after that, it will begin to **CONTRACT**—very slowly first, but then faster and faster, until the entire universe will **COLLAPSE** under the pressure of its own gravity—or, in Biblical terms, it will be “rolled up like a scroll.”

## A NEW CREATION

How, exactly, God will dissolve the heavens and the earth, we don't know. But we DO know, based on Biblical evidence, that God will create *new* heavens and a *new* earth. In addition to the passages we have already quoted in this regard, further evidence is set forth in Scriptures such as Isaiah 65:17 and Isaiah 66:22. Passages like Isaiah 60:19–20 and Revelation 21:23 give us further insight into God's creation of new heavens and a new earth—*without* a sun or a moon.

Romans 8:18–23 explains that the new creation will no longer exist of matter, but it will be spirit. Verse 21 says that the creation will be delivered from corruption “into” the glorious liberty of the children of God. *Moffat* says: “The hope being that creation as well as man would one day be freed from its thralldom [bondage] to decay and gain the glorious freedom of God's children.”

The *Revised Standard Version* writes: “The creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and OBTAIN the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

The *Luther Bible* states, “The creation, too, will be freed from bondage of temporary existence INTO the glorious freedom of the children of God.”

God's physical creation waits to be delivered from corruption to obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. The glorious freedom, which the universe will receive, is freedom from death. In that new universe, DEATH, as well as decay and corruption, will be unknown.

While it is true that our earth will remain forever, as we read in Ecclesiastes 1:4, it does not say that it will remain forever in a *physical state*. We know that ultimately, everything physical will decay and cease to exist. We have seen that, even our sun will one day cease to shine. *Reader's Digest*, “Why in the World?”, states on page 32: “A star's life is fixed at birth. It depends on its weight—how much matter it holds...The greater the star's mass, the more fiercely will it burn, and the shorter will be its life.”

Everyone, and everything, will be freed from physical limitations and shortcomings. God will create new heavens and a new earth, consisting of spirit, not matter. Truly, God “will make all things new” (Revelation 21:5).

## **OUR ULTIMATE POTENTIAL**

What an awesome potential we ALL have. In comparison to God, at this time, we are nothing more than insignificant, tiny, mortal, physical, temporary human beings. But still, we have the awesome potential to become immortal members of the very God Family, sharing in the spiritual world of our Father. For now, we may be bogged down by the cruel realities of physical life. But we need vision. We need to see beyond our present circumstances.

We need to free ourselves from the bondage of temporary shortcomings and sufferings, step out of the captivity of physical limitations, and climb up, as it were—in mind and thought—to the very REAL existence of God’s spirit world, something we can already visualize with the spiritual eyes God gives us.

We need to focus on those things which are above, knowing that God will share them with us very soon, because we are promised that we will rule with God for all eternity—“forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).

## **NEVER LOSE THIS PRECIOUS KNOWLEDGE!**

God’s annual Holy Days explain, step by step, God’s Master Plan for mankind, as well as for His entire Creation. When we observe and keep these days with proper understanding, we are reminded of our incredible potential—why God created us, why we exist, what we are doing here on earth, and what lies ahead of us.

We must treasure God’s precious gift of His Feast Days. Without observing them, we cannot, and will not, *really* understand why we exist. We will not be any different than those who grope in darkness, looking for light, without being able to grasp it.

God has given YOU a unique understanding through His annual Holy Days. Do not take this priceless truth for granted! If you have not already done so, **DO begin** to keep those Days **COMMANDED** by God. And if, perhaps, you have drifted away and have neglected to obey God’s injunction in this regard, **begin AGAIN to DO what God commands you to do**: Keep the “feasts of the LORD” as “holy convocations” at “their appointed times” (Leviticus 23:4).

# Annual Holy Day Assemblies — What YOU Need to Know About

Deuteronomy 16:16–17 reads, in the *New International Version*: “Three times a year all your men must appear before the Lord your God at the place He will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks and the Feast of Tabernacles. No man should appear before the Lord empty-handed: Each of you must bring a gift in proportion to the way the Lord your God has blessed you.”

We should note the following points:

## **Appear Three Times**

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It says we are to appear three times a year, yet there are seven Holy Days to observe. The command in Deuteronomy 16 to appear refers to three Holy Day *seasons*, rather than the actual Holy Days. If it were otherwise, God would be telling us here that we only have to appear on three Holy Days, but we do not have to *appear* before Him on the remaining four Holy Days. We are clearly commanded throughout the Bible, however, to *appear* before Him on *each* separate Holy Day. When it comes to the Autumn season, note that it says we are to *appear* before Him at the Feast of Tabernacles. Does this mean that we do not have to appear before Him, for example, on the Day of Atonement? No, because we read in Leviticus 23:27, regarding the Day of Atonement: “It shall be a holy convocation for you.”

So then, Deuteronomy 16 addresses the Festival *seasons*, not the individual Holy Days. It groups the Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread together in the early Spring. God’s third festival, Pentecost, oc-

curs in late Spring or early Summer. The last four festivals are grouped together, as they occur in the Fall or Autumn.

## **Who Must Appear**

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Deuteronomy 16 emphasizes the obligation to *appear*, but it only speaks directly to the men. We understand, of course, that women, and even children, are included in this *command*, but there are rare occasions when women might not be able to *appear*, because pregnancy or very small children might prevent them from traveling a great distance to be able to attend, for example, the Feast of Tabernacles. Normally, of course, the whole family is expected to attend, including the widows and the fatherless (compare Deuteronomy 16:14).

## **Where to Appear**

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Deuteronomy 16 instructs us to appear at the place God has chosen. An article in the *Good News*, September 1983, states, “If we had the opportunity to choose, some might remain at home or go to some other place, rather than assemble with the rest of the Church at the assigned festival site. It is the responsibility of the Church leadership, guided by God, to determine the place.”

## **Don’t Appear Empty-Handed**

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Deuteronomy 16 tells those who appear before God, not to appear empty-handed, but to give an offering—a gift—proportionate to the way God has blessed them.

Note that it says we **MUST** give a gift, but it is up to us to determine

# Them

the size of the gift. In doing so, we are to consider how much God has blessed us.

*WHY does God require us to give Him a gift on the Holy Days?* After all, He owns everything. He does not *need* our gifts, and quite frankly, neither does the Church *need* our gifts. Since Christ is the Leader of the Church, He will see to it that the Church receives what it needs financially to do the Work of preaching the gospel and feeding the flock. (For a full explanation as to HOW the true Church of God uses the money contributed to it, please read our free booklet, "*Tithing—Today?*"). When Christ promises us individually that the Father will provide us with everything we need—if we seek the Kingdom and God's righteousness first—would He do anything less for His body, the Church?

## **Why We Are To Give**

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So then, why *does* God want us to give Him a gift on those Holy Days? For the same reason we tithe to Him (pay 10 % of our income), on a regular monthly or bi-monthly basis. In doing so, we show Him that we appreciate the fact that it is HE who gives us everything we have. Especially during the Feast of Tabernacles when we spend our second tithe to feast, eat, drink and rejoice, we must be careful NOT to forget GOD—the One who has made it all possible (compare Deuteronomy 8:10–14, 17–18).

Where our treasure is, there will be our heart. God wants to see what we will do with whatever money or possessions He has chosen to give us.

The amount of our tithe is determined by what we earn, but God leaves it to us to determine how much we want to give Him as an offering on the annual Holy Days, thereby acknowledging Him as the source of our money and possessions.

When Israel left Egypt, God saw to it that they received from the Egyptians gold, jewelry, precious stones and other things—a late payment, so to speak, for all the work they had done for the Egyptians while they were enslaved. But what did the Israelites do with the costly things that they had received? Did they use them in the worship to God? Not at all! When Moses was upon the mountain receiving another special gift from God to man—the priceless Ten Commandments—the Israelites took some of the gold and had Aaron build a golden calf to use for idol worship. Only later, when they brought it to Moses for the building of the tabernacle, were they willing to use what they had received from God for the right kind of worship.

## **Where Our Heart Is...**

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How are we spending our money? Are we showing God that we appreciate what He gives us? Or are we like the man who had a very good harvest, but instead of sharing it with the poor, he decided to build larger barns and storage places for himself (compare Luke 12:13–21)? His focus was neither on God nor on the needs of his fellow man. His focus was only on himself, so God said, in effect: "You will die tonight—what are you going to do with all those riches?" And then God added the timeless

continued...

warning, in effect: "Make sure you are rich before God. Make sure that your treasure is in heaven, where no thieves come in and steal."

When we live in recognition of the fact that it is God who gives us everything we have, we will welcome the opportunity to give God something in return. We will be a cheerful giver (compare 2 Corinthians 9:7), rather than one who gives grudgingly or because of feeling we *have to do it*.

When we give our children something, we feel joy when they show their appreciation for the gift. When we see thankfulness, it is even more of a joy to do good. It is the same with God. He wants to see how thankful we are for what He does for us. We should never forget the example of the poor widow who gave very little in comparison with the rich contributors, but for her, it was a great deal (compare Luke 21:1-4). God appreciated her sacrifice much more than the gift of those who just routinely gave some money from their abundance.

Sometimes it takes faith and confidence in God to give an offering, but God promises that we will be blessed when we do. He chided the Israelites of old, for example, in the book of Malachi, for not giving Him tithes and offerings (Note that the Bible does not mention anywhere "weekly collections." As a consequence, the true Church of God does not engage in such a practice.) He minced no

words and told them that they were actually *robbing Him* and that they were under a curse. But then He told them, in effect: "Prove Me if I will not open the doors of heaven for you to bless you when you become faithful in bringing all your tithes and offerings to Me" (compare Malachi 3:8-10).

### **Serve God and Men**

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We cannot serve mammon and God. If we are like the rich farmer who enlarged his barns to keep everything for himself, God will not honor that. Those who have been blessed with riches are to distribute to, and share with the poor.

By the standards of most countries, all of us who live in the Western world are rich, and all the people of this world who have not been called yet by God, are spiritually poor. They need to hear God's Word. God has given His Church both an opportunity and a responsibility to be His workers, His laborers. But He does not need us. If we let Him down, He can raise stones to do what He wants to get done. But He would rather have us willingly respond to our calling. He WANTS us in His Kingdom.

The time will come when all of our gold, silver and money will become absolutely worthless and useless. It will be thrown into the streets, to be trampled upon (compare Ezekiel 7:19). When that time arrives, we had better be rich before God.



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**The following booklets are available, upon request:**

Europe in Prophecy: The Unfolding of End-Time Events

The Theory of Evolution — a Fairy Tale for Adults?

The Gospel of the Kingdom of God

Don't Keep Christmas

Is God a Trinity?

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