The Satanic Rebellion: Background to the Tribulation

Part 5

Judgment, Restoration and Replacement

(also available on line at www.ichthys.com)
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VII. Background to the Tribulation

Introduction: In our previous lesson, we discussed the devil's organization, tactical plans and procedures, and his integrated system for the enslavement of humanity. We now turn our attention to God's point of view and shall see how He has been in complete control of the process of human history all along. In this final installment of the present series, we shift our focus to a chronological and strategic overview of God's plan for humanity as it moves resolutely and inexorably forward toward history's final conclusion, decisively pushing aside in the process all satanic resistance, defeating the devil at every turn until he and all the evil he represents are finally eradicated from the universe. As is the case with so many aspects of divine truth, the process of judgment, restoration and replacement, a threefold set of actions that can stand as short-hand for the plan of God overall, are themselves divisible into three distinct parts. In this respect, they parallel the believer's sanctification (see Peter #13), the process whereby an unsaved human being is restored to complete and eternal fellowship with God better than what was lost at the fall:

- Initial sanctification: in Christ, we enter into the family of God through faith in Jesus and are restored to fellowship (though the full reality of these blessings to come is yet future). Just as God restored light to the universe in Genesis 1:3, so new believers are transferred out of darkness into the light by believing in the true light of the world, Jesus Christ (Jn.8:12; Col.1:13; cf. Jn.1:5; 1:9), and so *positionally* become "light in the Lord" (Eph.5:8).

- Experiential or progressive sanctification: by following Christ, we are transformed in this life through spiritual growth toward the goal of living like restored persons in spite of the sin within us and the evil in the world around us (demonstrating thereby the power of God to His glory). Just as God sustains light in the universe as a witness in this dark world (Ps.19:1-6; 74:16; 136:7-9; Is.40:26 Jer.31:35; Rom.1:20), so as believers we are charged to continue to reflect *experientially* His light as we make our way through life (2Cor.3:18; Eph.5:8).

- Ultimate sanctification: with Christ, we are literally transformed through resurrection, bringing the process of restoration to completion (1Jn.3:2). Just as God will at the end of time replace the limited, restored light of the sun with the glory of the Son and of Himself (Rev.21:23), so we believers will *ultimately* shine forever like stars in the firmament in the Kingdom of God forever (Dan.12:3; 1Cor.15:41-43; cf. Rev.2:28).

God's overall plan of universal history is constructed in parallel fashion to this individual plan of sanctification for believers. Phase one of judgment, restoration and replacement sets the stage for restoring God's harmonious universal order in a positional way in the person of Adam (though the actual realization of this is yet future). Phase two (otherwise known as human history) is bringing about an experiential restoration in the persons of believers of all eras, and will reach its culmination in the millennial rule of Jesus Christ (where grace, truth and goodness will rule in spite of the continued presence of sin). Phase three will see the destruction of the present material universe, the final execution of Satan and his followers, and their final replacement with perfected, resurrected human beings, along with other perfect (angelic) creatures living forever with the Father and the Son in a perfect world without spot or blemish.

I. Judgment, Restoration and Replacement I: Positional Victory (Progeny and Promise)

1. Judgment I: of Satan and the universe: Untold eons before the dawn of human history, the devil conceived and led a rebellion against God (the subject of this series). With his thinking corrupted by his own arrogance, Satan brought himself and others to believe that God would be unable (by reason of His own character and perfection) to call the devil to account (see Part 1 of this series). This attempted coup d'état was, much to Satan and his supporters' surprise, met with an overwhelming initial judgment whereby the earth, the focus of the universe and center of Satan's rebellion, was destroyed, and the entire universe blacked-out (see Part 2 of this series). The devil, along with the rest of angelic creation, was left to tremble in anticipation of what God would do next. Instead of an immediate and final termination of Satan and his followers, however, God did something that had to have come as a complete and utter surprise to all of His creatures: He re-created what had previously been destroyed.

2. Restoration I: of Earth: The ways of God are truly unknowable, and marvelously so (Rom.11:33). In all His ways, He is a God "who hides Himself" (Is.45:15; cf. Deut.29:29; Prov.25:2), who acts not as the world would expect or assume, but according to His boundless and unsearchable wisdom (Job 5:9; 11:7; Ps.139:6; Eccl.8:17; Is.40:28; Matt.11:25; Eph.3:8). Whether in blessing or in judgment, God seems to make a point of doing things in a way that makes the ears of all who hear of it "tingle" (1Sam.3:11-14; 2Kng.21:12; Jer.19:3). Our God is a God not only of unexpected judgments, but of magnificent surprises and blessed mysteries, the chief of which is Jesus Christ who now resides in all who believe in Him (Col.1:27; see also Eph.3:4-6; Col.2:2-3). The restoration of the universe in six days was just such an unanticipated, blessed event. God did not ignore Satan's rebellion (as the devil and his followers had hoped), nor did He entirely annihilate His creation (as all angelic kind must have feared). Instead, as is His wont, He did something astoundingly different, something that had never been done before (cf. Is.43:19; Jer.31:22). He re-created heaven and earth, making them habitable again, bringing illumination back to the universe with that most significant command "let there be light" (see Part 2 of this series). And, most astoundingly, He created a new type of creature, morally accountable as were the angels, but lower than they in terms of power and knowledge, a creature

whose very purpose would be to demonstrate the character and glory of God while replacing those who had disparaged it (see Part 3 of this series).

3. Replacement I: Adam and the Last Adam for Satan: Because of their possession of a life-span and range of knowledge beyond human comprehension, the decision of each individual angel as to whether to side with Satan or with God in the rebellion at issue was, for all intents and purposes, an irrevocable one (see Part 2 of this series). But God offered a last olive branch in the person of Adam (see Part 3 of this series). Coupled with the unmistakable threat of impending final judgment embodied in the destruction of earth and the universal black-out along with the promise of mercy inherent in the restoration of heaven and earth, the creation of Adam that followed was a clear signal to all who had opposed God that this was their final chance at repentance; for they could indeed be replaced after all (Job 4:18; 15:15; 25:5; 34:24). In fact, with the command to Adam and Eve to propagate and fill the earth, it would take no great effort on the part of the fallen angels to deduce that within a relatively short amount of time (especially by angelic standards) the full complement of their replacements would come to be present on the restored earth; and so their time for deliberation would soon expire. Instead of reconsidering, however, Satan wasted no time in launching an all out effort to thwart God's plan of replacement, concluding that if only he could corrupt mankind, no further threat from this quarter would need to be feared. In the end, however, his very success merely opened the door for the promise and eventual reality of the coming of the Last Adam (1Cor.15:45), whose sacrifice would restore to life all of Adam's progeny who would choose to believe in Him.

4. Satan's Reaction: The temptation and fall of Adam and Eve: The devil's temptation of Eve (and the subsequent fall of Adam as a result: see Part 3 of this series), was a textbook display of Satan's use of deception and of the anatomy of his most potent weapon, the lie (see Part 4 of this series). By leading our first parents into sin, the devil assumed that their corruption (and the inevitable corruption of all of their offspring) meant that mankind would forever be useless as potential replacements for himself and his followers. But God, all along, had planned a way to restore His human *progeny* through the *promise* of His Son, Jesus Christ. At the judgment in Eden, Eve is told that her progeny (Jesus Christ, and, in Him, all those who will choose for God) will be opposed to the devil's seed (most prominently antichrist, but including all those who choose against God), and that her Seed (the Savior of the world), will crush his head (i.e., achieve the ultimate victory over Satan and his antichrist and all who follow them). This victory would not be without cost, as the prophecy of the crushed heel foretells, speaking as it does of the price He would pay by His death on the cross for all our sakes (also prefigured in the coats of skin in Genesis 3.21 and in ritual animal sacrifice in general). By returning to God, saved human kind would in this way regain more than had originally been lost. For through the promised resurrection to come, elect mankind will not only become superior to angelic kind in every way, but will come to possess eternal life which can never again be compromised or called into question. The greatest blessing to rise forth out of the curse of Genesis chapter three, however, is the promise and the (present) reality of Jesus Christ. For in the wake of the death sentence Man brought upon himself by his own sin, God brought eternal life out of death through the death of His Son. This sacrifice, the true cost of which we can only dimly comprehend this side of

heaven, demonstrated beyond any possible question or doubt the love of God for His creatures, for He sacrificed what was dearest to Him for our sake, despite our sin against Him. Just as God would not abandon His angelic creation, but restored the universe (even going so far as to offer His fallen creatures a second chance through the creation of Adam), so in the person of Jesus Christ, so far from not giving up on us, God has actually wed Himself to His creation for the sake of mankind. For in the person of Christ, true humanity has been inseparably and irrevocably united with undiminished deity, so that there can be no further doubt about His commitment to all His creatures who have chosen for Him:

> For God loved the world so much, that he gave His only beloved Son, in order that whoever believes in Him might not perish, but have eternal life.
> John 3:16

Such is the blinding and ineffable glory of God. Instead of blistering judgment, in His matchless grace He offers mercy to all who will but receive it of Him in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is thus the key to all human history, because in Him is the only solution to the sentence of death mankind has willfully placed over its own head, and because in Him deity and humanity have been joined forevermore, guaranteeing beyond all doubt the absolute solidity of the promise of eternal life through His name. For through Him we have become eternally united to Him forevermore:

- As partakers of the divine nature (2Pet.1:4).
- In fellowship with Him and the Father (1Jn.1:3).
- As His bride (Eph.5:25-32; Rev.19:7).
- For we have been baptized into His person (nothing to do with water: Matt.28:19; Rom.6:3-11; 1Cor.12:13; Gal.3:27)
- And are in Him (Jn.14:20; Matt.28:19).
- Inseparably united with Him (Rom.6:5).
- As He is in us (Jn.14:20; Rom.8:10; 2Cor.13:5; Gal.2:20; Eph.3:17; Col.1:27).
- Until God becomes all in all (1Cor.15:28).

II. The Plan of God in Human History

Long before it ever entered Satan's mind to draw our first parents into sin, God's plan for all people throughout the entire course of what would be known as human history to follow had already been determined, namely, salvation through the incarnation and sacrificial death of His beloved Son. Indeed, one cannot even speak about God's plan for mankind without mentioning Jesus Christ in the same breath. For in the name and in the person of Jesus, God's entire will for the human race is given its full expression, and by that name alone are we saved from the otherwise inevitable fate that is our collective lot as descendants of Adam and Eve. In every single human life, from the time paradise ended and the history we know began, Jesus Christ has been the issue, and He will continue to be so till God brings history to an end, incinerating every trace of evil in a final, universal conflagration (2Pet.3:7-13). Until that time, Christ is the

dividing point in every person's life (chronologically as well as spiritually). For every human life is divided into two essential phases:

1) pre-cognizance: from birth until the point of being conscious of God.
2) post-decision: from response to God (leading to faith in Christ), or rejection of God.

The critical point in any given person's life arrives when he or she becomes aware of the existence of God. With the exception of those who die as children (or remain children mentally), God leads all human beings to this point (Rom.1:18-23; cf. Ps.19:1-6; Acts 17:26-27). Response leads to faith in the Son of God (as foreshadowed and promised before the cross; in the flesh with the promise realized after the cross), while rejection leaves no hope of deliverance from the inevitable.[1] So it is that Jesus Christ is the true center and the proper focus of every life, the Person in respect to whom every life is ultimately divided in two, and absolutely, without question the only possible way of salvation.

1. The One Central Person of Human History:

> ... according to His plan for the ages (i.e., history) which He has implemented in [the person of] Christ Jesus our Lord ...
> Ephesians 3:11

Jesus Christ is the linchpin of human history. He is the mystery shrouded before the cross, revealed after the cross (Eph.1:9-10; 3:9-10; Col.1:26-27). He is *the* Son of God (undiminished, genuine deity: Matt.16:16; Jn.1:18), and *the* Son of Man (perfect, genuine humanity: Mk.8:31). He is uniquely Man and God, and so alone is qualified to sacrifice Himself to God on Man's behalf at the cross, the turning point of all human history.[2] Like the highest mountain peak or a giant vortex into which everything is eventually drawn, Jesus Christ, in the most complete sense of God's point of view, ***is*** history, because human history has no purpose without His saving work on the cross (which is the entire point of history). From the first, prehistoric Eden (see Part 1 of this series), to the garden of Eden, to the dark world in which we now find ourselves (wherein He is the only light: Jn.1:4-5; 1:9; 3:19; 8:12; 1Jn.2:8), to the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus Christ is and has always been the visible Person of God, the face of God (2Cor.4:6;

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[1] The length of time between becoming conscious of God and making a decision for Him (through faith in Christ) varies. The gospel message may not be immediately available, or the person concerned may hesitate (sometimes even to the very point of death). But God works everything out for the good in His own perfect way. From His point of view, the point of faith in Christ (or rejection of God) is the dividing point of every life, no matter how long the interlude until a final decision is made.

[2] The doctrinal category of Christology is covered in detail in Part 4A of Bible Basics: Christology.

Heb.1:3), and the ultimate issue for every human being who has ever lived. No one, therefore, can approach God the Father apart from embracing the Son and His saving work:

> Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent Him.
> John 6:22-23 NIV

> He who believes in Me does not believe in Me, but in He who sent Me.
> John 12:44

> I am the way: the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.
> John 14:6

In response to the Father's will, Jesus Christ is the Creator of the universe, of men and angels alike, and all things owe their continued existence to Him.[3] Therefore even the stage upon which human history is played out is His work, for the world was created by Him and for Him.

> Everything in the heavens and on the earth was created by Him (Jesus Christ), things invisible as well as those visible – whether thrones, authorities, rulers or powers, everything was created through Him and for Him. And He Himself is before everything, and everything subsists in Him.
> Colossians 1:16-17

2. The Two Phases of Human History: The Foreshadowing and Fulfillment of Jesus Christ: As Christ is the central person of human history, so the death and subsequent resurrection of Christ is history's central event. From the divine point of view, all history before the cross looks forward to it, and all history since looks back at it.[4] The cross divides history into two discrete phases, both referencing history's central Person:

- Phase one: **Shadow** (anticipation of the Messiah and His sacrifice).
- Phase two: **Reality** (revelation of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice)

The cross (followed in short order by the resurrection) was obviously the focal point of our Savior's earthly life, and it is history's focal point as well (in tandem with the resurrection). All human history funnels down to this point, and expands forth from it. The shadows of the temple ritual and the Mosaic Law are fulfilled in Him and His work, and give way to the reality of Him, resurrected and exalted at the right hand of God. Just as each human life is divided into two distinct phases, the acceptance of Christ (or rejection of God) being the fundamental turning point, so God has ordered human history in such a way that the appearance of His beloved Son to

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[3] This issue is covered in detail in Part 1 of Bible Basics: Theology: The Study of God.

[4] I wish to credit Mr. Lynn Murray for first pointing this out to me many years ago.

effect salvation through His death on the cross forms "the conjunction of the ages" (Heb.9:26; cf. Mk.1:15; Rom.5:6; Gal.4:4; Eph.1:10; 1Tim.2:6). Throughout the Old Testament period, the promise of a coming Savior was clearly given by God, "at many times and in many ways" (Heb.1:1; cf. Gen.3:15; Deut.18:15; Ps.2; 110; Is.9:1-7; 11:1-5; 49:5-7; 52:13-53:12; Dan.7:13-14; Zech.13:1). Furthermore, the substitutionary sacrifice that He would perform on mankind's behalf was continually foreshadowed through animal sacrifice, even before the giving of the Mosaic Law (e.g., Gen.3:21; 4:4-5; 8:20-21). But the exact ***nature*** of the Messiah (i.e., that He would be human and divine), and the exact ***manner*** of His coming (i.e., that He would come twice, first as the Servant to expiate sin, second as the King to eradicate evil), were shrouded in mystery (cf. Eph.1:9-10; 3:9-11; Col.1:26-27). Scripture tells us that many Old Testament believers were eager to know what we now understand about the Messiah and His work (1Pet.1:10-12; cf. Lk.10:23-24). Nevertheless, when He finally did come to face the cross as God's humble Servant, He was rejected by His own, at least in part because He did not fulfill their kingly expectations of Him (Matt.21:9; 27:41-43; cf. Jn.6:15). They wanted the Crown, but stumbled over the Cross (Rom.9:32-33; 1Cor.1:23; cf. Lk.7:23). Even those He chose did not at the time fully understand what He had come to do (e.g., Mk.9:31-32; Lk.9:44-45). Only after His death and resurrection did the true reality of His saving work on the cross become fully perspicuous to them (cf. Jn.14:25-26). Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary's cross wrought salvation for all who had (or would) trust God for forgiveness of their sins. As a result, we now no longer look forward to the future fulfillment of a salvation whose time and manner we can but dimly comprehend, but, possessed of a much more complete understanding of who He is and what He did for us by the shedding of His own precious blood, we eagerly anticipate His return. With the coming of the Messiah in person, and His victory won at the cross an accomplished fact (Jn.16:33; Col.2:15; Rev.5:5), human history has now entered its second and final phase. No longer do we deal with shadows of what is to come (Col.2:16-17; Heb.8:5; 9:11-12; 9:23; 10:1), but we are instead direct recipients of God's amazing grace which has replaced the shadows of the Law through the reality of the God-Man Jesus Christ, based upon His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection (Rom.6:14). Today we enjoy the historical reality of the Cross even as we look forward to the future reality of the Crown, eagerly anticipating the return of our Lord and Master when He shall come in glory to take possession of His Kingdom (1Cor.1:7; 16:22; Phil.3:20; 2Thes.1:7; 2Pet.3:12).

> ... as we await our blessed hope, namely the glorious and majestic appearance of our God and savior, Jesus Christ.
> Titus 2:13

The Old and New Covenants: These two phases of human history correspond respectively to the two covenants, the Old Covenant (or testament) and the New Covenant (or testament). The Hebrew word for covenant/testament is *beriyth* (ברית), literally, a treaty, alliance or agreement. Since these "agreements" are not made by two equal parties, but are made by God at His own instigation on Man's behalf, translators have always felt the need to distinguish the Old and New "*beriyoth*" from person-to-person or state-to-state agreements. But one of the main points of the *beriyth* is indeed that God has chosen to bind Himself to fulfill all that He has promised– for *our*

benefit, not for His. That is to say, if God has said it once, it is true and it will stand, but for the sake of our encouragement and perseverence, He has undertaken to give us assurances above and beyond anything we could ever deserve or ask for by formally "ratifying" His Word (cf. Heb.6:16-20).

A covenant/testament/*beriyth* is, therefore, first and foremost a ***promise*** from God, and it is for this reason that we find the word *beriyth* closely associated in the New Testament with the concept of "promise" (*epangelia*: επαγγελια; cf. especially Eph.2:12: "the covenants of the promise"). Now the Greek word for covenant/testament is not *epangelia* but *diatheke* (διαθηκη), and this is the word that literally translates the Hebrew *beriyth*. But as the usage of *diatheke* in the New Testament makes clear, a "covenant" is still essentially an agreement, that is, a solemn, formalized ***promise*** or collection of promises which God has obligated Himself to fulfill (cf. Lk.1:72; Acts 3:25; Rom.11:26-27; 2Cor.3:14; Gal.3:17; Eph.2:12; Heb.7:22). The best way to understand the idea of the covenant/testament/*beriyth*, therefore, is in terms of God's ultimate promise to mankind. For the Old Covenant (really a series of promises, to Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, etc.; cf. Acts 13:23; 13:32-33; 26:6; Rom.4:13; 9:4; Gal.3:16; 3:29; 4:28; Eph.3:6; 2Tim.1:1; Heb.4:1; 6:12; 9:15; 10:36; 11:38-39; 1Jn.2:25) was first and foremost the ***promise of salvation*** (and all that it would entail), while the New Covenant is essentially the ***fulfillment of that promise*** (through Christ's incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection).[5] The Old Covenant is thus a looking forward through the shadows to the New Covenant, the reality of Christ and the fulfillment of all God's promises for salvation and eternal life through Him (1Cor.11:25; 2Cor.1:19-20; 3:6; Heb.9:15):

> And we are proclaiming this good news to you, the ***promise*** made to our fathers now become a reality. For this ***promise*** God has fulfilled for us, His children, by raising Jesus from the dead.
> Acts 13:32-33a

> For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcision for the sake of God's truth, that is, to confirm the ***promises*** (i.e., covenants) made to their ancestors – and also so that the gentiles might glorify God for His mercy (i.e., in providing salvation through Jesus).
> Romans 15:8-9b

> This cup is the new covenant [ratified] by My blood which is shed on your behalf.
> Luke 22:20b.

From mankind's point of view, hope is always the central idea behind the promises of God solemnized in covenant form. That God has promised, sworn, and obligated Himself to provide for our salvation (Old Covenant perspective), and that Christ has accomplished and fully ratified all the promises of the Old Testament through His blood (New Covenant perspective), is

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[5] Thus the promised Seed of Genesis 3:15, and the Seed promised to Abraham in Genesis 12:7 find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Gal.3:16-29).

indescribably encouraging news, good news, that empowers and strengthens our hope that one day we shall indeed be with Him.

> For men are accustomed to take oaths on the authority of something greater than they are, and there is absolutely no doubt about the fact that an oath is taken for the purpose of confirmation. Just so God, out of a desire to make it abundantly clear to us, the heirs of His ***promise*** [after the pattern of Abraham's faith], that His will in this matter [of salvation and its resultant blessings] is unchangeable, guaranteed it with an oath (Gen.22:16-17), so that through two unchangeable matters wherein it is impossible for God to prove false (i.e., His Word and His oath), we who have escaped [the wrath to come] and taken hold of this ***hope*** offered to us might have a strong basis for encouragement. And this ***hope*** [truly] is what "anchors" our lives, so to speak: it is certain; it is solid; it penetrates beyond the [heavenly] veil into the [holy of holies] where our vanguard, Jesus, has entered on our behalf, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.
> Hebrews 6:16-20

Hope then, in the biblical sense, is much different from the way the word is often used in contemporary English. Hope in the biblical sense is not an uncertainty for which we wish, but rather a certainty we cannot yet see. Secular Greek usage reflects this same idea, for the word *elpis* (ελπις), refers to a likelihood about future events, a definite expectation, whether good or bad.[6] In the New Testament, hope is always good, a confident anticipation about what is going to come, and, specifically, the sure and certain knowledge, belief and conviction of our salvation, resurrection, gathering together with Jesus Christ, and glorious eternity with Him. We do not see it yet, but we know for certain that through Christ's victory and our faith in Him it is only a matter of time before we actually experience the things we hope for:

> For it is in this hope [of the resurrection of our bodies] that we have been saved. Now a hope that is visible is not [really] a hope. For why should someone wait expectantly for what his eyes can see? But we have set our hope on what cannot be seen, and so are patiently awaiting its fulfillment.
> Romans 8:24-25

> It is faith, moreover, that substantiates what we hope for. [Faith] provides proof of things unseen.
> Hebrews 11:1

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[6] The two most common Hebrew words for hope, from the roots *yachal* (יחל) and *qavah* (קוה), yield a similar result, meaning respectively "to wait for" and "to look eagerly for", stressing the idea of sure expectation of something not yet fulfilled, rather than the English notion of fantasy and wishing.

The Old Covenant looked forward to the coming of the promised Messiah, to the redemption of all mankind through His work (Rom.11:27). With the advent of Jesus Christ and His work on the cross now an accomplished fact, the New Covenant that God has made with all mankind includes not only forgiveness, but innumerable blessings besides, prominent among which is the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn.7:39; cf. Is.59:21). Now that Christ has been resurrected, ascended to heaven and sits at the Father's right hand, we who believe in Him have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts as well, an unfulfilled promise from the Old Covenant perspective, but, like the coming of Christ in the flesh, a reality under the New Covenant (compare Is.44:3 and Joel 2:28 with Acts 2:14-21; Rom.12:5-8; 1Cor.12:1-11; Eph.4:7-13).

Jesus Christ is thus the key to the two phases of history with their two concomitant covenants. He is the unique Prophet (Deut.18:17-19), the eternal Priest (Ps.110:4) and the promised King (Is.9:6-7). He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises (Rom.15:8; cf. Acts 3:24-26), of the Old Covenant (2Cor.3:14; Heb.7:22), and of the Law (Rom.10:4; Heb.7:12). He is the One who has delivered us from the bondage of the Old Covenant and brought us into the freedom of the New Covenant (Gal.4:24f.). He it is who has mediated for us a better covenant than was in force before, a covenant built on better promises (Heb.8:6; 12:24; cf. Eph.2:12; Heb.9:15-16).

> But the fact is that the ministry which [Jesus] has received is a more excellent one to the same degree that the [New] Covenant of which He is the mediator is better [than the Old]. For this [New Covenant] has been instituted on the basis of better promises. For if that first [covenant] had been perfect, an occasion for the second would not have been sought. Indeed, in finding fault with [those under the first covenant, God] says,
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> > "Behold, the days are coming", says the Lord, "when I shall ratify a New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah – not like the covenant which I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not remain [faithful to] My covenant, and so I in turn disregarded them." says the Lord. "For" says the Lord, "this is the covenant which I shall make with the house of Israel after these days: I shall put my precepts in their minds and write them upon their hearts, and I shall be their God, and they shall be My people. They shall not teach each one his fellow and each one his brother, saying 'Know the Lord!', because all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I shall have mercy upon their unrighteous deeds and shall remember their sins no more." [Jeremiah 31:31-34]
>
> In mentioning a "New [Covenant]", He has rendered the Old one obsolete. And that which is obsolete and antiquated is close to disappearing.
> Hebrews 8:6-13

Not that every promise from the Old Testament has already been fulfilled in every aspect and detail (Heb.11:39-40). Indeed, even now under the New Covenant we still await the return of our Lord and our gathering together with Him in resurrection. But all God's promises have in fact been completely fulfilled *in principle* through our Lord Jesus Christ's victory over sin at the cross, a victory that resulted in our redemption from sin and thus cleared the way for all the coming blessings of eternity. Therefore the actual fulfillment of all the promises to Israel and to

us, our resurrection, eternal life, our reward and eternity with God in the new heavens and new earth are a reality by which we are separated only by a short span of time (and one for which we wait with eager anticipation: 2Pet.3:10-13).

Synopsis: Covenants in general in the ancient Middle East required two parties and a formal blood-sacrifice for ratification wherein both sides agree to abide by the terms specified. A biblical covenant is an agreement made by God on mankind's behalf, wherein God undertakes to bless all those who faithfully follow Him. God's part is two-fold: He supplies blessing (culminating in resurrection and eternal life), and He provides the blood-sacrifice (the gift of His Son, necessary to redeem us from sin so that we may be blessed). Our part is to keep faith with Him (i.e., accepting Christ and continuing to trust Him, believe Him, obey Him, follow Him: cf. Gen.15:6). God's covenants are formalized promises that provide those who have set their hearts on following Him with a strong basis for confident hope, because God has not only promised the eternal life and concomitant blessings we eagerly await, but has irrevocably bound Himself to fulfill them. Therefore although part of these covenants' fulfillment is yet future (requiring those who accept God's gracious offer of salvation which is at the heart of both covenants to trust Him while waiting patiently for fulfillment after the pattern of Abraham's faith and patience), fulfillment is absolutely certain for all who embrace the promises and persevere in faith.[7] Both Old and New Covenants are ratified by blood: the Old through the shadow of animal blood, the New through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross (where the reality of His death on our behalf and in our place [and wherein He did ***not*** bleed to death: Jn.19:30-37] is ***symbolized*** by the phrase "the blood of Christ": Heb.9:16-22). God promises, formalizes the promises, and pays the most severe price to fulfill the covenants He has established – the price being the sacrifice of His only beloved Son. We benefit from His unconditional and glorious act of grace, if we but trust in Jesus and stay faithful to Him. Whether it be present day believers who partake of the communion which proclaims the completed reality of salvation through the blood of Christ (Matt.26:26-29), or believers of the past who partook of sacrificial meals "of covenant" that foreshadowed the future reality of salvation (Ex.12:1-12; cf. Gen.31:51-54), our participation "proclaims the death of Jesus until He comes" (1Cor.11:26) and so pledges our continuing faith and faithfulness. The old, shadow covenant(s) (cf. Ezek.16:60 "covenant of youth") and the memorial, "New" covenant (cf. Ezek.16:60 "everlasting covenant) thus both proclaim the salvation to which we are heirs and partakers by the work of God through our continuing faith in Jesus Christ:

> But Christ has already arrived [in heaven] as high priest of the good things to come, [having passed] through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, that is, the one which is

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[7] It is common among exegetes to find numerous Old Testament covenants, but from Adam (the promise of the redeemer: Gen.3:15), to Noah (the promise of continued freedom and opportunity to choose for Him: Gen.8:20-9:17), to Abraham (the promise of the Seed: Gen.12:7; 13:15; 17:19-21), to David (the promise of the Son: 2Sam.7:5-16), all these "additional" covenants serve the same purpose as ***the*** Old Covenant (otherwise known as the Law of Moses: cf. Ex.24:8), that is, to foreshadow the person and work of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

not of this creation. Nor was it through the blood of goats and bullocks, but through His own blood (i.e., His death) that He entered once and for all into the holy of holies, having wrought eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of the heifer sprinkled upon the unclean render a person holy in respect to bodily cleansing, how much more will the blood of Christ, who offered Himself without defect to God through the eternal Spirit, cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we may serve the living God? And it is for this reason that He is the ***Mediator of a New Covenant***, so that those who have been called might receive their eternal inheritance on the basis of the death He suffered to redeem us from the transgressions [committed] under the first Covenant.
Hebrews 9:11-15

I, the Lord, have called You in righteousness, and shall take You by the hand, and guard You, and appoint You ***a covenant*** for the nations and a light for the gentiles.
Isaiah 42:6

3. <u>The Three Wilderness-Pilgrimage Eras of Human History</u>: Since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden, this world has largely been under the devil's control (see Part 4 of this series). And since the garden of Eden, there has been no paradise on earth, nor will there be until our Lord's return and the commencement of His blessed thousand year reign (i.e., the Millennium).[8] Until that time, this world, lying as it does in the lap of the evil one (1Jn.5:19), is a desert world, a place of hardship that must be gotten through with God's help, rather than enjoyed to the full (1Cor.7:29-31). For this world is not yet a place where God dwells manifestly and in person, but rather a wilderness through which we who believe in Christ are making our pilgrimage to God (1Chron.29:15; Ps.39:12; 63:1; 119:19; Heb.11:37-38; 13:13-14; 1Pet.1:1; 2:11):[9]

Happy is everyone whose strength is in You. Their hearts are set on the highways [of pilgrimage to Zion]. As they pass through the [dry] valley of Bachah (i.e., the wilderness of life), they make it a place of springs. Even the early rains enwrap it with [their] blessings. They go from strength to strength, until they appear before God in Zion.
Psalm 84:5-7

These all died [while still walking] in faith, though they had not received the [fulfillment of their] promises. But [while they lived] they did catch sight of [these promises] from a distance and salute them, [so to speak], thus making it plain [to all the world] that they

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[8] As we saw in Part 1 of this series (q.v. for the Seven Edens), the biblical terms Eden and paradise are synonymous for the place of perfect pleasure in fellowship with God. The current paradise is known as the third heaven, the place of God's throne room where Christ is seated at His right hand (cf., Lk.23:43; 2Cor.12:4).

[9] See Part 4 of this series, section I, "Strangers in the Devil's Realm", and also lesson #3 of the Peter series.

> were [in effect] strangers and sojourners on the earth. For people who express [their faith] in this way make it quite evident that they are eagerly in search of a homeland [other than the world they now pass through]. Indeed, if these [believers'] hearts had yearned for the [land] from which they had departed, they would have had [ample] opportunity to turn back. But they were zealous for a better place, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. He has, in fact, prepared a city for them.
> Hebrews 11:13-16

There are three wilderness-pilgrimage eras in human history. They are defined by and take their names from the pilgrims who sojourn through them:

- Gentile era
- Jewish era
- Church era

The first wilderness-pilgrimage era (Gentile) runs from the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the garden of Eden until the call of Abraham. Its pilgrim-believers are exclusively gentiles. In this era, there is an *individual focus* to the pilgrimage (i.e., following God as separate persons).

The second wilderness-pilgrimage era (Jewish) runs from the call of Abraham until the birth of Christ, when its completion is postponed till the commencement of the Tribulation. Its pilgrim-believers are primarily Jewish (along with gentiles in association with Israel). In this era, there is a *national focus* to the pilgrimage (i.e., following God as members or associates of a national community established by God and dedicated to Him, namely, Israel).

The third wilderness-pilgrimage era (Church) runs from the day of Pentecost until the onset of the Tribulation. Its pilgrim-believers are both Jews (the original branch) and gentiles (grafted into Israel) combined into the single body of Christ. In this era, there is a *corporate focus* to the pilgrimage (i.e., following God as intimate members of His family, the body of Christ which is the Church universal).

Though they differ in many respects, all three eras have several important aspects in common. They are all ...

- post-paradise: they all follow the garden of Eden temporally.
- non-paradise: no establishment of direct, divine administration at any time during the eras.
- pre-Kingdom: they all precede the 2nd Advent.
- syn-cosmic: they all run concurrently with Satan's administration of the world, his *kosmos*.
- syn-chronic: they all share a duration of two thousand years.

These three wilderness eras demonstrate God's grace in providing for believers under three different pre-Kingdom pilgrimage circumstances: 1) as individual pilgrims; 2) as a discrete nation of pilgrims; 3) as a world-wide family of pilgrims. To each and for each of these pilgrimages, the Millennial rule of Christ forms the capstone. For it is in the Millennium at Christ's return that the believers of all three eras come forth out of the wilderness and receive their rewards (Matt.16:27; 19:28; Lk.14:14; Rev.11:18; 22:12). Gentiles, Jews and both as members of Christ's Church have been trekking toward the promised land through the desert of this world since the expulsion from Eden. At our Lord's return, we shall enter the ultimate land of milk and honey in a literal as well as a spiritual sense, for we shall all be with Christ for His thousand year reign on Mount Zion in Jerusalem (see Part 1 of this series, section II.6.f). Until that time, this world is a wilderness, like the desert of Sinai through which the children of Israel journeyed. The devil's world is truly a dry and trackless place, a valley of Bachah (as in Psalm 84:6a above), a name that not only connotes arid conditions (as a place of Balsam trees), but also suffering and tears (as almost indistinguishable from the Hebrew word for weeping). But with hearts stayed upon the Lord, we pilgrims can experience the blessings of the water of life in the midst of this desolate wilderness (Ps.84:6b).

4. The Four Ages of Human History: Before the rebellion of the devil and his angels, Satan occupied a unique position in God's creation (see Part 3 of this series, section III). He was the guardian cherub, assigned to protect the holiness of God from everything profane, and he appeared before God bedecked with memorial jewels betokening the original nine angelic divisions.[10] Created to serve and glorify God in these and other special ways, the devil decided instead to attempt to replace God as ruler of the universe. As a consequence, Satan has now been replaced in his duties as *the* cherub by four other (elect) angelic creatures.

These newly appointed cherubim, in addition to taking over the devil's former duties, also have the important function of symbolizing the life and work of the One who is, as the new Morning Star, the ultimate and transcendent replacement for Lucifer, the Redeemer of those whom the devil seeks to destroy. In this capacity, each cherub represents the four major aspects of Christ's role as the Savior-King of human history, and each of these four aspects likewise corresponds to a distinct age of that history in which that aspect is visibly revealed:

- Gentile Age: Christ promised to all humanity in general as Savior.
- Jewish Age: Christ promised to Israel in particular as Messiah.
- Church Age: Christ having been revealed in Person in the (virgin-born) flesh in humility as the suffering Servant.

[10] On the cherubim and the angelic orders, see The Satanic Rebellion, Part 1, section III.i, and Part 4 section III.3.b.1-2.

- Millennial Age: Christ having been revealed in Person in the (resurrected) flesh in glory as the King.

As we saw in the first installment of this series, Satan, in his role as Lucifer (the Morning Star), was meant to be a unique reflection of the glory of God. In this role, he was the creature counterpart of the divine Angel of the Lord, the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ (see Part 4, section III.3.b).[11] After the devil's rebellion occasioned the events we call human history, however, the appointment of a college of four cherubim was symbolically necessary. For Jesus Christ would personally supplant the devil in a transcendent way, so that the function of the cherubim from the standpoint of reflecting the divine glory would now be directed towards the victor of human history, our Savior. So it is that the four cherubs who attend God's throne represent four important aspects of Christ's unique person and work. Moreover in doing so (a point which is apropos of our immediate topic), the symbolism which each of the four faces of the cherubim espouses corresponds to a primary aspect of Christ's Person and work as it is revealed within each of the four ages of human history:[12]

- Bullock-face: (Gentiles): Christ promised to all humanity in general as Savior.
- Lion-face: (Israel): Christ promised to Israel in particular as Messiah.
- Human-face: (Church): Christ come in person in the flesh in humility as the Servant.
- Eagle-face: (Millennium): Christ come in person in the flesh in glory as the King.

We have discussed the cherubs in Parts 1 and 4 of the present series (and will have occasion to revisit the issue anew in Part 2B of the series, The Coming Tribulation). Several points about them should be clarified here, however:

a) Their Number: The cherubs (also called seraphim in Isaiah chapter six) are, according to the above discussion, four in number, and are almost always described as such. The one true exception to this rule is their depiction on the mercy seat. This exception is entirely understandable when it is considered that the mercy seat and the temple depictions are essentially two dimensional representations. Since the cherubim stand by the sides of God's chariot-throne in pairs (when carrying the throne), only two cherubs are fully visible to someone viewing the scene from the direct forefront, and so it is that they are represented in this context (a point with significance for their faces as well as we shall see below).

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[11] On the Angel of the Lord and Christophany overall, see part 1 of Bible Basics: Theology: The Study of God., section II.C.3.

[12] It is also true that Israel in military, tribal formation, was divided into four divisions (Num.2:1-31; 10:11-33). The four divisions encamped around the tabernacle which contained the ark of the covenant covered by the "mercy-seat" (which is symbolic of God's heavenly throne), just as each of the four cherubs is stationed at one of the four sides of the actual chariot throne. Thus, in this respect as well (see the discussion of tabernacle symbolism in Part 1 of this series), the arrangements of the Mosaic Law are shadows of the heavenly reality (cf. Heb.8:1-5).

b) Their Wings: The wings of the cherubim are described as numbering six in Isaiah and in Revelation as well. Ezekiel's mention of only four wings is to be accounted for by the fact he is describing the cherubs as they are in the process of transporting the chariot-throne of God (not the case in either Isaiah or Revelation where the throne is at rest). The "wheel-with-a-wheel-within-it" which Ezekiel describes as being by the side of each cherub (Ezek.1:15-18; 10:9-13) is, in actuality, the additional set of wings providing rotary locomotion to the chariot wheels (thus giving the appearance of a "wheel within a wheel" in each case; cf. Ezek. 3:13). The description of these "wing-powered wheels" overheard by Ezekiel and recorded in verse thirteen of chapter ten as the "whirlwind wheels" (Hebrew: *galgal*: גלגל) is most revealing in this respect, for this image (i.e., of a funnel cloud) portrays substantial three dimensional depth just as a circularly rotating pair of wings (one from each side of the cherub) would possess, but which wheels alone would not. This also explains why the wheels are "full of eyes", a characteristic of the cherubs' wings: the rapidly rotating wheels with the pair of wings interlocked gives the appearance that the eyes are part of the wheels (compare Ezek.1:18 and 10:12 with Rev.4:6 and 4:8).

c) Their Symbolism: As described above, all four cherub-faces symbolize Jesus Christ, with each representing that aspect of His historical mission at the forefront during the age for which they stand.

- The bullock face (Gentile age) is a picture of Christ the suffering Servant. The bullock not only bears burdens (as Christ bore our sins: cf. Is.53:4), but is also the most esteemed sacrificial animal, whose blood was shed under the Old Testament economy as a symbolic representation of Christ's promised work on our behalf (Lev.1:5ff.).
- The lion face (Jewish age) is a picture of Christ as the promised Messiah. The lion is the symbol of the tribe of Judah (Rev.5:5; cf. Gen.49:9-12), and has a messianic connotation throughout the Old Testament (cf. Num.23:24; 24:9). The generation of Israel to whom He came was ready to embrace the lion (the Messiah as avenging warrior), but stumbled over the bullock (the Messiah as self-sacrificing servant).
- The human face (Church age) is a picture of Christ as the incarnate, visible Savior of the world. He is ***the*** Son of Man (Matt.9:6), the archetypical human being who is truly human in every way apart from sin (Heb.2:14 with 4:15), the last Adam (1Cor.15:45). The Church, composed of all believing Jews and gentiles, is His body here on earth, not yet glorified as indeed He was not glorified until after His work on the cross was completed (Jn.17:1-5).
- The eagle face (Millennial age) is a picture of Christ exalted in resurrection and victorious in battle. Glorified by the Father for His victory at the cross (Eph.1:19b-23), following His resurrection and ascension He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father until the day of His return (Ps.110). At that time (the Second Advent), He will fulfill all the messianic prophecies recorded in the scriptures (cf. Eph.3:10-12; Col.1:20), and will rule the world in glory for a thousand years. With its connotations of forbidding majesty and awe (Deut.28:49; Jer.48:40; 49:22; Ezek.17:3; 17:7; Dan.7:4; Hos.8:1; Hab.1:8; cf. Is.46:11), the eagle is an appropriate symbol for Christ's majestic and awe-inspiring double victory, first at the cross (with its accompanying resurrection, ascension

and session at the Father's right hand), and ultimately at the Second Advent (Matt.24:28; Lk.17:37; compare the picture of the glorified Christ at Rev.1:12-16).

d) The Number of their Faces: Of all human features, the face is at once one of the most memorable and expressive, making it a most effective means for the type of symbolic representation discussed above. Although their bodies are in human form (Ezek.1:5), the four faces of the cherubim are unique, and stand symbolically for the various aspects of our Lord's earthly ministry just described. In this way, the faces of the cherubim reflect the glory of the Son of God instead of their own glory, just as, ideally, the world should see the face of Christ in us, His servants, when we walk as He commanded us to do (2Cor.3:18; cf. Matt.16:24; Jn.13:15; 1Cor.11:1; 2Cor.2:15; Gal.4:19; Eph.5:1; 1Thes.1:6; 1Pet.2:21).

All four faces of the cherubim are entirely obscured in Isaiah (Is.6:1-7), because as the cherubs hover over the throne of God, they cover their faces with one set of wings (so as not to look upon the glory of God). In Ezekiel (Ezek.1:4-26; 10:1-22; 41:18-20), the cherubs (along with their wing-wheels) are positioned under the chariot throne, so that no veiling of their faces is necessary. All four faces, as a result, were visible to Ezekiel. In Revelation (Rev.4:6-8), the cherubs encircle the throne and are part of it (i.e., in direct contact with it), but are not positioned so as to provide locomotion (i.e., they have rotated into a guardian position: see the diagram below). Here, they are roughly on the level of God's throne (i.e., not completely below it as in Ezekiel, nor hovering above it as in Isaiah). As a result, we may surmise that they are seen by John covering all but their outward looking face (so that he can describe them as if they had only one face).[13] In actuality, therefore, each cherub in all three passages possesses all four faces: that of a man on the front, an eagle on the back, a lion on the right and a bullock on the left (as in Ezek.1:6-9). From the viewer's perspective, however, each cherub may seem to have only one face, since only one of the faces is generally visible at any given time (cf. Ezek.10:14, where it states literally in the Hebrew that "***the*** face of the first one was ... [etc.]", although Ezekiel is previously quite clear about the fact each cherub has ***four*** faces: Ezek.1:6-9).

e) Their Order: Ezekiel's initial description of the faces in verse ten of chapter one proceeds in a natural and understandable order, making mention of the forward looking face first (that of a man), then moving to the right and left sides (the lion and the bullock respectively), and finishing with the rearward-looking face (the eagle). Ezekiel 10:14, by way of contrast, is not a

[13] The two-faced cherubim on the walls of the temple in Ezekiel 41:18-20 are to be explained by the fact that the flat surface of the wall demanded, in according with the artistic conventions of the time, a two-dimensional representation. Accordingly, the observer is presented with the front and right side views (the rear and left being, theoretically, visible from a rear, two-dimensional view). Compare also the single-sided representation of lion and bull faces of the cherubs on Solomon's moveable basins: 1Kng.7:29.

generic description of a single cherub, but rather an account of the entire college of four as they carry God's chariot-throne.[14]

> Each had four faces. The face of the first [side] was [that of a] cherub; the face of the second [side was] the face of a man; the face of the third [side was] the face of a lion; the face of the fourth [side was] the face of an eagle.
> Ezekiel 10:14

In this second description, Ezekiel's account thus moves around the chariot-throne in a clockwise fashion (left-front, front-right, right-rear, rear-left), mentioning the outward-looking face in each case. Ezekiel begins with the cherub stationed on the left-front corner of the chariot no doubt because this angel was closest to his view, for the chariot-throne is described at this point as standing south of the temple (Ezek.10:3), while Ezekiel himself was positioned near the temple's entrance (viz., to the north of the chariot-throne: Ezek.8:16). His description of this cherub, elsewhere with the bullock face, as having "the face of a cherub" may be explained by fact that in the Hebrew culture the *cherubh* (cherub: Hebrew כרוב) must have generally been understood as having the appearance of a bullock, precisely the reason why Ezekiel made such a point of articulating that the genuine, heavenly cherubs had *four* faces, only one of which resembled a bullock.

The order of the cherubim given in Revelation 4:7 of Lion, Bullock, Man, Eagle, is thus consistent with what is found elsewhere in scripture (i.e., Is.6:1-7; Ezek.1:4-26; 10:1-22; 41:18-20). In Ezekiel's description, the cherubs are actually in contact with the chariot-throne while flying, in Isaiah's description, the cherubs (called seraphs) are disengaged and flying, and in Revelation, the cherubs are in contact with the throne (though they have apparently shifted positions: see the diagram immediately below), and are not flying (i.e., they are "in the midst" of the throne; Greek: *en meso*: εν μεσω του θρονου).

[SEE CHART #1 AT BACK] = cherub.bmp

As to the order per se as given in Revelation 4:7, John lists the cherubim in the following manner right, left, front, rear. This is similar to what Ezekiel does when describing the four faces of the individual cherubim in the tenth verse of chapter one, but not identical. For while Ezekiel sandwiches the left and the right in between the front and the rear, John, on the other hand, shifts this order, giving the left and the right, followed by the front and the rear. This change of order (from the more natural order of Ezekiel) is due to the fact that, in the book of Revelation (the "unveiling of Jesus Christ", its literal title), it was appropriate for John under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to list the faces of the cherubim so as to reflect these symbolic representations of the person and work of our Savior in respect to their specific relationship to the overall Plan of God. Therefore the ranking in Revelation 4:7 (Lion-Bullock-Man-Eagle) has the following significance:

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[14] This fact is not made clear in some English versions (e.g., NIV).

- The symbol of the historical Age of Israel is placed first.
- The symbol of the coming Kingdom of Israel is placed last.
- These two symbols enclose the two symbols of the predominantly gentile ages, of which ...
- The symbol of the Age of the Gentiles is placed first.
- The symbol of the Church Age (where gentiles are grafted into Israel) is placed next to it.
- Thus Israel and Kingdom Israel enclose the gentiles and the mystery gentiles (Eph.3:6).

The symbolism thus rendered of Israel enclosing the gentiles and the gentiles fulfilling Israel is at once powerful and appropriate, for Christ, whose Person and work these four ages and their corresponding cherub-faces represent, is the One who fills and completes everything in every way (Eph.1:23; cf. 1:9-10).

5. The Five Dispensational Divisions of Human History: The word "dispensation" is at once a descriptive and unfortunate term for the five segments into which history is divided in respect to God's allocation of resources for pursuing a relationship with Him (i.e., salvation and spiritual growth). This is because while "dispensation" is a perfectly good English word that closely shadows the biblical vocabulary on the one hand (translating the Greek word *oikonomia*: οικονομια), on the other hand the connotations the word carries from Roman Catholic usage as well as from traditional, evangelical "Dispensationalism" can be misleading.[15] The Greek word *oikonomia* may also be translated "economy" and "stewardship" (cf. Lk.16:2-4; 1Cor.9:17; Col.1:25; 1Tim.1:4), but these words too have taken on specialized meanings that obscure the real force of what biblical *oikonomia* really is. God's dispensations are periods of time distinguished by the different grace means He uses in each one to "dispense" the resources necessary for seeking Him to all those who desire to do so (Eph.3:2).[16]

It should go without saying that God has always made Himself available to those who want to know Him and who wish to have a relationship with Him – that is the whole point of our existence (Deut.4:29; Prov.8:17; Is.45:22; 55:6; Jer.29:13; Matt.7:7; Lk.11:9). The manner and the means whereby He accomplishes this, however, differ, corresponding to the dispensational division in question. To know God, one needs to have information about God; one needs truth, truth which must then be believed and put into practice. And while certain truths are obvious to

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[15] See C.I. Scofield's Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth pp.19-23.

[16] The description in Hebrews 3:1-6 of Moses as the steward of the "household" (*oikos*) Israel, and of Christ as the builder of the "household" (*oikos*) of the Church refers to the respective dispensations (*oikonomia*): Moses served God's house Israel through dispensing the truth of His Word (along with the associated means necessary for salvation and growth under the Law). Compare also 1st Peter 2:4 where the Church (i.e., believers) are described as the "house" of God, that is, the family and household that is the object of His spiritual provision (in particular).

all mankind (e.g., the existence of God, the basic distinction between right and wrong, etc.),[17] more specific information about God, the salvation He has provided in Jesus Christ, and the knowledge essential to cultivating a relationship with Him are areas of truth that are not available to mankind independent of the grace means God has provided for their dissemination. While our omnipotent, omniscient God is certainly capable of giving any and every interested human being independent revelation of all His truth, He has for the most part in the course of human history chosen to work through various agents, stewards or "dispensers" who have been responsible for providing spiritual food to the family of God. Until the coming of the canon of scriptures, this was a direct process wherein the Word of God came exclusively to certain individuals of God's choosing called "prophets" (Hebrew: *nabi'* – נביא; Greek: *prophetes* - προφητης) who were responsible for dispensing divine truth. During the formation of the canon (a period of some fifteen hundred years), prophecy and the written Word were dual means of dispensing truth. With the close of the canon and the passing of the apostolic generation, God's Word ***is the sole source*** of special revelation about Him, so that the dispensation of truth during the division known as the Church is correspondingly different from preceding dispensational divisions (the ministry and gifts of the Spirit being crucial at this present time). With the commencement of the end times and the millennial reign of Christ that follows, scripture will be complemented once again by extraordinary prophetic empowerment as the knowledge of God will come to fill the entire world (see below).

The "dispensations" of God's gracious provision of truth about Himself (necessary for salvation and spiritual growth) are five in number. They are:

- Gentile Patriarchy: from Adam to Abraham.
- Jewish Patriarchy: from Abraham to Moses.
- The Mosaic Law: from Moses to Christ.
- The Church: from Christ's first advent to His Second Advent.
- The Millennium: from Christ's return to the end of history.

a) Gentile Patriarchy: In keeping with the individual focus of the times of the gentiles, God worked primarily through individuals during that period of history which preceded the call of Abraham. After the pattern of Enoch (Gen.5:21-24; Heb.11:5), Noah (Gen.6:9; 6:13-14; Heb.11:7), Job (Job 1:8), the king of Salem (Gen.14:18-20), and, until his circumcision, Abram (Gen.12:1-3; 15:6), God provided Himself with stewards, men to whom He granted great knowledge about Himself through personal revelation. These men were prophets whom God blessed with special revelation of His truth, and whom He used as means for the stewardship or "dispensing" of that truth about Himself.

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[17] For the distinction between "natural revelation" and "special revelation", see Peter #11. On the inherent human appreciation of the difference between right and wrong, see Part 3B of Bible Basics: Hamartiology, section I.3, "The Conscience".

b) Jewish Patriarchy: In terms of the dispensing of divine truth, God's grace means from the call of Abraham to the giving of the Mosaic Law are similar in the sense of being visited upon individual believers, exceptional in terms of their relationship to God. In the Jewish division as in the gentile division, heads of households prominent for their favor in the eyes of the Lord remain the focus of divine revelation, often through direct communication with God (as well as through visions, dreams, and their interpretation). The main difference between the Gentile and Jewish dispensational economies is expressed in their respective titles: before Abraham, no familial distinction existed; after Abraham, God made particular and preeminent use of Abraham's seed to witness for Himself and to distribute His truth. For example, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all functioned as prophets (cf. Gen.20:7). All three patriarchs are recorded in scripture as having received special revelation directly from God (e.g., see respectively Gen.15:12-16; 26:2-5; 28:13-15). The procedure of the dispensation of truth is thus identical for the first two divisions of history, only that in the second, revelation comes predominantly through the line of the Messiah.

c) The Mosaic Law: With the giving of the Mosaic Law, God's truth took written form for the first time in human history. While prophets would continue to receive direct revelation from God, they were, beginning with Moses, sometimes instructed to record the Word of God. The act of writing down scripture is thus a prophetic one, accomplished exclusively by prophets (e.g., Moses: comparing Deut.18:15 with Num.12:6-8), and always at the behest of God (e.g., Ex.34:27-28), and under the direct guidance of God (cf. 2Pet.1:20-21).[18] With the giving of the Law, there was now a body of written truth about God which could be taught independently of prophecy (a function for which the priests and Levites were primarily responsible: Deut.33:8-10; 2Chron.17:7-9; 35:3; Neh.8:9; Ezek.44:23). More than this, the entire national lifestyle dictated by the Law was itself designed to teach truth. The behavioral requirements of the Law functioned as a "pedagogue", so to speak, designed to expose our sinful nature and so lead the way to salvation (Gal.3:24-25). Its stipulations for separating the clean and unclean taught God's holiness and the need to emulate it. The sacrifices it enjoined in particular spoke of Christ and His sacrifice for us on the cross (cf. 1Cor.5:7), and the system of festivals taught God's ultimate plan for the ages (see below). The tabernacle and its furniture were also rich in symbolic meaning, communicating much truth about God (cf. Heb.9:23-28).[19] Even elements which may seem superficially trivial have deep spiritual significance (cf. 1Cor.9:8-10). In short, with the giving of the Law, God's dispensation of knowledge about Himself was no longer confined to exceptional individuals, but was now more widely and immediately available, although concentrated in His priest-nation, Israel.

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[18] Note also that the written Word is called *propheteia graphes*, "written-prophecy", in 2nd Peter 1:20, that is, truth from God which the Spirit has directed be written down (as opposed to strictly oral prophecy).

[19] See Part 1 of this series, section II.5.b.

d) The Church: The death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ, followed by the advent of His Holy Spirit, brought about a revolution in the dispensation of God's grace means for learning about salvation and pursuing spiritual growth. With the explosion of grace to the gentiles and the formation of a world-wide family of God, a major change in the dispensation of truth was also required (cf. Heb.7:12). As a single family, united to Christ, the work of spiritual growth is very much now a group effort. The two key factors which allowed this transformation to take place are 1) the giving of the Holy Spirit; 2) the completion of the canon of scripture. Apart from the early days of the Church (and it would be well to remember that all the writers of scripture were either apostles who had seen Christ or were writing under their authority: cf. the discussion of prophecy above), the dispensation of knowledge for salvation and spiritual growth has rested almost exclusively on these twin pillars, whether directly or indirectly. For all believers have the gift of the Holy Spirit (Rom.8:9), and all truth necessary for salvation and spiritual growth is contained in and limited to the Bible (with the exception of "general revelation": e.g., recognizing God's existence from contemplating the magnificence of His creation). That is not to say, of course, that in our current dispensation it is "every man for himself", and that every believer is authorized and capable of "self-dispensing" the spiritual food necessary for growth. To the contrary, we the Church are the most interconnected group of believers in this respect that the world has yet seen. We are one body, and we function as parts of that body, each one of which is essential, each one of which has great need of all the others (1Cor.12:12-30). As those who have accepted Jesus Christ, we are all here with the same dual-objective: to grow spiritually and to help others do the same.[20] The Holy Spirit bestows spiritual gifts upon all new believers (1Cor.12:4-11), so that through His empowerment of these gifts and His indwelling of every believer we of the Church age have greater opportunities than ever before both for personal spiritual advance and also for helping our fellow believers grow as well. As spiritual advance in the midst of Satan's world is no easy mandate, the mutual support of the body of Christ is essential for effective, collective growth. Furthermore, the dispensation of divine truth is no longer accomplished through prophecy (a gift that apparently ceased to function with the passing of the apostolic generation, once the canon of scripture was complete: 1Cor.13:8).[21] Nor is it now a matter of close adherence to a very strict set of symbolic rituals (the Law having been abrogated by the reality of Christ's incarnation and work on the cross: Rom.6:14; 10:4; Col.2:17). We are now free to accept the responsibility of spiritual growth without the burden of following the Law in all its particulars, educational as they may be (Gal.5:1; 5:13; 1Pet.2:16). For everything we as Christians need to know about God and our role

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[20] See the Peter series, lessons #12-13.

[21] Prophesying, along with dreams, visions and "talking with God" are not the primary means God has chosen for communication of His truth for by far the better part of the Church Age (including today). God, of course, can do as He will, but false or wrong assumptions on this issue have the effect of degrading (in the eyes of those who put stock in such things) the importance of the Word, the ministry of the Spirit in understanding the Word, and the authority of those who minister the Word (in effect undermining the entire dispensational system for this division of history).

in His plan is now contained in one unique book, the Bible (2Tim.3:15-17). God used inspired men to write this Book of books (2Pet.1:20-22), and now uses prepared men with the requisite spiritual gifts to teach and so to "dispense" the truths it contains (1Cor.12:27-31; Eph.4:11-16; 1Thes.5:12-13; 1Tim.5:17; cf. Eph.1:9-10):[22]

> . . . . . in all wisdom and understanding [God] has made known to us the mystery He has willed (according to His own benevolent purpose which He determined in [Christ]) for administering (lit., for the ***dispensing*** of) this [present] fulfillment of the epochs: namely the incorporation of all things in Christ, things in heaven, and things on earth –
> Ephesians 1:8b-10

> This gracious favor has been given to me, the least of His holy ones: to give to the gentiles the good news of the indescribable wealth [that is in] Christ, and to enlighten everyone as to how [the truth] of this mystery (once hidden from the ages in God who created everything) is now ***being dispensed***, so that the enigmatically intricate wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the agency of the Church.
> Ephesians 3:8-10

> It is of this [Church] that I, [Paul], have become a minister according to God's mandate given to me for ***dispensing*** [***the truth***] to you, in order to bring completeness to God's plan (lit., "word", Gk. *logos*), that is, [to make known] the mystery hidden from ages and from generations [past], but now revealed to His holy ones (i.e., believers). To all such God desired to make known what wealth there is in this glorious mystery regarding the gentiles, for it is that Christ – your hope of glory – is in you.
> Colossians 1:25-27

> And command them not to pursue myths and endless genealogies, things which provoke controversies rather than the ***dispensing*** [***of***] ***the*** [***truth***] of God by faith.
> 1st Timothy 1:4

e) The Millennium: With the return of Christ at the Second Advent, our Lord will take up direct rule over the earth (along with those who are His at His coming: 1Cor.6:3; 1Pet.2:5; 2:9; Rev.1:6; 2:26-28; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; 20:6). The commencement of the reign of Emmanuel (which name means "God [is] with us") will begin for the first time since Adam's fall the personal and direct rule of God on earth in the divine person of the Son of God. The dispensation of divine truth at that time will be such as the world has never before seen, for, in addition to the other wonders of millennial perfection, the knowledge of God and His truth will be universally and bountifully available:

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[22] The subject of grace epistemology (how we learn God's truth with the help of the Holy Spirit), will be covered in the forthcoming Part 5 of Bible Basics: Pneumatology.

> "For" says the Lord, "this is the covenant which I shall make with the house of Israel after these days: I shall put my precepts in their minds and write them upon their hearts, and I shall be their God, and they shall be My people. They shall not teach each one his fellow and each one his brother, saying 'Know the Lord!', because all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest of them. For I shall have mercy upon their unrighteous deeds and shall remember their sins no more."
> Jeremiah 31:33-34
>
> They shall not harm nor destroy on all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.
> Isaiah 11:9

However, despite this perfect environment, and despite unprecedented revelation abounding to all, truth which it will be impossible for mankind to ignore or be ignorant of, many will nevertheless resist the truth and choose to follow their sinful natures instead, even to the point of rebelling against the perfect King just as soon as the opportunity arises (when Satan is temporarily released: Rev.20:7-10).

6. The Six Chronological Periods of Human History: These six periods divide history from a secular point of view, listing in order the significant divisions of human history *chronologically* rather than categorizing them on the basis of any spiritual significance (which is the basis for the five categorizations that precede and the one which follows). If, as many exegetes throughout the history of the Church have claimed, "six" is the number of Man, six periods of history from the human as opposed to the divine perspective are all the more understandable.[23] For one thing, six periods are certainly one short of the one number which most clearly has symbolic significance in the Bible: i.e., "seven" (see II.7 immediately below). However that may be, for our purposes it is enough to note that history, divided into the six periods listed below, is significant not for any divine trend or characteristic, but for the different emphases of satanic attack manifest in each one. These six periods, therefore, present history largely from the devil's point of view. Specifically, they highlight the major objects of his attacks on mankind from the fall to the end of history:

a) The Antediluvian Period: From the fall to the flood. Primary satanic target: true humanity.

b) The Postdiluvian Gentile Period: From the flood to Abraham. Primary satanic target: freedom and law.

c) The Jewish Period: From Abraham to Christ. Primary satanic target: the people and the nation of Israel.

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[23] For example, Man was created on the sixth day, and the number of the antichrist (the man who portrays himself as God) is 666 (Rev.13:18). See J.J. Davis, Biblical Numerology (Grand Rapids 1968) 122-123.

d) The Church Period: From Christ to the beginning of the Tribulation. Primary satanic target: the truth of the Word of God.

e) The Tribulational Period: The seven years preceding the return of Christ. Primary satanic target: all of the above (humanity, freedom and law, Israel, truth) along with a particular emphasis on eradicating believers from the earth, as the devil employs any and all means available to him in the short time he has remaining.

f) The Millennial Period: The thousand years following the return of Christ. Primary satanic target: the rule of Christ (attacked after Satan is released at the end of the period).

Satan's counter-strategy (against God's plan), therefore, forms the basis for the six periods listed above. This strategy (and its implementation within human history) is the subject of section III below and will therefore be reserved for detailed discussion. It should be noted here, however, that from the human point of view, history is a dark, unpleasant progression, characterized only by the successive attacks of the devil upon all that is righteous and truly worthwhile. Only through God's divine control of history are we delivered from the adversary and blessed in this his evil world.

7. The Seven Days of Human History: When God restored the heavens and the earth to habitable form, He did so in six literal days, leaving the seventh as a day of rest to memorialize the principle of peace and rest available to all who trust in Him. These seven days of the earth's re-creation began the process of God's judgment upon evil, His restoration of the universe, and His replacement of Satan. As we saw in section I above, following His divine *judgment* upon the heavens and the earth in response to Satan's rebellion, God *restored* the earth and set the stage for the *replacement* of Satan and his followers with Adam and his progeny. Though the devil thought to disrupt this prospect through his temptation of Adam and Eve, the fall of mankind merely set in motion the grand Plan of God for human history, a design which pivots around the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and which will culminate in the ultimate replacement of the devil and his followers at history's end.

Besides marking the first phase of judgment, restoration and replacement, these first seven literal days were also symbolic of the entire course of human history that was to come. For the seven days of re-creation correspond to the seven millennia of human history, a definite period of time ordained by God before the foundation of the world within which mankind would be saved by the gift of Christ and within which all things would be judged, restored and replaced. As we have seen above, different conditions prevail in different periods, both from the standpoint of God's provision of grace and from the point of view of Satan's method of attack. Just as the restoration of what was destroyed in heaven and on earth in the wake of God's original judgment upon the devil and his followers was replaced in phases during seven literal days, so throughout the course of the seven millennia of human history God is phasing in replacements for Satan and the fallen angels, demonstrating in the process His multifarious grace to believers regardless of the vastly different circumstances under which they are called out:

Days 1 and 2: The Gentiles: (ca. 4065-2065 B.C.)

a. The Antediluvian Civilization:

Time Frame: From Adam's fall to circa Noah.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God while transitioning from perfect environment to the hardships of the present world.

b. The Division of the Nations:

Time Frame: From circa Noah to Abraham.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God in the face of unprecedented satanic attacks (i.e., the genetic dilution of Genesis chapter six, and Satan's post-flood attempt to establish one-world government).

Days 3 and 4: Israel: (ca. 2065-2 B.C.) [the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity excepted; the seven years of the Tribulation still future]

c. The Nation of Israel:

Time Frame: From Abraham to circa David.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God as His unique witnesses (and as primary targets of the devil) in the midst of a pagan world.

d. The Kingdom of Israel:

Time Frame: From circa David to Christ.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God as members (or associates) of His unique nation Israel (the central point of satanic opposition) in the midst of a world of devil-worshiping nations.

Days 5 and 6: The Church: (ca. 33-2033 A.D.)

e. Centralized Christianity:

Time Frame: From Christ to circa the schism of the Church.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God despite growing opposition to the truth from monolithic, bureaucratic pseudo-Christianity.

f. Decentralized Christianity:

Time Frame: From circa the schism of the Church to the Second Advent of Christ.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God in the face of mounting attacks on the truth from all quarters (religious, social, economic and political), culminating in the most intense period of pressure and opposition in human history, the Tribulation.

Day 7: The Kingdom of God (the Sabbath Day): (ca. 2033-3033 A.D.)

g. The Millennium:

Time Frame: From the Second Advent of Christ to the Gog-Magog Rebellion.

Challenge to believers: To maintain and develop faith in God while transitioning from the devil's world to Christ's perfect rule over mankind (sinful human beings facing the ultimate prosperity test).

8. Evidence for the "Seven Days" Interpretation:

a. Direct Biblical Testimony: The interpretation of human history as a set of seven millennia has a certain internal logic when we remember that history in the aggregate has been designed by God for the very specific purposes outlined in this series of judging evil, restoring righteousness, and replacing evil-doers with faithful followers, all through the agency and saving work of His Son:

> By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God.
> Hebrews 11:3a

There are clear indications in scripture that God's specific plan of construction for that part of time we call human history is indeed a series of seven millennia. For example, when scripture makes a deliberate point of telling us that Jesus took his inner group of disciples up to the Mount of Transfiguration "after six days" (Matt.17:1; Mk.9:2), it is reasonable to suppose that this information has not been supplied to no particular purpose, yet nothing in the context of either Matthew or Mark explains why here almost uniquely in the gospels such specific chronological information should be given – unless it is precisely because of the fact that on ***the seventh day*** our Lord was "transfigured", a preview of His return in glory at the second advent (as the appearance of the two heralds of that event, Moses and Elijah, makes clear). And if the seventh day is thus symbolically linked here to the second advent (as it clearly is), we would be remiss not at least to consider the possibility that this otherwise inexplicable reference to the "six days" which precede this symbolic second advent and Millennium are meant to be understood in a similar way, namely as representing the six millennia of human history which precede the second advent and the Millennium.

We may therefore start with this fact, namely that the Millennium, the final period of human history, the only period of human history specifically named and delineated in scripture, is most definitely described as a period of one thousand literal years (Rev.20:1-7). Elsewhere in scripture, the Millennium, the time of the reign of Christ commencing with His triumphant return and concomitant judgment upon His enemies, is called "the ***day*** of the Lord" (Is.2:11-21; 10:11-34; Joel 2:28-32; Am.5:18-20; Ob.1:15; Zeph.1:14; Zech.14:1-7; Mal.4:5; 1Thes.5:2-4; 2Thes.2:2; 2Pet.3:10; Rev.6:17; 16:14), and "the ***year*** of the Lord" (Is.61:2; 63:4; cf. Is.49:8; Lk.4:19; 2Cor.6:1-2). In the case of the Millennium, therefore, the Bible clearly calls a literal and specific period of 1000 years "a day". While from the human perspective the difference between a day and a millennium is massive, to God, the Creator and Master of time who exists outside of time and is in no way subject to it, these two finite chronological periods are much the same:

> For a thousand years in Thy sight are like yesterday when it passes by, or as a watch in the night.
> Psalm 90:4 [NASB]

> Let not this one fact escape your attention then, beloved, namely that one day is like a thousand years in the Lord's eyes, and a thousand years like one day.
> 2nd Peter 3:8

> [The Lord] will restore us, [Israel], after two days (i.e., after the Church age), and will raise us up on the third day (i.e., the Millennium), that we may live in His presence (i.e., with the Messiah, who personifies this prophecy in His resurrection on the third day).
> Hosea 6:2

By using short periods (hours, days, weeks) to designate much longer chronological periods, scripture reflects God's complete sovereignty over time. This tendency of scripture to diminish the significance of a given period of time in proportion to the importance of time's Inventor and Master is common in the Bible and is often accomplished in this same way, namely through the use of relatively small units to refer to much longer chronological spans. For example, the "year of redemption" in Isaiah 63:4, and the "day of vengeance" in both Isaiah 34:8 and 63:4 refer to the thousand years of the Millennium, while the "day of salvation" in Isaiah 49:8 refers to the two thousand years of the Church in addition to the Millennium (cf. 2Cor.6:1-2). In the "seventy sevens" prophecy of Daniel chapter nine, each day of the "week" is a one year period (Dan.9:25-27). Similarly, at Revelation 12:14 the "time, times and half a time" refers to the three and one half years of the Great Tribulation (as in Dan.4:16 the seven "times" are seven years). The effect of all these passages is to make it clear to God's elect that even though time plays such a seemingly dominant role in our lives, it is nothing at all to God and presents not the slightest obstacle to the accomplishment of His will. It is merely a tool He has invented for the ordering of our lives wherein we may choose for Him (time is merely the stuff of choice: Eph.5:16; Col.4:5). Therefore seven thousand years, the sum total of human history, may seem a long span to us from our earthly perspective, but in terms of the eternity that God has constructed for us His faithful followers, it is an inexpressibly minute period of time.

As we shall see below, the chronological records found in the Bible yield approximately 2000 years from Christ to Abraham and an additional 2000 years from Abraham to Adam. Given that the Gentile and Jewish ages both covered ca. 2000 years, and that the Millennium, the final "day" in God's plan for human history, will be 1000 years, it requires no great leap of exegetical skill to posit a comparable 2000 years for the Church age. In so doing, a total of 7000 years results wherein each millennium is reckoned as "a day" in God's system. The analogy to the seven day week, another divine invention (cf. Gen.1:3ff.),[24] is also impossible to ignore, especially considering the very close analogy between the seventh day of rest, the Sabbath, and the seventh day of human history, the Millennium, with all its promised peace and abundance, which likewise comes as the final "day" of the seven (cf. Is.9:6-7; see Part I of this series, section

[24] The modern, western "week" is a direct descendent of the biblical week, and was unknown in the west before Jewish and Christian influence brought it to prominence.

II.6.f.).[25] Based on the analogy of the week, therefore, the Millennium of its own accord invites us to posit six prior thousand year "days". This evidence is all the stronger when we consider that the original period of time wherein God began the process of restoration and replacement known as human history was the original week of seven days, also ending in a day of rest (compare the "six days" mentioned prior to the transfiguration which prefigures the Second Advent in Matt.17:1 and the beginning of the "seventh day" or Millennium).

b. The Seven Days of Re-Creation: That the seven day week is a reflection of God's overall design of human history can be seen most perspicuously from the original week of re-creation, which, occurring at the dawn of that history, foreshadows the seven ages to come. During those original seven days, God conducted a comprehensive refitting of the earth (as we have seen in Part 2 of this series), a restoration of the material world which parallels very closely His Plan for replacing Satan and his followers over the course of the seven thousand years of human history:

Days 1 and 2: The first two Genesis days of re-creation are clearly paired in that they alone focus upon acts of separation almost exclusively (the re-kindling of light which marks the beginning of the process over all being the significant exception): light separated from darkness (Day 1); the waters above separated from waters below by means of the firmament or sky (Day 2). This first pair of days provides essential groundwork for physical life through the provision of light and air. This physical provision is analogous to the essential spiritual groundwork provided by the first two millennial days of the Gentile age:

Day #1 - Gentile age millennium #1: Just as light, the foremost necessity of physical life, first appears in the dark world on day one of re-creation, so God's truth, the foremost necessity of spiritual life, first appears in the devil's dark world during the first millennium of the Gentile age, beginning with the first promise of Christ (Gen.3:15). This legacy of truth is then perpetuated through the line of Adam and Seth down to Noah and his family.

Day #2 - Gentile age millennium #2: Just as air, a necessity without which physical life cannot be maintained, is provided on day two of re-creation, so during the second millennium of the Gentile age God guaranteed the fresh air of ***freedom*** for mankind, an attribute as absolutely essential for spiritual life as air is for physical life, through:

1) the prohibition of angelic interference (Gen.6:1-7).
2) the restraint of crime through law (Gen.8:21-9:17).
3) the repression of one-world tyranny through nationalism (in specific response to the tower of Babel: Gen.11:1-9).

God's instrument of judgment whereby (1) the angelic outrages of Genesis six are brought to an end, (2) after which the rule of law is established, and (3) in consequence of which the nations are divided, is the great flood, the deluge that temporarily restored the earth to its pre-dry land

[25] It will be recalled that the Bible elsewhere definitely does equate years and weeks (Dan.9:24-27).

condition (cf. 1Pet.3:18-22; 2Pet.3:5-6). Therefore it is exactly because of the deluge that the legacy of truth is protected, finding a more secure foothold in the environment of freedom (provided through limitations on further angelic interference, the establishment of law, and the development of nationalism).

Separation: As the first pair of Genesis days focuses on the formation of an essential environment for physical growth through the separation of light from darkness and the waters above from the waters below, so the first pair of millennial days (the age of the Gentiles) focuses on the formation of an essential foundation for spiritual growth through the provision of divine truth (separated and protected from the devil's lies) and human freedom of choice (separated and protected from the devil's best efforts to destroy free will through demonic interference, murder and intolerant internationalism).

Days 3 and 4: The second two Genesis days of re-creation are clearly paired in that they alone witness acts of both separation ***and*** filling: dry ground separated from water *and* the filling of the earth with vegetation (Day 3); the sun, moon and stars filling the heavens *and* separating the light from the darkness (Day 4). Note that separation precedes filling on day three, while filling precedes separation on day four, evidencing the progression (from separation to filling) that we are observing here. The second pair of days provides more essential groundwork for physical life through the provision of dry land and the specific division of time. This second pair of days *also* provides the first two installments of re-filling the empty world through the creation of vegetation and heavenly bodies. This physical provisioning on the one hand and filling up of the empty world on the other is respectively analogous to the further building up of essential spiritual groundwork on the one hand, and, on the other, to the enlistment of believers provided by the second two millennial days of the Jewish age.

Day #3 - Jewish age millennium #1: Just as the separating of dry land on day three of re-creation was necessary for human life, so the separation to God of a holy ***people*** during the third millennial day was essential for establishing an environment in which truth and spiritual growth could flourish. And just as the creation of vegetation on that third Genesis day was the first installment in the re-filling of the empty world, so the calling out of the seed of Abraham provides the first substantial and contiguous echelon of believers in the process of replacing the devil and his followers with a people after God's own heart, with the faith of Abraham, the "father of many nations" providing the pattern of salvation for all who would later believe (Rom.4:17; Gal.3:7-9).

Day #4 - Jewish age millennium #2: Just as the separation of light from darkness into distinct and regular phases on the fourth Genesis day was necessary to provide a regular flow and sequence for time (required by human life), so the separation to God of a holy ***nation*** during the fourth millennial day was essential for stabilizing the environment in which truth and spiritual growth could flourish and then be witnessed to the nations. And just as the heavens were filled with the celestial *lights* on the fourth Genesis day, so the establishment of Israel, a holy nation to

be a *light* to all the nations, was an essential step in the expansion of the family of God (Is.42:6; 43:21; 49:6; Acts 13:47).

Separation: The calling out by God of a specific family and its development into a unique, witnessing nation necessitated its separation, its sanctification from all that was profane in the pagan world in which it existed. The mark of God's promise to Abraham of a holy progeny, namely circumcision, served to distinguish Israel as unique in God's eyes, and was also, importantly, a symbolic testimony of belief in God and His promises (Rom.2:29). The Mosaic Law was also a means of separation, sanctification and demarcation, for it called on Israel to "be holy as I am holy" (Lev.11:44-45; 1Pet.1:16), and an essential underlying principle in all of its precepts was to separate the holy from the profane (Lev.10:10; 20:25-26). The Ten Commandments, the essence of the Law (cf. Deut.4:13),[26] speak to this same basic idea of separating the people of God from anything evil, sanctifying our conduct in life's most important areas:

Area #1: Holiness toward God (sanctifying and separating Him in what we think, do and say):

1. No other gods: guarding the sanctity of how we *think* about Him.
2. No idols: guarding the sanctity of how we *act* toward Him.
3. No misuse of His name: guarding the sanctity of how we *represent* Him in our *speech*.

Area #2: Holiness toward Life (sanctifying and separating ourselves from reliance on the world):

4. Keep the Sabbath: guarding the sanctity of the day of rest; trusting God, not ourselves, for provision in this life (cf. Ezek.20:12; 20:20). ***n.b.***: this is the only commandment not repeated in the New Testament. As the book of Hebrews emphatically assures us, specific day observance has been replaced with the reality of continual rest in and reliance on God (in the same way that animal sacrifice has been replaced by the reality of Christ's sacrifice: Heb.4:1-11; cf. Rom.14:5-8; Col.2:16-17). Since the cross, we are to rest in God at all times, not just on one particular day.

Area #3: Holiness toward Authority (sanctifying and separating ourselves from rebellion against divinely constituted authority):

5. Honoring Father and Mother: guarding the sanctity of our behavior toward legitimate authority, all those who under the charge of God function as stewards in His place towards us (parents being the first and prime example).

Area #4: Holiness toward Others (sanctifying and separating ourselves from infringement upon the right of others to use this life to seek God):

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[26] This can be refined even further, of course, by the law of love, as our Lord taught us (Matt.22:37-40): love for God and love for our neighbors – against such conduct there is no law (Gal.5:23).

6. No Murder: guarding the sanctity of life, the sine qua non for every human being to seek after God in the time God has given.

7. No Adultery: guarding the sanctity of the family, the basic support network required by the vast majority of people for normal function in life as a base for seeking God.

8. No Theft: guarding the sanctity of property, a necessary element for survival in the world that one may seek after God.

9. No False Witness: guarding the sanctity of freedom of the innocent before the law, an important requirement for being able to freely seek God.

10. No Covetousness: guarding the sanctity of freedom of action in general from threats of evil action and intent which impede, hinder and prevent the search for God.

Finally, the firm establishment of the nation Israel with the ascension of David, a clear type of Jesus Christ (Ps.110), provided the dark world with a shining example of the righteousness and accompanying blessings from God upon a nation that followed Him and His perfect divine standards, standards (expressed in the Law, the Old Testament and the sanctified nation) which regulated an environment for seeking God and witnessing to Him in the midst of a dark world in a way analogous to the regulating function of the heavenly bodies that produce the sequence of light necessary for human existence (cf. Ex.19:5-6; Lev.20:26):

> For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people who are His special property, separated from all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.
> Deuteronomy 7:6

> And He said, "It is too small a thing for you to be My servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob and to restore the sanctified ones of Israel. Therefore I have appointed you as a light for the nations, to be My [instrument of] salvation to the ends of the earth.
> Isaiah 49:6

Filling: With God's promise of progeny to Abraham and the birth of Isaac, the process of expansion of the family of God began in earnest, and the line of faith from Adam to Seth, a linear witness with little numerical expansion in the world (as the small remaining remnant of Noah and his seven family members at the time of the flood demonstrates: 1Pet.3:20), now develops into a significant expansion in breadth as Israel the vine begins to flourish under the now more favorable circumstances and to spread out in the world in a manner analogous to the filling of the earth with vegetation on the third Genesis day (Ps.80:8-16; Is.5:1-2; Jer.2:21; Ezek.17; Hos.10:1; cf. Jn.15:1). The pledge of circumcision (the mark of a people apart) and the giving of the Law (the perfect separation of right and wrong) served as prime elements of this sanctification. The formation (from this expanded family) of a holy nation was also key to God's plan of replacement, for as He says to Moses on the occasion of the golden calf rebellion, "I will make you into a great nation" (Ex.32:10). The protection of Israel in Egypt while her numbers grew, her testing under a harsh Pharaoh, her training in the wilderness, and the divinely directed and aided expulsion of the Canaanite tribes were all part and parcel of God's expansion of His family out of one man's seed. With the coming of the nation of Israel, a definite state within definable

geographic boundaries under the initial direction of David, a clear type of Christ, the process of filling and replacement continues for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars of the heavens, analogous to the filling of the heavens on the fourth Genesis day (Gen.15:5; 22:17; 26:4; Deut.1:10; 1Chron.27:23; Neh.9:23; Heb.11:12; cf. Gen.37:9; Rev.12:1), and a harbinger of the replacement of the fallen angelic "stars" with believing "stars" who choose for God (compare Rev.12:4 with Rev.12:1; being Abraham's spiritual seed, we are all stars in God's firmament: Rom.4:16).

As the second pair of Genesis days focused on the completion of an essential environment for physical life through the separation of dry ground from water and of light from the darkness (specifically, of concentrated, sequential light, not the general division of light from darkness accomplished on day one), so the second pair of millennial days (the Jewish age) finds God in His plan for human history sanctifying for Himself first a people, then a nation, to provide first an expanded family of God that would be holy and separate from the rest of the pagan world, then, as a nation, a safe haven for the worldwide testimony of God through the light of Israel.

And as the second pair of Genesis days focuses on the initial filling of the earth with vegetation and of the heavens with the sun, the moon and the stars, so the second pair of millennial days (the Jewish age) finds the first significant expansion of the family of God in human history (through Israel the vine, and the nation Israel, as numerous as the stars), and so, in terms of numbers, the beginning of the process of replacing those angelic creatures who have chosen to disassociate themselves from the family of God.

Days 5 and 6: The third pair of Genesis days of re-creation are clearly paired in that they alone witness acts of <u>filling</u> exclusively: the filling of the waters with aquatic life and the sky with birds (Day 5); the filling of the earth with terrestrial creatures (Day 6), culminating in the creation of Man (a type of Christ as rightful ruler of the earth, and here, symbolic of the completion of the replenishment of the family of God at the end of the sixth millennial day). The third pair of days completes the re-filling of the empty world through the creation of aquatic and terrestrial life. This completion of the process of re-filling the empty world is analogous to the completion of God's enlistment of believers during the fifth and sixth millennial days as replacements for the followers of Satan.

<u>Day #5 - Church age millennium #1</u>: Just as the creation of aquatic and bird life on that fifth Genesis day represented a quantum leap in the re-filling of the empty world, so the first Church age millennium witnessed a veritable explosion in the numbers of the family of God on earth as the gospel was taken in earnest to the gentiles for the first time. The fifth millennial day is characterized by the collection and distribution of the holy scriptures into one, complete Bible, and the emergence of an infra-structure necessary for studying and teaching it in its original languages: i.e., the creation of a Christian scholastic system, the development of the codex form (that is, the invention of the book, credited by many scholars to early Christians), the production of translations in many languages (resulting from the first two events), and the growth of literacy (making possible the reading of the Word of God by more than just the educated few). These

events had the effect of actually expanding the evangelical explosion of faith begun by the apostles in the first generation of the Church, *in spite* of the fact that many of the Spirit's miraculous gifts did not continue beyond that inaugural era (e.g., apostleship, tongues, prophecy, healing). The Spirit's ministry continued, however, as it does today, and thus in the groundswell of faith that follows in both of the Church age's millennial days we have historical proof that the powerful combination of the Spirit of God (given on the day of Pentecost) and the Word of God (made available to teachers through the establishment of education and wide availability of the Hebrew and Greek originals, and generally available to all Christians through translations) is more dynamic and effective than the most impressive miracles and the most exotic spiritual gifts.

Day #6 - Church age millennium #2: Just as the creation of terrestrial life on that sixth Genesis day completed the re-filling of the empty world (culminating in the creation of Man), so the sixth millennial day has seen the creation of the worldwide Church of Jesus Christ. With the establishment of the means for teachers to study God's Word in the proper way (education in the original languages of scripture, training in theology, and in the historical and cultural background of the Bible), and with the growing availability of the Bible in an abundance of languages, the gospel message has penetrated to nearly every clime and place. This process will continue until with the universal availability of the gospel and with the final enlistment of the last replacement members of the family of God the end will come with the return of Jesus Christ (Matt.24:14; Rev.10:1-7; 14:6-7).

Filling: With the proliferation of the gospel to the gentiles (through the agency of Israel), the third pair of millennial days completes the process of bringing in the promised and prophesied great expansion of the family of God, reaching its completion just prior to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. For that the gentiles would one day turn to the Lord in unprecedented number is a matter about which the Hebrew scriptures give clear prophetic indications (cf. Acts 9:15; 15:13-19; Rom.9:1 - 11:36; 15:15-16), a fact that the divinely inspired writers of the New Testament understood very well:

> As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you [Abraham], and you shall become the father of a multitude of nations.
> Genesis 17:4 (cf. Romans 4:17)

> And Abraham shall certainly become a great and powerful nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him.
> Genesis 18:18 (cf. Galatians 3:8)

> Rejoice, O gentiles, with His people.
> Deuteronomy 32:43 (cf. Romans 15:10)

> Therefore, O Lord, I shall praise You among the gentiles.
> Psalm 18:49 (cf. Romans 15:9)

All the nations (i.e., gentiles) which You have made will come before You and will worship You, O Lord, and they will give glory to your Name.
Psalm 86:9 (cf. Revelation 15:4)

Praise the Lord, all you gentiles. Laud Him all you peoples.
Psalm 117:1 (cf. Romans 15:11)

And on that day the Root of Jesse shall appear, even the One who will stand as a sign for the peoples. After Him shall the gentiles seek, and His resting place shall be glorious.
Isaiah 11:10 (cf. Romans 15:12)

Thus He shall sprinkle [with salvation] many gentile [nation]s. Kings will shut their mouths at [the sight of] Him. For those [gentiles] who had not been told shall see, and those [gentiles] who had not understood shall hear.
Isaiah 52:15 (cf. Romans 15:21)

For My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations (i.e., gentiles).
Isaiah 56:7b (cf. Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46)

"And I shall say to them who were not My people, 'You are My people', and they shall say, 'You are our God.'"
Hosea 2:23b (cf. Rom.9:25)

"On that day I shall stand David's fallen booth back up, and repair its holes and everything else which has been trampled down I shall [also] stand up. And I shall rebuild it as in days of old, so that the remnant of mankind and all the gentile [nation]s which are called by My name may seek Him, declares the Lord who is going to accomplish this."[27]

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[27] Given the quotation of this verse by James in Acts 15:16-17 (which differs slightly from the Septuagint) and the similar interpretation of the Septuagint, we can say with relative certainty that this is one of those rare instances where minor alterations in the received version of the Masoretic text have led to rather large discrepancies in meaning. The MT Hebrew has אדום למען יירשו את־שארית, which almost certainly stands for למען יירשו אתו שארית אדם (the text reflected in the translation above). The revised text (the Septuagint's original and the text as James understood it) is thus achieved without any loss of letters (a matter of critical importance to the Masoretes whose primary means of protecting the text was letter counting) by merely transposing the *waw* in "Edom" to the end of the earlier object marker, and by reading *daleth* instead of *yodh* as the first root letter of the verb. The confusion would be explained as follows: in the original text, the bottom portion of the *daleth*'s vertical stroke became obscured, yielding an unworkable "possess Him" (instead of "seek Him"). The scribe in question then transposed the *waw* (i.e., the "Him" marker) to the first workable place, in the middle of the word "man", which had the double effect of changing "man" to Edom (a suitable place to "be possessed"), and making the "remnant" now an object instead of a subject. For further discussion see Gleason L. Archer and G.C. Chirichigno, Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete

Amos 9:11-12 (cf. Acts 15:16-17)

Therefore, however large the first major installment of Christ's bride (i.e., the believing Israelites from Abraham to Christ), in numerical terms it cannot compare to the massive wave of those saved that has followed in the wake of the advent and sacrifice of Him who won that salvation. And it is certainly appropriate, moreover, for the Savior of us all, the One for whom and through whom the world and human history exist, the One who is the key to and cornerstone of history and through whom we have been given the inestimable privilege of becoming sons of the Living God, to have the flood tide of those human beings who would be saved (in replacement of those fallen angels who would not) follow in the train of His life and death of sacrifice on our behalf, and in the train of the resurrection that assures our hope of eternal life (cf. Jn.1:16; Gal.4:4):

> For it was fitting for [the Father] to make complete through sufferings Him on whose account all things exist and through whom all things exist, namely, the Captain of their salvation, even Him who has led many sons to glory, [our Lord Jesus Christ]. For the One who sanctifies and those who are sanctified belong to One [Father], and for this reason [Christ] is not ashamed to call them His brothers, as He says:
>
> > I will proclaim Your name to My brothers. In the midst of the assembly I shall praise you.
>
> and elsewhere,
>
> > I [too] shall put My confidence in Him (i.e., the Father).
>
> and elsewhere,
>
> > Behold, I and the children whom God has given Me.
>
> Hebrews 2:10-13

Thus the Church age completes what the Jewish age began and what the Gentile age delineated in principle, namely, the systematic, one for one replacement of rebellious fallen angels with faithful human beings in union with the God-Man, Jesus Christ. This can also be seen from the scriptural analogy of the holy building, established on the essential Cornerstone, Jesus Christ (Is.28:16; Matt.16:18 [Christ, not Peter, is the Rock[28]]; Rom.9:33; Eph.2:21; 1Pet.2:4-7):

Survey (Chicago 1983) 152-155, to whom I am indebted for the reading אתו in place of את.

[28] The Pauline epistles are sufficient evidence to prove that the use of Matthew 16:18 to support a claim of Peter as "the first pope" is an erroneous one. For the Pauline epistles by both their content and quantity clearly refute any notion of Petrine superiority. This alleged superiority Peter himself never claimed, deferring to Paul under the inspiration of the Spirit (2Pet.3:14-16). Our Lord Himself appointed Paul, not Peter, His apostle to the gentiles (Acts 9:15; cf. Gal.1:15 and 2:7), a role fulfilled admirably by the greatest of the apostles. As to the text of Matthew 16:18, by the phrase "upon ***this*** Rock", Christ is clearly referring to Himself, not Peter, a fact which can be discerned by His use of the demonstrative pronoun *houtos* as a self-reference, a usage paralleled in John 2:19, where the "this" in "destroy ***this*** temple, and in three days I will raise it up" clearly refers to Himself (specifically His body: Jn.2:21; compare "this

1) the Gentile age believers, a series of prototype men of righteousness, are analogous to the structure's blueprint (Heb.11:4-7).

2) the Jewish age believers, the line of Christ and the authors of the Holy Scriptures, are the structure's foundation (Eph.2:20).

3) the Church age believers, the great influx of the faithful, Jews and gentiles alike, are the "living stones" who comprise the edifice proper (1Cor.3:10-17; Eph.2:22; Heb.3:6; 1Pet.2:5).

All are fully and equally members of Christ's body, Christ's assembly, and God's house (1Tim.3:15; Heb.3:6), and when the last trumpet blows and our Lord returns, the entire "structure" will be united in resurrection to join Him in His triumphal return (1Cor.15:50-54; 1Thes.4:13-17; 1Jn.3:2; Rev.19:14). It is wrong to think, therefore, that the early gentiles, the Jews, and the Church are somehow different in any important way.[29] Together, we are all one body in Christ, for He has broken down the barrier that separated us:

> So remember that you were once gentiles in the flesh, called "un-circumcised" by those of the so-called circumcision which is fleshly and man-made. Remember that you were without Christ, alienated from the polity of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity between us, by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind]. For when He had come [1st advent], He proclaimed the gospel of peace to you who were far away [from God], and peace to those who were near. For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit. So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but you are fellow citizens and fellow members of the household of God, established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, in whom the entire structure is in the process of being riveted together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you too are being built up into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.
> Ephesians 2:11-21

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bread" in Jn.6:50-51; 6:58), and not to Herod's temple. For more on this point, see the Peter series, lesson #2.

[29] For example, 1st Corinthians 15:23 groups the entire "bride of Christ", from Adam until the 2nd Advent, into one whole with the phrase "them who are Christ's at His coming", thus making no distinction between pre-millennial believers.

(i.) **The Uniqueness of Israel:** It should not be overlooked that in the preceding passage, gentile believers of the present day are portrayed as having become *part* of the household of God along with Israel, rather than *replacing* Israel. This picture is consistent with every other passage in the New Testament where the issue is discussed. The gentiles are the wild olive branch that has been grafted into the natural olive tree Israel (Rom.11:13-24). The truth of the matter is that the Church is composed of Jews and gentiles, and that Jewish believers are the foundation for the holy building that God is erecting – not only in the Jewish age, but in the Church age as well:

1) All of the apostles of Christ were Jewish. And although the New Testament is written almost exclusively in Greek, the dominant gentile language of the time, all of the writers of the Bible, New Testament as well as Old Testament, were Jewish (cf. Deut.4:6-8; Ps.147:19-20; Is.59:21; Rom.3:1-2).[30]

2) Though many first century Jews rejected the gospel in the same way that their Judean countrymen had rejected their own Messiah, even a cursory reading of Acts and the Epistles demonstrates clearly that Jewish believers were both the original foundation of the Church and continued to play a huge role after the influx of the gentiles had begun.

3) Jewish believers not only exist but have played and continue to play a critical part in all generations of the Church (Rom.11:5). For the gospel is theirs by first priority, and ours (as gentiles) by the grace of God: "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (i.e., gentile)" (Rom.1:16; cf. Matt.10:5; 15:26; Acts 13:46; Rom. 2:9-10).

4) The hardness of the majority of the line of Israel during the Church age has been since Paul's day a heavy burden on the heart of their believing countrymen (Rom.9:3; 10:1). Jesus Himself mourned their lack of belief (Matt.23:37), and predicted these "times of the gentiles" which comprise the two millennial Church age days, when gentiles would flood into the Kingdom while Jewish belief would be reduced to a trickle (Lk.21:24; cf. the wedding banquet parable where those invited fail to come and others are brought in instead: Matt.22:1-14;

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[30] Small parts of both Old and New Testaments are in Aramaic. As concerns authorship of the Old Testament, though some parts are anonymous, these are all in Hebrew. The only "anonymous" New Testament book is Hebrews, and that epistle was most likely penned by the apostle Paul, who purposely omitted his name because of the rancor it would certainly have caused in Judea coming from the "apostle to the gentiles" (see the discussion below). Luke too was Jewish (as suspected by scholars from Origen to Diessmann, in Rom.16:21 he is undoubtedly the "Lucius" who is described as a Jewish "kinsman" of Paul; cf. Rom.16:7), though often deemed a gentile on the basis of Colossians 4:11 through a misunderstanding of the Greek word *paregoria* (παρηγορια: used only here in the NT), which has its usual rhetorical force and refers to the help rendered to Paul in his legal case by the aforementioned Jewish Christians: "These are my only fellow workers for the kingdom of heaven who are of the circumcision who *spoke on my behalf* (i.e., uttered helpful words in Paul's defense to the Roman authorities, not words of comfort to Paul – after all, with all of the Jewish Christians at Rome evident from the book of Romans, it would be beyond strange if these three were the only persons of Jewish origin who comforted Paul during his captivity)".

Lk.14:15-24).[31] In the case of the resistant majority, two issues always seem to lie at the core of this resistance which is in such stark contrast to the preeminence of Israel in matters of faith both in the past and in the prophesied future:[32]

a) refusal to accept a suffering Messiah (Matt.16:21-23; Jn.6:66; 1Cor.1:22-23; cf. the desire for displays of miraculous power instead of the cross: Matt.16:4; Mk.8:11-12; Lk.11:29), and consequently tripping over the Cornerstone, Jesus Christ, and the "offense" of His cross (Rom.9:32-33; 1Cor.1:22-23; Gal.5:11; Heb.11:26; 12:2; 13:13).

b) resentment over the inclusion of gentiles into the family of God, seed of Abraham by faith alone (Matt.27:18; Acts 13:43-45; 17:5; 22:21-22; Rom.10:2; cf. Lk.15:25-32), and, corollary to this, trusting in their own righteousness from the Law instead of faith (Rom.9:30-32; 10:3-4). This second issue is very much a post-cross problem. Jesus' earthly ministry was focused entirely upon Israel, not the gentiles, so that our Lord's contemporaries never had this excuse. They rejected Him before believing gentiles became an issue (Matt.7:6; 10:15).

This "hardness in part" of Israel is destined to continue "until the fulness of the gentiles comes in ..." (Rom.11:25), that is, until the calling out of the mass of gentile believers is complete, a process characterizing the Church age, and a process that will continue and be completed just prior to the 2nd Advent of Christ (cf. Rev.11:2; 12:17). At the moment of His return, everything will change for Israel, and the vision of Him returning in glory will bring about a profound and glorious change of heart (Zech.12:10-14; Rev.1:7; cf. Joel 2:30-32; Matt.24:30).

5) Despite this general "hardness", during the last phase of the Church age, when the Jewish age overlaps with it for its final seven years known as the Tribulation, Israel will once more take the lead in spectacular fashion. Moses and Elijah, the two witnesses of Revelation chapter eleven, will be resuscitated for a warning ministry of the greatest significance. These are the only two Jewish age believers of whom we know whose bodies were "taken" by God for precisely this purpose (Deut.34:6 compared with Jude 1:9; 2Kng.2:11-12). And the final world-wide witness of the Gospel (and God's warning of impending doom) will be carried to the four corners of the earth by 144,000 Jews (Rev.7:1-8; 14:1-5), thus partially fulfilling through Jewish hands the prophecy of universal evangelization (albeit as an indirect witness in the case of the

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[31] It is not a question of "necessary replacement" where Jews and gentiles are concerned. God's resources are infinite and the blood of Christ suffices for all. God wants all to be saved (1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9), and, as Paul so eloquently puts it, "if their failure has meant wealth [of salvation] for the world, and their loss has meant wealth [of salvation] for the gentiles, then how much more will their fulness (i.e., restoration) mean!" (Rom.11:12).

[32] No one would argue that Israel was or will be perfect as long as the sin nature resides in human flesh. Her failures during the Jewish age are well documented (the entire Exodus generation, for example). But the case is much like Churchill's characterization of democracy as the worst form of government except for all the others. Israel's performance, concentrating on her failures, is dismal, but far superior to any other nation or group in human history, inclusive of our own Christian era.

gentiles: Matt.24:14; Mk.13:10 compared to Rev.14:6-7, the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy).

6) The Millennial glories of Israel and her undisputed prominence when the Son of David returns to rule the earth as her King show clearly the pride of place that Abraham's seed enjoys in the plan and family of God (see section IV.2 below and also Part 1 of this series for Millennial details).

7) The preeminence of Israel can also be clearly seen from the description of the eternal state in Revelation chapters 21-22. The twelve gates of New Jerusalem (named for the historical *Jewish* capital) are named for Israel's twelve tribes (21:12), and the twelve foundations of its wall are named for the twelve (Jewish) apostles (21:14).[33]

[SEE CHART #2 AT BACK] = NewJerusalem.bmp

8) And the Messiah comes from Israel (Jn.4:22; cf. Ps.2:8). We should never forget that Christ is Jewish, ***the*** seed of Abraham, the Vine of the vine of Israel (Ps.80:8-16; Jn.15:1ff), the Branch of David's line (Is.4:2; Jer.23:5; 33:15; Zech.3:8; 6:12), and, prophetically, ***the*** Light of Israel, the Light of the world (Is.42:6; 49:6-7; 55:3-5 compared with Jn.1:5; 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:46).

Therefore while it is true that gentiles are Jesus' "other sheep" (Jn.10:16; 11:52; cf. Zech.12:11), that they have been made one with Jews in Christ (Gal.3:28; cf. our "brotherhood" in Matt.23:8), that the barrier between the two groups has been broken down through His cross (Eph.2:11-21), and that there will be many from the east and the west who will recline together with the Lamb at His victory banquet (Is.25:6; Matt.8:11; cf. Zech.2:11), Christians of gentile stock need to understand that we are Israel's spiritual seed (Rev.12:17), and sons of Abraham by faith (Rom.4:11 & 16). For we are a wild olive branch, and it is the root of Israel which bears us, not the other way around:

> So even if some of the branches have been broken off, and you, wild olive branch that you are, have been grafted into their place and have become a partaker of the rich root of the natural olive tree, don't boast over those branches. For if you boast, [remember] that you don't support the root, but the root supports you. Now someone may say "Branches have been broken off for me to be grafted in." True enough. They were broken off because of their unbelief, and you stand secure because of your faith. But don't think arrogant thoughts. Rather, have a care. For if God didn't spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either. So consider God's mercy and severity. For He is severe towards those who have fallen away, but merciful towards you– if, that is, you continue in that mercy. But if you don't, you too will be cut off. And if they don't continue in their unbelief, they will be grafted back in.
> Romans 11:17-23a

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[33] For specific information about the ordering of the gemstones in the chart displayed here, see part 4 of this series, section III.3.b.2.

(ii.) **The Church:** Given Israel's obvious uniqueness in the plan of God and her special relationship with Him (Deut.4:6-8; 4:34; 7:6; 1Kng.8:53; Zech.2:8), the calling out of the gentiles in such unprecedented numbers to be part of the family of God, though foreshadowed in prophecy (as documented above), came as quite a surprise – especially to the devil. We can assume that the seven thousand year outline of human history is well-known to him, as is the one for one replacement of him and his followers with believing humanity – a plan that should by rights be completed at the inception of the day of rest. Looking at his no doubt carefully tabulated scorecard before the day of Pentecost, it must have seemed impossible that the necessary replacement figure could possibly be met on schedule, given that in the two thirds of the available time already elapsed (i.e., the Gentile and Jewish ages), only a small fraction of the requisite number had believed and chosen for God. But just as the incarnation and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, God taking on true humanity and dying for Man, is God's great strategic surprise and victory of the ages, so the filling up of Christ's assembly of believers with a flood of gentiles during the last pair of millennial days is the great "mystery" that followed in the wake of the victorious cross. Just as the final pair of Genesis days sees the re-created earth filled in earnest with a plethora of inhabitants, so the final pair of historical millennial days fills up the family of God with believers, filling up the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, to its full and complete number – the fundamental purpose for the history of the world from the divine point of view.

The word and the concept of the Church must be seen in these terms. For the Church, properly understood, is ultimately composed not just of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ since the day of Pentecost, but of all believers throughout the first six millennial days (on the Millennium, see below). Stephen's mention of "the Church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38– NIV "assembly") is a clear indication that the universal assembly of believers antedates what is often thought of as "the Church". The English word "church" is derived from the Old English borrowing and transformation of the Greek adjective *kyriakon*, or, "belonging to the Lord", a clear attempt on the part of believers of an earlier time to distinguish between local assemblies of believers and *the* universal Church. In the Greek New Testament, the word translated "church" is an entirely different term: *ekklesia* (εκκλησια). Derived from the verb "to call" and the preposition "out of", this is the same word used for the assembly of enfranchised citizens in the classical Greek city-states. These notions of special selection and special privilege can also be seen in the adjectival form *eklektos*, cognate in form and meaning with the Latin word from which our English "elect" is derived. That the Church is thus properly the universal *assembly* of all who choose to faithfully follow Jesus Christ during the first six millennia of human history, a chosen few (by grace through faith, Eph.2:8-9), an elect group called by God out of the devil's world and into His own family, is a truth not only supported throughout the New Testament (cf. Matt.22:14; Rom.8:33; 1Cor.1:27; 1Thes.1:4; 1Pet.1:1; Rev.17:14), but consistent with the picture given by the Old Testament as well, where *ekklesia* is the standard translation for Israel's

assembly, the *qahal* (קהל).[34] Central to the idea of our "election" is the purpose for it. For we who are elect are so because of Him who is ***the*** elect, Jesus Christ, and it is for Him that we have been chosen out of the world, to share eternity together with ***the*** chosen One (compare Is.42:1 with 44:1; and cf. Lk.9:35; 23:35; 1Pet.2:4):

> Though the world hates you, know that it came to hate Me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own. Now because you are not [a part] of the world, but ***I chose you out*** of the world, for this reason the world hates you.
> John 15:18-19

> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing heaven has [to offer], seeing that even before the world was founded He ***chose us in Him*** to be sanctified and blameless before Him.
> Ephesians 1:3-4

This, then, is the true meaning of the Church, the select assembly of Christ, formed and chosen for Him from every age of human history to be His special unique possession.[35]

(iii.) **The Mystery of Christ:** In the Greek, a "mystery" (μυστεριον) is most commonly a cryptic rite, a ritual or arcane piece of information that only the initiates of certain cults (the Eleusian mysteries, for example) were permitted to know, a secret, in other words, that was generally hidden from all but the select few. The designation "mystery" perfectly reflects the particulars of both the nature of the Messiah's first advent (His incarnation and victory on the cross) and the nature of the calling out of the complement of His Church that followed in its wake (the flooding of gentile believers into the assembly of God in completely unanticipated numbers). As we have seen above, both the suffering of the Messiah and the great influx of gentiles into the family of God were predicted in scripture, but the particulars of the second Person of the Trinity taking on human existence and dying for our sins, and the particulars of the unprecedented surge of believing gentiles into His Church would have surprised even the Old

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[34] The word *qahal* stresses the idea of being assembled (and is translated "assembly" 95 times in the NASB version), while the other term for the gathered people of Israel, *'edah* (עדה), stresses the idea of having been called to the appointed place (translated "congregation" 126 times in the NASB version). For this latter term, the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, uses *synagoge*, our "synagogue" (compare Heb.10:25 "the synagogue-ing of yourselves together"). That the two Hebrew terms are synonyms is apparent for the Septuagint's treatment of Num.16:2-3 where both Hebrew terms are translated with *ekklesia*. The Greek word *ekklesia* was the natural term for translating both *qahal* and *'edah*, for both notions (i.e., of being called out already and of being in the process of being calling out) are resident in the word *ekklesia*.

[35] That is, with the exception of the millennial believers who form a special *additional* blessing for Christ (see below).

Testament prophets who alluded to them. All this was, in short, "a mystery" that has only come fully to light since the cross:

> The prophets [of old] diligently investigated and inquired about this salvation [destined to come to you gentiles (cf. v.1)], when they prophesied about the grace [that was to come] to you (i.e., the mass calling out of the gentiles). For they were eager to discover the precise time the Spirit of Christ within them was signifying as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow (i.e., the filling up of the Church). For it was revealed to them that in prophesying these things, they were not so much serving themselves as they were you – and these same things have now been proclaimed to you through those who gave you the gospel through the Holy Spirit, sent from heaven – even angels want to look into these things.
> 1st Peter 1:10-12

In this last verse we have the answer to a question so profound that the mystery of Christ and of the Church would remain effectively cloaked until His resurrection: If Israel, God's chosen people, the one people on the face of the earth after His own heart, did not accept Him en masse but only in part (cf. 1Kng.19:18; 1Cor.10:5; etc.), then how could it ever be that the gentiles, so much farther from God, would flood into His family in such unsurpassed volume? The answer, as verse twelve above makes clear, is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit's ministry is a rich and detailed subject that will be given full treatment in Part 5 of Bible Basics: Pneumatology. It must suffice to say here that the gift of the Holy Spirit, an event that could not take place before the victory and glorification of Christ (Jn.7:39; Phil.2:5-11; cf. Is.53:2; Jn.12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1-5), is one of the most momentous and significant features of the Church age. It is the ministry of the Spirit which was behind the expansion of evangelism from Pentecost forward (Acts 2:1-41; 5:12-14; 8:4-6; 8:29; 10:44-46), the broadening of evangelistic focus beyond the borders of Israel (Acts 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 20:28), and the massive influx of gentile believers into the family of God, which trend continues to this very day (Jn.3:5-8; 15:26-27; 16:5-11; Rom.8:2; 8:26-27; 1Cor.2:4; Gal.3:2-3; 5:16ff.; 1Jn.5:6-7). The line of the Church (the early gentiles) and the foundation of the Church (historical Israel) antedated the coming of the Savior, but it was appropriate for the erection of the great edifice of the Church to wait upon His victory and glorification, and it is the Spirit's work to bring to completion "the joy" that Christ had set His heart upon (Heb.12:2), namely, to complete within the present two millennial days the bride that completes Him, the Church. In the meantime, the comparable surge of Jewish belief (though in every generation there is at least a remnant of believing Jews: Rom.11:5), likewise anticipated in scripture (cf. Jer.31:33-34), has not been abrogated, but is merely pending, waiting for the ministries of preparation predicted to come in the last days, and ready to burst into full flood at the 2nd Advent of the Messiah:

> Brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant of ***this mystery*** (and so think more of yourselves than you should): hardness has come over a part of Israel until the time when the fullness of the gentiles has come in [to the family of God]. And it is in this [following] way that all Israel will be saved just as it is written:

> The Deliverer will come from Zion. He will expel ungodliness from Jacob. And this will be My covenant with them when I take away their sins.
> Romans 11:25-27

So the change of heart that brings a flood of Jews to faith in Christ (comparable to the flood of gentiles that characterizes the Church age) will be the Messiah's actual return. When they look upon "Him they have pierced" (Zech.12:10-14; Rev.1:7; cf. Joel 2:30-32; Matt.24:30), Israel will turn to Him in numbers that will proportionally outstrip the greatest gains of the Church age, as God purges and restores His chosen people, fulfilling all the promises He has made (Is.65:8-10; Jer.31:31-34; Ezek.20:33-38; 37:11-14; Hos.1:10-11; Mal.4:5-6; Matt.23:39; Rom.11:26). The fact that this much anticipated spiritual (and geographical) restoration of Israel would not take place immediately after the Messiah's (first) appearance, but would wait upon the completion of His Church through the calling out of innumerable gentiles is the "mystery" we have been experiencing since His triumph on the cross (and as a direct result of that victory: cf. Lk.2:32; 10:17-20):

> Then one of the elders said to me, "Don't cry. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, ***has conquered*** so as to [be able] to open the book and its seven seals."
> Revelation 5:5

> [God] has erased the charge against us along with its particulars (i.e., our sinful nature and personal sins) which opposed our [relationship with Him], and He removed it [as an obstacle] between us by nailing it to the cross. [For by means of the cross, God] has stripped [demon] rulers and authorities [of their power] and subjected them to public humiliation, ***having triumphed over them*** in [Christ].
> Colossians 2:14-15

> (1) For this reason (i.e., the building up of the Church into a holy temple: cf. 2:14-22), I, Paul, am Christ's prisoner on behalf of the gentiles. (2) And I assume that you have heard about this dispensation of God's grace given to me on your behalf (i.e., his mandate as an apostle to "carry Christ's name to the gentiles": Acts 9:15). (3) For it was through [God's] revelation that this ***mystery*** [of His calling out of the gentiles] was made known to me as I wrote you briefly before. (4) When you read these things you will be able to understand my spiritual insight into this ***mystery of Christ***, (5) which was not made known to mankind in previous generations as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. (6) [And the ***mystery*** is this]: that the gentiles are [now] fellow heirs, members of the same body, and equal partakers of the promise [of salvation to Israel] in Christ Jesus through the gospel, [the proclamation of His victory]. (7) It is of this gospel that I have been made a minister by the gift of God's grace given to me through His dynamic power. (8) To me, the least of all His holy ones, this gracious charge has been entrusted: to proclaim to the gentiles the unfathomable wealth that is Christ, (9) and to shed light on this ***mystery***[, the calling out of the gentiles] which is now being brought to pass (lit., "the dispensation" of it), though it was once hidden from the ages in God who created everything. (10) God [did this] so that [His] enigmatically

intricate wisdom might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms through the agency of the Church, (11) according to His plan for the ages (i.e., history) which He has implemented in [the person of] Christ Jesus our Lord.
Ephesians 3:1-11

Fully digested, the passage above teaches virtually the entire content of what we have been discussing on the subject of the mystery of the fifth and sixth millennial days, that is, the calling out of the gentiles to fill up the body of Christ, a prophecy not fully understood until its implementation, and therefore a *mystery*, the mystery of the Church (when viewed from the standpoint of the bride, the Church) and at the same time the mystery of Christ (when viewed from the standpoint of the bridegroom, Jesus Christ):

- verses 1-2: the object of Paul's ministry is to implement or dispense the mystery of the calling out of the gentiles, made known to Him by Christ.
- verse 3: the mystery, hidden in the past, was unveiled or revealed to him by divine agency (revelation is the counterpart of a mystery).
- verse 4: Jesus Christ ***is*** the mystery (because the mystery, seen from Christ's point of view, is the fulfillment of His body and His bride, the Church).
- verse 5: this mystery has now been fully revealed to the present day apostles and prophets (who needed to know about the calling out of the gentiles in order to properly minister to them).
- verse 6: Paul explains the mystery specifically from the point of view of the bride of Christ, namely, the new co-equality of the gentiles (and their subsequent thronging to God and Jesus Christ).
- verse 7-9: it is Paul's job to minister to this unforeseen expansion of the family of God through the gospel, the proclamation of Christ's victory, which has opened up the wealth of Him to the gentiles (cf. Rom.11:12; Gal.3:8), and in the process of bringing the mystery to light.
- verse 10: God's wisdom in filling up the assembly (the Church of Christ) is thus made known in heavenly places so that the devil and his angels are refuted and replaced.
- verse 11: Such has been God's purpose for and plan of human history all along: the construction of His replacement assembly, the Church, for the Person and through the Person of Jesus Christ.

(iv.) **The Bride:** The Church is Christ's "body, the fulness of Him who fills everything in every way" (Eph.1:23). The Bible is consistent and insistent upon drawing this analogy between Christ and His Church on the one hand, and man and wife on the other. At the end of a lengthy discussion in Ephesians chapter five of the wife's duties of obedience toward her husband and the husband's duties of love towards his wife, in the final verse (Eph.5:32), Paul admits that this is a great "mystery", but, rather unexpectedly, informs us that he has been speaking all along ***primarily*** about Christ and His Church, and only about the relationship between husband and wife by way of analogy. Thus the intimate relationship between the Savior and His saved is so close, so intense, that in itself it comprises both sides of the mystery we have so far been discussing, namely, the incarnation and sacrifice of Jesus for His Church, and the filling up of

that Church in such a marvelous and unanticipated way following His triumph. The analogy (between Christ and Church and man and wife) is, therefore, incredibly close, and can be seen from the very beginning of human history when God invented and sanctified the human institution of marriage. Indeed, it is not too strong a statement to say by way of inference that the whole idea of marriage (something unique to human beings: cf. Lk.20:35-36) was designed by God for mankind in order to teach us about the fundamental and essential tenet of His plan for all of human history: the incarnation and sacrifice of His Son (the loving husband) for the salvation of His Church (the faithful wife). For it is certainly fitting for the most fundamental and original human institution (marriage, consecrated in Eden before the fall: Gen.2:18-24) to mirror and reflect His most fundamental and central purpose for human history as He constructed it (the saving work of Jesus Christ and the calling out of His Church). Just as God has constructed human existence and human nature so that man needs woman and woman needs man (Gen.2:18), so He has established the span of human history as the type to this antitype, with the coming of Jesus as a true man and the preparation and calling out of His bride the cardinal events of these first six millennial days. Thus the whole purpose and reason for history (salvation for the Church through the Person and work of Christ) is reflected in what is, apart from mortality, arguably the dominant human concern in this life, namely, the marriage relationship. And in every marriage relationship we learn something about the greatest of all mysteries, the great love of Jesus Christ and the faithfulness of His Church. This is true notwithstanding the weakness of our flesh and the resultant imperfect nature of human relationships here in the devil's world. Do men fall short of the perfect standard of Christ's love? Of necessity, they all do (only the degree is in question), but we can learn about the wondrous nature of Christ's perfect love by comparison to the imperfections of every husband we meet: every human lapse reminds us of our divine Husband's perfection. Do women fall short of the perfect obedience and faithfulness that the perfect love of Jesus Christ is due from His Church? Every such instance is a reminder of the perfect responsiveness due to our heavenly Husband. Even the Church itself, that is, the part which remains in these bodies and in this world, is far from perfect in these respects. But it should be noted with care that, in respect to Christ, we as the Church, women *and* men, find ourselves in the woman's role, and are called upon to manifest the same submissive obedience and faithfulness toward God demonstrated by Christ during His sojourn on the earth, humbling Himself even to the point of total humiliation and death on the cross (Phil.2:5-8). And so we can learn from observation of any wife something not only about the relationship of the Church to Christ in general, but also (and very importantly) about *our* individual relationships to Christ. Do we observe a wife who is extraordinary in her duties toward her husband? We examine our own performance toward the One who bought us with His blood and should be challenged to be found likewise in His eyes. Do we observe a wife who in our estimation falls far short of the biblical standard? We would do well to consider our own performance toward Christ and His forgiveness and faithfulness in the face of our rebellious behavior. In short, by applying the analogy of marriage, we learn about who Christ is and what He would have from us, and we learn about our true priorities and His estimation of our behavior. This is indeed a great mystery, revealed now to the Church through Jesus' chosen apostles, the close consideration of which can help us to know our Master better and bring us closer to Him by making us better servants for Him. Just as the first Adam was espoused to Eve by God, flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone,

so the Church is the bride of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ (1Cor.15:45; cf. Rom.5:14), the perfect complement to Him, designed for Him, and destined to be one with Him forever (Matt.9:15; Matt.25:1ff.; Mk.2:19; Lk.5:34; Jn.3:29; 2Cor.11:2-3; Eph.1:22-23; 5:22-33; Rev.19:7-14; 21:2-4; 21:9ff.; 22:17; cf. Rom.7:1-6):

> "Let us rejoice and be jubilant, and let us give glory to [God], because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has prepared herself. And it has been given her to wear a pure, resplendent [gown] of the finest material (now this fine material represents the righteous acts of His holy ones [believers])." And [the angel] said to me, "Write this down: Happy are those who have been called to the wedding of the Lamb".
> Revelation 19:7-9

(v.) **The Revelation:** While we now know the mystery of Christ and of the Church, it has not been fully revealed what we shall be (1Jn.3:2), for the glories to come cannot be fully appreciated until experienced. Therefore the final and full experiential unveiling of the great mystery still lies in the future, awaiting the day when Christ shall be fully unveiled to the world at His return (Lk.17:30; 1Cor.1:7; 2Thes.1:7; 1Pet.1:7; 1:13; 4:13; Rev.1:1), and we, His bride, shall be unveiled with Him (Rom.8:19; cf. Rom.16:25-26; Gal.3:23; Eph.3:5-6).[36]

Thus God took Satan completely by surprise, and though He had given indications of future events, before the cross the great mystery was hidden – to His glory and the devil's discomfiture (cf. Prov.25:2; Matt.13:11; Mk.4:11; Lk.8:10). Christ, now human and divine, coming to earth to die for our sins *is* the mystery (Col.2:1-4; 1Tim.3:16), and the miraculous completion during this age of the Church, His body and His bride for whose sake He died, *is* the converse side of that mystery (Eph.1:23), for Christ and His Church are inseparable.

As the antitype to the fifth and sixth Genesis days, the Church age reflects the refilling of the newly refurbished earth. For as the previous four Genesis days had made life habitable for the creatures placed upon it by God during the fifth and sixth day, culminating in the creation of human kind in Adam and Eve, so the Church age has seen the arrival of the bountiful crop sprung from the seed of faith planted in the Gentile age and sprouting in the Jewish age. Noah alone (along with seven others) had kept this seed alive at the time of the great flood (1Pet.3:20), and the cadre of believers during the Jewish age constituted the growing remnant of that faith as the seed grew into a plant (Ps.80:8-16; Is.5:2; Jer.2:21; Ezek.17; Hos.10:1; cf. Jn.15:1). But during the Church age, as in the fifth and sixth Genesis days when the filling up of the world with creature life had occurred only after the favorable conditions created by the first four days – all the particulars necessary to physical life in the Genesis type – so in the antitype of human history the abundant "hundred fold" crop of salvation throughout the world which that plant is now producing, the filling up of the body of Christ, has been occurring only after the necessary conditions have been met (Lk.10:2): the advent and victory of Jesus Christ, *the* Seed of promise

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[36] The events of the Tribulation and 2nd Advent thus constitute the "apocalypse" (Greek αποκαλυψις) or "revelation" of Jesus Christ (Rev.1:1).

and *the* Branch of Israel. The Church age is truly the "fullness of times" for in it the Church is fulfilled (Eph.1:9-10). And just as the final pair of Genesis days culminates in the creation of the man and of the woman who fulfills him, so the final pair of historical days begins and ends with *the* Son of Man's two advents, and is taken up with the completion of the Bride for whom He died. The Church age is thus the mystery age, because it is in this age that the mystery of Christ and of His Church has been revealed and is being fulfilled. And now, at the end of these days, the unsearchable and perfect plan of God is on the point of being completely fulfilled, with the gap in the family of God created by the defection of the devil and his angels nearly filled up by Christ and His Church, a feat seemingly impossible before the cross and the resultant dissemination of the gospel to the gentiles, but at this late hour all but an accomplished fact, a mystery hidden and still hidden from all those whose eyes are blinded by the prince of this world, but an essential and blessed truth to all who have had the privilege of partaking of the riches of Jesus Christ:

> It is of this [Church] that I, [Paul], have become a minister according to God's mandate given to me for dispensing [the truth] to you, in order to bring completeness to God's plan (lit., "word", Gk. *logos*) that is, [to make known] ***the mystery*** hidden from ages and from generations [past], but now revealed to His holy ones (i.e., believers). To all such God desired to make known what wealth there is in this ***glorious mystery*** regarding the gentiles, for it is that Christ – your hope of glory (i.e., resurrection and reward) – is in you.
> Colossians 1:25-27

Day 7: As discussed in the previous section, the seventh Genesis day of rest and the Millennium, a time of universal peace and rest under the perfect rule of Jesus Christ (Is.9:6-7), are not only mirror images of each other, but also occur in identical order in the sequence of seven: the ultimate position, connoting a crowning, final perfection, and demonstrating in each case that what God has wrought (in both re-creation and replacement) is absolutely perfect, with nothing further to be done.[37] The important difference between the two is the same as we have observed all along, namely that in the case of the Genesis days, the type is the reconstruction and refilling of the earth, while the antitype in the case of the millennial days is the formation and completion of the Church (i.e., the reconstruction and refilling of the family of God, depleted by the Satanic rebellion). So while on the seventh Genesis day God ceased His work of re-creating the earth because it had been perfectly accomplished, in the analogous seventh millennial day, God will cease from His work in filling up the body of Christ's Church (because she will have been perfectly and completely filled up to the full replacement number, and resurrected to be with Christ forever). As in the beginning of human history in Eden, however, when the command "be fruitful and multiply" made clear that it was God's will for what He had made full to become even fuller (Gen.1:22; 1:28), so during the Millennium a new multitude of believers in

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[37] The number "seven" in the Bible frequently has this sense of completion and fulness (cf. Ps.12:6; 119:164; Prov.6:16; 9:1). For further references and discussion see J.J. Davis, Biblical Numerology (Grand Rapids 1968) 116ff.

addition to the Church will be called out to join the family of God, fulfilling once again the principle that where God is at work, loss (in this case that of the devil and his followers) is met not only by replacement, but by superabundance (Rom.5:20-21).

Just as the seventh Genesis day was, therefore, a demonstration that everything God had done in re-creating the earth "was good" (Gen.1:31), so the Millennium will demonstrate that only a world ruled by God (through His anointed Son), can be made "good". The earth of Genesis chapter one is gradually reclaimed from a condition of darkness and devastation (following God's judgment upon Satan's revolt: see Part 1 of the present study) by systematically ridding it of all factors unfavorable to human life and habitation, both by separation from elements hostile to life, and by replacement and filling with the elements necessary for life (as we have discussed in detail above). In an analogous fashion, the millennial earth under the perfect rule of Jesus Christ will restore "goodness" to the world again, not only by removing from it the most pernicious source of evil (the devil and his angels and the world system of evil they promote: Rev.20:1-3),[38] but also by the provision of all things necessary to bring about blessing and abundance under the perfect reign of Jesus Christ.[39] Only when Satan and his followers have been removed from interference in human life, and only when the world finds itself under the direct reign of the Son of God (Ps.2; Rev.19:6) will the earth be "good" again, and it is important for believers to understand that without these two key factors of the devil's removal and Christ's return, no paradise on earth is possible.[40]

In Genesis 2:1-2 we are told that when God had accomplished all He had set out to do in restoring the earth and replacing its creatures (following His prior judgment upon it), that He blessed the seventh day and "made it holy" (i.e., sanctified it). This special "setting apart" (the essential meaning of the Hebrew and Greek roots for holiness respectively: *qadash*, קדש *hagiazo*, □αγιαζω) of the seventh day serves to make it a special memorial to God's holiness, faithfulness, and goodness. In the face of the rebellion of so many of His angelic creatures, God did not compromise His holiness but acted in justice, ***judging*** the earth, and in so doing opened the door for His righteous mercy. In ***restoring*** light to the universe and habitability to the earth, God

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[38] See the previous study in this series: The Satanic Rebellion Part 4: Satan's World System: Past, Present and Future.

[39] See below and also Part 6 of the Coming Tribulation series for specific details about the blessings of the Millennium. The perfect reign of Christ is taught (among many other places) in Psalms 2, 45, 72, 110, Isaiah chapters 9, 11, 24, 40-42, 54, 60-66, and Zechariah chapters 6, 9, 13, 14. For the superabundant filling (with both blessings and believers) of the Kingdom of Heaven, see the parables of mustard seed (Matt.13:31-32; Mk.4:30-32; Lk.13:18-19; cf. also the tree in Dan.4) and the yeast (Matt.13:33; Lk.13:20-21), and cf. also Is.9:6-7 and Dan.2:35.

[40] The essential evil of the present cosmos as ruled by Satan, and the utter futility of attempting to reform it through human energies is addressed in detail in Part 4 of the present study.

demonstrated His faithfulness in the face of creature unfaithfulness, bringing about the requisite conditions for life on earth again, thus restoring wholeness (biblical "peace"). In ***replacing*** earth's plant and animal life (and in creating the conditions for replacing what was missing in the family of God, either through the [potential] reconciliation of the fallen angels or their replacement with mankind), God rendered the pre-fall cosmos "good", thus demonstrating His great and unique love for His creation, and the boundless and incomprehensible nature of His grace.

In a similar fashion, the Millennium will see, through the perfect rule of the Son of God, the reclaiming of God's direct control over the earth and Man's as well in the person of Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, reclaiming that which was lost by the first Adam. Though sin will not disappear until the present heavens and earth are destroyed by fire and replaced with the new heavens and earth (Is.65:17; 66:22; 2Pet.3:7; 3:10-13; Rev.21:1), the Millennium will be a period that begins and ends with winnowing and purification (Ezek.20:34-38; Zech.13:8-9; Matt.3:10-12; 25:31-46; Lk.3:9-17; 2Thes.1:7-8). Like the seventh Genesis day, it will be a time sanctified (i.e., made holy) by the Lord, indicating a world of true justice and righteousness enforced by the Son of God Himself (Ps.2; Rev.19:11; cf. 2Pet.3:13). According to Deuteronomy 5:15, a major purpose of the Sabbath day was for Israel to remember their deliverance from Egypt by God's mighty power. It was to be a day of rest so that even those without recourse, servants and animals, might have some repose (Deut.5:14). Just so, the Millennium is a time to remember God's deliverance of the world from the devil's grasp, so vividly and horribly experienced in the Great Tribulation which immediately precedes it (Rev.20:1-3), a time to enjoy the rest and blessing of the Christ's perfect rule, and to celebrate the great deliverance God has wrought from the worst period of human history:

> The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me [the Messiah], for the Lord has anointed Me. He has sent Me to proclaim victory on behalf of the afflicted, to bind up the wounds of the broken hearted, to announce liberation for the captives and freedom for the prisoners, to announce the year of the Lord's favor [the Millennium], and a day of vengeance for our God [the 2nd Advent], to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve for Zion, to anoint them with joy as with a crown in place of their grief, and to dress them in garments of praise in place of their faint spirits.
> Isaiah 61:1-3a

A major part of this Millennial restoration of "good" in an environment of superabundance is the fulfillment of all of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, David and the Jewish nation as a whole. The Millennium will see the complete fulfillment of all the Old Testament covenants, with Jews from everywhere on earth brought back to the land of Israel, established with her promised borders by the Son of David, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will preside over the entire world from His capital, Jerusalem (see section IV.2 below and Part 1 of this series for references).

The Church (believers from all three prior dual millennial day sets or ages) will return with Christ, being resurrected just prior to His 2nd Advent (1Cor.15:51-52; 1Thes.4:13-18).[41] This is the "wedding of the Lamb" of Revelation 19:7. The Church is thus complete at the return of Christ, but there are many who will turn to Him after He returns with His bride. These are those "invited to the wedding *supper* of the Lamb" (Rev.19:9; i.e., those implied in 1Cor.15:24 vs. the Church of 1Cor.15:23). First and foremost, the new wave of Millennial believers will be Jews, who, when confronted with the reality of the returning Messiah, will turn to God (Jer.31:31-34; Joel 2:30-32; Zech.12:10; Rom.11:12; Rev.1:7). Throughout the course of the Millennium, however, many more will believe – gentiles as well as Jews – as the human race, lately decimated by the events of the Tribulation, expands geometrically in the paradise conditions of Christ's world-wide Kingdom (Is.9:6-7; 49:19-21; 54:1-3; Dan.2:35; Zech.2:4; 10:10; Matt.13:31-33; Mk.4:30-32; Lk.13:18-21). These Jews and gentiles who will turn to the Lord after His glorious return are a complement above and beyond the fulness which is the Church at Christ's return. That is, they are given to Christ over and above the number needed to replace the devil and his followers on a strictly one for one basis (for that is accomplished by the resurrection of the Church at the 2nd Advent). These post 2nd Advent believers, "invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb" (the uniting of Christ and His Church and its celebration throughout the memorial time of the Millennium: Rev.19:9), will share and enjoy the world-wide blessing and bounty of Christ's Millennial reign. Thus the believers of the Millennium constitute an *additional* blessing for Christ, a "double portion" blessing that is traditionally the right of the first born (Deut.21:15-17; cf. Gen.48:22; 1Sam.1:5; 2Kng.2:9; Job 42:10; Is.61:7; Zech.9:12; 1Tim.5:17), and so very appropriate for the "First Born of all creation" (Col.1:15; cf. Ps.89:27; Col.1:18; Heb.1:6), so that He might truly be "the First Born among many brethren" (Rom.8:29).[42]

Summary: the <u>Seven Genesis Days</u> compared with the <u>Seven Millennial Days</u>:

	Genesis Days	**Millennial Days**
1.	<u>separated</u>: light from darkness (general)	<u>separated</u>: the truth from the lie
2.	<u>separated</u>: waters from waters yielding air	<u>separated</u>: freedom from the devil's coercion
3.	<u>separated</u>: the dry land from water	<u>separated</u>: a holy people from a pagan world

[41] For the resurrection, see the Peter series #20 and #27.

[42] Given the dramatic and unprecedented repopulation of the earth during the Millennium (cf. Rev.20:8b), and given that the Church per se of the first resurrection (cf. Rev.20:5-6) is, as we have sought to demonstrate in this study and series, a one for one replacements of the devil's followers, it is likely that the Millennial echelon of believers, being Christ's double portion, will match the Church precisely in number (a thousand years of perfect environment being more than ample time from the standpoint of population growth). In this case, since the devil's angels are, as we have seen, one third of the original elect total, adding an additional complement to the Church per se will have the result that at the commencement of the eternal state, the number of elect angels will be exactly equaled by the number of saved and resurrected human beings (one third plus one third equaling the two thirds number of the holy angels).

	filled: vegetation	filled: Israel the vine
4.	filled: regulating heavenly bodies	filled: Israel the standard-setting nation
	separated: light from darkness (specific)	separated: right from wrong
5.	filled: fish and birds	filled: the Church's evangelistic base
6.	filled: terrestrial animals and livestock	filled: the Church's evangelistic expansion
	completion: the First Adam by Eve	completion: the Last Adam by the Church
7.	rest: blessing on the re-created world	rest: blessing on the re-claimed world

As illustrated in the chart above, both sets of days are subdivided into three discrete pairs: 1-2; 3-4; 5-6 (with the exception in each instance of the seventh day). Whether taken in tandem or taken individually, both the first six Genesis days and the first six millennial days demonstrate an essential progression of separation (the good from the bad, physically and spiritually respectively) and of filling (to replenish the material world and the family of God respectively) leading toward an ultimate goal: the habitability of the earth for mankind in the case of the Genesis days, and the filling up of the full number of family of God for the Son of Man at His return in the case of the millennial days. The seventh day in each case is a crowning glory, a memorial time of rest and blessing with paradise conditions under the rule of the First Adam and the Last Adam respectively. Thus the seven re-creative days of Genesis serve as a model for God's plan for human history, wherein the people of God are progressively separated from the devil's world and enter God's lists in progressively mounting numbers through faith in the Son of God, Jesus Christ as replacements for Satan and his followers (Ex.32:32-33; Ps.69:28; Dan.12:1; Phil.4:3; Rev.3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12-15; 21:27).

God had originally created the entire universe in the blink of an eye (Gen.1:1; see Part 2 of the current series). Therefore His utilization of six literal days merely to restore the earth to habitability (with a seventh memorial day of rest to follow), was certainly not the result of any need on His part for what in comparative terms was a much longer period of time (He is omnipotent, after all, and not subject to space and time).[43] We must conclude then that God's re-creation of earth over seven days was neither accidental nor without significance. In fact, as we have just sought to demonstrate above, the seven Genesis days have great symbolic significance, for they provide a blueprint of God's plan for human history in the planting (Gentile age), growing (Jewish age) and harvesting (Church age) of the Church for Jesus Christ (with a second, memorial bumper crop to follow in the Millennium). Just as was the case in His provision of marriage (with that institution providing mankind with a constant synchronic analogy for the overarching purpose of history: the marriage of Christ and the Church), so through His re-creation of the earth in seven days and the resultant weekly seven day pattern governing our lives God has given us a continual diachronic memorial for remembering and considering His essential objective for human history: the calling out of the Church for Christ. Every day and every week – the essential units of time by which we organize our lives – offers us a reminder of God's plan for the ages, perfect and inevitable. For every day and every week serve as divinely constructed

[43] See Part 1 of Bible Basics: Theology: the Study of God.

analogies to God's design of human history in the progressive and systematic formation of the Church, centered and focused upon the Person and the work of Jesus Christ.

c. The Jewish Ceremonial Calendar: The third proof of God's seven millennial day construction of human history is to be found in the pattern of festivals He ordained for Israel in the Mosaic Law. The Jewish ceremonial calendar was, after all, not produced by human agency, but was instead given to Israel by God Himself through His intermediary Moses (Gal.3:19). It is not surprising, therefore, that, just as the seven Genesis days give us God's blueprint for human history as a whole, so the yearly system of dates and festivals ordained by the Mosaic Law likewise lays out the pattern for God's historical agenda. The Jewish ceremonial calendar (to be distinguished from Israel's civil calendar which, commencing in the seventh month, was roughly equivalent to our fiscal year) began with the month of Abib (or Nissan), March/April in our calendar. This ceremonial calendar, by means not only of its festivals, but also through the significant gaps it contains between the festivals, mirrors the overall progression of God's plan for human history. For the Jewish calendar is essentially composed of four "gaps" (periods of no festivals) separated by three festival clusters, wherein both the festivals *and* the gaps give specific information about God's grand design in Jesus Christ and the calling out of His Church:[44]

[SEE CHART #3 AT BACK] = festivals.bmp

I. Gap #1: The Age of the Gentiles: 14 days: from Abib 1 through Abib 14. It is significant that the Jewish religious year does not begin on the day of Passover, but that Passover is held two weeks into the first month. As is the case in all four gaps, we have a fourteen day period symbolizing the two millennial days of the age it represents. In all of these cases, the basic period of the week is, in a yearly context, performing a similar symbolic function to that of the day in a weekly context (cf. Is.63:4 where "day" and "year" refer to the same millennial period). That is to say, in this first fourteen day period representing the Age of the Gentiles each of the two weeks stands for one of that period's two millennia, just as in the case of the Genesis week, each day represents one thousand years.

1) Passover (Ex.12:1-14; Lev.23:5; Num.9:1-14; 28:16; Deut.16:1-7): Preceding each of the next three gaps, a festival (or festival-cluster) occurs that both inaugurates and at the same time represents the age symbolized by the gap which follows. No festival had preceded the initial two weeks representing the age of the Gentiles because that age was, as we have seen, concerned with preserving the line of faith, and not with the calling out of sufficient numbers to fill up the Body of Christ. However, the three ages which follow that of the Gentiles all produce significant numerical contributions to the growing family of God, so that the calendar given to Moses precedes the gaps in the year which represent them with appropriately symbolic inaugural

[44] For the symbolism of the festivals, see especially M. Unger in Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, v.2, 173-177. The NIV Study Bible, ed. Kenneth Barker, pp.176-177, contains a very helpful chart delineating essential information on the festivals.

festivals. Thus Passover represents the Jewish Age in its own right, but also precedes the gap in the calendar which symbolizes the Jewish Age. The essential reason for this double symbolism (treated in more detail below) is that while the festival-clusters provide an *overall* analogy for the ages they represent, the gaps 1) specifically relate the millennial day symbolism of the Genesis week to that of the religious year (through the use in each gap of two sets of seven days, each standing for one millennial day), and 2) *also* and importantly give the proportion of believers entering the family of God in each of the three ages of filling (through the use in each of the last three gaps of additional twelve day sets: see below). It is both significant and appropriate that the festival cluster representing the Age of Israel should be the one which also symbolizes the sacrifice of the Messiah. Technically, the festival of Unleavened Bread (treated next) symbolizes the Age of Israel. Passover, the inaugural feast of the Jewish ceremonial calendar, is well-known as a festival richly symbolic of the death our Savior. The blood of the sacrifice is symbolic of the blood of Christ, the Passover lamb, a first-born with no broken bones and with no spot or blemish, is symbolic of the perfect first-born Lamb of God (Ps.34:20; Jn.1:36; 19:36; 1Pet.1:19; Rev.5:6); the sprinkling of blood on the door posts in the form of a cross is symbolic of the death He died for us, while the deliverance from the angel of death through this mark of blood symbolizes our deliverance from death to life by His sacrifice (1Cor.5:7).

It is, in fact, difficult to imagine a feast more closely symbolic of the death of Jesus Christ on behalf of His people than Passover is. This is especially true when we add to the above discussion the fact that Passover, symbolic of the crucifixion and occurring on Friday, is followed on Sunday by the First-fruits, a feast illustrating the resurrection of our Lord as the first-fruits of all whom God will resurrect (see below). The symbolism of the Passover, therefore, carries over into the seven day festival of Unleavened Bread which began on the following day (with First-fruits occurring on its second day, Abib 16). And like the feast of Unleavened Bread (which is representative of the age of Israel as a whole), Passover too has important symbolism for the Jewish Age. For it not only illustrates the death of the Messiah for the world, but also provides a clear picture of the life of faith in response to that precious sacrifice. Occurring as it does on the day before the week long festival which represents the Jewish Age, Passover demonstrates that Israel is founded upon the expectation, hope and faith of the coming Messiah and His sacrifice. Secondly, the manner in which the Passover was to be celebrated speaks of the life of faith responding to God's offer of salvation through this sacrifice. The sacrificed lamb is eaten, a picture of belief (Jn.6:35-58), and eaten completely (an act of unreserved faith). It is eaten along with bitter herbs, with unleavened bread, and in all haste, standing up with readiness to depart. These elements speak, it is true, of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt,[45] but Israel's temporal experience is symbolic of the spiritual experience of all people before or since who have turned to God for salvation in Jesus Christ: Egypt with her slavery and harsh rule symbolizes the devil's world, while the bitter herbs bespeak the unsatisfying nature of all that the world offers. The hastily baked bread and posture of readiness tell of the need to embrace God's gift fully and hastily – the way of evil and death must be abandoned completely, forthrightly and without hesitation.

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[45] See M.F. Unger's important discussion of this topic in his Bible Dictionary, p.362.

2) Unleavened Bread (Ex.12:15-20; 13:3-10; 23:15; 34:18; Lev.23:6-8; Num.28:17-25; Deut.16:3-8; 16:16): The feast of Unleavened Bread is the first of the three seven day festivals and represents the Age of Israel in the same way that the feast of Weeks and Tabernacles represent respectively the Church Age and the Millennium. The ceremonial week as a basic, symbolic unit is a feature of divine revelation we have noted above in our discussion of the Genesis week and Daniel's seventy weeks of years (Dan.9:20-27), and can also be seen in the observation of the sabbatical year (Ex.23:10-11; Lev.25:1-7), the seventh year in the series of seven weeks of years to be followed by the Year of Jubilee (Lev.25:8-55; 27:17-24; Num.36:4). In the feast of Unleavened bread, the first of the three seven day festivals that symbolize the age represented by each of the gaps which follow, the dominant image is the bread made without leaven, a symbol with two main foci: 1) leaven generally represents contamination and sin (Matt.16:6-12; Mk.8:15; Lk.12:1; 1Cor.5:6-9; Gal.5:9), so that bread without leaven is an effective picture of the sinless Messiah. Eating this bread for the entire seven day period is therefore a call for Israel to believe in Him at all times and remain separate from the contamination of evil, to, as God says, "be Holy as I am Holy" (Lev.11:44-45; 1Pet.1:16); 2) bread without leaven is also symbolic of hardship and oppression (i.e., "the bread of affliction" of Deut.16:3), so that eating this bread throughout the festival calls attention to the fact that a life of following God, as Israel is called to perform throughout her history, is no easy matter though an absolutely necessary choice: in this world we have tribulation if we follow God, but, through the Messiah, God has overcome the world (Jn.16:33).

3) First-fruits (Lev.23:9-14): The feast of First-fruits takes place in the middle of the feast of Unleavened Bread and the timing is of critical importance, for it clearly represents the day of the Messiah's resurrection, taking place on the Sunday after the Friday Passover, just as in the case of our Lord's resurrection. It should therefore not be surprising to learn that the symbolism of the feast of First-fruits appropriately betokens Christ's resurrection. Twice in 1st Corinthians, Paul calls Jesus "our First-fruits", both times in the sense of His priority in the bodily resurrection which precedes the resurrection of all who will believe in Him (1Cor.15:20 and 15:23). The waving of the barley sheaf, the main symbolic event of the festival, is clearly a type of Christ in resurrection, the first-fruits of the abundant harvest to come at His return (1Cor.15:35-44).[46]

II. Gap #2: The Age of Israel: 14 days plus 36 days (12 x 3). The second gap, representing the Jewish age, can be variously constructed. It runs either from Abib 16 (the day of the festival of First-fruits symbolizing the resurrection of Christ) to the feast of Weeks on Sivan 6-7 (cf. Lev.23:11:b with 23:15-16), or from the end the festival of Unleavened Bread to the same terminus with the addition of a five day period of intercalation (discussed immediately below). In either case, the gap is 50 days long, a number from which the New Testament designation for the feast marking its termination is derived: i.e., "Pentecost", coming from the Greek word for fifty. Given that the Jewish religious calendar is based on the approximate lunar cycle of 30 day months, roughly five additional days per year would be necessary to keep it in harmony with the

[46] See L.S. Chafer's Systematic Theology, v.7, pp.153-154.

solar calendar. We have no record of original Mosaic practice on this score (from the Bible or elsewhere), but regardless of later custom, the facts are that 1) this gap we are considering was felt to be fifty days (witness the name Pentecost for the feast which follows); 2) a five day intercalation every year and at the beginning of the year would have been more practical (especially in an entirely agricultural economy) than an entire month being added every six or seven years (which would put the calendar seriously out of line with the seasons);[47] and 3) the five day overlap of remaining days in the festival of Unleavened Bread after First-fruits is exactly the overall deficit, which, when matched with an additional intercalated five day period, results in the precise number of days necessary both for removing this overlap (see below) and for filling up the solar year with the requisite number of days. The close relationship between the festival of First-fruits and the feast of Weeks (the full harvest festival coming fifty days later which also marks the close of the Jewish age gap) also argues for this solution. For both of these festivals are harvest feasts, with First-fruits representing the resurrection of Christ, while the feast of Weeks symbolizes the calling out (or "harvesting") of His Church, so that First-fruits should by rights be the beginning just as Weeks is the end of the time period representing the Jewish Age (an eventuality accomplished only by understanding a five day intercalary period). The fifty day period which separates these two festivals is also significant in one additional way. The interval is calculated as one day plus seven weeks (Lev.23:15-16; Deut.16:9)[48], indicating that to the perfect number of seven sevens, an additional single period is to be added. That final period, Daniel's 70th week (Dan.9:25-27), is the Tribulation, a seven year period at the end of the Church Age (and shared in common with the Church Age) which will be treated below.

4) Weeks or Pentecost (Ex.23:16; 34:22; Lev.23:15-21; Num.28:26-31; Deut.16:9-12; 16:16): This main harvest festival (the bringing in of the wheat crop) symbolizes the Church Age, the bountiful harvesting of an unprecedented number of believers for the filling up of Christ's Church. Harvest and crop metaphors in this connection are plentiful in scripture. Our Lord's parables of the growing seed (Mk.4:26-29), of the sower (Matt.13; Mk.4; Lk.8), and of the wheat and the tares (Matt.13:24-30 & 37-43) all make use of the same essential analogy: those who believe and grow in Him are God's crop (cf. Matt.7:16-20; Jn.4:35-38; 1Cor.3:6-8; 15:35-44; Rev.14:14-16).[49] The bounty of believers during the Church age is in numerical terms the richest so far:

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[47] The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, in loc. *Festivals*, suggests on the basis of 2nd Chronicles chapter thirty that intercalation may well have taken place after the month Abib/Nissan (which would place it in the second gap as suggested).

[48] See Unger, Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament, v.2, p.173f.

[49] In the last case mentioned, that of the wheat and the tares, the metaphor is the same (crops represent believers), though the parable itself relates to believers in Christ's millennial Kingdom, not to those of the Church Age.

> Haven't you been saying, 'There are still four months[50] until the harvest comes.'? Behold, I tell you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already ripe for harvesting. He who reaps is receiving a reward and gathering grain for eternal life (i.e., bringing those who respond into God's family), so that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together.
> John 4:35-36 (cf. Matthew 9:37-38; Luke 10:2)

Though in terms of sheer numbers, gentiles predominate in the Church Age, Jews, as we have seen, are the pillars of the Church and included as the "remnant according to the election of grace" in every generation of the present era (Rom.11:5). This duality of Jew and gentile is symbolized in the ritual of the feast of weeks by the presentation of the two bulls (Num.28:27), the two rams (Lev.23:18), the two lambs (Lev.23:19) and the two loaves (Lev.23:17), this last element being unique to the feast of Weeks.

III. Gap #3: The Church Age: 14 days plus 108 days (12 x 9). This period from the end of the feast of Weeks until the commencement of the feast of Booths (or Tabernacles) represents the Age of the Church, a sizeable hiatus in the cycle of festivals signifying an interruption in the Jewish Age (cf. Matt.21:33-44; 22:1-14; Mk.13:10; Lk.20:16; Eph.2:14-22; the concluding of the Jewish Age with the seven year Tribulation is discussed below). If the feast of Weeks were to start on Sivan 7, then the tally of days from the end of the feast of Weeks until the fifteenth day of the month of Tishri when the feast of Booths began is only apparently 121 days, short of the 122 days expected for Gap #3. But through inclusive counting (necessary because of the injunction to calculate the time of the festival of Weeks from the morning after the first Sabbath [i.e., instead of from evening to evening in standard Jewish reckoning: Lev.23:11, 15, 16 - Hebrew, not NIV]), an additional day is gained, a point illustrated by the fact that the "morning after" stipulation in Leviticus has resulted in Weeks historically being celebrated on both the 7th of Sivan or the 6th of Sivan. The occurrence of the feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement within this gap is significant, indicating that the tribulational period they represent is a common era, shared jointly by the ages of Israel and the Church (an issue addressed below).

5) Trumpets (*Rosh Hashanah*) (Lev.23:23-25; Num.29:1-6): Known popularly as Rosh Hashanah (lit., "beginning of the year"), the feast of Trumpets takes place on the first day of the seventh month according to the religious calendar and is only "New Year's Day" according to the civil calendar (which, as was mentioned above, ran on a six month offset to the religious calendar in a manner comparable to our fiscal year). The trumpet blasts which constitute the dominant imagery of this festival are symbolic of warning. This symbolism is easily seen from numerous scriptural parallels where sounding the trumpet acts as the main alarm in moments of crisis (e.g., Num.10:1-9; Josh.6:20; Jer.4:19-21; 6:1; Hos.5:8-9; Amos 3:6; Zeph.1:15-17; 1Cor.14:8). The seven warning trumpets of Revelation 8:6-11:19, moreover, are more than an illustrative parallel of this festival's primary symbol. They are, in fact, the fulfillment of that prophetic symbol, for

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[50] The four months symbolize the Church Age (two millennia) and the double portion Millennium (see below).

they represent God's warning judgments upon the world that introduce the first phase of the seven year Tribulation. Thus the feast of Trumpets represents and marks the beginning of the tribulational period of seven years, and the blasts sounded thereon represent God's warning to the world of impending judgment.[51]

6) The Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) (Lev.16:1-34; 23:26-32; Num.29:7-11): Occurring on the tenth day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement is symbolic of the beginning of the second half of the tribulational period, generally referred to as "The Great Tribulation" (Dan.12:1; Matt.24:21; Mk.13:19; Rev.7:14). That the sacrificial rituals of the Day of Atonement represent Christ's efficacious sacrifice on our behalf and, specifically, of His ascension to heaven and propitiation by His blood of the Father's wrath toward our sins is well known from the detailed exposition of these matters in the New Testament, the book of s in particular (Heb.9:1-28; cf. Matt.27:51; Heb.4:14; 6:19-20; Rev.11:19). This is important from the standpoint of the festival's eschatological symbolism. Coming as it does a mere three and one half days before the termination of the gap in the Jewish calendar which represents the Age of the Church, the Day of Atonement puts its Jewish participants into the attitude of anticipation of God's great judgment to come. From a purely historical point of view, Christ's ascension and God the Father's acceptance of His sacrifice occurred at the point where the Jewish Age was interrupted and the Church Age began. Symbolically, however, its place in the calendar moves Israel forward to the threshold of Christ's return to judge the earth. This will be a time of great soul-searching for Israel occasioned most spectacularly by the ministries of Moses and Elijah on the one hand (Mal.4:5-6; Matt.11:12-14; 17:3-12; Rev.11:3-13), and the 144,000 Jewish martyrs on the other (Rev.7:1-8; 14:1-5; cf. Matt.10:5-42). It will culminate at the 2nd Advent with a wholesale repentance on the part of non-believing Jews world-wide (Zech.12:10-14; Rev.1:7; cf. Joel 2:30-32; Matt.24:30).[52] In this context, the "afflicting of heart" commanded of all Israel on this day is most appropriate (Lev.23:27, 29 & 32; Num.29:7, all clearest in KJV), and God's resultant cleansing fittingly symbolic of God's forgiveness of Israel at Christ's return (compare Lev.16:30 with Is.4:2-6; 59:20-21; Jer.31:34; 50:20; Ezek.20:33-38; 36:24-38; Joel 2:30-32; Zech.12:10-3:1; Mal.3:2-4; Rom.11:26). Also highly significant is the timing of the festival, ten days after the feast of Trumpets, and three and one half days before the feast of Booths (Lev.23:32; for the reckoning, see point number four above).

The eight days which follow the feast of Trumpets and precede the Day of Atonement represent the first half of the tribulational period wherein God will, through a series of seven trumpet judgments, warn the inhabitants of earth to repent or face His wrath (Rev.8:6-11:19). Each

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[51] The eschatological significance of this festival was not lost on contemporary Jews. The Mishnah remarks that on this day the world is judged when "all the inhabitants of the world pass before Him, like flocks of sheep" (Rosh-hashanah, 1.2).

[52] The ministries of Moses and Elijah and the 144,000 Jewish witnesses will have already produced a significant revival among Jews during the first half of the Tribulation, though the great majority of Israel will not be so affected until Christ's return (cf. Rev.12:6; 12:13-17).

trumpet blast equals one "day" or six month period, with one additional actual day to represent the preceding period of silence observed in heaven for "half an hour", the six month interval of grace for repentance before the actual commencement of the Tribulation (Rev.8:1-2). The four days between the Day of Atonement and the feast of Booths represent the second half of the Tribulation, that period known as "the Great Tribulation", following which Christ will return and establish His millennial kingdom (Dan.7:25; 12:7; Rev.11:2; cf. Rev.12:14; 13:5). This four day period is, in prophetic terms, really three and one half days, for the final half day (i.e., the daylight period of the fourth day which, in the Jewish system follows the evening) represents the period of time directly preceding the 2nd Advent, a "unique day" on which there will be no daylight immediately prior to Christ's return to judge the world (Zech.14:6-7; cf. Is.13:9-13; 34:4; 60:1-2; Ezek.32:7-10; Joel 2:2, 2:10, 2:31; 3:15; Zeph.1:15-18; Matt.24:29; Mk.13:24-25; Acts 2:17-21; Rev.6:12-13; 16:10).[53] The shift of real-time days from representing six month periods to full years before and after the Day of Atonement respectively is a symbolic indication of the intensification of the world's distress during the Great Tribulation. Finally, the fact that both the feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement have special significance for Israel and yet occur within the Church Age gap is a reminder of what we know from elsewhere in prophecy, namely that the final horrendous period of seven years known as the Tribulation will see the reestablishment of Jewish leadership within Christ's body, the Church.

7) Booths/Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) (Ex.23:16; 34:22; Lev.23:33-43; Num.29:12-34; Deut.16:13-16): After the three and one half day interval following the Day of Atonement (representing the Great Tribulation), and after the additional half day (representing the period of supernatural darkness that precedes the Messiah's return), there occurs on the fifteenth day of the seventh month the seven day feast known as the festival of Booths. This festival is symbolic of the millennial reign of Christ which will commence immediately after His 2nd Advent. Known also as the festival of "ingathering" (Ex.23:16), the feast of Booths represents the restoration of the Jews to their land under the Messiah's care in a manner similar to the gathering in of crops into a storehouse (Is.66:20; cf. Is.11:11-16; 14:2; 43:5-6; 49:19-26; 54:7; 60:4 & 9; Jer.31:10; 32:37; Zech.8:23; Matt.23:37; Lk.13:34). This ingathering of Israel is commemorated by a sacred assembly on the first day of the festival (Lev.23:35; Num.29:12). The joyful mood of this festival (Deut.16:14-15) is in stark contrast with that of the Day of Atonement as one might well expect for a feast symbolizing the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel (in comparison with the judgment foreshadowed by the Day of Atonement). The booths or tabernacles in which the celebrants of this festival lodged for the seven days of the feast, are a reminder of the temporary shelters in which the Jews dwelt on their departure from their permanent homes in Egypt (an event in its entirety symbolic of God's retrieval of His people from the rest of the world for resettlement in the land of Israel at the Messiah's return: Lev.23:43; cf. Hos.12:9; Zech.14:16-19), as well as on their initial entrance into the land of promise (Neh.8:17b; cf. Ps.78:55 [not NIV]), and on their return after the Babylonian captivity (Neh.8:17a).

[53] On darkness as symbolic of judgment see section II.2.d of part 2 of the present series.

8) The Sacred Assembly (Lev.23:36; see also Num.29:35-38): Finally, directly following the feast of Booths, though not technically a part of it, is the Sacred Assembly on "the eighth day". This final event of the Jewish ceremonial calendar comes at the conclusion of the feast representing the Millennium, and therefore occurs symbolically at the end of human history's seven millennial days. It is *the* "closing assembly" [Hebrew אצרת, *'atsareth*], indicative not only of finality but also symbolic of God coming to be with mankind forever (cf. 1Kng.8:2's description of the dedication of Solomon's temple at the time of this festival, and the resultant filling of the newly consecrated temple with God's glory: 1Kng.8:10-11). The Sacred Assembly therefore represents the eternal state, the Kingdom of the Father that will be brought in at history's end when the present heavens and earth melts away and the New Jerusalem descends from heaven to be the dwelling place of God and all who love Him forevermore (Rev.21-22).[54]

IV. Gap #4: The Millennium: 14 days plus 144 days (12 x 12): Following the final event of the Jewish ceremonial calendar, the Sacred Assembly which takes place at the conclusion of the feast of Booths, the last and longest gap occurs, representing the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. That this gap begins in the seventh month of the year is likely more than accidental, for it symbolizes (and provides information about) the seventh and last millennial day of human history, the Millennium.

The Symbolism of the Three Week-long Festivals: As noted above, the three week long festivals represent the Jewish Age, Church Age and Millennium respectively.[55] The three are positioned on the Jewish ceremonial calendar in the same order in which the ages they represent occur. Additionally, all three immediately precede gaps which also represent the same ages which the festivals symbolize. The three week long feasts are "the Lord's appointed feasts which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies for bringing offerings made to the Lord by fire" (Lev.23:37). This statement from the book of Leviticus when applied to the historical symbolism of the three week long feasts indicates that, regardless of what man under the influence of the devil may think or say about them, these portions of human history are God's "feasts" (so to speak) for the "assembling" of those who hear His call, for the calling out His sacred assembly, an offering sacred to Him, one based upon the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Rom.15:16 with 1Cor.5:7-8).

The Symbolism of the Four Gaps and their Twelve-Day Groupings: It is not only the three week long festivals which are symbolic of the last three ages of human history. The gaps in the

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[54] So Unger, Commentary *op.cit.*, p.225.

[55] The fact that no festival exists for the age of the Gentiles, an era already historically well past by the time this calendar was put in place, should not be surprising given our prior discussion. For while gentile believers during the two millennial days that precede the Jewish Age did maintain the line of faith in the human family and provide a significant cadre of exceptional believers (e.g., Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Noah; cf. Gen.4:26), the first age of human history did not produce, in numerical terms, a significant "assembly" of believers.

Jewish ceremonial calendar which follow them represent their respective ages as well. The festivals, complete seven day weeks, each accomplish conceptually the symbolic task of designating one of the four major divisions of history, and as such appear in the exact same proportions (i.e., seven days each, a perfect whole). The gaps which follow these festivals, on the other hand, are not uniform in length and purposely so. For these gaps are designed to give us important information about the historical periods they represent. Specifically, they tell us the proportion of believers called out in the Jewish Age, Gentile Age and Millennium respectively. Each of the three calendar gaps is composed of a sum of fourteen days plus a variable number of twelve day periods. As the symbolism of the week long festivals was conceptual, with the single week representing the complete age in question, the symbolism of the fourteen days is temporal, with each week in this case (expressing as it does the idea of a complete, integral unit) representing one millennial day. That the gap representing the Millennium should also contain a like fourteen day period (although it consists temporally of only one millennial day) may be explained as follows:

1) The Millennium is the age of Christ's double portion (discussed in this section above under "Day 7"; cf. Is.61:7).

2) The Millennium is the only age lacking direct satanic rule and, by way of great contrast, benefitting greatly from the rule of the Son of God. It is thus an age of double blessing as evidenced by the fact it will double the number of saved human beings, with an equal number being saved therein as in the whole of prior human history (see immediately below).

3) The Millennium will combine Jews and gentiles in full, functional participation and service in God's plan in contrast both to the Age of Israel (where gentile participation in Israel was relatively rare, with gentiles shut out of most religious observance) and to the Age of the Church (where in numerical terms Jews have formed but a numerically small though critically important remnant of believers in keeping with the "hardness" prophesied to endure until the eve of the last times: Rom.11:5; 11:25-27).

Subtracting these fourteen day periods from the number of days in each of their three respective gaps, we are left with a varying number of twelve day complements: 12 x 3 for the Jewish Age, 12 x 9 for the Church Age, and 12 x 12 for the Millennium (see the discussion above and the chart at the beginning of this section). Twelve is, of course, the number of full and overflowing wholeness, a principle most perspicuously seen from the number of the tribes of Israel according to which (and into which) the entire saved complement of humanity will ultimately be organized:

1) Israel is the ultimate measure: According to Deuteronomy 32:8, the boundaries of the nations were established by God "according to the number of the sons of Israel", making their number the standard in conformity to which the Lord has planned human history.

2) Israel is the ultimate root: Following the cross, Jew and gentile are now one in Christ (Gal.3:28; Eph.2:11-22; Col.3:11), but it is the root of Israel into which gentiles are grafted, not the other way around (Rom.11:18).

3) Israel is the ultimate foundation: The prophets (including, for example, Moses, David, Elijah, and Elisha), all writers of scripture (see above), all the apostles, all of the ultimate evangelists (viz., the 144,000 of Rev.7), and, last and most significantly, the Messiah, all come from Israel (Eph.2:20; 1Pet.2:6; cf. Rev.21:14).

4) Israel is the ultimate goal: We are all looking forward to the day when we shall inhabit the New Jerusalem, the capital of eternal Israel, a place where the twelve gates will bear the names of twelve tribes of Israel and whose wall's twelve foundations will bear the names of the twelve Jewish apostles of the Lamb (Rev.21:12-14).

5) Israel is the ultimate organization (Is.14:1; Jer.51:19; Ezek.47:22-23): That tribal reorganization within Israel will ultimately ensue is indicated by the fact that the twelve apostles (clearly not evenly distributed among the tribes: James and John are brothers as are Peter and Andrew) will judge the twelve tribes (Matt.19:28; Lk.22:28-30; cf. also Is.66:21; Heb.7:14). Given the importance of gems and stones in designating tribal division in Israel (cf. Ex.28:17-20; 39:10-13; Josh.4:2-24; and see the discussion of angelic elders in Part 4 of this series), we should take the promise of the "white stone" inscribed with a "new name" in Revelation 2:17, in addition to its significance for our individual recognition and reward, as an indication of tribal assignment for all believers (cf. Is.66:21; Zech.3:9). We are all precious stones to God (Zech.9:16; 1Pet.2:5), and in His Son, *the* Rock, Jesus Christ (Matt.7:24-25; 16:18; Rom.9:32-33; 1Cor.10:4; 1Pet.2:4-8), we share all that Christ is, including being a part of Israel as Abraham's spiritual seed and as part of the Body of Christ (Eph.3:6; cf. Rom.2:29; 8:16-17; 8:32; 1Cor.12:2; Gal.3:29; Phil.3:3; 2Pet.1:4).

> So remember that you were once gentiles in the flesh, called "un-circumcised" by those of the so-called circumcision which is fleshly and man-made. Remember that you were without Christ, alienated from the polity of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now, in Christ Jesus, you who were once far away ***have now been brought near*** by the blood of Christ (i.e., into Christ along with Israel, and therefore into Israel by way of Christ). For He Himself is our peace, for He has made both [Jews and gentiles] one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition, that is, the enmity between us, by discharging the Law of the commandments and its requirements with His [own] body, so that He might re-create the two into one new Man by making [this] peace, and might reconcile both in one Body to God through His cross, having by means of it abolished the enmity [between God and mankind]. For when He had come [1st advent], He proclaimed the gospel of peace to you who were far away [from God], and peace to those who were near. For it is through Him that we both have our access to the Father by means of one Spirit. So then, you are no longer strangers and hangers-on, but ***you are fellow citizens and fellow members*** of the household of God, established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Himself the cornerstone, in whom the entire structure is in the process of being riveted together and is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you too are being built up into a dwelling place of God by the Spirit.
> Ephesians 2:11-21

> For neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is significant, but what is significant is a new creation (i.e., Jewish and gentile believers united *in Christ*: cf. 2Cor.5:17; Eph.2:14). And as many as walk by this standard, may peace be upon them, that is, upon ***God's*** Israel (i.e., the entire elect, saved human family of God).
> Galatians 6:15-16

The human family of God is thus a unity, born of the seed of faith coming down from the Age of the Gentiles to Abraham, sprouting into the vine of Israel, and bearing bountiful fruit in the Church Age. And since the stock of this plant is Jewish, it should come as no surprise that in resurrection the human family of God will eventually be arranged into the twelve tribal divisions of Israel. The further organization of believers in each of the three fruit bearing eras of human history into the matching echelons of twelve discussed above is to be understood as reflecting this same, ultimately tribal organization. Moreover, the disparate length of time comprised by the three age-representing gaps in the Jewish religious calendar also bespeaks the relative proportion of saved individuals which each group will produce: three duo-decades in the Jewish Age, nine (three times the number of the Jewish Age) in the intensified harvest of the Church Age, and twelve (a number equal to the Jewish and Church Ages combined) in the Millennium. Given the fact of Jewish prominence in God's plan throughout the scriptures, and the fact that according to the millennial tally of days believers in that era will equal the number of believers hitherto, it is not unlikely that the Millennium will also reverse the proportions of gentile and Jewish believers hitherto. This argument is strengthened when one considers that Jerusalem and millennial Israel will be the focal point of Christ's earthly kingdom. This event would yield an exact balance in Christ's Church between Jews by birth saved by faith and gentiles adopted into the family of God through their faith when human history terminates.

This prospective equality of number between gentile and Jew will also apparently be duplicated between the human and angelic portions of the family of God. For, as we have seen, the Church, completed at Christ's 2nd Advent, will equal that element of the family of God lost through its own free will (i.e., Satan and his angels: see Part 1 of this series). Now since the demons comprise one third of the total of angelic kind (Rev.12:4), doubling the number of saved human beings during the Millennium (the twelve groups of twelve days during that era) will have the result of bringing the total of saved humanity into exact equality with the total number of elect angels (i.e., doubling the Church which on its own matches the one third lost by angelic kind will result in saved humanity equaling the remaining elect two thirds of angelic kind). Thus the final organization of the family of God would seem to be as follows: 6 clans of elect angels represented by 24 elders on the one hand, complemented by and equal in number to 12 tribes of saved and resurrected human beings, organized into 24 echelons on the other, both ruled over by the God Man Jesus Christ.

d. The Testimony of Irenaeus: Our final support for the seven millennial day interpretation of God's plan of the ages comes from early Church history. The writings of Irenaeus, perhaps our last extra-biblical witness to the original New Testament eschatological teachings (before such views were squelched by the increasingly secular church), clearly show that this was the way in which he understood the critical passages of Psalm 90:4 and 2nd Peter 3:8. For, in *Adversus Omnes Haereses* 5.28.3, the millennial day interpretation is put as fact.

e. The Problem of Science and the Bible: For at least the last few centuries, the application of scientific theories to the Bible has provided stumbling blocks for many who would otherwise accept the truth of the Word of God. Our Lord Himself told us that it is necessary for such

stumbling blocks to arise, but also promised dire consequences to those through whom they come (Matt.18:7-9). As Christians, believers who profess faith in Christ in spite of what our eyes may see (2Cor.4:18; 5:7; Heb.11:27), we ought to trust God more than human testimony, no matter how persuasive and seemingly irrefutable that testimony may seem to be. We ought to understand by now, living as we do in a world of accelerating change, that science *at its best* is merely a search for the truth about the material construction of God's creation, and a highly imperfect attempt at that, yielding but a dim and incomplete comprehension of the boundless universe which God has wrought, and producing but a limited and often only theoretical understanding of it, an understanding which is, moreover, of necessity always in flux. For each new scientific revelation reveals in turn a geometrically larger area of ignorance of whose existence science was previously unaware. The more scientific knowledge, the greater the awareness of the boundlessness of the task, and of the futility of any ultimate, comprehensive understanding of the cosmos through secular means. Sadly, what should occasion humility, that is, the dawning realization of the ultimately incomprehensible nature of God's creation by any mere mortal, has historically tended to arrogance as insignificant bits and pieces, only partially understood, are hailed as great achievements. No matter that all our scientific and technological advance has not prevented one single person in human history from reaching the grave, nor provided one single person with eternal life, science has become for many what amounts to a religion.

As Christians, we are not surprised at the value secular society has placed on this new Tower of Babel that vainly seeks to elevate mankind to heaven without God. But we should take offense whenever partisans of material religion assert or fellow believers dangerously assume that some current scientific interpretation would somehow invalidate in any way any teaching of scripture. God is not material. He is spiritual. He invented and created matter. Between the imperfect and incomplete grasp that science currently has on the vast universe which He created in an instant and the spiritual reality on which it is based lies a gulf whose vastness cannot even be guessed at.

It is therefore not only right, but prudent, for those of us who profess to believe God in spite of all that the world tells us, to side with His Word in any and all cases where it may be under some assault by the materialistic forces who deny the reality behind it. Believe the Bible. In this, you will never be disappointed. But if you doubt its words and teachings because of what the world says (even on the basis of "good scientific evidence"), then you have made a bad bargain indeed. For this doubt that you have allowed to be sown in your heart may very well go down to the very depths of your soul and undermine the very foundations of your faith.

Let us state the principle of truth: In each and every case where there are apparent discrepancies between scripture and scientific commentary upon the events and facts detailed in scripture, what the Bible *really* says is right. The Bible is not a science text, but all that it says, correctly translated and interpreted (for theological and historical issues), is absolutely true. Where there is any conflict, by definition, either science or our interpretation is at least partially wrong. It is ironic, for example, that though for several centuries science has caused many to waver in faith, almost all that science once proclaimed has been "modified"– indeed, is being modified every

day. For as imperfect human beings, our knowledge and understanding of almost anything is incomplete and imperfect, and it is gross error to assume that very small gaps in knowledge and understanding may not result in critical differences in the way things are perceived. This is certainly true in regard to the chronological data which the Bible contains. Certain events recorded by scripture, the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for example, are so clearly supernatural and at the same time so obviously crucial to the faith of anyone who would deem himself a Christian, that the disciples of evil are generally quick to avoid direct attacks on these points. A more devious (and often more profitable) strategy has been to attack the believer's belief in the Word of God overall by nibbling around the edges, the rationale being that if once doubt can be introduced about seemingly minor points, this can then be eventually parlayed into doubt about every point of scripture.

There is no better example of this satanic strategy than the secular objections one finds regarding chronological issues in the Bible. Doubts about the dates and historical events most often surface in the context of archaeology, a "science" which, generously put, is inexact (as serious historians know only too well). A potsherd dug up in a specific locality ultimately informs us of nothing more than this fact. Speculation about dates, origin and originality (not to mention attempts to draw out historical conclusions from such finds) are subjective and open to interpretation. Certainly, everyone is interested in and grateful for archaeological finds, but it is the unfortunate (and largely unfounded) dogmatism with which archaeologists all too often try to splice their material finds into the historical record that causes the most difficulties. As a rule of thumb, a good written historical source can be supplemented by archaeological information prudently vetted and cautiously applied, but the construction of historical schemata exclusively or largely on archaeological data is pure folly. This is certainly true where archaeological objections to the historical and chronological record contained in the Bible are concerned.

The fact that the Bible is the most popular book ever written, coupled with its faith based teachings and (true) claim to divine inspiration would have made it a prime target for archaeological "correction", quite apart from the devil's obvious interest in undermining this central pillar of our faith. What we have in the case of the holy scriptures (especially in many parts of the Old Testament) is a good (perfect, actually) historical record which has been called into question by archaeology. That is to say, exactly the situation of which students of ancient history are most suspicious: the "correction" of a reliable written source on the basis of archaeological finds. Time does not permit here a cataloging of the numerous instances in which over the past century and a half the Bible has been vindicated after initial charges of inaccuracy based on speculative interpretation of archaeological finds. For illustration's sake, however, it is worth our time to spend a few moments on the issue of dating, for if there is one area where archaeology has managed to some degree to convince the lay public that it possesses a "scientific" basis, it has been in the area of modern dating methodologies. Of these methodologies there are a plethora, and more with every passing year. They all share a common patina of absolute objectivity and are inevitably portrayed as nearly indisputable evidence. In truth, however, they all suffer from one massive, faulty assumption, namely, that the earth of today is essentially the same as the earth of yesterday.

Quite the contrary, we Christians know from the Bible that the re-created earth is much younger than science is prepared to admit, having been retrieved from the judgment of darkness a scant 6,000 years ago (see Part 2 of the current series). An important corollary to this crucial false assumption of homogeneity is the projection of phenomena observable in real time back over long stretches of theoretical past time. The problems these weaknesses engender are observable in all so-called scientific systems of dating, but the illustration of Carbon 14 dating (perhaps the best known of the current methods) will help to shed some light on the problem. According to Vos, Carbon 14 dating relies on three basic assumptions: 1) that radioactive Carbon 14 ceases to be taken in when an organism dies; 2) that it deteriorates thereafter at a constant rate; 3) that Carbon 12 remains at a stable level throughout (and so can be used as a comparative measuring tool).[56] No great intellectual effort is necessary to see that the second and third assumptions cannot be proved (for the simple reason that we are unable to enter a time capsule and proceed far enough forward in time to check on the progress of a particular sample – i.e., results are not provable in the lab). Nor is it enough to graph the line of deterioration for Carbon 14 from samples whose dates are approximately known. For even assuming that one has guessed the sample dates correctly, sometimes graph lines curve for any number of unpredictable reasons (as recent observers of the stock market know only too well), and sometimes they spike – when significant events intrude. Thus Carbon 14 dating – indeed, *all* archaeological dating – is only theoretical, like evolution. And, like evolution, in the absence of divine commentary to the contrary, one might well be able to understand how a misguided search for the origins of life might lead down that false path. But given that in the Bible we have a record more trustworthy than anything the secular annals of mankind has ever been able to produce, obstinate perseverance in something so demonstrably false is folly in the extreme. We know evolution is false because the Bible very clearly documents the re-creation of all physical life on earth approximately 6,000 years ago (and "after its kind" at that). The comparable event that makes a mockery of Carbon 14 dating (and all such systems) is the world-wide flood, an event of such cataclysmic proportions that it stands the assumptions of "scientific" dating on their head. No doubt this is why, as Vos points out, Carbon 14 dates grow increasingly unreliable passing 2,000 B.C.[57] Of course, the book of Genesis is not a state secret, so that those who stand steadfastly with the current methodologies are, by definition, rejecting out of hand this cosmos-changing event that, taken into due consideration, might have brought some validity to their work. Make no mistake. It is not the samples, nor the apparatus, nor the testing methods with which we are here finding fault. Rather, it is the myopic lens of interpretation through which the anti-Bible scientific community is viewing their results, blindly ignoring the crucial testimony of scripture because, ipso facto, they reject the validity of scripture. And this is hardly an unbiased basis from which to proceed to a critique of the chronology of scripture.

What exactly did the great flood do to the only recently re-created earth? Though the Bible is not a textbook of historical geography, we can glean a number of important facts from it that should

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[56] H.F. Vos, Archaeology in Bible Lands (Chicago 1977) 45.

[57] *op. cit.*, 46.

illustrate just how woefully inadequate the current secular interpretative paradigm is. The overwhelming force produced by enough water to cover the entire earth (to a depth surpassing the earth's highest mountains by a full twenty feet: Gen.7:20), is difficult to estimate, but its effects would have been dramatic (cf. 2Pet.3:5-6), undoubtedly causing significant shifts in the earth's magnetic fields (upon whose stability many dating techniques, including Carbon 14, ultimately depend). But there is much more. Prior to the flood, a vastly different biological regime obtained on earth than has been the case ever since. Prior to the flood, human life-spans approaching 1,000 years were the rule (cf. Gen.5), whereas afterwards, the upward limit is generally 120 years (Gen.6:3; cf. Moses: Deut.34:7– Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the high priest Jehoiada are examples of exceptions: 2Chron.24:15), and the normal range 70-80 (Ps.90:10). Prior to the flood, earth apparently enjoyed a uniform, temperate climate with no seasonal changes (compare Gen.2:4-6 with Gen.7:4), whereas afterwards, the seasons we now take for granted commenced, possibly to be explained by the tilting of the earth on its axis as a result of the deluge's incalculable force (Gen.8:22). Prior to the flood, the earth was insulated by a dense mist (Gen.2:6), whereas afterwards, it has experienced direct sunlight along with all of its concomitant effects (Gen.8:22). Prior to the flood, bacterial activity was much less than presently experienced, as evidenced by the fact that the fermentation of wine was an entirely novel event for the postdiluvian civilization (Gen.9:20-21). Prior to the flood there were no rainbows (Gen.9:12-17), but atmospheric and spectrographic conditions have certainly changed since.

The cumulative effects of such massive changes – in the earth's gravitational field, its axis of rotation, its essential atmospheric and climatic conditions, the level of cosmic radiation it receives, even in its basic biological activity – would be difficult enough to model, let alone fully comprehend in regard to archaeological dating techniques. Even small changes in the magnetic field of the earth, cosmic ray activity, the process of bacterial decomposition, or minor variations in the seasonal patterns so much taken for granted, would produce entirely different results for any of the many systems of "scientific" dating on which archaeology so heavily relies. How much more is this true then given the monumental differences between the pre and post-flood worlds so definitively set forth in the Bible and yet so emphatically and pointedly overlooked by modern archaeology. It is no wonder then that the results of modern dating techniques are often at odds with the straightforward and internally consistent statements of scripture. It should also be evident at this point why archaeological dating offers little to those genuinely interested in the subject of biblical chronology, since devotees of such so-called scientific systems reject out of hand testimony from the Bible which would dramatically alter all of their antediluvian calculations.

> Keep this foremost in your mind: in the end times cynics will ridicule [the truth], acting out of their own selfish lusts and saying, "Where is that 'return' He promised? Everything is the same now as it was since the beginning of the world, since the time our forefathers passed on." But it escapes their notice in asserting this, namely, that there were heavens long ago too, and an earth, which was [re-]established out from under water (i.e., the "waters below") and through [the midst of] water (i.e., the "waters above") by

the Word of God – [and that it was] through these two [sets of waters] that the world of that time (i.e., in Noah's day) was [again] deluged by water [from above and below] and destroyed. Now the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire by that same Word (of God), preserved for the day of judgment and the destruction of godless men.
2nd Peter 3:3-7

[These types], though always learning, are never able to accept the truth. In the same way that Jannes and Jambres (Pharaoh's court magicians, i.e., "scientists") opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, for their minds have been corrupted and they have been found wanting concerning the faith. But they will not keep on striding forward forever. Their folly will become obvious to all, just as in the case of those two.
2nd Timothy 3:7-9

By faith we understand that the ages have been constructed by the Word of God, so that what we see (i.e., the material world) ***has not come into being from the things presently visible***.
Hebrews 11:3

f. Chronology in the Bible: Before proceeding to set out any scheme of biblical chronology, it is important to note that the Bible contains no absolute chronological scale, that is, it provides no references to "B.C." or "A.D." Indeed, our present system of chronology was only invented ca. 525 A.D. by a Scythian monk named Dionysius Exiguus at the behest of pope John I. The ancient Roman method of calculation (A.U.C.) had been the previous system of choice. But whether Olympiads or regnal years or any other of the countless systems which have been employed by mankind to chronicle the ages be consulted, all have their problems and fallibilities, especially when it comes to applying them to the span of human history in toto.

Pride of place for the collection and interpretation of biblical chronological data and attempting to apply systematized results to our modern calendar system goes in the ancient world to Eusebius, and in the modern world to Ussher, and it is fair to say that anyone who delves into such issues inevitably builds upon the work of these two.[58] Ussher's exhaustive researches posited Adam's creation at 4004 B.C., and Abraham's entry into Canaan at 1921 B.C., dates that fall very closely in line with the millennial day interpretation being advanced here. Further positing an interval between Adam's fall and his creation (an assumption which is by no means contradicted by scripture), and positing Abraham's circumcision as the point when the Jewish Age began, will bring us very close indeed to an exact 2,000 years from Christ to Abraham, as well as from Abraham to Adam's fall. Before getting into the specific points of chronology that

[58] Eusebius, *Chronica*. Ussher, Annales Veteris et Novi Testamenti (2 parts, 1650-1659). I have also profited greatly from Jack Finegan's Handbook of Biblical Chronology (Princeton 1964), and Harold W. Hoehner's Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (Grand Rapids 1977).

are necessary to address in support of this interpretation, however, it is important to discuss some basic principles of biblical chronology:

1) As the Creator, God invented, created, and controls time (cf. Josh.10:13-14).[59] Everything that has ever happened or ever will has already been decreed by Him (Ps.56:8; 139:16; Jer.33:25; Rom.8:28-30; Eph.1:11; 1Pet.1:2). God is therefore in no way subject to time; rather time is entirely subject to Him. Therefore, any exactitude in the seven millennial day system discussed here is entirely due to His divine prerogative. He has always been free to alter, amend or append time (as in His lengthening of a solar day during the battle of Gibeon: Josh.10). By the same token, He is also free to adhere to any system of temporal division He may have established, such as the seven days of human history.

2) The Bible contains much in the way of chronological data. As with all information contained in scripture, we must assume that this information has been deliberately included by God and is important. The chronological data in the Bible must be there for a reason. Therefore the fact that this information is not always provided in a way which is easily comparable to our current system of dating does not in any way decrease its importance and relevance.

3) The problems of matching biblical chronological data to our system of time reckoning are our problems, not the Bible's problems. Our system, possessing as it does its own share of difficulties, did not even come into existence until well after the Bible was written. Matching the biblical data to our current calendar is thus an interpretive problem with which we must deal and in no way impugns the accuracy of biblical statements.

4) "Pegging" dates to our method of dating therefore runs into a number of systemic problems, such as the A.D./B.C. shift, inclusive counting in biblical times, exact length of months and years, start times of years, and the use of multiple reckoning methods in the Bible (to name but a few of the more significant complications).

5) For all these problems relative to understanding and interpreting this data, however, it is important to note that biblical chronological information is not only absolutely accurate, but also extremely precise (cf. Ex.12:40-42: the exodus took place "430 years to the very day" from Israel's arrival there).

6) It is also clear that we *are* meant to know and understand the chronological facts the Bible records (Matt.16:3; 24:32-35;1Thes.5:1-3).

7) We end this summary of principles where we began. God is the ruler of time. And this means that it is also within His authority to "change the times and the seasons" whenever and however He should so desire (Dan.2:21). God is not bound to honor any human system of chronology or any human expectation about its progress. He is only bound as He chooses to bind Himself through the prophetic revelation of scripture.

9. Specific Chronology of the Seven Days of Human History: The construction of a biblical chronology of human history thus runs into two profound problems: 1) hermeneutic; 2) practical. The second problem (or, really, set of problems), is concerned with analyzing the biblical data and applying it to the time-line of human history. These issues will be treated below. The first problem, the hermeneutic or interpretive problem, is really a question of whether such an attempt

[59] See Part 1 of Bible Basics: Theology: The Study of God.

is profitable, practical and scriptural in the first place. This question is all the more delicate inasmuch as certain scriptures (Matt.24:36, Mk.13:32 and Acts 1:7 in particular) are commonly used by contemporary exegetes to discourage such attempts, a disposition which is certainly understandable in light of so many recent attempts to "predict the end times" in clearly misguided ways.[60] Certainly, prophecy is a gift not presently active in the Church. Interpretation of scripture, however, is another matter, and it must be underlined at this point that the projection of the seven millennial day interpretation so as to arrive at (among other things) the probable commencement of the Tribulation is an application of scripture, not a "prediction". Readers are encouraged to examine the analysis upon which the theory which underlies this projection is based and form their own conclusions. It has always been and will ever be the guiding principle of this ministry to discover the truth of scripture and delineate it as perspicuously as possible, withholding none of the counsel of God (Acts 20:20 and 20:27).

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[60] The "unknown day and hour" of Matt.24:36 and Mark 13:32 merely indicates that we may know an event is imminent without knowing the precise day of the year and hour of the day in which it will occur. After all, this comment occurs *immediately* following the parable of the fig tree where we are told by our Lord in no uncertain terms *precisely* ***to*** pay attention to scripturally significant events and not to ignore what the Bible has to say on these matters (cf. Matt.24:32-35; Mk.13:28-31). Acts 1:7 is often mistranslated "It is not for you to know", but should be rendered "It is not for you ***to decide*** the times and the seasons". The Greek verb *gignosko* commonly has this meaning of "decide" especially when it is in the aorist as it is here (cf. Lk.16:4; Heb.3:10). The context strongly supports this revised translation since our Lord immediately adds "which the Father ***has ordained by His authority***". That is to say, Jesus' point is that it is the Father who has ***decided*** these matters; they are ***not to be decided*** by your wishes. For our Lord's disciples had just very clearly expressed the wish through their question in the preceding verse six for Him to establish the Kingdom immediately. Therefore our Lord's reproof in verse seven is not a commendation of complete ignorance about the Father's timetable, but rather a reminder to them that it is His will in these matters that counts, not theirs; they would have to remain patient, even though from their perspective the time seemed ripe for the commencement of the Messiah's kingdom. We must also take into consideration the fact that this statement was given to the apostles prior to the gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. The Spirit is the agent of inspiration, chronology included, who, as Jesus had already made clear, would be the One to relate to them "the things to come" (Jn.16:13; cf. 2Pet.1:16-21). Since they will later come to understand the "things to come", verse seven must also be understood in conjunction with verse eight: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you . . .", a statement that clearly includes the previously promised further revelation of the Spirit (not excluding information about the end times). This is why, a few short years later, Paul can tell the Thessalonians the exact opposite of Acts 1:7 (that is, as it is generally misconstrued): "concerning the times and the seasons, you have no need that anyone write you, for you know very well . . ." (1Thes.5:1-2).

> Look at the fig tree and all its leaves. When they have already come out [like this], you can see for yourselves by examining it that summer is near. So also when you see that all things [of verses 5-28] have come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is near.
> Luke 21:29-31

As we are to watch events in preparation for the trying times to come, so also we ought to make use of whatever specific chronological guidance the scriptures offer us, for it is certainly there for a reason. When we accept this principle, the issue becomes one of accuracy in interpretation.

The most potentially controversial piece of information developed below, that is, the projected date for the commencement of the Tribulation, is based upon the following suppositions (all of which are treated within the context of this study):

- The seven millennial day interpretation is taught in scripture and meant to be understood and applied.
- The Church Age will last for two millennial days or 2000 years.
- The Church Age commenced following the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.
- These events took place in 33 A.D.
- The Tribulation belongs to both the Church and Jewish Ages and is therefore to be subtracted from the 2000 year total when calculating the start of the Tribulation.
- The half hour of silence in heaven at the breaking of the seventh seal (Rev.8:1) signifies a half year grace period that shifts the start point from spring to fall.
- Scripture gives no indication of either shortening or lengthening of this time-line, and therefore no such change of schedule is anticipated.

The above points are all presented here as true, and the analysis upon which they are based is set forth below. Clearly, deviation from any of the above will alter the entire scheme. It is also true, as we have already said, that alteration of the schema presented below is certainly within the power and authority of the Almighty. The very end of the Tribulation, for example, will be shortened by some undisclosed amount of time (Mk.13:20). Rather than undermining the theory advanced in this study, however, Mark 13:20 in actuality supports the importance of paying heed to the Bible's chronological information. For if "the days are shortened", then surely this means that there was a definite heavenly timetable in the first place. Secondly, Mark 13:20 indicates that the shortening mentioned is a matter of days, weeks at the most (i.e., not enough to change the general time-line given below). This is certainly in line with the very specific tally of days and months given in Daniel and Revelation (Dan.7:25; 8:14; 12:7; 12:11-12; Rev.11:2-3; 12:6; 12:14; 13:5).

From the practical point of view as well, the difficulties of constructing a precise chronology of the Seven Millennial Days are significant. Anyone who has ever delved into ancient chronological issues (and especially into biblical chronology) will have an idea of the significant problems involved in so doing. Working from the millennial day hypothesis, however, it is possible to construct a fairly solid chronology, and the task, though challenging, is by no means without purpose, if for no other reason than that we who live in the shadow of the approaching

Tribulation are well served by having a general idea of its proximity. With these thoughts in mind, the present schema is offered:

a. The Life of Christ: We begin with the most significant period in the history of the world, the life of our Savior Jesus Christ. Scripture calls this time the "conjunction of the Ages" (Heb.9:26; cf. Rom.5:6; Gal.4:4; 1Tim.2:6; Tit.1:3; Heb.1:1-2; 1Pet.1:20), and so it is, for His birth marks the postponement of the Jewish Age (cf. Matt.11:12; Mk.1:15; Lk.12:49ff.), while His death, resurrection and ascension to heaven signal the imminent commencement of the Church Age (Acts 1:4-5; cf. Matt. 27:51; Mk.7:27; Jn.2:4; 7:8; Heb.9:10). It is therefore from this point that our investigation of the specific chronology of the seven millennial days must commence.

(i.) **The Birth of Christ:** To begin with, we know from Luke 3:1 that John began baptizing "during the fifteenth imperial year of Tiberius" (i.e., from August 19th of A.D. 28 to August 18th of A.D. 29).[61] Since Luke states that Jesus was "about thirty"at the commencement of His public ministry (Lk.3:23), an event that post-dates the time when John began baptizing, there can be little doubt that the birth of Christ is to be fixed ca. 1-2 B.C. To place Christ's birthday any earlier would make Him "twenty-something", not "about thirty". Moreover, this phrase is best taken (and arguably can only be properly taken, especially given Luke's penchant for precision: cf. the precise dating of John's ministry at Lk.3:23) to mean that while Christ had passed His thirtieth birthday, He was very close to turning thirty one that same calendar year.[62] If we accept December as Christ's birth-month, therefore, He will then have been born in 2 B.C. (only one year earlier than supposed by the Christo-centric calendar we now use, established by Dionysius Exiguus ca. 525 A.D. at the behest of Pope John I).[63] It is impossible within the scope of this

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[61] The life of the emperor Tiberius is relatively well documented, and this date certainly represents his fifteenth year of sole rule. Proponents of an earlier date (i.e., 26/27) can only argue that dating should begin from a period of "joint rule" between Augustus and Tiberius on the basis of similar co-regency ascension dating in other ancient cultures. Given the hostility of Augustus and Tiberius towards each other, the cloud that still hangs over Tiberius' ascension (so well documented by Tacitus), and the otherwise unparalleled notion of co-regency dating among the Julio-Claudians, it seems best to stay with the date A.D. 28/29.

[62] This is important, because thirty was the age generally associated with the maturity necessary for service to God (cf. Num.4:3, 23, 30, 35, 39, 43, 47; 1Chron.23:3). Incidentally, as is clear from Luke 1:26, John was six months older than Jesus, and therefore also "about thirty" when he began his ministry (see below for the point that John's ministry commenced one year before that of our Lord).

[63] 2 B.C., as opposed to 1 B.C., is also required because of the need to place the birth of Christ before the death of Herod (cf. Matt.2:1-19). Although many have found such a late date for the death of Herod impossible, it is important to note that our only source for the earlier dating of his demise is Flavius Josephus, a somewhat dilettantish historian. Moreover, it is entirely possible that Josephus' statements in this regard have been wrongly interpreted in any

study to detail all of the chronological details and arguments connected with Christ's birth, but the 2 B.C. date, in addition to being based on the only two clear chronological references in the gospel (i.e., Lk.3:1 and 3:23), is also recommended by three other important factors. First, it allows for a three year ministry of Christ (as required by the chronological details of John's gospel as we shall see when discussing the date of the crucifixion). Secondly, it allows for a crucifixion date of 33 A.D., by far the most likely date when independently derived (see below). And, thirdly, it squares most precisely with the universal census mentioned by Luke (Lk.2:1-3).

(ii.) **The Census:** The first two points that need to be clarified here are that the universal census described in Luke 2:1-3 is *not* the census of Quirinius, and, secondly, that Luke does *not* in fact equate the two. That Quirinius, Roman governor of Syria from ca. AD. 6 to 11, held a census in A.D. 6-7 is well established (cf. Josephus, *B.J.* 2.118; 2.433; 7.253; *A.J.* 18.4-10; 18.23-25; 20.102).[64] It is therefore unfortunate that English versions of the Bible inevitably mis-translate Luke's Greek to make these two separate censuses appear to be one and the same. Properly translated, Luke 2:2 states that "this was ***a*** census which occurred ***prior*** *to* Quirinius' governorship of Syria".[65]

It was important for Luke to point out the distinction between the census that took place at Christ's birth and the one held later by Quirinius. For, being seven years more recent and also more notable on account of the armed resistance it engendered, Quirinius' census would have been easily confused by his readers with the earlier one he describes at Luke 2:2 (a confusion which, ironically, modern interpreters have almost universally failed to avoid in any case). The Roman Empire was a triumph of bureaucratic organization as well as military might. Not surprisingly, accurate census data (especially as it related to taxation) was essential for its

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case. See W.E. Filmer, "The Chronology of the Reign of Herod the Great", Journal of Theological Studies 17 (1966) 283-298, who proposes January of 1 B.C. as the time of Herod's death. This date leaves ample time for a December 2 B.C. birth of Christ, the events of Matthew 2:1-9, and the death of Herod immediately following.

[64] On the topic of Quirinius' census, see especially E. Schürer's The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (Edinburgh 1973) v.1, 399-427. While Schürer's conclusions are fanatically secular and wrong-headed, his excursus is invaluable for the details and bibliography he provides.

[65] The absence of the Greek definite article in the initial phrase means that "census" is the predicate (i.e., "this was ***a*** census which occurred ..."). The second problem for the standard translation is the generally misunderstood use here by Luke of the superlative form *prote* to govern the genitive case (i.e., "[occurred] 'first of' the governorship", meaning *before* the governorship). This usage is paralleled at John 1:15 and 1:30 in John the baptist's description of Jesus: "He was 'first of me'" (i.e., *before* me).

administrative and financial operation.[66] In his *res gestae*, the synopsis of his most prestigious accomplishments, Augustus devotes considerable space to his work in census matters (*CIL* v.3, in loc., para.8). Secular historians have been (unreasonably, in my view) skeptical about extrapolating a regular, empire-wide census from Augustus' remarks cited above. Indeed, Augustus' census of Roman citizens in 9/8 B.C. is paralleled by evidence for a census taking place in the Roman province of Egypt at the same time.[67] This Egyptian census cycle is known to us primarily from papyrological records, and that fact is significant, for papyrus has generally only survived from antiquity in places with extremely arid climates (i.e., conditions which did not obtain in most of the rest of the Empire). Mundane records such as official census returns are not likely candidates for preservation in climates where heroic efforts were historically necessary to safeguard important texts. In other words, there is much we simply will never know, because the documentation has not survived. But when we add to the 9/8 B.C. and 6/7 A.D. censuses the further fact of a 13/14 A.D. census under Augustus and Tiberius, the pattern of a seven year cycle emerges, and 2/1 B.C. is the only gap within this otherwise repetitive cycle.[68] Rather than a slap-dash approach, it seems more in keeping with his penchant for careful organization that Augustus would have begun the systematic application of Roman census procedures (cited in his *res gestae* above) not just to certain provinces, but to all territories under Roman sway, exactly as the biblical record indicates:

> And it came about in those days that a decree went out from Augustus Caesar to conduct a census of ***the entire civilized world*** (i.e., the whole Roman empire).
> Luke 2:1

One of the characteristics of Roman provincial census procedures which seems to be indicated by our admittedly incomplete data on the topic is that results are recorded for the year ***preceding*** the year of recording. [69] The census process thus covered roughly two calendar years, with the first year being the year of record and the second the year of recording. But unlike in the U.S. today where we file income tax by April the 15th of the year following the year being officially recorded, under the Roman system the census was a "snapshot" of assessable wealth and legal status, taken (and officially registered) during the first year, thus giving the imperial administration a further year to verify, validate, correct if necessary, and record the information submitted by all residents of the province in question. That, at least, is what the surviving evidence strongly suggests. And coupling this last fact with the likelihood that Joseph and Mary

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[66] cf. the Cyrene edicts' use of census classifications to make jury assignments (*SEG* 9.8.1).

[67] See especially Grenfell and Hunt's discussion of the P.Oxy. II 254, pp.207-214.

[68] There was, in fact, also a provincial census in Gaul at this time (i.e., 1-2 B.C.). See the Oxford Classical Dictionary (2nd ed.) *s.v.* "census".

[69] Grenfell and Hunt, *op. cit.*, 208f.

journeyed to Bethlehem to fulfill the legal requirements of the universal census of 2/1 B.C., we would come again to the proposition stated above that Christ was born in 2 B.C., the year of registration (as opposed to 1 B.C., the year of official recording).

(iii.) **The Crucifixion of Christ:** It will be recalled that John the baptist's ministry began sometime after August 19th of 28 A.D. (the beginning of Tiberius' fifteenth year). The time-frame of September-October 28 A.D. has much to recommend it as the true start of John's ministry. First, it allows some time to elapse beyond the exact start of Tiberius fifteenth year (if the start were close to being temporally coincident, one would have expected Luke to say "at the outset of" rather than "in" the fifteenth year). Secondly, the proposed time-frame allows approximately one year for the commencement and publicizing of John's ministry before the start of Jesus earthly ministry (a likelihood confirmed by the chronology given by the gospel of John, treated below). Thirdly, the proposed dating yields a symbolically significant start time and terminus for both ministries. Both will have commenced about the time of the Day of Atonement (the festival that most clearly calls attention to the need for repentance in the face of God's coming wrath), and concluded with their deaths at the time of the feast of Passover (the festival that most vividly presents the suffering of the Messiah satisfying the righteous requirements of God's justice on behalf of all who receive Him).

Fourthly, the proposed time-frame is also symbolically important from the standpoint of the length of the two ministries. The three and one half year ministries are of the exact same duration as the tribulational ministries of the two witnesses, Moses and Elijah (who are prophetic types of Jesus and John respectively: Deut.18:15-19; Is.40:3-5; Zech.4:11-14; Mal.4:4-6; Matt.16:14; 17:3-13; Mk.9:4-13; Lk.9:29-33; Jn.1:25; Jude 1:9; Rev.11:1-14).[70] The primary point of chronological divergence between these two sets of ministries is that the ministries of the two tribulational witnesses run concurrently, whereas the ministries of John and Jesus overlap, commencing and ending one year apart. Besides the obvious (and incalculable) difference in quality between the earthly ministry of the Savior of the world and that of His herald, this overlap served several important purposes. John came first to announce and herald the coming of the Messiah, whereas after He came on the scene, John's ministry waned as Jesus' waxed (by divine design: Jn.3:30). One important effect of the simultaneous period of ministries was to give Jesus a certain amount of protection from celebrity to accomplish His ministry in the early years without having it paralyzed by the intense glare of attention that would obtain during

[70] The fact that Moses is a type of Christ obviously does not elevate him to the level of the unique God-Man, anymore than in the case of David, to take an example of another type of Christ. David tellingly remarked of his Son (under the ministry of the Holy Spirit) "the Lord said to ***my*** Lord" (Ps.110:1; cf. Matt.22:41-46).

that final year after John's death.[71] Celebrity, as many in the history of the world have discovered, is a burden, and Jesus often had to contend with the negative side-effects of this phenomenon (fame was often counter-productive to His ministry: Matt.8:4; 9:30-31; 12:16; 14:13-14; Mk.1:43-45; 3:20; 8:26; 9:30; Lk.4:42-44; 5:15-16; 5:19; Jn.4:1-3). On the other hand, the death of John heralded the beginning of the final year of ministry, a year of intense opposition and dramatic events that took place in the limelight, and which brought about the chain of events that culminated in our Lord's crucifixion.[72]

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the time-frame proposed above would fix Jesus' baptism and therefore the coincident start of Jesus' earthly ministry precisely at the point indicated by Luke (Lk.3:23), that is, at "approximately" (Greek *hosei*) the age of 30 years old. Indeed, if we accept the traditional late December birthday for Christ, He may have been only weeks away from His thirty-first birthday at the time of His baptism, and, after this inaugural phase and His temptation in the wilderness, at least thirty years of age (Matt.4:1-2; 4:12-17). In this way, not only will Luke's statement have been entirely precise, but Christ will have begun His earthly ministry as our high priest at the normal age when priests were called upon to serve.[73]

All of the above analysis, moreover, is consistent with the 33 A.D. date we have suggested for our Lord's sacrificial death on the cross and subsequent resurrection. For not only does Passover of 33 A.D. seem the soundest date when derived independently,[74] but it is also the date at which one arrives when adding the three and one half years length of Christ's ministry to the starting point of that ministry as analyzed above (i.e., Passover of 33 A.D. is three and one half years later than September-October of 29 A.D., the commencement of His ministry as indicated above).

That Christ's earthly ministry stretched beyond three years is clear from the chronological information provided in the gospels (especially in the gospel of John).

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[71] John himself, it is true, was imprisoned shortly after Jesus' baptism (Matt.4:12), but his disciples continued to operate under his authority (Matt.9:14; 11:7; Mk.2:18; Lk.5:33; 7:18; cf. Jn.4:1-2) so that the ministry of John would still serve to deflect the oppressive and negative scrutiny of the Jewish ruling class that would later come to rest so heavily upon Christ during His final year of ministry.

[72] Indeed, as will be clear from a perusal of the chronological sketch below, most of the events and miracles recorded in the four gospels relate to Christ's final year of the three and one half year period of His earthly ministry.

[73] On thirty as the age of acceptable service, see note #62 above. The NIV Study Bible suggests that the alternative age mentioned once (at Numbers 8:24) of twenty-five may perhaps reflect an apprenticeship period (in loc. Num.4:3).

[74] See especially Hoehner, chapter 5 (n. 58 supra).

[SEE CHART #4 AT BACK] = John-Jesus.bmp

Following His baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus' earthly ministry formally commenced before a Passover (Jn.2:13), spanned two further Passovers (Jn.2:13 and 5:1),[75] and ended with His crucifixion at the time of Passover as well (Jn.11:55). This gives us a duration for His ministry of three and one half years which fact (calculating from His baptism in September-October of A.D. 29) places His crucifixion in March-April of A.D. 33. To recap our conclusions, John's ministry began in ca. September-October of 28 A.D., and ended with his death in March-April of 32 A.D. Jesus' ministry tracks exactly one year later, beginning in September-October of 29 A.D., and ending with his death (and resurrection) in March-April of 33 A.D.

As noted at the beginning of this section, the period of Christ's earthly life is the center-piece of God's chronological design of human history. It is "the fulness of times" (Gal.4:4), and "the conjunction of the ages" (Heb.9:26b; cf. Heb.1:2). It is a 33 year interlude in the progression of the seven millennial days, which marks the termination of the Jewish Age (Mk.1:15),[76] and the commencement of the Church Age (Matt.21:43; Mk.12:9; Lk.20:16). This thirty-three year interval, the exact period of time that David (a type of His coming Son) reigned in Jerusalem, is a grace period around which the rest of human history pivots, so to speak. For in it, Jesus Christ was offered to the world, but the world rejected Him.

From a chronological point of view, therefore, Christ's birth is the critical departure point for calculating God's historical timetable backward, while the date of His death and resurrection is the basis from which to reckon the scheme of history that follows. Having established 2 B.C. and 33 A.D. as the best dates for these two seminal events respectively, it shall now be our purpose to work backwards from the former and forwards from the latter to explore with as much precision as possible the specific dates to which the biblical record points in respect to the seven millennial days of human history, for the year of Christ's birth and the year of His crucifixion, mark the terminus of the preceding Jewish Age and inception of the following Church Age respectively.[77]

[SEE CHART #5 AT BACK] = timeline.bmp

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[75] "*The* festival of the Jews" mentioned in John 5:1 is indeed Passover, as is evident from the similar phraseology used at 6:4: "the Passover, *the* festival of the Jews".

[76] For the final seven years of the Jewish Age, see below.

[77] For the remaining seven years of the Jewish Age (Daniel's "seventieth week") and its collocation with the last seven years of the Church Age (called here the "tribulational overlap"), see below.

b. Days 4-3, and 2-1: As we saw above, the Age of the Gentiles, Jewish Age and Church Age all comprise two millennial day-pairs. Working backward from the birth of Christ in 2 B.C., the biblical record is consistent with a precise four thousand year period (our two double millennial day-pair ages, the Jewish Age and the Age of the Gentiles) to the fall of Adam when certain points (noted in the chart above) are taken into consideration:

1) The Age of Israel still has seven years to run (i.e., Daniel's 70th week, otherwise known as the Tribulation: Dan.9:27). Therefore only 1993 years are to be found in Israel's two millennial days.

2) The Babylonian captivity (586-516 B.C.) does not count against the two thousand years of the Jewish Age, because, for that seventy year period, Israel's functioning as God's mechanism for the distribution of His divine truth was being held in abeyance.

With these two caveats in mind, it is possible to track the biblical evidence back to Adam's creation. The list below uses the critical scriptural references to move the chronology backward, step by step from the birth of Christ in 2 B.C.

– The Jewish Age (2065 - 2 B.C.[78]) –

1. to 1444 B.C. (the Exodus): retrogressing 1442 years (from 2 B.C.) to the Exodus in 1444 B.C., based upon 1st Kings 6:1 which states that the 4th year of King Solomon's reign (ca. 964 B.C.) occurred 480 years after the Exodus (ca. 1444 B.C.: i.e., 964 + 480 = 1444).[79]

2. to 1874 B.C. (Jacob in Egypt): retrogressing from 1444 B.C. a further 430 years to the time of Jacob's arrival in Egypt, based upon Exodus 12:40 (which states that Israel remained in Egypt after Jacob's arrival exactly 430 years), and thus taking us to 1874 B.C.

3. to 2004 B.C. (Jacob's birth): retrogressing from 1874 B.C. a further 130 years to Jacob's birth, based upon Genesis 47:9 where Jacob tells Pharaoh on his arrival in Egypt that he is 130 years old.

4. to 2064 B.C. (Isaac's birth): retrogressing from 2004 B.C. a further 60 years to the birth of Isaac, based upon Genesis 25:26, where we learn that Isaac was sixty when Jacob was born.

5. to 2065 B.C. (Abraham's circumcision): retrogressing from 2064 B.C. one year to the circumcision of Abraham, the event which marks the beginning of the Jewish Age (Gen.17-18; cf. Rom.4:9-12). Subtracting from 2065 two years for the birth of Christ in 2 B.C. and seventy

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[78] This is a two thousand year period, adding the 70 years of the Babylonian captivity which do not count against it, and subtracting the 7 years of the Tribulation which are yet future.

[79] Although the year given here for the 4th year of Solomon's reign is, admittedly derivative, based upon the supposition of a 2,000 year period for the Jewish Age (subtracting 70 years for the Babylonian captivity and adding seven for the Tribulation), it certainly falls well within the window of probability. The most commonly given conservative date for this milestone (966/967 B.C.) is also only an approximation. See Roland K. Harrison, Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand Rapids 1969) 184-185.

years for the Babylonian captivity, we are left with 1993 years, the entire two millennial days of the Jewish age (minus the seven years of Daniel's seventieth week, the yet future Tribulation).

– The Age of the Gentiles (4065 - 2065 B.C.) –

6. to 2164 B.C. (Abraham's birth): retrogressing 99 years from 2065 to the birth of Abraham based upon Genesis 17:24.

7. to 2456 B.C. (the flood): retrogressing 292 years from 2164 to the great flood by adding the intervals between generations from Abraham to Shem, based upon Genesis 11:10-26.

8. to 3056 B.C. (Noah's birth): retrogressing 600 years to the birth of Noah by adding the intervals between generations from Shem to Noah, based upon Genesis 7:6 and 7:11 - 8:14.[80]

9. to 4112 B.C. (Adam's creation): retrogressing 1056 years to the creation of Adam by adding the intervals between generations from Noah to Adam, based upon Genesis 5:3-29. Allowing exactly 2,000 years for the Age of the Gentiles from 2065 to 4065 and subtracting the latter figure from 4112, we posit that Adam sinned and was expelled from the garden at the chronological age of 47 (i.e., he was already mature when created, then fell 47 years after his mature creation: 4112 - 4065 = 47).

c. Days 5 and 6: Working forward two complete thousand year periods from 33 A.D., the year of our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection, would bring us to the year 2033 A.D. as the date of our Lord's return and the beginning of His millennial reign. Subtracting seven years from this total, gives us the year 2026 A.D. as the time of the commencement of the seven year tribulational period. Although our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection occurred in the spring at the time of the Passover, the Tribulation will begin with the cycle of festivals occurring in the fall (see section II.7.3 above). The sixth month hiatus (between the spring and fall of 2026 A.D.) constitute the "half hour of silence" (Rev.8:1), the final grace period before the commencement of that great" hour of testing" begins (Rev.3:10).

d. The Break-points of the Three Pairs of Days: As has been noted above, the Gentile, Jewish and Church Ages, though consisting of two millennial days each, are integral wholes. Thus it is not unexpected that these three pairs of millennial days (i.e., 1-2; 3-4; 5-6) should have no hard and fast event-breaks to clearly separate and distinguish their two one-thousand year periods. This phenomenon of no clear breaks within these three pairs of days is in sharp contrast to the very definite breaks that separate the other divisions of the seven day scheme (i.e., the fall of Adam as the start of the Gentile Age, the circumcision of Abraham as the start of the Jewish Age, the birth of Christ as the [temporary] conclusion to the Jewish Age, the death and resurrection of Christ as the start of the Church Age, and the return of Christ as the conclusion to the Church

[80] Genesis 7:6 states that Noah was 600 when the flood occurred, while verse eleven of the same chapter says that the flood began in his 600th year (suggesting he had not yet attained 600). The answer to this apparent contradiction, however, is that, due to the long duration of the flood (compare Gen.7:11 with 7:24-8:5), Noah turned 600 years old while still in the ark (Genesis 8:13).

Age [and Jewish Age: see immediately below]). This lack of any comparably significant break within the three day-pairs is all the more understandable when one considers (in addition to the fact that each pair is part of an essentially indivisible contiguous whole) the truly pivotal nature of the divisions between the three pairs (mentioned above), for these are dividing points which frame in a most significant way God's architecture of the seven millennial days of human history:

- The fall of Adam: The initial promise of the Messiah (Gen.3:15; 3:21)
- The circumcision of Abraham: The specific promise of the Seed (Gen.17:1-27)
- The birth of Christ: The Word becomes flesh (Jn.1:14)
- The death and resurrection of Christ: The promise of salvation fulfilled (2Cor.1:19-20)
- The return of Christ: The resurrection and the kingdom (Rev.20:4-6)

Still, it is true that while no exact break point exists within each of the three day-pairs, at roughly the half-way point of each pair we find a period of transition which does mark the shift in character between each respective day (as we have outlined these differences at the beginning of this section: II.7):

1) Days 1 and 2: Shortly after the chronological half-way mark of the Gentile age (3065 B.C.) Noah was born (in 3056). Noah's birth is significant for several reasons. First, it was attended by a special prophecy that foreshadowed the many changes the earth would undergo as a result of the great flood (Gen.5:29). Secondly, while the flood itself occurs well within the second millennial day of the Gentile Age (nearly 600 years so), the time of Noah was different from what had preceded during this era's first millennial day. It was the beginning of the period of large population increase. It was also a time characterized by one of the most horrendous satanic attacks upon humanity ever devised as the devil attempted to erase the true human line by polluting it with angelic seed (see section III immediately below). In this diabolical gambit, the human race of that day willingly participated to such a degree that by the time of the flood, very few true human beings (if any) were left, outside of Noah and his immediate family. This time of intense satanic attack, of heroic resistance (in the person of Noah), and of unprecedented witness to the world (through the building of the portentous ark), is a clear, albeit extensive, period of contrast to the situation that obtained in the first thousand years after Adam's fall. Furthermore, with the exception of Noah and his family, all of the rest of the genuine, direct line of Adam, the line of Christ and of true humanity, had died out by the year of the flood (Adam in 3187, Enoch [taken] in 3125, Seth in 3070, Enosh in 2972, Kenan in 2877, Mahalalel in 2822, Jared in 2690, Lamech in 2461, and Methusaleh in 2456, the very year of the flood). Noah thus constitutes both the last of the original post-Edenic generation and the first of the post-flood generation. Therefore while not a hard and fast break-point along the lines of the age dividing events, it seems appropriate that Noah's birth should serve as a general point of demarcation between the two millennial days, occurring as it does in the decade that marks the chronological division of the pair of thousand year periods that make up the Age of the Gentiles.

2) Days 3 and 4: Although the chronology is difficult to establish with precision, 1065 B.C., the chronological half-way point for the Age of Israel, marks roughly the beginning of the monarchy.[81] Saul, the Lord's original anointed, proved himself less than satisfactory in God's eyes (1Sam.13:14; 15:28), and it was left to David, a man after God's own heart (1Sam.16:7; Acts.13:22), to become the model for the theocracy that will one day be headed up by his greater Son, our Lord Jesus Christ (Ps.110). Politically and prophetically, the establishment of the Kingdom of Israel is an event of the utmost significance. Therefore, while it too is not a hard and fast break-point, it seems appropriate to find in the establishment of the monarchy a general point of demarcation between the two millennial days of the Jewish Age.

3) Days 5 and 6: In a similar fashion, the Church Age possesses no true break-point even approaching the theological significance of either its beginning (the death and resurrection of Christ) or of its termination (the return of Christ). Like the Gentile and Jewish Ages before it, however, the two millennial days of the Church Age are distinguished by significant differences, and are divided by events which both reflect these differences and which occur at its approximate chronological half-way mark. That point in time, for our present age, is the year 1033 A.D. The eleventh century was in many ways a turning point for the Church Age. It marks the beginning of the crusades (political "Christianity" taken to an extreme), as well as of the imperial papacy. It brings the culmination of monasticism and scholasticism, the beginning of the inquisition and of the persecution of the sects, and, finally, the schism between the eastern and western Churches. All of these events mark in indisputable terms the end of the early Church and the formation in its place of an institutional pseudo-Christianity which has militated against true faith and spiritual growth throughout the second millennium. It is interesting to note that precisely in the year that marks the Church Age's half-way point (1033 A.D.), Benedict the 9th became Pope at the age of only twelve years old, and later sold the office for several thousand pounds of silver, a fitting commentary on the completely bankrupt nature of organized "Christianity" by that time. Freed of the more rigid and monolithic forms that were in some respects necessary during its first millennium (to disseminate the Bible and to develop the means of educating men to teach it properly, as pointed out above), the second millennium of the Church Age has seen a proliferation in the knowledge and availability of God's Word, and in its expansion to all parts of the globe without being fatally hindered by false dogmatism (i.e., enforced adherence to non-biblical teachings as was increasingly the case toward the end of the first millennium, the primary issue which led to the Reformation).

e. The Tribulational Overlap: One final issue needs to be addressed before moving on to Day 7 (the Millennium). There is a common fallacy in biblical exegesis vis-a-vis the chronology of

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[81] Comparing the information in 1Kng.2:11 and Acts 13:21 (and, depending upon emendation, 1Sam.13:1, if we read "42"), we can deduce that Saul was anointed king in ca. 1050 B.C. (adding David's 40 year rule and Saul's 40-42 year rule to the ascension of Solomon, 968 B.C.). Saul would have been approximately 13-15 years of age at the exact halfway point. Note: Acts 13:21 gives forty years as the length of Saul's reign which may be an approximate figure (cf. v.20 "*about* 450 years").

God's plan which reckons the seven years of the Tribulation exclusively to the Age of Israel. In this popular scheme, the Tribulation is "appended", so to speak, to the Church Age, occurring immediately after its conclusion. Besides being influenced by the incorrect notion of a pre-tribulational "rapture" of the Church,[82] this false view is part and parcel of the erroneous thinking that draws a sharp division between Israel and the Church.[83] In fact, as we have seen, Israel is the root to which the gentiles are attached. Together with an increasing number of believing Jews, Church Age gentile believers will continue to persevere in their faith in Christ until His return, the event that marks the true end of the Church Age. The last seven years of this age, however, will be a time of the most intense distress the world has yet witnessed. This period, the Tribulation, will be a seven year period of warning and judgment. It will also be the time of Israel's (partial) reawakening and of the beginning of the reassertion of her leadership role within the human family of God (cf. the two witnesses, Moses and Elijah, and the ministry of the 144,000).[84] The Tribulation's seven years, therefore, belong both to the Church Age (its final seven years) and to the Jewish Age (its final seven years: Daniel's seventieth week). Thus, although the Jewish and Church Ages are initially divided by the life of Christ (His birth marking the temporary end of the former and the beginning of the latter), they are ultimately joined together in the period preceding His Second Advent, with both ages dovetailing at history's climax as apocalyptic events intensify and reach their crescendo at our Lord's return. This overlap of ages explains, for example, the inclusion in the Jewish ceremonial calendar of the festivals of Trumpets and Atonement within the Church Age gap (i.e., *because* the Tribulation occurs within the Church Age: see above, section II Summary 3 and chart #3). Other indications that we should find the Tribulation within the Church Age include:

1) the fact that the completion of the gentile complement of the body of Christ is coterminous with Israel's change of heart at the Second Advent (viz., at the end of the Tribulation: Rom.11:25-26).

2) the fact that this present era, described as "the *times* of the gentiles (that is to say, a time and a time [period] of 1,000 years each: Lk.21:24), will not come to an end as long as Jerusalem is "trodden under foot" (i.e., not until the return of Christ at the end of the Tribulation).

3) the fact that the current Church Age trend of antichrist-type deceivers will only reach its culmination with the unveiling of *the* antichrist in the Tribulation (1Jn.2:18).

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[82] The living resurrection (or rapture) of believers takes place at Christ's second coming, not prior to the Tribulation (see Peter #27 for a detailed treatment of this doctrine).

[83] As noted above (section II, "The Uniqueness of Israel"), Christ's Church consists of all believers from Adam and Eve until His return at the Second Advent, not just those who have believed during the Church Age, the age of the filling up of His assembly.

[84] The symbolism and description of tribulational events in Revelation and elsewhere also paint a dominant role for Israel (cf. the Woman Israel in Revelation chapter 12, and the close coordination between tribulational references and the restoration of Israel throughout the Old Testament: cf. especially Isaiah chapters 25-27 and 34-35).

4) the fact that the prophesied (and already observable) trend towards apostasy on the part of the Church will only reach its fulfillment in the Tribulation (compare Rev.3:14-20 with 2Thes.2:3).

5) the fact that the Church Age is in a very real and scriptural way part of the "end times" (1Cor.10:11; Heb.1:2; 1Pet.1:20; 1Jn.2:18), a principle that makes little sense if it is to be excluded from the conclusive period of the "last days", the Tribulation.

6) and finally and perhaps most significantly, the fact that much of our hope as Christians consists in our looking forward eagerly to the return of our Lord, an event that will take place at the *end* of the Great Tribulation (1Thes.4:13-18; Tit.2:13; see Peter #27 for detailed discussion).

With the inclusion of the tribulational overlap into the Church Age proper, we see our age ending in the same miraculous fashion in which it was ushered in, with great satanic opposition, and surpassingly great divine provision and manifestation (cf. Joel 2:28-32, a passage equally applicable to Pentecost and the events preceding the Second Advent: compare with Acts 2:16:21; cf. Is.32:15; 44:3; Jer.31:33-34; Ezek.36:24-27; 37:9; Zech.12:10).

Finally, to apply this principle of overlap to the chronological scheme which we are here constructing, we must, then, (as stated above) subtract these seven years from the Church Age's two thousand year tally to find the Tribulation's commencement. Taking into account the half hour of silence mentioned above as standing for a one half year grace period (Rev.8:1-2), we are thus left with a probable start date for the Tribulation of fall 2026.

f. Day 7: The Millennium: The Millennium is in many ways the capstone of the seven days of human history, a time of blessing as close to perfection as yet sinful mankind can experience, with Satan, the prime instigator of evil, temporarily removed from the world (Rev.21:1-3), and the Son of God Himself reigning upon the earth (Rev.11:15). The Millennium will commence almost immediately following Christ's return (following a short period of purification: Dan.12:11-12; cf. Ezek.20:34-38; Zech.13:8-9; Matt.3:10-12; 25:31-46; Lk.3:9-17; 2Thes.1:7-8), and last for one thousand years (ca. 2033-3033). Following the elapse of the one thousand years, the devil will be released and a short period of human rebellion and swift divine judgment will ensue (Rev.20:3; 20:7-10). Scripture is silent as to the length of this postscript to history (although it is "short": Rev.20:3), but we do know that at its conclusion, the world as we know it will cease to exist, being subsumed forever by our eternal home, the New Heavens and the New Earth – a place where only righteousness will dwell (2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.21:1-4; cf. Is.60:21). This "new day" will have no end, as we who have chosen for God will have the inestimable privilege of living with Him and His Son forever (Rev.22:3-5). The shifting of the "Lord's day" from the Saturday Sabbath (the seventh millennial day in history's seven day structure) to Sunday, is indicative and evocative of this "new day" that will never come to an end (cf. Rev.1:10).

Summary: Though not evident to the eyes of those who do not acknowledge God, human history is completely subject to His plan, and the entire point of history is His Son, Jesus Christ, and the salvation of all those who are willing to accept and follow Him.

> ... according to His plan for the ages (i.e., history) which He has implemented in [the person of] Christ Jesus our Lord ...
> Ephesians 3:11

> For [God] has made known to us the mystery He has willed according to His own good pleasure, one which He purposed in [Christ], for the dispensing [of truth] about the completion of history, namely, that all things have now been incorporated in Christ, both things in heaven, and things on earth –
> Ephesians 1:9-10

In the first stage of judgment, restoration and replacement (which we have now sufficiently covered in the present series), God judged the earth (the place of the satanic rebellion), then restored it, and, through the creation of humanity, set in motion the historical process of replacing the devil and his followers with human beings who would choose for Him. Satan's seduction of Adam and Eve, far from reversing the process, brought the Savior to come directly to the center of human history (from the divine point of view). The devil would henceforth oppose the line of faith, the line of the Messiah, and every life of faith, but would be unable to arrest the inexorable progress of the Plan of God, which was destined to be actualized in the coming of Christ and the successful completion of His efficacious sacrifice on our behalf. This stupendous victory laid the cornerstone for the next two phases of judgment, restoration and replacement in the final working out of God's plan. Before we can address phases two and three of judgment, restoration and replacement, however, it will first be necessary to consider Satan's "anti-plan", that is, his counter-strategy for opposing the historical march of the Plan of God as outlined in the discussion above.

III. Satan's Counter-Strategy

In the last installment of this series, our object of study was Satan's World System, that is, the tactical doctrine and methodology the devil employs in attempting to control the human race for his own ends. This section will investigate the large-scale strategies Satan has employed (and will employ) in an attempt to frustrate the Plan of God with his own reactionary counter-plans.

God's plan of salvation in the promised Person of Jesus Christ (treated in section II above) caught Satan completely by surprise. With the commencement of human history under the promise and potential of salvation, God's plan for the final disposition of Satan and his followers began its ineluctable forward march. Left unopposed, it would only be a matter of time before human beings, now in a sinful state, would do from weakness what fallen angels would not do from strength, namely, respond to the gracious offer of a Savior and return to a merciful God. Faced with this inevitable progression, Satan's only possible alternative, his only recourse in the face of God's plan for redeeming willing humanity through the Person and work of Jesus Christ, was to oppose the plan of salvation in every possible way and with every available means at his disposal. As redemption through Jesus Christ summarizes the plan of God for human history, so opposition to faith in Christ is not only at the heart of the devil's world system (see Part 4 of this

series), but is also the guiding principle in his reactions to the grand movements of the Plan of God as they become manifest to him.

Following the commencement of human history after Eden, the devil was left without a strategy. Being a mere creature, and having no actual use for mankind, any strategic operations on his part are of necessity merely reactions to God's actions. To put it another way, Satan really has no grand plan of his own – except to try and stop God's plan. Having been thwarted in his attempt to halt the progress of the Plan of God through his seduction of Adam and Eve (failing to anticipate God's promise of redemption through the woman's Seed), the devil has now been left with little choice but to oppose the ultimately unopposable Plan of God for human history. Despite the essential futility of their actions, the devil and his forces are and always have been extremely active in their attempts to turn mankind away from God. Human beings – and believing human beings in particular – have always been important "targets of opportunity". But in addition to this general policy of using any and all means to deceive and to destroy humanity at large (i.e., the objective of the Satanic World System treated in part 4 of this series), Satan has also concentrated significant resources throughout the course of human history on more specific "prime targets", inevitably important for him because of their importance in the Plan of God, and it is this reactive counter-strategy that forms the subject of this section.

1. Satan's antediluvian attack on the purity of the human line (the Nephilim): As we have pointed out before, were it merely a question of pitting his superior power against the human race, the devil and his angels could long since have wiped every living thing off the face of the planet (not to mention mankind). Satan, prevented by the sovereignty of God from this most direct approach to solving his problem, chose as his first counter-attack something almost equally as effective as the outright elimination of the human race, namely, its pollution to the point of no longer being truly human at all.

The context for this first satanic counter-attack is Genesis chapter six, the waning days of the post-Edenic generation of believers in the line of Seth (all of whom died out before the great flood, with the exception of Noah and his family: see section II "breakpoints" immediately above). Satan may have been content to play a waiting game until the multiplication of humanity (and of believers in God) began to give definite promise of eventually producing the numbers necessary to replace him and his followers, this despite the less than perfect environment that obtained after Eden and under conditions of mortality. Goaded into action by events, the devil cunningly surmised that if he could introduce a measure of impurity into the human line, once that impurity had affected the entire human race, there would be no more *true* humanity, no pool of legitimate replacements, and, most importantly, no possible way of bringing his ultimate nemesis, the Seed of the woman, into the world. The means whereby the devil sought to accomplish this (and came within eight persons of doing so) was the cohabitation of his followers with human women.

At this point, a small comment is, unfortunately, a necessity. Like the great flood, Jonah and the whale (lit., "great fish"), and the parting of the Red Sea, this is one of those portions of scripture

that, for some reason or other, offends the sensibilities of sometime readers of scripture more than other biblical descriptions of supernatural activity. Why this should be so is entirely unclear to the writer, for the Bible is a supernatural book. Virtually every verse reflects the hand of the ultimate spiritual, supernatural, non-material God of the universe upon the material world our eyes can see. The events depicted in Genesis chapter six happened. We know they did, because the Bible clearly relates that they did. The text of the chapter is quite clear about the facts (in spite of enthusiastic efforts on the part of some to explain them away). And if there were any doubt, we also possess several New Testament passages that discuss this matter more or less directly, and make it almost impossible to interpret Genesis six in any other way than is suggested here (1Pet.3:19-20; 2Pet.2:4-9; Jude 5-7). Thus, the "angelic cohabitation" interpretation of Genesis six not only found favor in the early church; refuting it requires the untenable position that two of the inspired New Testament writers either "got it wrong" or were indulging in allegory.

Genesis 6:1-2: Angelic Cohabitation

> Now it came to pass that when men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them, the sons of God (i.e., the fallen angels) noticed the daughters of men, that they were beautiful. So they took wives for themselves from all whom they selected.
> Genesis 6:1-2

To return to our theme, the time frame for the events of Genesis chapter six, as mentioned above, is roughly the first third of the Gentile Age's second millennial day, that is, the final days of the post-Edenic generation. As the passage above indicates, it was a time of rapidly increasing population growth, with the new inhabitants now separated from the fall (and the prophecies to Adam and Eve) by many years and many generations. It was also a time of little spirituality outside of the direct line of Seth, a circumstance which was to provide the devil with his opportunity for attack.

First of all, the phrase "sons of God" mentioned here most definitely refers to angels. This is so despite elaborate attempts to otherwise construe this passage on the part of those who have found the clear meaning uncomfortable (due to the bias against the existence of all things supernatural alluded to at the opening of this section). For one thing, we cannot assume that *only* daughters were born to mankind, for, obviously enough, male and female offspring would be necessary for the population expansion here described. No, the daughters are singled out because they become the objects of the attentions of the "sons of God" (i.e., fallen angels) mentioned next. For it is the female who carries the essential seed of our humanity (witness the virgin birth) and was, therefore, the natural target of this satanic operation. Even more convincing is the fact that everywhere else in scripture the phrase *beney ha-'elohiym* ("sons of God") and its variants refer not to men but to angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7 [anarthrous]; Ps.29:1 [cf. Ps.103:20; 148:2]; and Ps.89:6: *beney-'elim*). Finally, as we have mentioned above, there are three New Testament passages which reference the events of Genesis chapter six, and all three clearly link *fallen angels* to the activities here described:

> It was also by means of the Spirit that [Christ] visited the [angelic] spirits in prison (i.e., in the Abyss), and proclaimed [His victory]. [These are the angels who] were disobedient in the days of Noah at the time when God patiently waited (i.e., delayed judgment) while the ark was being built.
> 1st Peter 3:19-20a
>
> For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but plunged them into Tartarus with its gloomy pits (i.e., the Abyss), preserving them for the [day of] judgment, and did not spare the antediluvian world, but kept safe Noah as a proclaimer of righteousness and the seven with him when He brought the flood upon the ungodly inhabitants of the world, and condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction, reducing them to ashes and making them an example to those bent on similar ungodly behavior, and rescued righteous Lot who was tormented by the depraved lifestyle of those lawless men – for through the things he saw and heard just by dwelling among them this righteous man was damaging his righteous way of life day by day on account of their lawless deeds. For the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment – especially those who in their lust pursue the polluting of the flesh and so despise [God's] divine authority.
> 2nd Peter 2:4-10a
>
> Although you know all these things, I want to remind you that though the Lord saved [all] His people from the land of Egypt at the first, in the end He destroyed those who proved unfaithful, and the angels who did not keep to their own realm but deserted their proper habitation He has imprisoned with everlasting chains in the gloom below (i.e., in the Abyss) in anticipation of the judgment of that great day, just as He did with Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighboring cities, for they all prostituted themselves in the same manner as these [angels] did, having pursued sexual relations (lit. "flesh") that were inappropriate for them (i.e., outside of the natural order). [And so it is that] they have been appointed an example, and incurred the penalty of eternal fire.
> Jude 5-7

Note that all three New Testament passages make reference to the imprisonment of fallen angels in the Abyss on account of their activities just prior to the great flood. Moreover, the second two (2Pet.2:4-10 and Jude 5-7) clearly connect this activity with illicit sexual behavior comparable in its outrageousness (though not identical, obviously, in its specifics) to that practiced in Sodom and Gomorrah. Finally, the third passage (Jude 5-7) is quite specific in stating that this intermarriage of fallen angels with willing human women constituted an unauthorized abandonment of the rightful angelic sphere (one reason for the severe, temporary judgment inflicted upon the perpetrators of these acts).

Although angelic cohabitation with human woman may seem unlikely as well as bizarre, in the context of the devil's strategy to resist God's plan the enlistment of some of his more reckless followers to pollute (and thereby effectually destroy) the human race can be seen to contain a certain cold logic. For the success of this operation would have made the birth of the promised

Messiah, the woman's *pure and undefiled* human Seed, an impossibility (once every human being had become part angel).

Genesis 6:1-2 (quoted at the beginning of this section) leaves unstated the obvious background to these events. Rapid expansion of the human race brought with it an increased carelessness about acknowledging (let alone following) God and His natural law. Of this we may be sure, for it is just this expanding depravity of human behavior, seen here on earth for the first (though certainly not the last) time that forms the basis for a divine displeasure so extreme that the great flood becomes the only acceptable remedy (Gen.6:5-8; 6:11-13; see below). These conditions provided Satan with his first major strategic opportunity since his success in corrupting Adam and Eve. Apparently prohibited from direct, outright destruction of human beings (otherwise he would long ago have taken this obvious remedy), and stymied in his abortive attempt to have human beings slaughter each other to the point of extinction (by God's prohibition of murder in the wake of Cain's killing of Abel), he now found himself confronted with the intriguing prospect of introducing a fatal disease, so to speak, among the growing ranks of the spiritually weak. If he were not allowed to *give* such a disease to humanity (and thus destroy us apart from our free will), he discerned that granting *an opportunity* to contract such a disease would be a different matter. Offering the possibility of cohabitation with some of his followers would be an attractive portion of leaven that would soon leaven the whole lump. To abide by the principle of preserving human free will in the unseen conflict that rages around us, it would only be necessary to make these initial liaisons voluntary. The diabolical beauty of the plan was that this seed, once planted, would quickly spread. Although the majority might refuse such abominable joining in the first place, there would be some who would accept or even seek such alliances given the "talented" offspring that would be produced. And the situation would ever be such that a refusal would only be a temporary "win" for humanity, while an acceptance would be a permanent "loss". Once the angelic seed was introduced into the human gene pool, sooner or later every human family would become infected and spread that infection (always by choice), until at last there would be no possibility of a pure line for the Messiah.

Despite its attractive possibilities, the plan presented problems as well. God's reaction to the human beings so involved is well-known: that is, His extermination of all of them by means of the world-wide flood. Less celebrated, but equally as awe-inspiring, is His reaction to the angelic participants in Satan's scheme to irrevocably pollute the human race. Following these events, all fallen angels guilty of cohabitation with human beings would be punished with the most severe penalty possible (this side of the final execution of the sentence against them). The penalty for "not keeping to their own realm" was to be plunged into the lightless Abyss (1Pet.3:19; 2Pet.2:4; Jude 6), a terrifying prospect for these creatures of light, even in their fallen state. This awful prospect motivated the "legion" of demons who had possessed the demoniac at Gadara to beg Christ frantically not to have them confined to this terrible place (Lk.8:31; cf. Jude 6; Rev.9:1-11; 9:13-16; 20:1-3; 20:7).[85]

[85] See part 4 of this series.

We may surmise, therefore, that just as humans are induced into illicit sexual activities in full cognizance of the possible repercussions, so some of the fallen angels were induced (no doubt by the devil) to take this action, even though it must have been quite clear that swift and sure judgment from the Almighty was likely to follow. Satan, by all indications (there are still "legions" of demons loose in the *kosmos*), couldn't convince all of his followers to act recklessly in this fashion, and probably didn't want his best lieutenants to do so. Nevertheless, the events described here show that he was able to find a cadre willing to "abandon their estate" and risk the consequences that in the event did befall them. We have already noted in the first installment of this series the desire of fallen angels for physical bodies (Part 1, IV.3.b), and we may see these events as corollary to this principle. The selectiveness of which Genesis 6:2 makes a particular point (i.e., "they *chose*") reinforces this conclusion. Important as well is the fact that these verses betray no idea of force, indicating that the liaisons were voluntary on the part of the women involved, and, given the involvement of patriarchs in the marriages of that time, of their fathers.

Genesis 6:3: the Spirit's Restraint

> And God said, "My Spirit will not strive with Man forever in their sinful manner of life – for this [is the way of] flesh. Therefore his days shall be 120 years."

The divine displeasure evident in the verse above (very odd if the two preceding verses were only relating normal human procreation which had been divinely commanded in Gen.1:28) follows directly on the heels of the intermarriage described in Genesis 6:1-2. Verse three entails a double judgment of the most extreme severity. In a mere 120 years (brief by the extended life spans of the time), God would all but bring the human race to an end. And for the progeny of those who would survive in the postdiluvian world to come, the longevity Man had previously experienced (nearly a millennium in some cases) would be reduced to a scant 120 years, and this would be a maximum norm scarcely ever approached, and only rarely exceeded.[86] Even in such dire judgment, however, God's gracious nature is clearly perceptible, because for the one family of believers left on earth (i.e., that of Noah), the 120 years were an important grace period that gave the necessary time for the ark – God's chosen means of deliverance – to be completed. It is ever thus that by the patience of our God we are delivered (1Pet.3:20; cf. Is.48:9; Rom.2:4; 2Pet.3:9; 3:15).

Genesis 6:4: the Nephilim

> The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and afterwards as well (i.e., both before and after the start of the 120 year grace period before the flood). For when the sons of God

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[86] This reduction would be phased in after the flood (cf. the genealogies of Gen.11:10-26) as the debilitating repercussions of the postdiluvian climactic conditions (discussed in section II.7.5 above) began to take effect. Moses, one of the few human beings to hit this milestone since the sons of Noah (Deut.34:7), notes that the typical human life-span is 70-80 years (Ps.90:10).

went in to the daughters of men, they bore to them those "mighty-ones" (i.e., the Nephilim) whose names are famous from ancient times.

The transliteration of the Hebrew word Nephilim (*nephiliym*: נפלים) is standard practice now (cf. the NASB and NIV) on account of the clear unacceptability of the Septuagint's "giants". The Septuagint's interpretation, however ineffective the parallel drawn from Greek mythology, is clearly to see these "creatures" as not entirely human (as the Greek giants of myth were not), and that much, at least, is true. By the time we reach Genesis 6:4, interpretations which try to make these Nephilim entirely human have run into a host of difficulties. In the verse above, the extraordinary nature of these creatures is directly related to the fact that they are the progeny of the "sons of God", a mention that makes little sense if these "sons of God" were normal human beings. The etymology of the word *naphiyl* (Hebrew: נפיל; Nephilim is actually the plural) is also enlightening. The root, *naphal* means "to fall", and the *qatiyl* noun formation is passive in nature here (as is generally the case; cf. *`asiyr*, אשיר, "one in bondage" or "prisoner"). The meaning "fallen ones" is directly in line with our understanding of the passage so far, for the Nephilim were a) "fallen" from the ranks of pure humanity; b) the offspring of fallen angels; and c) fallen in the spiritual sense as well, giving no indication of desiring a relationship with God, a conclusion to which we are forced by their failure to respond to His gracious 120 year delay of judgment (for only Noah and his family entered the ark).[87]

Genesis 6:5-7: the Divine Assessment

Now the Lord saw that Man's evil had spread abundantly on the earth – indeed, the underlying intent of all his innermost thoughts was invariably evil. So the Lord regretted that He had made Man on the earth, and it grieved His heart [that He had done so]. And God said, "I shall wipe Man whom I have created off of the face of the earth, both Man and beast and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air, for I regret that I made them."

In our own time as well mankind is universally disposed towards evil because of the sin that resides in our mortal bodies as a result of our descent from Adam.[88] However, the intensity of

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[87] For properly understanding the mention of "Nephilim" in Numbers 13:33, the context is all important. The naming of the Amorites in Canaan "Nephilim" comes from the cowardly scouts sent to spy out the land. Their discouraging and faithless testimony caused the entire congregation to fall into sin and so to die in the desert instead of inheriting the land of promise. In their fear, these malingerers clearly fastened onto the most intimidating name they could imagine to dissuade their countrymen from attacking the land. The statement that the inhabitants they saw were Nephilim was a metaphorical exaggeration (analogous to when we call a tall person a "giant" today), just as when they proclaimed "we are grasshoppers in their eyes". These Amorites may well have been men of stature (cf. Amos 2:9), but they were not true Nephilim.

[88] See Peter #15.

evil described here – evil that leaves no place for anything else and is untouched by any other consideration – is a clearly unprecedented state of affairs in terms of both the concentration and homogeneity of the evil involved. There can be little doubt that this rock-hard dedication to evil which had become the rule on earth was a result of the majority of mankind at this point being of mixed seed. From their angelic progenitors they had acquired (along with the talents and stature that gave them the fame they still enjoy today)[89] that quality of adamant fixation of purpose which we first observed in our study of angels in the initial installment of the present series.[90]

It is also important to note the vast difference between the human and divine assessments of the situation on the antediluvian earth. While mankind is impressed, even fascinated with the likes of the Nephilim, individuals of exceptional prowess (whether physical or otherwise), God is concerned with the heart, with the individual's attitude towards Himself and His truth. These pre-flood "supermen" may be the stuff of human legend and may continue to capture the imagination of mankind even today, but to God their complete lack of respect for Him and a total absence of any desire for a relationship with Him provoked a quite different response. Indeed, despite the fact that these semi-humans were in many ways gifted beyond anything today imaginable, and would be objects of extreme veneration and emulation by the present day inhabitants of earth, God's response to their inveterate evil is completely the opposite: they must be wiped from the face of the earth.

The way in which God's profound regret and grief at the direction chosen by the human race in general is expressed here is not in any way to be understood to mean that He was "surprised" by these events (for history is entirely dependent upon Him and His decrees). These events are related to us in language that we can understand. Even though we cannot hope to fathom the true depths of God and His love, we can see from these expressions His merciful purpose for mankind and His profound lack of pleasure in their failure to accept that mercy, not wishing any to perish (1Tim.2:4).

> The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise (as some think); rather He is ***exercising patience*** for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring all instead to come to repentance.
> 2nd Peter 3:9

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[89] It is more than likely that the ultimate origin of supernatural mythology is to be found in the human memory of these not-quite-human Nephilim. In the Greek context, it is interesting to recall that Zeus and the Olympians replaced the Titans and imprisoned them in Tartarus, a theme which may conflate the hope of Satan's rebellion (i.e., to replace God) with the story of the pre-flood fallen angels (and God's punishment of them). It is, after all, typical of all Satanic false religion and propaganda to portray his intentions and desires as facts.

[90] See especially section I.3.d of The Satanic Rebellion Part 1: Satan's Rebellion and Fall.

Patience, in the italicized phrase above, is from the same Greek root as the verb Peter had used in his first epistle to indicate the patience of God during the 120 year grace period that preceded the great flood (1Pet.3:20: *makrothumia* vs. *makrothumeo* above). Even in the face of such intense, intractable evil, God went the extra mile in providing opportunity for repentance for all genuine human beings before visiting the ultimate judgment upon the world of that time. Truly, ours is a God to be feared, both for the ineffability of His gracious mercy upon the undeserving, and for the ineluctable and devastating power of His judgments upon those who systematically refuse it in their wickedness.

> Or do you esteem as being of little account this truly valuable tolerance He [is exercising towards you] in [all] forbearance and patience? [If you do, it is] because you fail to realize that it is this very tolerance of God that is leading you to (i.e., giving you the opportunity for) repentance.
> Romans 2:4

> And consider the Lord's patience towards you as [leading to your] salvation, just as also our beloved brother Paul has written to you, according to the wisdom given to him.
> 2nd Peter 3:15

God's great patience, God's great provision, God's great love and desire for the human race of that time to turn to Him was, in the event, despised, forcing the issue of His terrifying judgment. Only after it has been demonstrated for all to see that, in spite of extraordinary patience and provision, the human race had become irredeemably corrupt, did the deluge begin. That judgment, of course, was a total one, exterminating not only all of polluted mankind, but all lesser creatures as well, leaving not even a hint of pollution by association to survive. But God does not blot out the righteous with the wicked. One man had turned to God, and so by his righteousness (the righteousness imputed by God to those who turn to Him: Gen.15:6), stood in the gap for our entire race.

Genesis 6:8-10: Noah

> But Noah had found favor in the Lord's eyes. These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, and perfect in his generations (i.e., of pure human seed). Noah, moreover, made a habit of walking with God. Moreover, Noah was the father of three sons, Shem, Ham and Japheth.

In stark contrast to his contemporaries who wanted nothing whatsoever to do with God, Noah aggressively pursued a relationship with Him, seeking Him, finding Him, following Him, and, finally, coming to serve Him in the unique way for which he is now so famous. This attitude of responding to God in all that He initiated gained for Noah God's favor, a treasure more valuable than anything else on earth (and still to be sought in the very same way). Noah was not of mixed seed (his purely human pedigree is the point behind the Hebrew phrase *tamiym hayah bdhorothayv*, "perfect in his generations"). This fact, it is true, redounds to the glory of his parents and forefathers who did not succumb to the temptation of intermarrying with the semi-

angelic seed. But Noah had also in his own right forsaken this disastrous course at a time when, due to the intensification of evil mentioned in context and the spread of the angelic strain to nearly all of the human race, such intermarriage must have been more difficult to avoid than ever before. God honored Noah's steadfastness, providing a wife for him of equally pure human stock, and blessing them with three boys born during the final 120 years before the flood (compare Gen.5:32 with Gen.7:6), for whom God would provide acceptable spouses as well. We can only guess the degree to which Noah was ridiculed, ostracized and threatened for such "stubborn aloofness". But for anyone who truly sought and followed God, the alternative course of action would have been unthinkable, so clearly and obviously would it have violated the natural law of God (cf. Lev.19:19; Deut.22:9). By resisting the temptations of his day, and by persistently following after God wherever He led, Noah became prepared for the ministry God had in turn prepared for him: that is, to stand in the gap for the entire human race.

Now it was through the ark that God chose to effect the physical deliverance of that remnant of the human race from which we all derive (i.e., Noah, his wife, their three sons and their three wives). But it was *Noah*, after all, who built the ark, and that fact is far more important in God's eyes than any wooden structure ever could be. God, of course, could have plucked this family from the rising waters through any number of miraculous means. Instead, He chose to make use of Noah's faith and *faithfulness*. Given the mammoth nature of the task, it must have taken Noah the better part of the 120 year grace period that preceded the flood to build this vessel capable of containing not only himself and his family, but a remnant of all the world's animal population as well. And while it is this fabulous structure which has captured the attention of posterity since that time, the really amazing part of the story is that Noah persisted at this seemingly impossible task, day after day, and decade after decade, sticking faithfully to the charge that God had given him. We can scarcely imagine the opposition and active discouragement he encountered from the world for this faithful dedication to the Lord's command, but, in the end, God vindicated Noah, His "preacher of righteousness" (2Pet.2:5), and his work of witness to God, and did so in the most dramatic possible way.

It is interesting and important to note that, although in our own discussions of such things it is scarcely possible to say the name Noah without mentioning the ark in the same breath, yet in the frequent references to Noah in the Bible (following the Genesis account of the flood), the ark is generally not even discussed (Is.54:9; Ezek.14:14 & 20; Matt.24:37-38; Lk.17:26-27; 2Pet.2:5; the exceptions are 1Pet.3:20, where the mention is not substantive, and Heb.11:7, where the focus is upon Noah's reverent response to God's command in building it). The reason for this is obvious enough: the ark and the "animals two by two" are the parts of the story that impress human beings, but God was impressed by Noah's heart, by Noah's faithfulness. It was as a result of this previously proven character that Noah was chosen to build that most famous vessel as a means of deliverance not only from the coming flood, but also from the perverse generation that had made the deluge a necessity (1Pet.3:20: they were saved *through* the water [i.e., brought safely *through* it and so delivered from the threat of that generation]).

Genesis 6:11-13: Divine Judgment and Divine Deliverance

> Now the earth was ruined before God because the earth was filled with wrongful violence. For God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was ruined, because all flesh had ruined its way [of life] upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with wrongful violence on their account. So, behold, I am about to ruin them completely along with the earth.

The continual evil in the collective thinking of mankind that had attended the permeation of the angelic strain throughout the human gene pool had produced a deadly side-effect that made the destruction of the antediluvian civilization an absolute necessity: that is, a culture of "wrongful violence" (Hebrew *chamas*: חמס). Intimidation, it would certainly seem, will have been an additional factor in the rapid disintegration of the pure human stock, making Noah's determination to keep himself and his family pure all the more noteworthy and commendable. Since this endemic violence had essentially compromised the principle of free will, and since the mixed population of that time had universally rejected God (despite the witness of impending judgment given by the construction of Noah's ark), God determined upon an equally complete destruction of them and their world by means of a flood which the Bible takes pains to show was universal in nature (Gen.7:17-24). Thus ended Satan's first major counter-attack, an assault which came within a single family of accomplishing its goal – though with God, the most slender thread is an unbreakable bond. Deprived of its fabulous trappings, this direct angelic interference in human affairs was essentially an attack on human freedom, beginning with overwhelming temptation and ending with overwhelming violence. Following the destruction of the earth and the mixed seed that had resulted from this gambit, all the fallen angels directly involved in human procreation were imprisoned in the Abyss, a fearful prospect for these creatures of light, and no like design has been attempted since on any scale, large or small.

2. Satan's postdiluvian attack on human freedom (the Tower of Babel: Genesis 11:1-9): The devil's second major counter-attack focused entirely upon the issue of human freedom. For Satan was (and is) well aware that, short of destroying the human race (outright or through genetic pollution), the best way to stop mankind from turning to God is to compromise our ability, our freedom to do so. The Tower of Babel incident occurred at least one hundred years after the great flood (as we know from the naming of Peleg: compare Gen.10:25 with Gen.5:32 and 11:10-16). By this time, the family of Noah had expanded rapidly. The descriptions given in Genesis chapters ten and eleven paint a picture of a post-flood population boom progressing at a pace beyond anything the world had yet seen, a fact no doubt attributable at least in part to the decreasing life-span and consequent shortening of generational intervals (cf. Gen.11:10-24).[91]

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[91] The phrase "in his days" most naturally refers to the life of Peleg who was born one hundred years after the flood, but who lived 209 years (Gen.11:19). For potential re-population figures, see C.F. Keil, in Keil and Deilitzsch's Commentary on the Old Testament v.1, 176-178. Keil produces figures which reflect the potential for a significant population (within a wide range). Even with modest assumptions, the population of earth could well have been in the tens of millions by the time of Peleg's death.

As in the pre-flood world (cf. Gen.4:17; 4:21-22), this expansion of population was apparently accompanied by concomitant "advances" in technology and civilization (cf. the urbanization of Gen.10:10-12) – and by a concomitant decline in the general level of interest in and concern for God. Thus is it ever so. It was not long after this process had gathered momentum that Satan launched his next major counter-attack, inspiring the premier political leader of that day, Nimrod, to fuse this growing population into a united, one-world society. Such a development, still somewhat inconceivable in today's multi-cultural world, would provide tremendous advantages for the devil's objective of turning mankind away from God. A highly cooperative, highly homogenized, highly centralized society need only be shifted in a godless direction once. For once the worship of the only true God is deemed anti-social and made illegal, it becomes an easy matter to discourage it entirely under such circumstances – especially in the absence of any alternative society on the face of the earth where religious "dissidents" who had chosen for God might find refuge. One cannot therefore imagine a more ideal scenario for the devil's squelching of faith than to bring about a single unified, top-down state in charge of all human affairs on earth. For from this beginning it would be but a short step to eradicating all faith on earth by taking away the freedom of those who might choose to exercise such faith.

That Nimrod was the human genius behind this satanic plan is evident from a comparison of Genesis 10:8-12 with the account of the tower of Babel at Genesis 11:1-9. First, the tower is built in the very place of Nimrod's initial urban power base: the plain of Shinar (that is, Babylonia: Gen.10:10; Gen.11:2). Since this is the one place where all humanity is concentrated in the century following the flood, his supremacy in creating a political and urban structure for the rapidly expanding human race cannot be ignored.

Secondly, Nimrod is the only major political figure distinguished in scripture operating at the time of the "division of the earth" (Gen.10:8-12). He is the grandson of Ham through Cush, while Peleg, the great-grandson of Shem through Arphaxad and Eber, saw the earth divided in his days. Assuming roughly equivalent generations, Nimrod would have been older than Peleg, and could thus have been in a position to foment the building of the tower by the time of Peleg's birth. And as the builder of the most important cities of his day, it seems impossible that any such world-wide cooperative activity such as the construction of this infamous tower would have been possible without his approval and support.

Thirdly Nimrod is singled out by the Bible for his active hostility toward God at this time:

> Now Cush became the father of Nimrod. It was [this Nimrod] who became the first "mighty-one" (i.e., famous and prominent individual) on the earth [after the flood]. In particular, he was mighty at hunting [men] in opposition to the Lord. For this reason we have the proverb "[To be] like Nimrod, mighty at hunting [men] in opposition to the Lord".
> Genesis 10:8-9

Nimrod is the first to be called *gibbor* (Hebrew: גבור) since the destruction of the Nephilim (Gen.6:4; a fact also emphasized in the genealogy of 1Chron.1:10). The word *gibbor* means "mighty" not only in terms of physical strength, but also in the sense of fame or prominence in other areas as well. The Nephilim, it will be recalled, were apparently gifted with any manner of human talents and abilities, and were possessed of almost overwhelming attractiveness. In a similar way, Nimrod was not a *gibbor chayil* (that is, a "mighty man of valor", talented as a warrior, the most common application of the word in the Hebrew Old Testament). Rather, Nimrod's prominence lay in the sphere of political persuasion, and that is why the verses above carefully spell out the area of his "mightiness", namely "hunting [men] against God". That the "hunting" here referred to does not pertain to the taking of animals for sport is plain to see. God's covenant with Noah after the flood authorized the use of animals for food (Gen.9:3), save only that the blood, a symbol of life in general and the work of Christ in particular, had to be drained off in a specific way (Gen.9:4). There is thus no reason that literal hunting should be in any way "against God" (the meaning of the preposition *liphney* here).[92] As indicated by his success in organizing the growing population of the earth into cities (initially, Babylon, Erech, Akkad and Calnah, all on the plain of Shinar: Gen.10:10), Nimrod's amazing talent lay in his ability to persuade men to follow him, to "hunt" and capture their hearts, similar to the way in which Absalom "stole the hearts" of the men of Israel as a first step in fomenting rebellion against his father David (2Sam.15:6; "fishers of men" is the righteous antithesis: Matt.4:19; Mk.1:17). This ensnaring of his fellows' will was clearly "against God" as the sequel shows, and it is more often the case than not that, where political mass-movements are concerned, their entire purpose and foundation are, when stripped of all facade, anti-God in the extreme.

Fourthly, the very name Nimrod means, in Hebrew, "***let us*** revolt".[93] We may surmise, therefore, that Nimrod was not this individual's original name, but that it was changed (as so often was the case in Old Testament times) to reflect the crowning characteristic of his personality as well as the most significant event of his career. The rallying cry that became the name by which history knows him, that is, "Nimrod", is reminiscent of the similar call to arms that will be raised by the leaders of the final revolt against God, the Gog-Magog rebellion (Rev.20:7-9):

> Why are the nations forming into a mob and the peoples [of the earth] grumbling idly. The kings of the earth are assembling and its princes are gathering together – ***against*** the Lord and His Anointed One, [saying] "***Let us*** pull off Their chains, and cast Their cords from us!"
> Psalm 2:1-3

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[92] Literally "in God's *face*"; cf. cf. Ex.20:3; Deut.5:7. Compare the similar use of *el* in Is.3:8 and Nah.2:13; 3:5.

[93] It is the *qal* first person plural imperfect form, often used in the cohortative sense given here. See Keil and Delitzsch, *op.cit*., *in loc*.

Finally, Nimrod's career is clearly split into two phases in Genesis 10:10-12. The second phase, directed not at the plain of Shinar (where all of mankind was concentrated in the century after the flood), but to the more northerly climes of Assyria, must reflect God's frustration of Nimrod's original, more grandiose scheme. Following the defeat of his attempt to forge all humanity into one indivisible whole, Nimrod continued to put his special talents to work in the north.

The ambitious agenda of creating a single world-wide state capable of retaining its hold upon the growing population of the earth required more than an individual of preeminent political abilities. It required a rallying point, a unifying symbol that would at once capture the imagination of the postdiluvian world while at the same time providing sufficient motivation for collective action. In the selection of the famed "tower of Babel", Nimrod (unquestionably under the careful guidance of the devil) chose just such a symbol. This massive and impressive construction project could not help but be the universal subject of conversation in the uni-cultural, uni-lingual world of that time. Like the ark, it was unique and (to this point) completely unprecedented. Unlike the ark, however, which had, after all, been commissioned by God as a sign of impending judgment (as well as a vehicle of deliverance from that judgment), the tower of Babel was not only not *of* God, but was instead decidedly *anti*-God. This is true for a number of reasons.

First, the main objective sought by Nimrod and his diabolical master in the pursuit of this project was to parlay the universal cooperative effort of the tower's construction into a future (enforced) unanimity of action on the part of all mankind. Once the precedent had been set and sufficient time had passed in such a unified, all-out effort, the roots of a monolithic world state would have been firmly set (compare the securing of the Roman Empire on account of the lengthy reign of Augustus). It would have been a short step for Nimrod and his cadre of sub-leaders from overseeing this lengthy, all-consuming construction project to assuming complete political control.

Secondly, based upon the use to which similar structures were put in later times (specifically, the ziggurats), celestial worship – the worship of demons in place of the true God – was undoubtedly a major hidden purpose in the tower's construction (for the symbolism of a tower reaching into the heavens clearly betokens an attempt to make contact with the gods). After political unification had been cemented, the symbolic center-piece of the new collective would be used for pagan religious activity. This pagan devil worship would (as in later times in Babylonia) be a mandatory part of life in the new society, and, as this would be the only society on earth, all true spirituality would forever be fatally compromised.

> Now at this time [a century or more after the flood] the entire world spoke a single language and had identical customs. And it so happened that in their expansion eastward they found a [favorable] valley in the land of Shinar (i.e., Babylonia) and took up residence there. And they began to say, every man to his friend, "Come, let's make bricks and fire them." Now these bricks they used in place of [dressed] stone, and they used tar in place of mortar. Then they began to say, "Come, let's build a city for ourselves – and a

> tower whose top will reach to the heavens. That way we can establish our identity and not be scattered over the face of the entire earth".
> Genesis 11:1-4

The specific description in Genesis 11:4 of the "popular movement" to build the tower of Babel is the best testament we have to the uncannily persuasive powers of Nimrod. For the budding population of earth has taken his words and plans as their own ("***Let us*** build ..."). Now, clearly, this focused idea did not spring into the minds of the human family en masse of its own accord. It must have originated with someone, and the sole individual of the period reported by the Bible to be actively involved in the promotion of urbanization (before and after the tower incident) is Nimrod, who plainly found a way to further this plan on a "grass roots" level and thus be in a position to cast himself in the role of a humble facilitator of the popular will rather than of a high-profile dictator (a key characteristic of tyrants in their rise to power ever since). Another interesting point about his strategy to be gleaned from the narrative is the fact that the campaign to found Babel and build the tower was advanced very much in the manner of similar politically-correct, "good"-covered-evil schemes of our own day. Part of the population bought the idea immediately, then began to coerce their more reluctant neighbors to take part ("And they began to say, *every man to his friend*"), demonstrating that peer pressure has always been an important element in political persuasion. Furthermore, the plan did not start with the tower, the mostly clearly anti-God element of Nimrod's design.

First, collective action in general construction is secured ("***Let us*** make bricks ..."). Second, in a classic "bait and switch" maneuver, the construction of a city is put forward as a worthy construction objective, with the tower, the real focus of the operation, disguised as a subordinate "after-thought". We can see how the promise of a large urban center would have appealed to the post-flood generation, who had been a strictly rural civilization before Nimrod came on the scene, but who had doubtless heard about the antediluvian cities and would only naturally be desirous of reduplicating such inventions (Gen.4:17). Now cities and urbanization, like technology, are not evil in and of themselves.[94] But as with many things in life, that which is allowable is not always beneficial to our spirituality (1Cor.6:12; 10:23). Many things in life, by their very nature, bring with them increased potential for temptation and turning away from God (and, because of the diversity of our sin natures, these things often differ from person to person). As the sequel shows, the building of Babel did in fact have terrible spiritual consequences for the reasons addressed above.

Third, for those who were not fooled about the importance of the tower in the plan to build Babel, and who had the character to resist the intense peer pressure to join in this whole-world effort, Nimrod provided an attractive incentive and rationale for the need to construct such an edifice: without the tower, so the claim went, the heritage and history of the human family would be lost. Unless some extraordinary step were taken, their common identity as a distinct

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[94] See the previous installment of this series for a discussion of Satan's use of technology to further his own designs.

people would be obliterated by the passage of time and by the rapid growth and dispersal of a population that by and large had not even second hand knowledge of the pre-flood civilization. Thus Nimrod's appeal also played craftily upon the common human tendency to wish to preserve its roots, a characteristic no doubt all the more open to exploitation on account of the recent memory of the world-wide flood which had eradicated every tangible trace of the antediluvian civilization.

Lost in the enthusiasm of the moment (by all but the unnamed, unsung faithful few) was the fact that this attitude, let alone this act of creating a monument to themselves, flew in the face of any true faith in God. He is our Father, and our names are known forever by Him (Is.56:5; 62:2; 65:15; Lk.10:20; Rev.2:17). We are written in His book (Ex.32:32-33; Ps.139:16; Dan.12:1; Phil.4:3). Everything on this earth is dust, destined for destruction (1Pet.4:7; 2Pet.3:12), and the idea of preserving ourselves through preserving our "name" is a fatal vanity (cf. Lk.12:25). The tower of Babel, therefore, in addition to providing a framework whereby all future generations could be influenced and coerced into ignoring God, was essentially a monument of ***anti-faith***, for its express purpose was to do what only God can do (i.e., preserve human life and identity forever), and its very building a blasphemous statement to the effect that God could not or would not do so. The tower of Babel was thus a complete rejection of faith in the covenant made by God with Noah, wherein He pledged never to wipe out mankind again, replacing as it did the amazing rainbow of promise with a man-made edifice of dirt.

> Now the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men were building. And the Lord said, "Behold, they are one people and they all speak the same language. And since they have actually begun to accomplish this thing, in the future they will not be restrained (<*batsar*) from anything which they have contrived to do (<*zamam*). Come, let us go down and confuse their language in that place so that no one will be able to understand his neighbor's speech". In doing so, the Lord scattered them from there over the face of the entire earth, and they stopped [cooperatively] building the city. For this reason, the city is called Babel, since there the Lord changed the universal language of the earth to babble, and from that place the Lord scattered [humanity] over the face of the whole earth.
> Genesis 11:5-9

By confusing the common human language of the time, God rendered world-wide cooperation and the godless objectives it inevitably pursues impossible. So it will remain until the advent of antichrist, when the new technological tower of Babel that is currently under construction (i.e., the incipient one-world techno-society) will make such activities as world-wide persecution of believers a possibility again. For by His confusion of human language, God restrained "accomplishment" of this most offensive and evil kind, and thus God delivered those who resisted the idea of preserving life and identity apart from God. God always leaves a remnant of

believers for Himself (Rom.9:27; 11:1-5), which, in this case, must have included Noah and Shem, who both outlived Peleg in whose days these events took place.[95]

3. Satan's attack on the line of the Messiah (Antisemitism): The third satanic strategy of anti-Semitism, or, more precisely, a systematic policy of attempting to eradicate all Jews from planet earth, has been in play since the day of Abraham's circumcision, and will continue until the devil is removed from the world. This strategy can be divided into three phases: 1) before Christ; 2) the time of Christ; 3) after Christ.

Before Christ, the Jewish people were a special target of the devil because of the fact that the Messiah was destined to come from Israel. If he could not eliminate, corrupt or subject the human race to his complete control, destroying the line of the Promised One would suffice to bring the plan of God to an abrupt end. Complete annihilation of the Jewish state and the Jewish people was the only sure way to accomplish this objective, and so it was that Satan devoted considerable resources to attacking Israel, both internally and externally. Internally, Israel became the target of every corrupting influence the devil could bring to bear (one needs only read the prophets, especially Jeremiah, to get a sense of the idolatries into which she was led), while externally Satan worked tirelessly to array the nations of the world against her for the purpose of her destruction (consider, for example, the concentration of his agents in neighboring nations: Dan.10:13; 10:20).

The Messiah was the object of Satan's destructive intentions throughout His earthly life. From Herod's attempt to destroy Him (Matt.2:1-18; the devil undoubtedly had a part: cf. Rev.12:4), to the devil's personal, intensive temptation of Christ (Matt.4:1-11; Mk.1:12-13; Lk.4:1-13) and attempts to oppose Christ (Matt.4:1-11; 16:23; Mk.8:33; Lk.4:29-30; Jn.7:30; 8:59; 10:39), to his active role in the betrayal of Christ (Lk.22:3; Jn.13:2; 13:27), Satan spared no effort in undertaking to frustrate the Father's plan for Him – in vain.

Since the time of Christ, Israel has continued to be a prime focus for the devil's destructive attentions, though for a different reason. Although Satan failed to prevent the coming of the Messiah by extirpating the people ***from whom*** He was to come, he still has hopes of rendering His second coming pointless by eradicating the people ***to whom*** He is destined to return. For without Israel's continuation as a people, there would be no possible way of fulfilling the many specific promises made to them by God, the majority of which will only be brought to complete fulfillment under the millennial reign of Christ (e.g., the regathering of the nation, to name but one: Is.49:8-26). Without an Israel for the Prince of Israel to rule, the devil would have effectively frustrated God's plan.

Needless to say, all the devil's efforts in this regard will ultimately prove ineffective. Nevertheless, as events of recent and current history show only too well, he is continuing to

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[95] Peleg died 310 years after the flood, while Noah and Shem outlived him by 40 and 90 years respectively (Noah: Gen.9:28; Shem: Gen.11:10-11).

pursue this strategy. But woe to those who allow themselves to be used by him in this way (Is.27:7).[96]

> For I shall bless those who bless you, but those who utter curses against you I shall lay under a [true] curse, and thus will all the families of the earth be blessed through you.
> Genesis 12:3

> No weapon forged against you shall prosper. And you shall reprove every tongue that rises up to judge you. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and My vindication on their behalf, says the Lord.
> Isaiah 54:17

> For thus says the Lord of hosts, "In later times He [the Father] shall send Me in glory against the nations who have plundered you (for whoever touches you touches the apple of My eye). At that time, behold, I shall wave My hand against them, and they will be plundered by their slaves. In this way you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me.
> Zechariah 2:8-9

The many prophecies of the Lord's future retribution against all who would harm or damage Israel are paralleled by numerous historical examples. The principle of God using others to discipline His people – but of holding this instrument to close account – can be seen in the case of Assyria, the "rod of His anger" (Is.10:5), of whom He says,

> When the Lord has finished all His work against Mount Zion and Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the king of Assyria for the willful pride of his heart and the haughty look in his eyes."
> Isaiah 10:12 [NIV] (cf. vv.15-19)

Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and many nations and tribes large and small were used by the Lord in Old Testament times to scourge His people when they strayed far from Him, but always with the purpose of bringing them back to Himself, and never to utterly destroy them. In each instance, it was the oppressor who was, in the end, chastened far more severely than Israel, the original object of wrath. In modern times as well the examples of Russia (imperial and communist) and Nazi Germany stand as vivid reminders of the results of active antisemitic agendas. It is well for those who follow Jesus Christ to consider that, although the suffering of Jews in this Church Age may be the result of divine visitation (according to the same pattern of chastisement to turn His people back to Him in truth), the consequences for those used in such a capacity remain dire indeed. Disputes between the Lord and Israel are very much a "family affair" and so, as in the analogy, it is wisdom to avoid becoming part of the problem.

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[96] For a comprehensive treatment of this issue from a Christian perspective, see R. B. Thieme, Antisemitism (Houston 1974).

Judging from the continual backsliding and idolatry of the Old Testament nation Israel (trends continually denounced by the prophets), and from the "hardness in part" that holds sway over the greater part of Israel today (Rom.11:25), it is plain that "all Israel is not Israel" (Rom.9:6), and that we can therefore expect the Lord to continue with His work of discipline for the gracious purpose of repentance and salvation. But we must never forget that this "special attention" is a blessing (for some have always responded), and one that the Lord provides uniquely to this people who are "beloved because of the fathers" (Rom.11:28). For although a Jewish genealogy does not automatically bring salvation (Rom.9:30-32), this valuable heritage does bring a special consideration, a special oversight from God Himself (Zech.2:8-9; Rom.11:28).

Much then does it behoove us who are of the "wild olive tree" to respect and to pray for those of the "natural olive tree", and to be exceedingly circumspect in all our dealings in this regard. And we should do this not only to avoid falling under the same judgment that Israel's persecutors have suffered in the past. We should adopt God's own attitude of ***objective compassion***. For while no one shall come to Him apart from Jesus Christ (Jn.14:6), He nevertheless desires all men to be saved (1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9). How much more then is this true in the case of the descendants of Abraham, the original heir of His promises, "from whom is the Christ according to the flesh" (Rom.9:5)! If we are truly walking in love as Christians should, showing the same consideration for all our neighbors as we do for ourselves and adopting God's attitude of desiring and working for the salvation of all who will accept it, then this approach presents no problem whatsoever.

> To the Jew first, and also to the Greek (i.e., gentile).
> Romans 1:16; 2:9; 2:10

4. Satan's attack on the body of Christ (Persecution of the Church): Since the resurrection, ascension and session of Jesus Christ, the devil's primary focus has been Christ's body on earth, His Church. Having been defeated in all three of the campaigns discussed above, the devil is faced now with the sure and certain prospect of being replaced along with his followers by the Church as it continues to grow apace. The reality is that Satan has therefore been reduced to fighting a futile rearguard action in the vain hope of somehow staving off the inevitable. In spite of this, the opposition the devil is now visiting upon true believers world-wide is all the more furious as he attempts to prevent the growth and completion of the Church. This means opposing believers and attempting to prevent our spiritual growth, but it also means taking all possible measures to try and prevent unsaved humanity from coming to the light of Jesus Christ.

The main target during this era, however, is true Christian orthodoxy. Wherever believers are seriously attempting to pursue a close and genuine relationship with their Lord, we can expect to find active opposition. There is a point of view which suggests that major persecutions of the Church are largely a thing of the past, but such opinions are not informed by events today taking place in countries such as China, North Korea, India, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt and Iran (to name but a few of the more prominent and well-known examples) where to be and to walk like a true Christian is still to take one's life in one's hands. Even in places where no such direct threat of persecution exists at the moment (such as the

United States), more subtle forms of attack are being employed (the increasingly corrosive and hostile popular culture, for instance). One thing is certain: as long as the Church Age continues, the devil will continue to make a priority of targeting Christians who are advancing spiritually in an attempt to dissuade others from following suit.

> Stay sober and stay awake [on guard]. Our adversary the devil roams about like a roaring lion, looking for someone he can devour. Resist him, strong in your faith, remembering that your fellow believers in this world are undergoing the exact same sort of suffering [as you are].
> 1st Peter 5:8-9

5. Satan's supreme offensive (the Tribulation): Although the Church Age may for the most part represent for Satan a hard-fought rearguard action, its last seven years, the Tribulation, will be the time of his ultimate and most potent offensive prior to the return of Jesus Christ. Moreover, we should not underestimate the fury he will unleash during this last battle of the Church Age.

> Woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you, having great anger, because he knows that he has [only] a short time [remaining].
> Revelation 12:12

> But when the Son of Man returns, will He find faith on the earth?
> Luke 18:8b

Jesus' question in this second quote is an indication of the intensity of pressure that will be brought to bear against believers during the final seven years that precede His return. This is all the more remarkable in that another characteristic of Satan's strategy during the Tribulation is that instead of being more narrowly focused (as the other four major strategic approaches were), these final seven years will see the entire earth and all of mankind targeted in one way or another. During the Tribulation, his "final offensive", the devil will hold nothing back, but will instead take risks he has never before dared (including personal ones involved in his dangerous gambits vis-a-vis antichrist: compare Gen.3:15; 6:4; 2Thes.2:9; Rev.13:3-4; 13:12; 13:14; 16:13-14; 17:8; 17:11), committing all the resources he has thus far husbanded to this one last attempt at thwarting the plan of God. Specifically, he will undertake the elimination of the Jews, and of the whole community of believers on earth, setting in motion the train of events that will bring about open hostilities with God Himself, both in heaven (the "war in heaven" of Rev.12:7), and on earth (Armageddon: Rev.16:14-16). That his utter defeat is a foregone conclusion does not in any way alter the fact that, as a result of his massive effort, the Tribulation will be the most difficult period which humanity has ever experienced, one in which a careful walk with God will be more important for the believer's spiritual safety than ever before.[97]

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[97] In addition to being discussed again below, The Tribulation, to the study of which this series constitutes an introduction, is the focus of the series The Coming Tribulation.

> If anyone [is marked] for captivity, he is going into captivity. If anyone [is marked] for death by the sword, by the sword [he must] be killed. Therefore endurance and faith [on the part] of [my] sanctified ones is [called for].
> Revelation 13:10

6. Satan's last battle (the Gog-Magog Rebellion): The devil will launch one last offensive before being confined to the lake of fire forever. At history's end, he will be released from the Abyss for a short period of time – a final demonstration on God's part of Satan's intractably evil character (Rev.20:7-10). For immediately upon his release the devil will set to organizing the population of a world at peace and experiencing the most profound prosperity in its history under the universal rule of Jesus Christ to rebel against the Anointed One (Ps.2; Matt.13:26; Matt.22:1-14; Rev.20:7-10). In this last battle, the devil's strategy comes more clearly to the fore than ever before: he will attempt (unsuccessfully) to directly unseat his divine Replacement, Jesus Christ.

Summary: From the correct, divine point of view, it may be observed that Satan's actions seem to make little sense. For he is fighting against God in all these operations. And even though he has the advantage of attacking the weakest link in the plan of God, sinful mankind, with God in control even this weak reed becomes an unbreakable rod of iron (Gen.18:14; Matt.19:26; Lk.1:37; 18:27). Indeed, section II of this study has shown in great detail that God's entire construction of human history has been designed for and carried out in total victory. The devil's "madness" is thus of the same sort we see commonly in the human race (the rule, really, and, unfortunately, not the exception). It is a madness born of arrogance (which corrupts all sound thinking), a madness that blinds itself to the reality of God, His eternity, His power and His mercy, and substitutes self in His place. In all the diabolical undertakings given in synoptic form above, God has ever been in charge in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord who is blessed forever, and through Him we too shall have our share in the ultimate victory.

> For everything that has been born from God overcomes the world. And this is ***the victory*** that has overcome the world: our faith [in Christ]!
> 1st John 5:4 (cf. v.1)

> But thanks be to God who gives us ***the victory*** through our Lord Jesus Christ!
> 1st Corinthians 15:57

> In all this we are ***decisively victorious*** through Him who loved us.
> Romans 8:37

IV. Things to Come: Judgment, Restoration and Replacement Phases II and III

Since the beginning of this series, we have been tracking the course and composition of Satan's rebellion against God from its initial inception up until its most decisive culmination in the Tribulation. With the treatment of satanic strategies above, our task has reached a natural concluding point, for the Tribulation, the next major event in the history of the devil's rebellion and God's disposition of it, requires individual attention (provided in the series, The Coming

Tribulation). Indeed, as the title demonstrates, this present series is, by design, an introduction providing background for that most intense period of human history. It will not be amiss, however, to sketch out here in preliminary form an overview of the final disposition of the satanic rebellion as God brings to a conclusion the human history He has fashioned to deal with it.

The **plan of God**, as set forth in these studies, can be seen as working in three distinct phases. This three phase process, consisting of Judgment, Restoration and Replacement, phases I, II, and III respectively, is, essentially, God's plan for total victory (in response to the rebellion of Satan) described in strategic terms:

Phase I: Constitution: Lays the foundation for the eternal victory (the "much" phase).

- Judgment I: The Genesis Gap judgment: judgment is passed upon Satan and his angels while the devil's original headquarters, the pre-historic earth, is devastated and the original universe plunged into darkness.

- Restoration I: Earth is restored to a habitable environment (the Seven Days of Re-creation).

- Replacement I: The creation of the first Adam begins the human race (the source of eventual replacement for Satan and his angels). The gift of the Last Adam, Jesus Christ, provides the grace necessary for the salvation of the human race after the fall through the Messiah's work on the Cross. The Church can then be called out for replacement.

Phase II: Completion: Realizes eternal objectives with victory in time (the "more" phase).

- Judgment II: the Tribulation: God's judgment upon the devil's kingdom and upon his earthly subjects. Satan and his angels are expelled from heaven and later imprisoned.

- Restoration II: the Millennium: earth is restored to an environment of blessing.

- Replacement II: Christ the King replaces Satan as the de facto ruler of the earth. The Church is resurrected in replacement.

Phase III: Consummation: Crowns the victory with surpassing blessing in eternity (the "most" phase).

- Judgment III: The Final Judgments: Satan and his angels are removed to the lake of fire along with unbelieving humanity (following the Great White Throne judgment).

- Restoration III: The New Heavens, New Earth and New Jerusalem provide an unparalleled and eternal environment of perfect blessing.

- Replacement III: The Advent of the Father: along with Christ, He will rule forever from earth. The Church is complemented by the double portion of millennial believers.

Phase II: Completion: Realizes eternal objectives with victory in time (the "more" phase).

1. Judgment II: the Tribulation: Although opinion often holds the Tribulation to be largely a reign of terror introduced by the devil and his earthly minion the antichrist (and so it is), the Bible is quite specific in indicating that its primary purpose is one of divine judgment upon the earth (the devil's kingdom) and its inhabitants (hostile to God for the most part, especially during the Tribulation: Rev.6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8; 13:12; 16:1; 17:2; 17:8; cf. Is.24:5-6; 24:17-18; Mic.7:13):[98]

> Behold, the Lord is about to empty the earth and lay it waste, and He will mar its face and scatter its inhabitants.
> Isaiah 24:1 (chapters 24-27 deal primarily with the end times)

> Get out, My people. Go into your rooms and close your doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until My indignation has run its course. For behold, the Lord is about to come forth from His place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity. And the earth will reveal the blood shed upon it, and conceal its slain no longer (i.e., the persecution of believers will be punished).
> Isaiah 26:20-21 (cf. 2Pet.3:10b)

The principle of the Tribulation being first and foremost a period when the Lord judges the earth can also be clearly seen from the seven final plagues of Revelation (Rev.15:11 - 16:21). These plagues are all righteous judgments from God upon the earth and its sinful inhabitants, and are very similar in their nature and execution to the plagues He wrought upon Egypt for persecuting Israel (Ex.7:14 - 12:30). This is no surprising matter when one considers that the plagues of Revelation chapters fifteen and sixteen are the divine response to ***the persecution*** of God's people world-wide which will reach a fever pitch during the Great Tribulation (cf. Dan.8:12-13; 11:33-35; Matt.24:8-13; 24:23-26; Mk.13:9-13; Lk.21:12-19; Rev.6:9-11; 7:9-17; 12:12-17; 13:10; 13:11-18; 14:13; 14:14-16; 15:1-4; 16:5-6; 17:6; 18:24; 19:1-2; 20:4):

> Then I heard the angel of the waters saying,
> > "O You who are and [always] were, the Holy One, You are justified in rendering these [seven bowl] judgments. For [the inhabitants of the earth] have poured out the blood of [Your] saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it."

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[98] As Robert H. Mounce points out in The Book of Revelation (Grand Rapids 1977) 194, "the inhabitants of the world" is, in Revelation, essentially a technical term for the unsaved (cf. the use of the word "sinners" in the gospels).

Revelation 16:5-6

While the entire seven year tribulational period will be one of intensifying judgment, the apex of that judgment will come when the full fury of God's wrath is revealed immediately before, during and after the battle of Armageddon, the time when a returning Christ will slaughter all the armies of the world that Satan has assembled to do battle with Him:

1) The Seven Bowl Judgments (the final plagues: Ex.7:14 - 12:30; Rev.15:1 - 16:21):

> Then great hail stones the size of a talent (i.e., approx. 80 lb.) were coming down out of heaven upon mankind, and they blasphemed God on account of the plague of hail, because that plague was very severe.
> Revelation 16:21

2) The Destruction of the Beast's Home Kingdom (Babylon has fallen: Is.13:19-22; 14:21-23; 21:9; 46:1 - 47:15; Rev.14:8; 16:10-11; 17:16-18; 18:1-24; 19:1-2):

> Now as for the ten horns which you saw and the beast, these will come to hate the harlot [Babylon] and will render her desolate and naked, and they will eat her flesh and will burn her up with fire.
> Revelation 17:16

3) The Terrifying Signs and Wonders (heaven and earth shaken: Is.24:18-20; Is.29:6; 34:4; 51:6; 60:2; Ezek.38:19; Joel 2:29-30; 3:14-16; Hag.2:6-7; 2:21-22; Matt.24:29; Lk.21:25-26; Rev.6:12-17; 16:18-20):

> Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, a mighty day of anger and intense wrath, to make the earth desolate and remove her sinners from upon her. For the stars of heaven and the constellations will not flash forth their light. The sun will grow dark on its course and the moon will not pour out its light. Then will I punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity. I will bring an end to the arrogance of the proud and bring down the haughtiness of the ruthless. I will make men more rare than gold, and mankind than the choice bullion of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth will quake from its place, on account of the anger of the Lord and on the day of His fierce wrath.
> Isaiah 13:9-13

4) The Harvest of the Earth (Armageddon: Ps.2:1-2; 110:5-7; Is.11:4; 29:5-8; 34:1-3; 52:10; 59:15-19; 63:1-6; 66:15-16; Ezek.38:1 - 39:21; Joel 3:9-14; Hag.2:21-22; Zech.12:3; 14:1-3; Rev.14:17-20; 16:14-16; 19:11-21):

> Send forth the sickle for the harvest is ripe! Come down into the winepress for it is full and the vats overflow. For great is their wickedness. Multitudes,

> multitudes in the valley of doom! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of doom.
> Joel 3:13-14

5) The Lake of Fire (judgment of the antichrist and the false prophet: Dan.9:27; 11:45; 2Thes.2:8):

> And the beast was seized and the false prophet with him (the one who had performed the signs before him with which he had deceived those who took the sign of the beast and worshiped his image). The two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with sulphur.
> Revelation 19:20

6) The Abyss (apprehension and imprisonment of Satan and his angels, previously thrown to earth in the middle of the Tribulation: Is.14:3-23; 24:21-23; 27:1; 34:1-5; Jer.10:11; Ezek.28:11-19; Dan.4:35; Lk.10:18; 1Cor.6:2-3; Rev.12:4):

> And I saw an angel coming down from heaven with the key to the Abyss and a great chain in his hand. He seized the dragon, the primeval snake, who is the devil, that is, Satan, and he bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss and closed it, putting his seal upon it, so that [the devil] might not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years had elapsed. After this, he must be released for a short while.
> Revelation 20:1-3

As seen from these events, Judgment Phase II is indeed the "more phase", both because of the increased level and intensity of the judgment (the devil and his angels did not suffer in God's condemnation of the original universe), and also because of the more permanent consequences the judgment produces (instead of being paroled, they are defeated and imprisoned). Phase II is thus the initial fulfillment of Phase I wherein judgment was rendered in principle by God upon Satan and his angels (before human history began as we have seen),[99] and is a development made possible by the victory of Christ on the cross and the subsequent completion of His Church (see Replacement II immediately below for discussion). The Phase II judgment upon the earth and its inhabitants will, as indicated above, also be an intense, experiential reality, carried out in a miraculous and supernatural way. The removal of the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Tribulation (2Thes.2:6-7), will allow the devil and mankind to go to extremes not previously permitted, thus vindicating for all to see the justness of these intense judgments (comparable to the special opportunity given to Pharaoh to "harden his heart" beyond normal limits).[100]

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[99] See especially part 1 of the current series.

[100] See the Exodus 14 series.

The Tribulation is thus the penultimate step in the complete removal of Satan and his influence from God's creation. Having first condemned Satan (Is.14:3-23; Ezek.28:11-19; see part 1 of this series), God proclaimed his eventual defeat (Gen.3:15), laid the foundation for it at the cross (Col.2:15), expelled him and his angels from heaven at the Tribulation's mid-point (Rev.12:7-9), and locked them all safely away in the Abyss for the duration of His Son's millennial reign (Rev.20:1-3). When this second phase of judgment is complete, only God's final disposition of the devil, his minions, unbelieving humanity, and the sin-infested cosmos will remain. Until that time, Phase II Judgment will have cleared the way for the corresponding restoration and replacement, based upon the victory of Jesus Christ on the cross:

> Now the judgment of this world is [imminent]. Now the ruler of this world is about to be cast out [of it].
> John 12:31

2. Restoration II: the Millennium: In phase one, God restored the earth and heavens from a condition of catastrophic darkness to habitable status. Only one centralized locale, the Garden of Eden, existed under "paradise conditions", and it did not take long before the first man and his wife deprived themselves of even this place of exceptionally pleasant environment. After the flood, as we have seen, conditions on earth deteriorated further, so that the present earth, though habitable, is only a shadow of its former self as it existed in pre-history before the beginning of the devil's rebellion. During the Millennium (Phase II Restoration), the earth will witness a return to much of its original glory. The fact that in the Millennium we shall still be "in time" (and therefore still coexisting with sin, even though Satan and his angels will be imprisoned until the Millennium's end) means that the environment on earth will not be "perfect", but it will provide the most exquisitely wonderful conditions seen since Adam and Eve were expelled from Eden.

Since Christ will return first and foremost as King of Israel, the majority of biblical passages touching upon the Millennium are directed primarily (if not exclusively) to Israel as she will be restored for His thousand year reign. In conjunction with other more general scriptures, however, we can extrapolate that the blessings indicated will be worldwide (though it is certainly true that the prosperity in "the land" of Israel will be exceptional even by millennial standards).

1) Earth: During the Tribulation, conditions on earth will be worse than at any time in human history since the great flood (Matt.24:21; Mk.13:19). During the Millennium, however, not only will the intensively harsh conditions of the Tribulation vanish, but the reign of Christ on earth will usher in a period of blessing and prosperity without parallel since the garden of Eden This will be a period of restoration (Acts 3:21; Rom.8:19-23), a return to near edenic conditions as the predicted "trees of blessing" that parallel similar trees in the garden indicate (Ezek.31; 34:27; 36:8; cf. Is.60:21; 61:3; Amos 9:15). Indeed, this period will witness the penultimate

Eden, the millennial Jerusalem, surpassed only in glory by the eternal New Jerusalem that will follow it (see point # 5 below).[101]

Though especially concentrated in Israel and in Jerusalem, the blessings of the new age will overflow to the world at large, positively affecting the climate (Is.30:23-26; Rev.7:16), the environment (Is.30:26; 35:7; 41:18; 44:3), plant and animal life (Is.11:6-9; 35:1-2; 41:19; 55:12-13; 65:10), and agriculture (Ps.72:3; Is.30:23-24; Jer.31:12; Zech.8:12). During this "season of the Lord's favor" (Is.61:2), the curse on the earth will finally be removed (Gen.3:17-19; 5:29; compare with Rom.8:19-23), and she will enjoy an unprecedented period of general prosperity:

> And it will come to pass on that day that the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills run with milk. And all the watercourses of Judah will run with water.
> Joel 3:18

> Behold, days are coming, says the Lord, when the one who ploughs will catch up with the reaper, and the one who treads the grapes will catch up with the sower. The mountains will drip with sweet wine and the hills will be liquid [goodness].
> Amos 9:13

2) Humanity: During the Tribulation, conditions will be so catastrophic that only God's foreshortening of the period will prevent the complete elimination of living human beings from the earth (Matt.24:22; Mk.13:20). Even so, as a result of the devil's last great offensive as ruler of the world, humanity's numbers will be so depleted that mankind will become "scarcer than gold" (Is.13:12; cf. Is.4:1; 17:6; 24:13; Rev.6:8; 9:15). The Millennium will witness a complete reversal of this trend. The general blessings upon the earth described immediately above and the advent of worldwide peace under the universal rule of our Lord Jesus Christ will bring in conditions ideal for rapid population growth (Zech.9:10). No small element of this swift recovery of mankind's numbers during the Millennium will be a general improvement in human vitality under the reign of righteousness, where healing (Is.29:18; 35:5-6), health (Is.33:24; Zech.9:17), and longevity (Is.65:20; 65:22b; Zech.8:4-5) will all enjoy miraculous improvement. The earth's population will thus stage a sudden comeback, beginning with Israel and Jerusalem (Is.49:19-21; 60:22; Zech.8:4-5), and expanding out to the entire world, so that after the thousand years have elapsed, the nations who had come close to extinction will again be "like the sand of the seashore" in number (Rev.20:8).

> I will rejoice over Jerusalem and be filled with joy for My people. The sound of weeping and the cry of distress will no longer be heard in her. No longer will there be there any infant that perishes in his youth, nor any old man who fails to live out his days in full. For a man will be accounted but a youth, should he die at a hundred, even the sinner a hundred year old who suffers this curse.
> Isaiah 65:19-20

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[101] The "seven Edens" are treated in part 1 of the present series.

3) Israel: One of the devil's main objectives in the Tribulation will be to destroy Israel from the face of the earth, a goal to be pursued during that period with more intensity than at any time previously in her storied history (Rev.12:1-17). By way of sharp contrast, the Millennium will see Israel exalted to the premier position among the nations for the first time since Abraham received the promises (Gen.12:2-3; 15:5-21; 17:4-19; 22:17-18). Her people will be regathered from the four corners of the globe (Is.43; 49:22; 60:4; 66:20; Jer.30:10; 31:8; 33:10-26; Ezek.11:17; 20:41; 37:21-28; 39:25-29; Amos 9:11; Zeph.3:20; Zech.8:8; 10:10). She will possess the full grant of land God originally made to Abraham (Zech.9:10). In an era of intensive blessing, she will be doubly blessed (Is.61:7; Joel 2:25; Zech.9:12), and be a blessing herself to whole world (Zech.8:20-23; cf. Gen.12:3). Whereas hardness and stubbornness had been the rule in generations past (Rom.11:25), at that time unbelieving Jews will be virtually non-existent after God purges His special people (Is.4:4; 59:20-21; Ezek.20:34-38; 36:24-38; Zech.13:1; 13:8-9; Mal.3:2-4; cf. Rom.11:12-15; 11:26-27; 11:30-31), and her sons will take the gospel of Christ to the nations (Is.66:19). The recapturing of the leadership role in the Church that begins during the Tribulation will be completely consummated during the Millennium so that believing gentiles will seek to join themselves to the nation of Israel and share in the richness of her blessing (Is.14:1; 56:3-8; Ezek.47:21-26).[102]

> The wealth of all the nations round about will be gathered up, their gold and silver and clothing in abundance.
> Zechariah 14:14

> The Lord their God will deliver them on that day (for His people are to Him as a precious flock, like jewels in a crown set prominently in His land). For how fair and beautiful they will be. Grain will make the young men flourish and new wine the young women.
> Zechariah 9:16-17

> Enlarge the place for your tent. Let your tent curtains stretch wide and don't hold back. Lengthen your ropes and strengthen your stakes. For you will burst forth on the right and on the left. Your offspring will possess the nations, and the deserted cities will be inhabited.
> Isaiah 54:2-3

4) Jerusalem: Jerusalem will suffer terribly during the Tribulation, experiencing, in particular, a massive earthquake (Is.29:6-7; Ezek.38:17-23; Rev.11:13), and a horrible siege (Is.29:6-7; Ezek.38:17-23; Zech.12:2; 14:2). But Jerusalem will also be the very spot to which our Lord will return (Zech.14:3-5). During the millennial reign of Christ, instead of being the focal point of satanic attack (Zech.12:2-3; 12:9; 14:2; 14:12), Jerusalem will become the focal point for all the unsurpassed blessing that God is about to pour out upon the earth in those days (Is.60:10-14). She will literally be elevated to stand preeminent over all the cities on earth (Is.2:2-3; 52:2; Ezek.40:2; Mich.4:1; Zech.14:10). In the Millennium, Jerusalem will be the

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[102] See the section above, "The Tribulational Overlap".

residence our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and there mankind will meet with Him face to face (Zech.8:3; 8:22; 9:9; 14:16). The seat of the penultimate Eden,[103] Jerusalem will be rebuilt (Is.44:24ff.; 51:3; 61:4), lavished with blessings (Is.54:11-17), and will be a blessing in its own right to the entire earth (Is.65:18 [also of the New Jerusalem]):

> Your gates will be open always, day and night they will not be closed, so that the wealth of the nations may be brought to you, and their kings led before you.
> Isaiah 60:11

> I am about to extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing torrent.
> Isaiah 66:12

> The Lord will have compassion on Zion, and compassion on all her ruins, and He will make her desert ***like Eden***, and her wilderness ***like the garden of the Lord***.
> Isaiah 51:3

5) Divine Rule (the Messiah): During the Tribulation the earth and its population will experience satanic rule at its most intense and direct as the devil's man, the antichrist, will preside over a one-world, Satan-worshiping state (Dan.2:40; 2Thes.2:1-12; Rev.13:1-18). The contrast here could not be more sharp as the worst leadership in human history will be replaced by the best during the Millennium with the personal rule of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Is.9:6-7; 33:17; Ezek.48:35; Dan.7:14; Zech.14:9). His will be a reign of peace (Is.9:6), of prosperity (Is.9:7; 25:6), of great comfort (Is.9:3; 25:8), and, perhaps most importantly of all, of justice (Is.11:3-5; 16:5; 32:1-8; 51:4-7; Jer.33:15; Zech.9:9). Under His righteous and firm hand, evil will be suppressed (Ps.2:9-12; Is.11:4), and mankind will experience a security never before known (Is.11:6-9; 32:16-20; 65:25; Jer.33:16; Mic.5:2-5). As the ultimate fulfillment and focus of all God's promises to Israel (2Sam.7:14; Jer.33:14-17; Lk.1:32-33), Christ will reign until all enemies have been placed under His feet (1Cor.15:24-28; cf. Ps.2; Ps.110).

> For He will judge between the nations, and chasten many peoples. Then they will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will no longer raise the sword against nation, and they will not study war any longer.
> Isaiah 2:4 (cf. Mic.4:3-4)

The righteous rule of Christ will suppress the effects of the sin nature so pronounced in our own experience (e.g., crime and war), and the result will be a veritable heaven on earth, an environment as perfect as possible (given the limitation that it will contain imperfect human beings), a world overflowing with blessing in its sights and sounds, its prosperity, and in the physical and spiritual wholeness, flowing forth from Jerusalem:

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[103] See part 1 of this series, section II.6.f.

> To His dominion ***and its prosperity*** there will be no limit or end. He will establish it and lay its foundation on David's throne and over his kingdom, in justice and righteousness, now and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this.
> Isaiah 9:7

6) The Knowledge of God: In the Tribulation, through his instigation of the greatest apostasy in world history (Dan.8:12-13; 11:33-35; Matt.24:4-5; 24:24-25; 2Thes.2:3; 1Tim.4:1), the greatest persecution in world history (Matt.24:9-12; Rev.6:9-11; 7:13-14), and his most direct control over the earth in world history (through his minion, antichrist: Rev.13), Satan will attempt his most vigorous suppression yet of the knowledge of God (Lk.18:8; cf. Amos 8:11). But in the Millennium, when God reigns in the Person of Christ, the knowledge of God will be more bountifully available than ever before in world history (Is.19:21; 54:13a; Jer.31:34; 32:38-40; Ezek.11:19-20; 36:25-27; Hab.2:14; Heb.8:10-11):

> "Come let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us of His ways, and that we may walk in His paths."
> Isaiah 2:3

> For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord just as the waters cover the sea.
> Isaiah 11:9b

Restoration Phase II is thus the "more phase", because of the great intensity of blessing in such stark contrast with what precedes (i.e., the Millennium as opposed to the Tribulation), and also because of the more permanent consequences produced: with the exception of the short interstice of the Gog-Magog rebellion, the Millennium will segue directly into the Eternal State (Rev.20:7 - 21:8). Phase II is thus the initial fulfillment of Phase I wherein earth was restored to habitability during the seven days of restoration to make possible the seven millennial day span of human history, culminating in the extreme blessing of the seventh day, the Millennium. Phase II restoration of the earth will also be carried out in a miraculous and supernatural way under the direct rule of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ (Ps.2:9-12). The removal of the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit at the beginning of the Tribulation (2Thes.2:6-7), will be replaced during the Millennium by the pouring out of the Spirit world-wide (Joel 2:28; cf. Is.32:15; 44:3; 54:13; Ezek.36:27; 39:29), and all mankind will enjoy the fruits of the restoration of the earth under the rule of the Son of God (Jer.31:23; Ezek.39:25; Hos.6:11; Joel 3:1; Mal.4:6; Matt.17:11; Mk.9:12):

> It was necessary for heaven to receive Him [Jesus Christ], until the times of the ***restoration*** of all the things (i.e., in the Millennium) which God has spoken about since the beginning of history through the mouths of His holy prophets.
> Acts 3:21

3. Replacement II: the Rule of Christ and the Kingdom of God: In phase one, God created a new order of creatures, mankind, as the ultimate source for completely replacing Satan and his angels. The original man, Adam, and his spouse were capable of sin, and their eventual exercising of this

capability plunged them (immediately) and their progeny (at birth) into a natural state of sin. Contrary to the devil's design and expectation, however, God provided the means for redeeming Adam and Eve along with any and all of their progeny who would desire redemption through the gracious gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Last Adam, and in every generation before and since believers have been enlisting in the roles of His Church. Christ's assumption of true humanity and His sacrifice on the cross opened the way for the next stage of replacement, the resurrection of believing humanity, with the way already having been led by the "Prince-Ruler of our salvation" (Heb.2:10):

> When He had accomplished the cleansing of [our] sins, He took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high.
> Hebrews 1:3b

Phase one laid the ground work for replacement, providing a new Ruler (Jesus Christ) to replace the present ruler of the world (Satan), a new kingdom (the Kingdom of Heaven) to replace the present kingdom of darkness (Col.1:13), and new subjects (believers bought with the blood of Christ) to attend the King in place of the devil's angelic followers (Phil.3:20). During phase one, these replacements are essentially such in principle only as they await the fulfillment of the two further phases: Christ has been glorified, but has not yet returned to commence His reign; the Kingdom is here in principle (in the persons of believers and the Spirit of Christ: Lk.17:21), but is not yet functioning in practice (cf. Matt.11:12); and the Church is coming rapidly to completion, but has not yet been resurrected. During phase two, Christ our King will return (the Second Advent), and will lay claim to His Kingdom (Rev.11:15), while His Church (His Body of believers called out during the first six days of human history) will be resurrected to share in His millennial rule (1Cor.15:23).

1) <u>The King</u>: Our Lord, the Messiah, Jesus Christ replaces the devil as the ruler of this world at the time of the 2nd Advent.

a. <u>His Kingship is ***founded*** upon His victory on the cross</u>:

- Through the cross, He has overcome and will terminate the devil's *kosmos* (Jn.16:33).
- Through the cross, the Father has in principle already triumphed over the devil's forces and stripped them of their power (Col.2:14-15).
- Through the cross, He has in principle already put an end to the one having the power of death (i.e., the devil: Heb.2:14; cf. 2Tim.1:10).
- Through the cross, therefore, He has the right to bring on the final epoch of Satan's direct rule (i.e., the Tribulation), thus opening the door for His direct millennial rule (Rev.5:5).
- Through the cross, He has led condemned mankind to the victory of eternal life (Matt.12:20; cf. Col.2:12-14; Heb.2:10).
- Through the cross, therefore, we share in His victory over death (1Cor.15:54-57).

b. <u>His Kingship is ***confirmed*** by proclamation, resurrection, ascension, and session</u>:

- Proclamation of His victory to the demons previously imprisoned in Hades (i.e., in the abyss: 1Pet.3:19; cf. Rom.10:5-7; Col.2:15; Eph.4:8-10) confirmed the success of His mission and the imminency of His reign. It was also an indication of the coming superiority of His followers over the angels (1Cor.6:3; Heb.2:5).[104]
- Resurrection confirmed the prophecies of His coming reign (Ps.16:10; Acts 2:24-31; 13:30-38), confirmed His status as heir of the Kingdom (Acts 5:30-31; 10:40-43; 17:31; Rom.1:4; 1Pet.1:21), and confirmed the effectiveness of His sacrifice (1Cor.15:13-19; 15:21; Phil.3:10; 1Pet.1:3; 3:21), which forms the basis for His followers to share in that resurrection (Rom.6:5; 8:11; 8:34-35; 10:9; 1Cor.6:14; 2Cor.4:14; 5:15; Col.2:12).
- Ascension confirmed the acceptability of the sacrifice of our High Priest (Heb.4:14; 6:19-20; 7:26; 9:11-12), while His entrance into the true Holy of Holies opened the door for believers to enter into the presence of God (Heb.10:19), with believers who had died prior to the cross led to heaven by Him in triumph at the time of His ascension (Ps.68:18; Eph.4:8; cf. Ps.68:24-27; 146:7b; Is.14:17b; 42:7; 49:9; 61:1; Jn.14:2-3; 14:6; 17:24; Col.2:15; 1Pet.3:18-22; Rev.1:18).
- Session validated His status as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Acts 2:32-36; 5:30-31; Eph.1:20-23; 1Pet.3:22), made His ultimate rule only a matter of time (Ps.110; Acts 3:21; Heb.1:13; cf. 1Cor.1:7-8; 1Thes.1:10; Tit.2:13; Jas.5:8), and so became the basis for the reward of believers (Ps.68:18; Is.40:10; 62:11; Eph.4:8; cf. 1Thes.2:19; Heb.12:2; 1Pet.1:7; Rev.22:12).

c. His Kingship is ***consummated*** at the 2nd Advent:

- With the commencement of His reign, human rule over the earth lost by the first Adam will be restored in the person of the Last Adam (Ps.8; Rom.5:12-21; 1Cor.15:45; Heb.2:7-9).
- With the commencement of His reign, the final process of reducing all God's enemies to complete submission will begin (1Cor.15:24-26; cf. Phil.2:10).
- With the commencement of His reign, there will also begin the final process of reconciling "all things" and restoring completeness and harmony to God's universe (Col.1:20; cf. Eph.1:10).
- With the commencement of His reign, earth will forevermore enjoy the perfect rule and presence of the perfect Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ (Rev.11:15; cf. Ps.2; 45; 48; 72; Is.2:1-5; Ezek.48:35b; Dan.7:14; Zech.14; Lk.1:32-33; 2Thes.1:6-10; Rev.19:11-20:6).

> For a child is born to us, and a Son is given to us. Dominion shall rest on his shoulder, and His name will be called "He whose counsel is wondrous", "Mighty God", "the Father of Eternity", "the Prince of Prosperity".
> Isaiah 9:6

[104] On this subject, see R.B. Thieme, Victorious Proclamation (Houston, 2nd ed. 1977).

> In those days and at that time, I will make a Branch of righteousness sprout forth for David, and He will accomplish justice and righteousness on the earth.
> Jeremiah 33:15

> But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, too small to be numbered among the clans of Judah, from you I will bring forth the One who is to rule over Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, even from the days of eternity.
> Micah 5:2

> Thus says the Lord: I will return to Zion and dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. And Jerusalem will be called "the City of Truth", and "the Mountain of the Lord, the Mountain of Holiness".
> Zechariah 8:3

> Rejoice greatly, daughter of Zion. Shout [for joy], daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your King will come to you. Righteous and victorious He is; humble and riding on a donkey, even on a colt, a donkey's foal.
> Zechariah 9:9

> And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be the only One and His Name the only Name.
> Zechariah 14:9

2) <u>The Kingdom</u>: The Kingdom of God under the rule of Christ our King replaces the devil's kingdom of this world (*kosmos*) commencing with the 2nd Advent (Rev.11:15). At that time, the Kingdom will be openly and gloriously established (Dan.2:44), but until that time it will remain an alien yet imminent presence in the devil's kingdom (Matt.3:2; 4:17). At the present time, the Kingdom is represented in the persons of its future citizens just as it had been in the Person of its future King (Matt.10:7; 12:28; Lk.17:21; Jn.18:36). As He was opposed, so we are being opposed:

> Since the days of John the baptist until this present time, the Kingdom of God has been under violent attack, and violent men are laying hands upon it.
> Matthew 11:12

But on that marvelous day, He will be revealed in glory (Matt.25:31; 1Thes.3:13; 2Thes.1:7; 1Tim.6:14; 2Tim.4:1; Rev.1:1), and we will share in His glorious rule (Dan.7:27; Rom.8:18-19; 1Pet.4:13). It is on this event that we fix our hope (Matt.6:10; 1Thes.4:16; 2Tim.4:8; Tit.2:13).

3) The Royal Assembly: The Church, the *ekklesia* or assembly of Our Lord Jesus Christ, replaces the devil's angels, and shares in Christ's millennial rule.[105] Here and now, all of us who have put our faith in Jesus Christ are sons of God (Jn.1:12; Rom.8:14-23; 2Cor.6:18; Gal.3:26; 4:5-6; Eph.1:5; 1Thes.5:5; Heb.2:10; 12:5-8; 1Jn.3:1-3), fellow citizens (Eph.2:19; Phil.1:27; 3:20) and co-heirs of His Kingdom (Rom.8:17; Eph.3:6; Jas.2:5; 1Pet.1:4; 3:7). At the present time, however, the King and His Kingdom have yet to be revealed, so that we, His Church, though possessing the Kingdom in principle now (Heb.12:28), have yet to experience the full reality of these blessings to come. During Jesus' 1st Advent, the Kingdom was erroneously thought to be imminent (Lk.19:11; cf. Jn.6:15), and even today its literal establishment lies in the future (2Tim.4:1; Rev.12:10). In the meantime, as we have seen above, the remaining members of Christ's royal assembly, His Church, are being called out, as God directs His plan militantly forward towards her completion and therefore to the effective replacement of the devil's minions. Until this process has fully run its course, we heirs of the Kingdom serve as witnesses against the current kingdom of this world, having been transferred out of it (Col.1:13), having responded to the good news of another Kingdom (Lk.4:43), working for it (Col.4:11), suffering for it (2Thes.1:5; Rev.1:9), striving to be worthy of it (Rom.14:17-19; 1Cor.6:9-10; Gal.5:21; Eph.5:5; 1Thes.2:12; 2Thes.1:5; 2Tim.4:1-2), and looking forward to it (2Tim.4:18; Heb.11:16; 2Pet.1:11), in glorious anticipation of that day when the world Kingdom of our God at last arrives in the person of its Ruler, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Rev.11:15).

And that day *shall* come. For beginning with our resurrection at the time of the 2nd Advent, the prerogatives of the Royal Assembly, the Church, will be fully functional, and we shall share experientially ...

- in His victory celebration: (Is.25:6; Matt.8:11; 25:1-10; 26:29; Lk.13:29; 14:15; 22:30; Rev.19:7-9).
- in His priesthood: (Ex.19:6; Is.61:6; 66:21; Rom.12:1; Heb.13:10-15; 1Pet.2:5; 2:9; Rev.1:6; 5:10; 20:6).
- in His rule: (Dan.7:9; 7:22; 7:27; Matt.19:28-29; Lk.22:29-30; Rom.5:17; 1Cor.6:2-3; 2Tim.2:12; Rev.2:27-28; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4; 20:6; 22:5).
- in His inheritance: (Is.40:10; 62:11; Rom.8:17; Eph.3:6; 6:8; Col.3:24; Jas.2:5; 1Pet.1:4; 3:7; Rev.11:18; 22:12).

In phase two replacement, the Messiah replaces the devil, the Kingdom of light replaces the kingdom of darkness, and the Church, joining in the Messiah's glorious rule, replaces the fallen angels who presently serve Satan. Phase two replacement is thus also a "more phase", as the Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Messiah's Royal Assembly clearly represent a quantum leap forward from the original rule of the first Adam in the garden of Eden, with the

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[105] For a discussion of the Greek word *ekklesia*, see above under the section "The Church and the Mystery of Christ: a. The Church". For the friends of the Bride, the millennial believers or "sons of the Kingdom" (Matt.13:38), see above under "Day 7".

incomparable, divine, resplendent Morning Star replacing the fallen creature once known as Lucifer, the bearer of light (2Pet.1:19; Rev.2:28; 22:16; cf. Num.24:17; Is.9:1-2; 42:6; 49:6; Matt.2:2; 2:9; 4:16; Lk.2:30-32; Jn.1:4-5; 8:12; 9:5).

Phase III: Consummation: Crowns the victory with surpassing blessing (the "most" phase).

4. Judgment III: the Great White Throne and the Lake of Fire: In phase two judgment, the removal of Satan and his angels from the world had been temporary. Similarly, although the most egregious of God's human opponents were destroyed over the course of the Tribulation (with a final intensive and furious slaughter at the battle of Armageddon: Rev.19:21), prior to this time deceased unbelievers (with the two sole exceptions of the antichrist and his false prophet: Rev.19:20) had remained in Torments (that is, in Hades: Lk.16:19-31; see part 1 of this series), awaiting this ultimate Judgment Day. After the one thousand year reign of Christ has been completed, this final phase of God's judgment upon His enemies will take place. At the conclusion of his final deception of humanity (the Gog-Magog rebellion: Rev.20:7-9), Satan, and his fallen angels, already judged (Jn.16:11; cf. Job 4:18; 15:15; 21:22; Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10), will be cast into the lake of fire to reside there forever (Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10; cf. Is.24:21-22; 27:1; 34:4; Jer.10:11; Ezek.28:18-19; Dan.4:35; Jn.16:11; 1Cor.6:3). Then all of unbelieving humanity will be judged at the Great White Throne judgment and subsequently removed to the lake of fire forever (Rev.20:11-15; cf. Rev.14:10-11). With this final disposition of all who had opposed God, and with the last echelon of the resurrection now completed, namely that of the living millennial believers (cf. 1Cor.15:24), death, by any definition (physical, spiritual, eternal), will finally be eliminated once and for all through the sacrifice of our Lord, put to death for us (1Cor.15:26; 15:54-57; Heb.2:14).

In phase three judgment, all who have opposed God throughout angelic and human history are dealt with decisively and finally, with the last enemy, death, removed from God's universe forever. Therefore phase three is the "most phase", being in no way temporary and in every way final. Phase three involves God's ultimate judgments upon angelic and human kind, judgments that in the case of the devil and his angels had been delayed beyond all expectation and deferred to provide opportunity for repentance and unarguable proof of their guilt and inveterate hostility toward God.

5. Restoration III: the New Heavens, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem: In phase two restoration, the earth had been returned to Eden-like conditions for Christ's millennial rule. As its name indicates, however, the Millennium is not meant to be a permanent state of affairs, but rather a transitional period that 1) fulfills in time God's promises to His people Israel (e.g., the inheritance of the land: Ezek.47:13ff.; cf. Gen.15:18-21), and 2) fulfills His proclamation that all His enemies will be subdued by the rule of His Son, the Messiah (Ps.110:1; cf. Ps.2; Matt.22:44; Acts 2:34; 1Cor.15:25-26; Heb.1:13; 10:12-13). Phase three restoration marks the beginning of eternity. With the creation of the New Heavens and the New Earth, the blessed eternal state will commence (Rev.21:1). This Kingdom, in which the Father and the Son will reign together (1Cor.15:24-28; Heb.12:23-24; Rev.21:22-24), will never come to an end (Dan.7:27). Within it,

elect angels (Heb.12:22) and elect, saved humanity (Heb.12:23), will fellowship with the Trinity in a perfect new world whose blessings are at present beyond earthly understanding (Rev.21:4; cf. 1Cor.15:28). As blessed and anticipated as the millennial Kingdom will be, the eternal Kingdom will surpass it in every way, adding the presence of the Father to that of the Son (Rev.21:3), lasting forever instead of a thousand years (Rev.22:5), existing in a universe completely without sin (2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.21:7-8; 21:27; 22:14-15; cf. Is.52:1), and having as its headquarters a New Jerusalem whose architect and builder is God Himself (Heb.11:10; 12:22-24; Rev.21:1 - 22:5). Finally, it is important to reiterate at this point what we have noted before, namely that it is the earth where God will reign forever, restored, remade and specifically reconstructed for saved mankind's eternal blessing. Better than Eden, better even than Jerusalem in the Millennium, the New Jerusalem will be the paradise par excellence, matchless, eternal, filled with all the blessings exemplified in the previous paradises, but without sin and without end, where we will live forever in the presence of God Himself.

6. Replacement III: The Advent of the Father: In phase three replacement, the double portion of saved humanity (i.e., the believers of the Millennium) will also be resurrected (see above under "Day 7"), and with the unalterable destruction of the old universe and the consignment of all of God's enemies, human and angelic, to the lake of fire (Rev.20:14-15; 21:1), the process of replacing Satan and his angels with resurrected human beings will be complete. With the vanquishing of all God's enemies, even death (Is.25:7-8; Hos.13:14; 1Cor.15:26; 15:54-57), and with the removal of sin and unrighteousness from the world (2Pet.3:10-13; Rev.21:7-8; 21:27; 22:14-15), the way will be cleared for the return of the King, that is, the taking up by the Father of His residence once more on earth. He will return not to the original Eden which Satan defiled, but to a new and extraordinary paradise, the New Jerusalem, likewise a paradise of divine design, now constructed in the form of a city, that is, a paradise specifically designed for mass human habitation (Heb.11:10; cf. Heb.2:16). At that time, the Glory will truly return to earth (cf. Ezek.10:18), and God the Father, who gave His Son to take on true humanity in order to save it (Heb.2:14-15), will, along with Christ through whom He made the world and around whom He fashioned the history we are now contemplating, dwell with us and we with Him forevermore. At that time, God will "be all in all" (1Cor.15:28; cf. 1Cor.3:21-23), and that will be the most sublime completion to His creation imaginable.

V. An Historical Overview of God's Disposition of Satan

Given that this series provides a background for the study of the Tribulation from the standpoint of the satanic rebellion (which is the Tribulation's ultimate cause), we would do well at this point to provide in outline form the course of Satan's career as we have studied it from the point of view of God's disposition of him and his followers:

1. God's initial disposition of Satan:

a. God's First Best Will Rejected: Although created in perfection and inhabiting a perfect universe, Satan and his followers rejected God's perfect plan for them, choosing rebellion instead of obedience (SR#1).

b. Judgment and Demotion: Having rejected God and mutinied against Him, Satan and his followers were judicially condemned by God for their rebellion (SR#1; Jn.16:11; cf. Job 4:18; 15:15; 21:22; Matt.25:41; Rev.20:10), and removed from their positions of service to Him (SR#1, section IV.3).

c. Judgment on the Universe: The original heavens and earth, having been contaminated by the sinful actions of the devil and his followers (cf. Job 25:5), were summarily judged by God, and plunged into utter darkness (SR#2, section II.2).

d. The Delay of Execution: Having judged the universe, God nevertheless deferred execution of Satan's sentence pending the completion of an as yet unforeseen event: human history (SR#4, section II; and see above, section II; cf. Gen.6:3; Rom.2:4; 3:25-26; 9:22; 2Pet.3:9; 3:15). This delay accomplished ...

1. The glorification of God through the successful completion of His plan (centered upon His Son, Jesus Christ) in all its particulars despite all opposition.

2. The vindication of God by demonstrating the devil's complete recalcitrance and unwillingness to repent in contrast to God's faithfulness toward His new creature, Man. God is thereby vindicated in His judgments (Ps.116:11; Rom.3:4), and justified by keeping all promises of salvation to mankind despite satanic opposition (Is.49:9; Jn.16:11).

3. The replacement of what was lost through Satan's rebellion in a manner that has ensured the free will choice of those who replace the devil and his followers (section II above).

e. First Parole: Satan was allowed the freedom to observe God's reconstruction of the world and His commencement of the process of replacement through the creation of mankind (SR#3, section IV).

f. The Last Olive Branch: Rather than drawing the appropriate conclusions from the creation of Man (i.e., that God is invincible and therefore that the carrying out His sentence against the devil was inevitable), Satan rejected this last, tacit overture on God's part and used his freedom of action instead to recommence his rebellion, this time on the battlefield of human history (SR#3, section IV.1.a; SR#4, section II.).

2. God's interim disposition of Satan:

a. Imprisonment: With the 2nd Advent of Jesus Christ, the devil and his followers will be imprisoned in the Abyss for the duration of the Millennium so as to remove all satanic influence from the Messiah's Kingdom (see above, section IV.1.6).

b. Second Parole: At the conclusion of the Millennium, Satan will be temporarily released and will stir up the peaceful world of that time for one final assault upon God (Ps.2:1ff.). The willingness of so many human beings to reject the perfect reign of Christ and the willingness of the devil to lead them in this last futile attempt to oppose God provides the final incontrovertible proof that evil and the rejection of God is not circumstantial, but flows from the free will choice of creatures.

3. God's final disposition of Satan: At the conclusion of the Gog-Magog revolution and just prior to the creation of the pristine and holy New Heavens and New Earth, the sentence imposed upon the devil and his angels before human history began will finally be carried out (Is.14:3-23; 24:21-23; 27:1; 34:1-5; Ezek.28:11-19; Jer.10:11; Dan.4:35; Lk.10:18-20; 1Cor.6:3; Rev.20:7-10), and they will be consigned to the lake of fire at that point and forevermore (Rev.20:10; see section IV.3.a above). The lake of fire and his final disposition in it (along with all creatures who chose to follow him instead of God) will stand as an eternal memorial to the folly of rejecting God and His mercy (Rev.14:10; cf. Is.66:24; Rev.19:3). For by trying to replace God and His Son instead of serving them, Satan finds himself replaced by the Son who was born into the devil's world to refute and defeat him through the victory of the cross (Lk.10:18; Jn.12:31; Rom.16:20; Heb.2:14; 1Pet.3:22; 1Jn.3:8).

VI. God's Q.E.D.

History, angelic and human, has never been outside of God's control (Job 12:23; Ps.9:4-8; Is.40:15; 40:22-24; Jer.10:7; 18:5-10; Dan.4:35). History, rather, has always proceeded according to God's plan. Sin, evil, rebellion from God, all results of free will decisions of creatures, have not been able to stop the plan of God. Indeed, it is through such willful disobedience that God has sorted out those who love Him from those who hate Him, like sheep from goats. For although He has loved all with a perfect love, He has also respected the free will choice of His creatures not to love Him back. And through this period of choice, the course of history, God has, through the greatest personal sacrifice, the gift of His own Son, made it possible for those who would respond to Him to do so, and so to live forever with Him. In so doing, that is, through an entire universal history of grace and self-sacrifice, God has once and for all stopped the mouths of all His adversaries. He has silenced the devil and completely refuted him by means of the praise that issues forth from the mouths of an originally weaker category of creature, mankind.

> From the lips of children and infants You have established your might (i.e., for your praise: cf. Matt.21:16), on account of your adversaries, to put an end to the enemy and the avenger.
> Psalm 8:2

From the moment the eternal state begins, the world will hear only God's praises being sung, and these will proceed from the lips of those who confessed Him in life, those who chose Him and chose to be with Him forever, so that in eternity only praise for God from *willing* creatures will be heard (Jn.4:23; 1Tim.2:4; 2Pet.3:9).

> But the hour is coming, and in fact has already arrived, when the true worshipers [of God] will worship the Father ***spiritually*** (i.e., our spirit responding to His Spirit) and ***truthfully*** (i.e., our heart responding to His truth). Indeed, it is just such worshipers that the Father is seeking. For God is spirit, and those who worship Him must do so spiritually and truthfully.
> John 4:23-24

It is, therefore, just as this final part of the Satanic Rebellion series has attempted to show: history, angelic and human, is an integral whole, planned and constructed by God in His manifold wisdom to achieve His intended results, centered upon and revolving around the Person of His Son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (Eph.3:10-11). Through many machinations, in many venues, at many times, and in many ways, all of Satan's lies and attacks have, ultimately, only served to further God's will and demonstrate the truth of what He has said all along, namely, that He is gracious to those who respond to Him, and unconquerable by those who reject and oppose Him:

> Towards the merciful man, You act in a merciful way. Towards the blameless man, You act in a blameless way. Towards the pure man, You act in a pure way. But towards the subtle man, You act in a subtle way.
> Psalm 18:25-26

> God opposes the arrogant, but gives grace to the humble.
> James 4:6

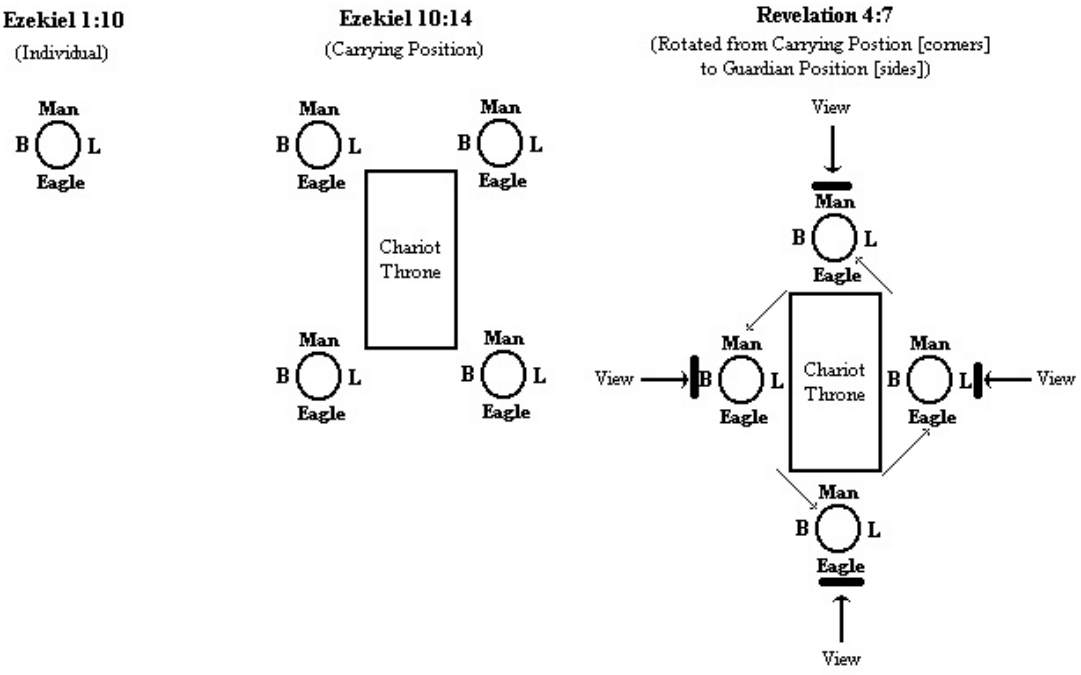
Evil has been refuted. Righteousness has been vindicated. What was damaged has been restored. What was lost has been replaced. Universal harmony has been reestablished (2Cor.5:19; Col.1:20), and all is better than it ever was before, because of the wisdom and the power and the grace of our God. The angels who rejected the Son and so became imperfect, have been replaced by imperfect mankind, made perfect by the sacrifice of the Son. And in the process, God's glory has been affirmed and magnified. Q.E.D.

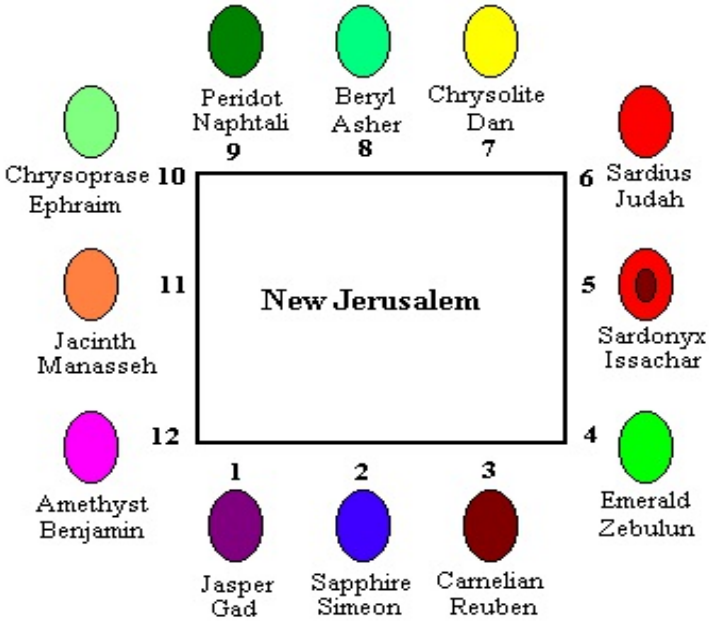
VI. Background to the Tribulation

As it is with the history of the universe, so it is with our lives. We know the future in its most important details, because God has revealed it to us. As He is in control of history's every detail, so it is with our lives. As He has worked the ages together for good in despite of the devil, so He does in the lives of those who love Him (Rom.8:28). As He has restored peace, wholeness, and harmony to the universe through the plan whose implementor is Jesus Christ, so He offers to do for each one of us, if only we would hear His voice and follow Him. And as the end of all things universal only brings a superabundant reality that far exceeds the original, so when we lose our lives for Jesus (Matt.10:39), we gain more than we could ever ask or think (Eph.3:20).

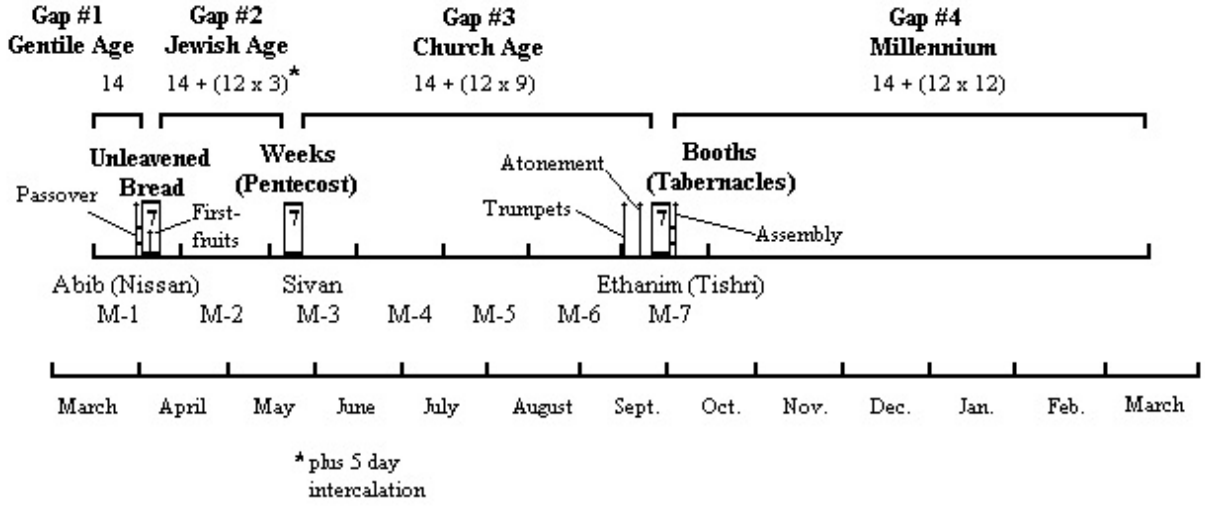
This perspective of the timelessness of the plan of God and the reality of His total victory over the devil is all the more important, given the shortness of the time remaining for us, upon whom the end of the ages has come (1Cor.10:11; 1Jn.2:18). It is, moreover, an essential prerequisite for studying, understanding, and appreciating what the Bible has to say about the coming Tribulation. Knowledge of our God's complete defeat of Satan brings conviction of His ultimate deliverance of us His children through that most intensive time of diabolic attack, and prepares us for the detailed study of the Tribulation, an event which can only be fully understood in light of the satanic rebellion to which it provides the climax.

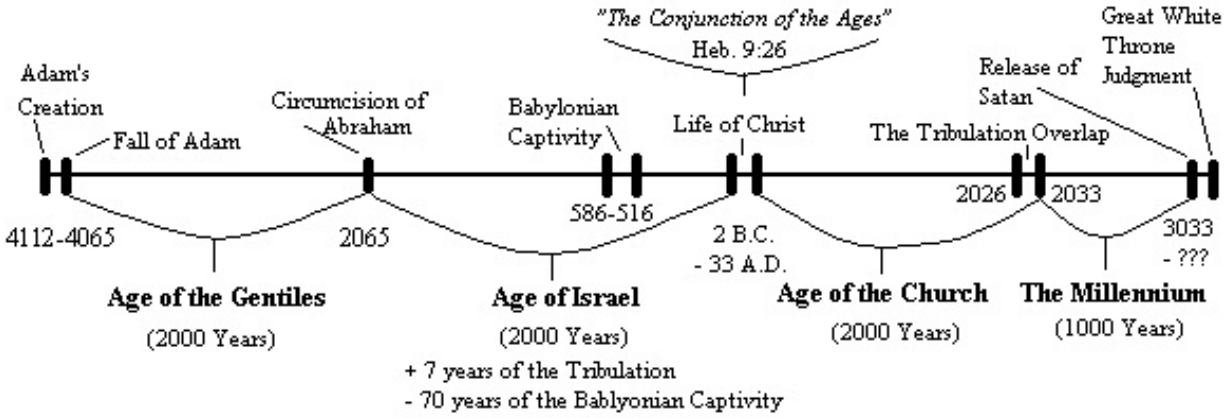
And the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire by that same Word (of God), preserved for the day of judgment and the destruction of godless men. Let not this one fact escape your attention then, beloved, namely that one day is like a thousand years in the Lord's eyes, and a thousand years like one day. The Lord is not delaying in the fulfillment of His promise (as some think); rather He is exercising patience for your sake, being unwilling for anyone to perish, but desiring all instead to come to repentance. For the day of the Lord will come like a thief, a day in which the heavens will depart with a roar, the very elements will ignite and dissolve, and the earth and everything which has been done upon it will be laid bare [for the Lord's inspection]. Since all these things are destined to disintegrate in this way, [consider] what sort of [Christians] we ought to be, [devoted to] holy and godly conduct, as we wait with eager expectation and apprehension the advent of the day of God. For on that day the heavens will burst into flame and dissolve, and the elements will catch fire and melt. But we are awaiting new heavens and a new earth just as He promised - [a world] where righteousness dwells.
2nd Peter 3:7-13





The Jewish Calendar





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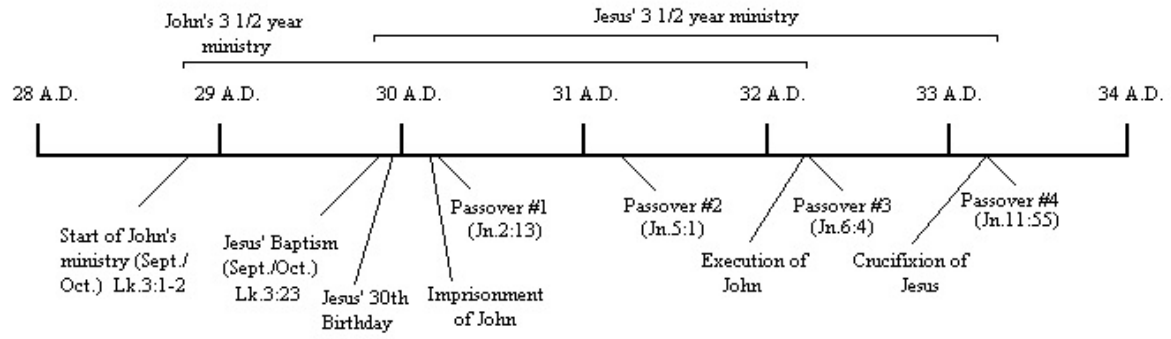
Compartive Chronology of the Minstries of John the baptist and Jesus Christ