

ARMOR OF GOD

A Publication of Biblical Clarity

What Is The Kingdom?

What does it have to do with Jesus? How can I get in?

A Comparable Look at the Old and New

Feast traditions — then and now

Tale of Two Kingdoms

Selflessness versus Selfishness

Why We Need The Kingdom

Only God can save us from ourselves...



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From the Editor:

Thy Kingdom Come

by Horane Smith

Welcome to the 1st issue of our new periodical: *Armor of God*. We hope you will enjoy the informative, educational, and spiritual nature of the articles, but in addition, we also hope you will begin to understand the awesome plan the Almighty God has for you and the entire universe.

As you read this new publication, and watch the *Armor of God* television program, we want to greet you with some very good news. Yes, we want to announce to you the good news about the gospel of Jesus, the Christ, and His coming Kingdom of God—a world-ruling government that doesn't have a mandate of four, five or ten years, but rather, is mandated *forever!* That's the good news we want to share with you, your family and friends!

In an age of war, pestilence, famine, mass murder, terrorism, homicidal bombings, infanticide, and all kinds of sexual perversions like homosexuality, adultery, fornication, and so much more to mention; what better news could you want to hear than the promise of Jesus Christ's return and the setting up of

His divine world-ruling government that will solve all of mankind's problems? What better message could one hear about, than the time when there will be no more wars, and all the sorrow and pain of today will be removed?

Sadly, each day we rise to all the horrors on the news. It seems as if our newscasts have space only for the bad news—the gut-wrenching stories of death, decay, and despair. We, as a society, are being overwhelmed with acts of evil, as evidenced by what our media reports. Sin has become so commonplace and accepted that when evil visits covertly and overtly, the outcry is far from what it should be.

At times, we feel paralyzed and helpless at the wanton destruction around us, caused by the fallout from the surrounding sin. We have come to see with our very own eyes things that were once considered good, that have now become evil, and things once considered evil, have now become good. We are witnessing society's inability to distinguish between right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness. We fear for our children's future in a culture that has failed to recognize the *power*

and *might* of the Creator. This is compounded by the fact that there is no fear of God in the land; society behaves as if God is dead. The whole world has been deceived (Rev. 12:9) into thinking God has been rendered helpless to the mounting problems of this Earth.

It may be a challenge to grasp this utopian notion of a time of complete peace, given the state of our global societies today. This is understandable, since the gospel message has been dismissed, and continues to be marginalized by many today.

However, in and amongst this confusion, there are many whom God is calling to be a part of this world-ruling government. *You could be one of those God is calling!* If this is true, you have a duty to yourself, and to your Maker, to read these articles and understand the serious times ahead, and how you can escape the impending Wrath of the Lamb, or the Lake of Fire, reserved to consume those who refuse to repent when they have the opportunity to do so (Rev. 20:10).

Whether you want to believe it or not, the

truth is (*and God's Word is truth*, John 17:17), the Kingdom of God is real and it's coming. We need it to come! Mankind has not been doing a good job of governing himself, especially considering the issues of unconscionable sins spiraling out of control around the world.

In this issue, you'll read about the *Feast of Tabernacles*, one of the seven annual Festivals (or Holy Days) listed in Leviticus 23 that God describes as "My feasts" which outline God's plan for humanity. The Feast of Tabernacles, which the Church of God, International observes, along with the other annual Holy Days, pictures the Kingdom of God *on Earth* during the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

We hope the news we have for you in this *A armor of God* periodical will help you see the need for Jesus Christ's return and the institution of His Kingdom, which will once and for all, put all sorrow and pain to rest! Behold, the day is coming when the world will be at one with God; and this will only come when our Savior returns to establish His world-ruling government, not elected by ballots, but appointed by divine authority. Can you truly think of any better news than that?

More will be conveyed to you about the *Feast of Tabernacles* and just what the Kingdom of God is through a variety of articles designed to explain different segments of this wonderful truth. In the same breath, you are going to see the *need* for the Kingdom to come sooner,

rather than later.

Of course, only God can determine *when* it comes, but because we are told to *watch* and *pray* (Mark 13:33) and to know the "times and the seasons," when He will finally usher in a new age, it's crucial that we be aware of what lies ahead for all humanity (1 Thess. 5:1). The *A armor of God* periodical and telecast will tell you in no uncertain terms how all this will unfold. We hope you will get inspired to embark on a new life, preparing for His coming by repenting and coming to the knowledge of His truth. May God give you the wisdom to understand!

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Change is coming...

from this age

...into the next

Uncover the mystery, watch:

ARMOR OF GOD

by Stephanie Chin

My First Feast of Tabernacles

I've had the privilege of attending 10 Feasts of Tabernacles over the years, but my very first will always be my most memorable.

It was during the fall of 1997 and one of the Canadian Feast Sites was in the rustic setting of the Blue Water Acres Resort, near Huntsville, in northern Ontario. I had only been a member of the Church of God, International for a few months and didn't fully grasp the entire meaning of the Feast. At the time, I was 20 years old and still learning about God's Holy Days and the doctrines of the church. Everything was still very new to me. I didn't know anything about saving a festival tithe (or second tithe), and because I was still in school, I had no money to fund the trip. Still, I felt compelled to go and experience what this 'Feast of Tabernacles' was all about. I was excited for the opportunity to fellowship with people of like mind and learn more about God's truths. I knew if it were meant to be, God would provide a way for me to go.

Sure enough, two sisters, members from our congregation, offered to share accommoda-

tions with me and another church sister. God had truly provided the means for me to attend His Feast. I had just \$7 in my pocket as we journeyed up north, but I was overwhelmed with excitement to be going. I knew God would take care of my needs.

As we settled into our cottage that first night, I wasn't quite sure what to expect from that point onward. It could've been the anticipation of church services the

next day, perhaps it was because I was far away from my family, or maybe it was simply the incessant snoring of my church

sister (bless her heart) in the other bed; but whatever it was, I didn't get much sleep that night. I woke up early the next morning anxious to begin the day's events.

The meeting room was right on the grounds of the resort, so it was a short walk to church services. I remember settling into my seat and watching as the room quickly filled up with brethren. There were many faces I didn't recognize. I later realized these people were from various congregations throughout Canada and the U.S. I just remember there was such a feeling of joy and fellowship as brethren got re-acquainted with people they hadn't seen in a long time.

As services drew to a close, it was announced the church would be sponsoring a 'singles luncheon' that afternoon. It was the perfect opportunity for the single brethren in the church to fellowship with one another and form real friendships and connections. Despite being a church-sponsored event, they were accepting donations to help cover some of the costs. I kept thinking about my \$7 in my pocket

and wondering how that was going to work. Nevertheless, I enjoyed a delicious meal and afterwards, one of my church brothers at the table stood up and offered to cover the costs for all of us at that table. I was totally surprised by his kindness, and once again realized how God continued to provide for me. I started to see how the Feast of Tabernacles is truly an opportunity for God's people to extend kindness, and genuine concern for one another. These Christian people truly are an extended family.

All of my meals were provided for in some way. There was one particular church sister who made it her mission of service to invite different brethren out to lunch or dinner every single day.

The sermons throughout the Feast were very uplifting and reminded us all of exactly why we were observing the festival. The remainder of the Feast provided many opportunities for fellowship and togetherness. We had various Bible studies, including a very informative marriage seminar. There was a family dance night, karaoke, and the traditional Feast Fun Show, which was preempted by an unexpected snowstorm, and had to resume the following night. It caused localized power outages but gave us a wonderful opportunity to enjoy the company of each other. We later learned that a young girl from the U.S. had prayed fervently for snow because she had never seen it before.

The last day of the Feast was very emotional as everyone said their good-byes. We had really bonded as a family, but it was finally time for us to go our separate ways.

Yes, my first Feast of Tabernacles really demonstrated to me the power of faith and obedience to God's word. Being new to the faith, I really didn't know what to expect, although I was convinced God desired for me to go. It reminded me of a scripture in Hebrews 11:8,

"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went."

If you have never attended a Feast of Tabernacles, I strongly encourage you to make every effort to do so. If you have the desire, God will richly bless your efforts and provide for your needs along the way.

I first began attending Sabbath services with the Church of God, International at the age of 14. As that summer began to draw to an end and with the fall Holy Day Season approaching, there was a buzz of excitement among everyone in the church. Having only learned about God's Holy Days a few months prior, I did not understand what all the fuss was about. "What was so exciting about 8 straight days of church?" I wondered. Even the other teenagers and children were caught up in the excitement! "What was this 'Feast' all about?"

Unfortunately, my family did not attend the Feast that year; but the following year we packed our bags, piled into the minivan, and drove 70 miles to St. Catharines, Ontario,

it is such an eagerly anticipated time of year for my brethren.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a great escape! The entire week allowed us to forget about the stress of daily life and focus on the importance of God's soon coming Kingdom. During this week-long festival, my life was filled with meaning and purpose as I learned about God's great plan of salvation and the anticipation of Jesus' triumphant return to the Earth as King of kings and Lord of lords!

As my first Feast drew to a close, the Last Great Day was full of both joy and sadness. Joy because I had experienced a wonderful Feast; yet sadness, because I knew that soon after Sabbath services were finished, we

edge of the Truth, and provide an opportunity for fellowship and service, at the Feast of Tabernacles we enjoy the 'Sabbath experience' daily. It is an annual opportunity for the children of God to come together, learn more about God's ways as we prepare ourselves for rulership in the Kingdom of God.

God, in His great mercy, has provided us with this wonderful opportunity to come together with other like-minded individuals and charge one another's batteries in preparation for another year of praise, worship, and service. As we escape the stresses of this life for one week, we are able to help one another draw closer to God. As Proverbs 27:17 says, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another" (NIV).



What the Feast Means to Me

by Jasmin Smith

for our very first Feast of Tabernacles. Now I could see for myself what all the fuss was about!

My first Feast is one I'll never forget. The camaraderie among the brethren from all over Canada and the United States was unlike anything I had ever seen before. It reminded me of a family reunion—brothers and sisters in Christ joyously reunited after one year apart. In addition to the inspiring sermons, sermonettes, and musical worship, each day after services there were activities scheduled to create bonding experiences, further fostering the feeling of becoming a part of one big, loving family.

With each passing day, I learned more and more about the Feast of Tabernacles and why

would be piling back up in the minivan again, and the Feast would be over.

But my sadness quickly turned to eager anticipation as the countdown to my second Feast of Tabernacles began! I was so excited to experience the joy of the Feast all over again.

Now, each year, I look forward to the Feast as my getaway from the troubles of this world as I fellowship daily with God's faithful few in preparation for the Kingdom of God. The peace and joy that I experienced at my first Feast only intensifies with each passing year.

I like to think of the Feast as a 'special training session' for the millennial reign when we will rule over the Earth with our Lord. Just as weekly Sabbath services enrich our knowl-

Each year, as I prepare for the Feast, I can hardly wait to meet new brethren, be reunited with old friends, and be reinvigorated by their zeal! How wonderful it is to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles each year, with the knowledge that we will celebrate it with Jesus Christ when He returns to the Earth (Zech. 14:16). And what a blessing it is to have a whole week completely devoted to serving God with no earthly stresses to get in the way!

May you have a wonderful Feast as we prepare for God's soon coming Kingdom.

Now I know what all the fuss is about!

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What Do You Mean, “Tabernacle with Men?”

by Lloyd W. Cary

Hebrews 11, sometimes referred to as ‘the saint’s Hall of Fame,’ recounts the examples of many of God’s faithful servants down through time.

It concludes that,

“these all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”
(Heb. 11:13)

An Annual Reminder

The Feast of Tabernacles is an annual reminder of our temporary state, and that we also “seek a better country” or homeland—that is, the soon-coming millennial Kingdom of God and His reign on the Earth (Heb. 11:14). This illustration is reinforced when we travel to a site for the Feast of Tabernacles and stay in temporary dwellings such as motels and campsites. The Feast of Tabernacles provides us a time to think about the realities of life, realizing that we now tabernacle in the flesh, but ultimately look for our conversion (change) to spirit. Clearly, this festival reminds us that in spite of our material possessions, we are still mortals in deep need of a literal transformation by means of a resurrection to spirit composition so we may possess eternal life (1 Cor. 15:50-54).

In the transfiguration vision, Jesus gave a glimpse of the Kingdom of God to Peter, James, and John. Christ appeared to be talking with Moses and Elijah. Peter’s immediate response was to suggest that they quickly construct three tabernacles, or booths. Instinctively, he understood the important connection between tabernacles and our quest for eternal life in God’s Kingdom (see Matt. 17:1-9; Luke 9:27-36).

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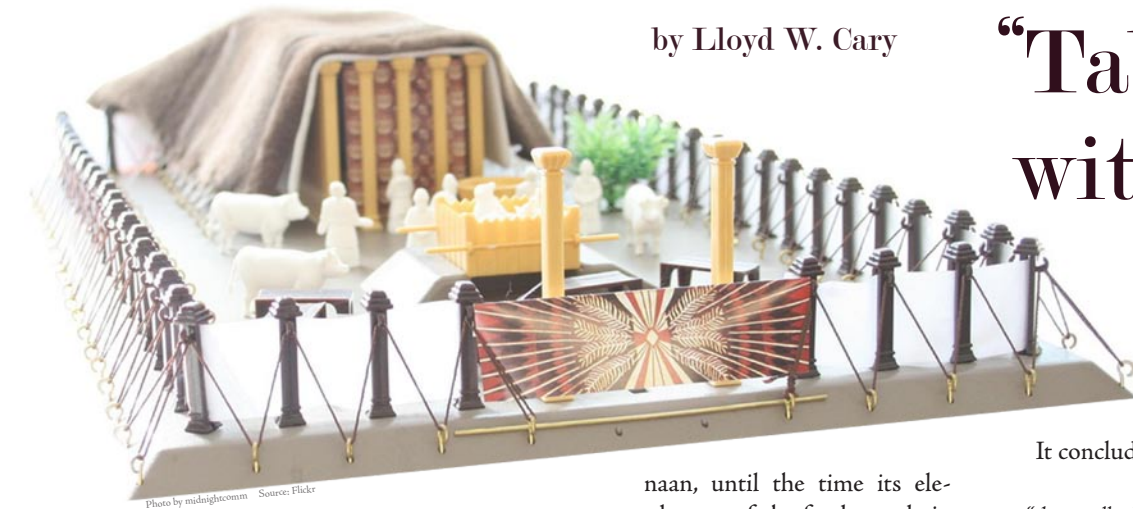


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Why did God institute the Feast of Tabernacles? What is the symbolism behind the word tabernacle? What is meant, by God “tabernacling” with men?

What does it mean to you?

Upon returning to work after coming home from the Feast of Tabernacles, one member of the church was asked by a co-worker, “Well, how were they?”

“How were what?” the member replied.

“The Tabernacles. You said you went to the Feast of Tabernacles. How did they taste?”

Sad, but true! Most people have no idea what the Feast of Tabernacles is. It is completely foreign to them. But you can know!

The Significance of Tabernacles

The English word ‘tabernacle’ is derived from the Latin word *tabernaculum*, meaning, a tent, hut, booth, or temporary dwelling place. To ‘tabernacle’ means to reside, rest, to be temporarily housed, or to live in for a short time. The tabernacle in the wilderness was originally a tent-like temporary dwelling, designed to be erected and dismantled with ease.

The tabernacle in the Old Testament was a portable sacred tent and central place of worship for the Israelites (Exod. 40:1-38). This concept remained from the time they left ancient Egypt following the Exodus, through the time of the Book of Judges when they were engaged in conquering the land of Ca-

naan, until the time its elements were made part of the final temple in Jerusalem about the 10th century BC.

The Israelites left their homes and built temporary dwelling places (Succoth in Hebrew, meaning “shelter of woven branches”) to reside in while worshipping in the place where God placed His name. These temporary makeshift residences reminded them of their liberation from slavery in Egypt (Lev. 23:34, 41-43). In stark contrast to the 400 years of abject slavery, the Festival of Tabernacles emphasized rest, peace, liberty, joy, freedom, and prosperity as it met the needs of all people, including strangers, widows, and the poor.

The Bible emphasizes that just as booths are temporary dwellings, so our physical lives are fleeting and transitory (Isa. 40:6-8). The term ‘tabernacle’ was also used to illustrate a ‘type’ for our natural human body reminding us that we are indeed physical and only temporary (2 Cor. 5:1; 2 Pet. 1:13). The apostle Paul used this symbolism in referring to our fleshly, temporary state, contrasting it to the resurrection:

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this [body] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.”
(2 Cor. 5:1-2)

Peter used a similar metaphor, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle [I must die], even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (2 Pet. 1:14). Even Jesus Christ was considered to be “tabernacling” while living in “the flesh” as a man during His ministry (John 1:14-16; Heb. 2:16).

Making The Feast a Tradition

by Patrick Bastien



I have been keeping the Feast of Tabernacles since 1981. The Feast has become a yearly tradition for me personally, and my family. Each year, we look forward to making the Feast a memorable one.

My family and I, and a number of faithful followers of Jesus Christ, annually attend the Feast of Tabernacles at various locations around the world. We celebrate, worship, and praise God for giving us the opportunity to emulate Him for 8 consecutive days, learning more about His Master Plan for mankind.

The Importance of the Feast in My Life

I am looking forward to seeing the brethren at the Feast this year. It is truly joyous and provides great comfort and pleasure to know that my family and I will share, with our brethren in Christ, time together learning the knowledge and wisdom of the love Jesus Christ has for humanity. The Feast always provides opportunities to practice the same type of loving relationships we will be expected to have with others in God's Kingdom. Additionally, this lesson is expected to also teach us to become more caring and understanding towards those outside the church. This is a fundamental lesson of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Planning for the Feast

In keeping with Deuteronomy 14:22-29, I have always practiced putting aside 10% of my income to finance the Feast. Since the Feast of Tabernacles is an important aspect of my Christian life, I give it high priority. Usually, I start preparing soon after the Last Great Day by getting my thoughts together and preparing a budget for the following year. The Feast calls for money, so it's important that the financial aspect is addressed. This money is for personal expenditures, including travel expenses, accommodations, food, and offerings.

Choosing a location to attend the Feast is very central to the planning process. This is usu-

ally decided after the sites are announced by the church. Sometimes my family and I even travel to the Feast site beforehand to search for accommodations and get familiar with the surroundings. We look for nice restaurants, and places for family outings.

The Importance of Prayer at the Feast

I see God in everything at the Feast. I see His salvation at the Feast. I envision the comfort He will bring to His people at His second coming. Yes, to us the Feast is considered to be a foretaste of what the Kingdom of God will be like at Christ's Second Coming. Also, the Feast is a place where I can go and revere God most abundantly.

The Feast gives me an opportunity to consecrate myself to God so I can learn how to better apply my heart to His righteousness. The Feast of Tabernacles is a time for rejoicing and praying in the name of the Lord. Al-

"The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful annual tradition of which my family and I keep, having come to appreciate it very much because it has also helped us to grow and use better judgment."

though the Feast is a time for families and friends to get together in brotherly love, it is also a time for us to step up in faith and continue drawing closer to God (Eph. 6:18; 1 Thess. 5:16-18).

We are instructed to tabernacle away from our homes (Lev. 23:42). Each year, Feast locations are planned in specific areas around the world. So for me, nothing could be more important than going to a specific place where I enter the presence of God.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was explosive. It was powerful. Yet, He knew the reward for solitude. Solitude is necessary for closeness with the Lord. Closeness is necessary for impartation. Impartation is necessary for change. Sometimes we must move away from the voices of others to distinguish God's voice. The Feast affords us time to depart

from our busy schedule and travel to a private place, sanctified and exclusive for improving the incredible relationship between us and our God; while keeping in mind the words of Job, "The Spirit of God has made me, And the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4).

God's Instructions for Mankind

The Feast gives me the opportunity to be at one with my Creator; to focus on God's mighty works—His Creation. In Leviticus 23:33-43, the Feast of Tabernacles is described as God's holy time that He instructed the Hebrews to follow. As followers of Christ, we are told to do the same as Moses instructed the children of Israel. The Feast is a learning environment where we have the opportunity to grow closer to God (Neh. 8:13-14, 18). At the Feast, when presenting the sermons and sermonettes, the ministers always read from the Bible similar to the way Nehemiah did in the days of Ezra, declaring, explaining, admonishing, and inspiring us from the Word of God.

Lessons I Learn from the Feast

The Feast teaches us to choose love, although we are living in a time when the level of hatred

is so rampant (1 John 3:13). Yet, God's Feast allows us to reach out to the brethren in love. The Feast of Tabernacles is a wonderful annual tradition that my family and I keep, having come to appreciate it very much because it has also helped us to grow and use better judgment. We must remember God is forever watching over us; therefore, we learn how to get closer to God by showing due diligence in all we do until Christ returns (Heb. 6:9-12). True Christianity is a way of life. It allows us to be a light bearer and at the Feast it gives us the opportunity to improve our performance to do all things with a good heart (Phil. 4:8-9). Unquestionably, it is a key tradition in helping anyone claiming Christ as their Savior, to understand the magnitude of God's unfathomable love for mankind!

A Comparable Look at the Old and the New

by Noel Scoburgh

The Feast of Tabernacles, that God gave to ancient Israel, was a time of celebration and joy, characterized by several practices (Deut. 16:14). God's command to ancient Israel for keeping "My feasts" is outlined in Leviticus 23. Modern observances of the Feast of Tabernacles today are based on these guidelines God gave ancient Israel although there are some key distinctions.

As commanded, the 1st and 8th days are holy convocations. In ancient Israel, all males were required to travel to Jerusalem where an offering was made to the Lord as stipulated in Deuteronomy 16:16-17. A booth or 'tabernacle' in which they were to dwell, was constructed using several branches (Neh. 8:15). In Jesus' time, pilgrims came from afar to observe the Feast in Jerusalem. Each family built their own booth, moving in on the first day of the Feast and lived there for the remainder of the Festival, figuratively, 'tabernacling' with God.

The rituals performed at the Feast of Taber-

nacles were indeed spectacular. It was a joyous occasion with several notable observances:

The Light Show

In the temple, light proceeded from immense lamp stands and shined into the court of the Gentiles. Beneath the lamp stands, singing and dancing of the people to the Lord could be heard beyond the gates of the temple. Religious Studies scholar, Dr. Robert Somerville, records the following:

"The Feast of Tabernacles (Succoth) was the final and by far the most festive and joyous of the Lord's festivals. History records that four huge candelabras were constructed, lighted, and attended by young men ascending ladders periodically with pitchers of oil to keep them burning. The light from these lamps illuminated the whole city of Jerusalem, and around them danced distinguished men with torches in their hands, singing hymns and songs of praise. The dancing as well as the

music continued until daybreak. It was a remarkably extravagant sight to behold!"

Significantly, it was at this time of the Feast that Jesus declared Himself, "the light of the world" (John 8:12).

The Waving of Branches

Another customary practice at the Feast was the waving of a cluster of branches or 'Lulav.' In addition to being used to construct the booths, the people used the Lulav in their rejoicing and praise to the Almighty. There were four types of branches gathered to create the Lulav as indicated in Leviticus 23:40. These are customarily understood to be the following:

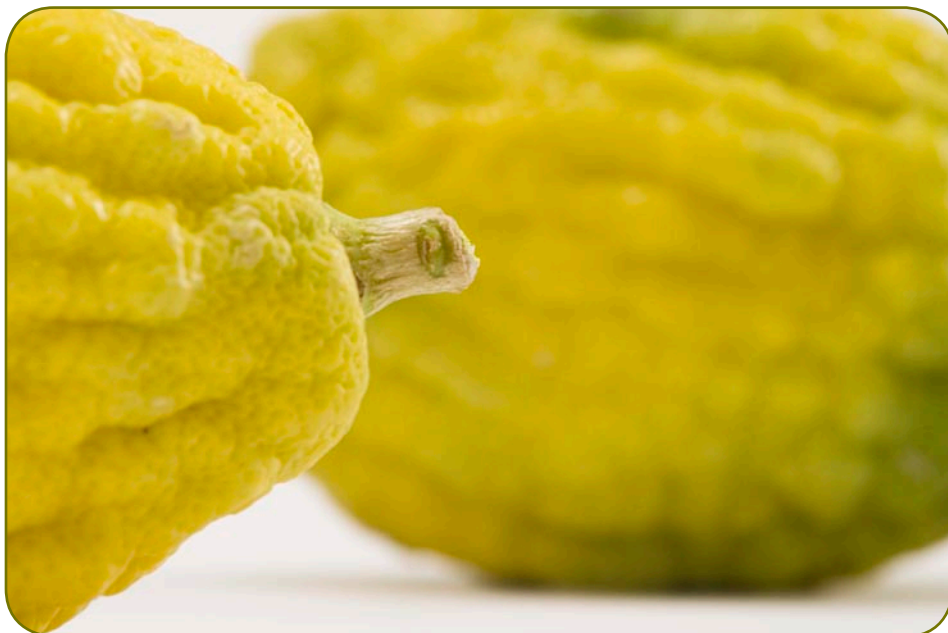
1. Branches of palm trees
2. Boughs of leafy trees: Myrtle
3. Willows of brook
4. Fruit of beautiful trees: A lemon-like, citron or similar citrus fruit

It is understood that a spiritual significance is attached to the selection of these branches:

The palm tree bears fruit but does not have fragrance. This is likened to a person, who lives by the letter of the Law, but lacks compassion and love for others.

The myrtle has fragrance but cannot bear fruit, which is a reminder of a person who knows scripture, looks really good, and appears to have all the right stuff, but has no real fruit; he or she is likened to a whitened sepulcher filled with the bones of dead men—the proverbial hypocrite.

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Atonement

Illustrates The Ultimate Transition Of Power

by Bill Watson

In many respects the Bible is a saga about good and evil. It covers many stories that outline the descriptions and interaction of circumstances and conditions of the human experience that illustrate how good and evil are defined. As we begin reading the Bible, our attention is brought to the *immediate* truism that there are primarily *three major factors* describing the reality in which we exist: God, Satan and mankind. As we become introduced and more familiar with these 'three factors' we begin to understand that Satan is an adversary (Isa. 14:12-15; Ezek. 28:12-17), steeped in rebellion and malice against God (Elohim) and His plan, but allowed to coexist with these human creatures that were created in His (God's) image (Gen. 1:26-28; Eph. 6:12-13; 1 Pet. 5:8-9).

Soon after mankind's Creation in the Garden of Eden, the serpent (a whispering spirit), Satan, the fallen, rebellious, and proud covering Cherub, persuaded mankind to rebel against God (Gen. 3:1-7). This was the same thing he did, in principle, when he (Satan) *originally* sinned, sometime before the Creation of mankind, and was cast out of heaven with 1/3 of the angelic host (Luke 10:18; Rev.12:3-4).

Immediately, he was correctly blamed and cursed by God for this *initial* act of sinful deception against mankind. Sadly, this event introduced death into the human realm (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Because of this hideously defiant seditious act, God pronounced in so many words that he (Satan) would be conquered, replaced, and punished without mercy for his malice and unrepentant evil attitude (Gen. 3:14-15). God was clear and direct about His own vindication and Satan's judgment, when He allowed Jesus Christ, *before* His human birth, to speak directly to Satan and his demons while the ark was being built. Notice,

"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God... by which also he [Christ] went and preached unto the spirits [demons] in prison [confined to this Earth];

God is working a salvific plan that will result in the restitution of all things. He is strategically steering circumstances and conditions that are intended to complete the transition of power from the "god of this world," Satan the devil, to the King of kings and Lord of lords, Jesus Christ. But what is underscoring this shift? What are some of the components this objective demands from God the Father?



Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few... were saved by water." (1 Pet. 3:18-20)

Undoubtedly, God was and is explicit about their future fate and is not in the least bit hesitant about explaining the 'why, wherefores, and how' it will be executed (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 20:2, 10).

Unquestionably, the punishment of this fallen Cherub is a major requirement that completes the achievement of God's Plan of Salvation. The "restitution of all things" *cannot* be fully appreciated and/or satisfied until this wily, evil, malicious demon is conquered, replaced, and punished for his original rebellion (sin). However, this is only one of three major components we should consider necessary for accomplishing this ultimate transition of power coming upon the Earth. Undeniably, the other two items include: Christ's substitutionary sacrifice and also His intercessory ministry.

These three major rudiments are key provi-

sions demonstrated in the typology of the Day of Atonement, which provides the paradigm that underlines our knowledge of how God will ultimately be vindicated and then redeem mankind for immortal life as resurrected spirit beings. Christ's sacrifice and intercessory ministry are embodied in the ritual of Atonement by the goat chosen to "represent the Lord." Notice, "And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the Lord, and the other lot for the [Azazel]" (Lev. 16:8).

Clearly, the sacrificed goat combined with the shedding of its blood, is an unmistakable reference for the typology of the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the suffering servant. The Azazel, on the other hand, undoubtedly, *is not* "for the Lord" and therefore doesn't represent the Messiah; it plainly represents the *contradistinction* of the Messiah. This contradistinction is none other than the father (originator) of murder and lies, Satan the devil, the "persona on grada" of evil (John 8:44).

In the fall Holy Day scheme, specifically captured by the Day of Atonement, Christ's sacrifice for sin is visibly illustrated by the killed

(sacrificed) goat representing the sin offering, while the shed blood on the mercy seat represents the purpose of His intercessory ministry; the covering of our personal sins. Satan's binding (Rev. 20:4) and ultimate banishment to outer darkness (Rev. 20:10) is portrayed by the laying on of the High Priest's hands, symbolically transferring the sin/evil and guilt to this representative of the evil one (the Azazel)—illustrating for us that he is responsible for the original (father of) sin and culpable in mankind's rebellion and enmity toward God. The Bible calls it the "spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). Admittedly, the world would be quite a different place without Satan and his demonic influence.

How is it Done Exactly?

In Genesis 3:15, the Lord God mentions something interesting.

"And I will put enmity (hostility, hatred) between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Most commentators and scholars will admit this is an unmistakable reference to the Messiah who would eventually succeed in discarding Satan (bruising his head). However, for a time Satan would bruise Him (Jesus Christ) through the ensuing conflicts characterized by the crucifixion and demonic efforts to stamp out the church (bruising His heel). Yet, in the end the evil one, Satan and his minions, would be conquered and banished from the Kingdom of God.

Sadly, many today marginalize the importance of the message Jesus Christ brought. Shamefully, much of Christendom has deemphasized the fact that Christ was born to be a king and is intended to rule on the Earth (Zech. 14:9; Rev. 2:26, 5:10; Dan. 2:44, 7:17-18, 26-28). Notice what Isaiah the prophet says about the coming Messiah:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace

there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

In Luke, consider what the angel told Mary, the mother of Jesus.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest...And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke 1:32-33)

Jesus Christ was born to be a literal King. He is called the "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). He was sent from the Father to explain and demonstrate certain truths of the gospel that would provide the mechanism to bring many sons unto glory (immortality). He is the first of the first fruits, the firstborn from the dead, then those afterward (us) at His Coming (1 Cor. 15:23; Col.

"Through this event our sins are transferred to Jesus Christ who covers them, interceding on our behalf, that we might be blameless and unaccountable for transgressions that lead to death..."

1:14-20). Today, what most Christians don't realize is a major segment of Jesus Christ's mission was that He came to qualify as the replacement King and Ruler of Satan the devil, who is the god of this world (2 Cor. 4:4).

The conflict Jesus Christ experienced with Satan in the wilderness, after He was baptized is often underestimated. What many don't realize is this was a major battle of wills confronting God our Creator (good) against the devil (evil). This was the ultimate 'show-down!' Notice,

"Again, the devil taketh him (Jesus) up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him [Jesus], All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." (Matt. 4:8-9)

Satan wanted Jesus to disqualify Himself by committing idolatry through worshipping

Satan, thereby betraying God the Father. However, we're all aware that Jesus resisted this personal attack and went on to complete His mission.

The Ultimate Mission Defined

And that planned mission included executing the three major components that are typologically illustrated in the ritual of the Day of Atonement. Embedded in this typology is the enriched understanding that first, Christ our Lord and Savior came as a substitutionary sacrifice to die for us so that we may live unto Him and the Father (typified in the killing of the goat for the Lord). Secondly, His blood provides us remission of sin allowing us to escape the death penalty (Heb. 9:22). He is "our Passover" (typified in the shed blood of the goat for the Lord, 1 Cor. 5:7).

Through this event our sins are transferred to Jesus Christ who covers them, interceding on our behalf, that we might be blameless and unaccountable for transgressions that lead to death (Rom. 6:23). This is the greatest privilege, honor, and gift a human being could ever have: that the Creator God (Jesus Christ) came to this Earth to die for us personally and bear our sins, so that we may obtain immortality (Heb. 1:2; Col. 1: 16; 1 John 2:1-3; Heb. 2:9-18). This is astoundingly remarkable!

However, this is not the end of the story. We need to remember the third and last component, "Vengeance is mine says the Lord" (Heb. 10:30; Deut. 32:35-36). God will be vindicated. His justice demands it. Until the evil that separates us from God, along with the evil one is confronted and eliminated, there will be no restitution of all things. The Judgment of God demands that sin must be accounted for. Currently, Christ is accounting for it. He is bearing our sins, interceding on our behalf—but that will eventually be changed.

We are told Christ came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Furthermore, He also came to destroy death, which Satan introduced when he originally persuaded (deceived) mankind to rebel against God in the garden (Heb. 2:14).

continued on page 21



The True Kingdom

by Dan Alexander

When you hear the word ‘kingdom,’ what’s the first thought that enters your mind? I proposed this question to my co-worker and his response was ‘royalty.’ When we think of royalty, it generally causes one to think about a king and queen, living in a castle in their kingdom, with knights and horses, fighting battles with other kings or queens from other kingdoms. We can clearly see this scene because we’ve seen or read about it before in books and movies. They all go together. It has been a very popular theme throughout history.

When I was a child, my friends and I would play Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest (actually it was a wooded lot behind our neighborhood). We took turns pretending to be Robin Hood and his band of merry men, including little John (usually played by the biggest kid in our neighborhood) against the Sheriff of Nottingham and his army.

Most of us are aware of the legendary story of Robin and his merry men, and how they would take food, supplies, and gold coins from the horse-drawn carriages guarded by the sheriff’s dark knights while traveling through Sherwood Forest on their way back to the castle. Robin did this to help the unfortunate towns’ people who were taxed to death. They all worked extremely hard and received next to nothing, surviving on very little.

Eventually, there would be a confrontation between the two forces. As this transpired, the peoples’ true king was abroad defending the honor of the Kingdom of Nottingham. While doing this, the sheriff was left in charge—so he thought he would run things differently. He made himself out to be the king. The peasants worked harder for less so he could line his pockets with gold from their hard labors.

That’s the reason Robin Hood and his men started helping the poor of Nottingham. To-

gether they defeated the Sheriff and his dark Knights and placed the rightful king back on his throne. As fairy tales go, they all lived happily ever after. However, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree, because though Robin Hood may be a figment of a writer’s imagination, there are many similarities in modern life.

For example: in many countries, monarchies have been replaced by Prime Ministers or Presidents, with their ‘bands’ of many men and women we call cabinet members or government ministers who change power periodically. As I recall, taxes are always rising and we seem to work harder for less. The same old story: the rich get richer; and the poor—they get calculators from the dollar store so they can figure out how to make their paychecks last longer.

Sadly, the so-called ‘middle class’ is trying to live as the rich. Unquestionably, advertisements lead them down the golden path of greed offering credit cards, tempting to encourage the in-betweens to enlarge their kingdoms (life-styles) on debt. After all, isn’t it our North American right to be, ‘King of our Castle,’ now, even if we can’t afford it?

There are millions of kingdoms in the world with private property and “No Trespassing” signs, orders from the ‘owner king.’ These are posted, warning us that if we don’t obey, soldiers (police) will be sent out, to remove the trespassers. Many people live fairy tale lives, with all the things money can buy setting up their own private little kingdoms. It may be big and beautiful on the outside, but so often it’s simply empty and hollow on the inside.

Have you ever entertained the thought of what money can *never* buy? We should, because as good as some countries or individuals may have it all the earthly kingdoms, large or small, political or personal, will eventually turn to dust and fade away.

Obviously, we cannot buy time—it’s not for sale; and time waits for no man. So, because time is marching on, there’s no time like the present to think about the word ‘kingdom.’ But not the futile kingdoms of this era or the personal ones we may try to create for ourselves, rather the Kingdom of God Almighty here on Earth. That’s right! Jesus Christ will return to His Creation and set up a world ruling government that will last for all eternity. Now this is a kingdom to consider!

When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory (Matt. 25: 31-34). Jesus will be King of kings and Lords of lords, here on planet Earth. God’s green Earth will be the Kingdom to end all kingdoms and ultimately our *home* for us, our Savior and our Father.

“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven [to Earth]... And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he [God] will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.”
(Rev. 21: 2-3)

Follow the instructions of God’s owner’s manual—your Bible. Learn how to conduct yourself in this life, so you’ll be better prepared for your role in God’s Kingdom because it is coming! Imagine a kingdom ruled by a true and just king. Yes, you can bear witness to the greatest kingdom of all time—for all time!

“...therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”
(Matt. 6:9-10)

Let’s pray God will speed that soon coming day.



What is the Kingdom of God?

by Vance A. Stinson



Some of the world's mightiest empires have come and gone, having been reduced to kingdoms of relics and sand. But the Bible speaks of a kingdom that will never end—the Kingdom of God. Just what does Scripture reveal about this kingdom?

Jesus Christ came preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. “The time is fulfilled,” He said, “and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15). What is this kingdom? How was it “at hand?” And why is this message called “the Gospel,” or “Good News?”

The word ‘kingdom’ in our English Bibles is a translation of the Greek word *basileia*, whose Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents are *malkuth* and *malkutha*, respectively. These terms mean much more than ‘kingdom,’ ‘government,’ or ‘empire.’ They may be translated, ‘kingship,’ ‘reign,’ or ‘sovereignty.’ Thus, the gospel of the Kingdom of God is the good news of God’s reign over His creation.

Daniel Describes the Future Reign of God

The prophet Daniel describes the Kingdom of God as a world-ruling empire that will “break in pieces and consume all these [preceding] kingdoms, and it shall stand forever” (Dan. 2:44). Unlike the preceding kingdoms—the Neo-Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian, and Roman empires—the kingdom established by the God of heaven will never be reduced to ruin or be succeeded by or absorbed into another kingdom.

Daniel describes the King of the Kingdom of God as “One like the Son of Man” who receives His authority from the “Ancient of Days.” Christians recognize the former is Jesus Christ and the latter is God, the Father. Daniel states,

*“Then to Him [Christ] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom,
That all peoples, nations, and languages
should serve Him.
His dominion is an everlasting dominion,
Which shall not pass away,
And His kingdom the one
Which shall not be destroyed.”*
(Dan. 7:14)

According to Daniel, the One like the Son of Man—Christ—will not rule alone. Daniel

continues,

*“Then the kingdom and dominion,
And the greatness of the kingdoms under the
whole heaven,
Shall be given to the people, the saints of the
Most High.
His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
And all dominions shall serve and obey
Him.”*
(Dan. 7:27)

The “kingdom and dominion” will be “given to the...saints of the Most High.” This means simply that the true people of God will reign with Christ, who will exercise authority over “all dominions,” or governments—hence the title “King of kings and Lord of lords.” This prophecy is reiterated in the book of Revelation, which is widely recognized as a companion to the book of Daniel.

The Kingdom in Revelation

John, who received the Revelation, describes Christ as “One like the Son of Man,” a Messianic epithet drawn from the book of Daniel (Rev. 1:13).

Christ affirms,

*“And he who overcomes, and keeps My works
until the end, to him I will give power over the
nations...as I also received from My Father.”*
(Rev. 2:26, 28)

The saints, as “kings and priests to our God,” will “reign on the earth” (Rev. 5:10; cf. 20:4). To those who successfully combat the influence of the devil and pulls of the flesh, Christ promises,

*“I will grant to sit with Me on My
throne, as I also overcame and sat
down with My Father on His throne.”*
(Rev. 3:21)

All this is reminiscent of Daniel’s descriptions of the future Kingdom of God.

From the above we learn that the Kingdom of God is not only the world-ruling government of God; it may also be defined as the ruling family of God—that is, the Kingdom subsists in the King and His co-regents. The Kingdom, you will recall, is “given to...the saints of the Most High” and is “an everlasting kingdom,” meaning that it continues indefinitely, transcending the temporal reign of “a thou-

sand years” (Rev. 20:4) and encompassing the everlasting New Heaven and New Earth (Rev. 21:1).

The Kingdom prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and others, consistent with Daniel’s prophecies, connect the future Kingdom with the restoration of Israel under the reign of the ideal Davidic king, a reign that expands to include all the nations of the Earth. But a much fuller picture of the Kingdom of God emerges from the teachings of the New Testament.

Facts About the Kingdom

While the Kingdom of God in its fullness is clearly a future reality—the “eschatological Kingdom,” as theologians often call it—it can be said that the Kingdom of God takes in the entire sphere of God’s reign—past, present, and future. For this reason, the New Testament speaks of the Kingdom as an “already but not yet” phenomenon, as a spiritual reality as well as a powerfully influential institution. These terms are not contradictory; they merely speak of the multiple aspects of the Kingdom.

Here are several important facts relative to the gospel of the Kingdom of God:

1 Jesus was sent for the purpose of preaching the Kingdom of God.

When a crowd of Galileans urged Jesus not to leave their city, “He said to them, ‘I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent’” (Luke 4:43). While preaching was not Jesus’ sole purpose for coming to the Earth, it was nevertheless an essential function of His ministry—one of the primary reasons for His Coming.

2 There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God was already present in the time of Jesus and the apostles.

Jesus said the Kingdom “is at hand” (Mark 1:15) and “has come near you” (Luke 10:9, 11). Reprimanding the religious leaders who accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Satan, Jesus said, “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt. 12:28; Luke 11:20). Similarly, when the Pharisees asked Him when the Kingdom of God would come, He replied, “The kingdom of God does

not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:19–21). The term "within" is better rendered "among," or "in the midst of." The Kingdom was *in the midst* of (certainly not *within*) the Pharisees because the King of the Kingdom stood in their midst at that moment. Where the King is, there is the Kingdom.

3 There is a sense in which the Kingdom of God has not yet come.

Jesus gave His disciples the Parable of the Minas in order to correct their misunderstanding that "the kingdom of God would appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). Years later, Paul and Barnabas urged believers to "continue in the faith," reminding them that "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22).

If believers are already in the Kingdom of God—if they are already experiencing the fullness of the Kingdom—it is pointless to speak of enduring tribulations as a prerequisite to *entering* the Kingdom. Paul and Barnabas were speaking of the *eschatological* Kingdom, which will commence with the Second Coming of Christ and come to full maturity in the New Heaven and New Earth period (Rev. 20–22).

4

There is continuity between the Old Testament kingdom and the future Kingdom.

Jesus' disciples expected the risen Lord to "restore the kingdom to Israel." Rather than tell them His Kingdom had nothing to do with Israel, He replied, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1:6).

Jesus declared that many from east and west would "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out" (Matt. 8:11–12). The "children of the kingdom" are those physical descendants of Jacob—Israelites—who reject Jesus as the promised Messiah. Jesus said the Kingdom would be taken from them "and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matt. 21:43).

Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God is rooted firmly in prophecies concerning the restoration of Israel. Even God's promise to "make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah" (Jer. 31:31) is in the context of the future restoration of Israel and Judah as a kingdom united under the reign of a Davidic "Branch of righteousness" whom we recognize as Jesus Christ (Jer. 33:15). So, dispensationalist claims notwithstanding, the

gospel of the Kingdom of God rests solidly on the foundation of the kingdom promises of the Old Testament.

5 Those who intend to be citizens of the Kingdom of God must place seeking it at the head of their list of priorities.

Jesus cautioned His disciples about worrying over physical things, urging them rather to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things [food, drink, clothing] will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33). Anyone truly seeking the Kingdom of God will commit himself fully to submitting to the Reign of God *now*.

And that brings us to *you*. Have you turned to God in heart-rending repentance—confessing your sins to Him and expressing your desire for forgiveness and regeneration—and accepted the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ? In other words, *have you fully submitted to the Reign of God?*

If yes, it's time for the next step. What is it?

You'll find the answer in Acts 2:38.

✠

A Comparable Look at the Old and New continued from page 8

The willow neither produces fruit, nor fragrance, which is illustrative of one for which doctrine (truth) is of little importance and consequently no fruit (positive change) is ever produced.

The citron tree has both fruit and fragrance. This is likened to one who is faithful and lives a balanced and fruitful life resulting from putting into practice the spiritual knowledge they've learned, thus, improving their life thirty, sixty, and ninety fold.

The Water Ceremony

A notable practice at the Feast was the pouring of water. This practice was introduced by tradition. Each day during the Feast, the high priest went to the Pool of Siloam to draw water. The water was carried back to the courtyard in a golden pitcher. The water was then poured out at the base of the altar. It flowed down the steps into the outer court

of the temple. When the priest poured the water, the people would wave the branches and sing. At the Feast, on the Last Great Day, Jesus proclaimed He was the source of "living water" and any who thirst could come and drink (John 7:37–38). It is believed that Jesus was referring to this customary practice at the Feast when He said these words.

Feast Observances Today

Thousands of people from all over the world observe the Feast of Tabernacles today. People travel miles to selected destinations to meet in groups, ranging from a handful in number, to hundreds, even thousands. Some still build booths in their backyards, decorate them with branches and live in them for the duration of the Feast. Others travel and stay in hotels, while others choose to observe the Feast in tents.

Holy convocations and the collection of offerings still occur on the first and last days of the Festival (animal sacrifices are no longer offered). The people of Israel were told to re-

joice at the Feast. Today, at many Feast gatherings, recreational activities, group meals, and fellowship are enjoyed. The waving of branches and pouring of water are still practiced by some.

Portions of the Torah were read daily at the Feast in biblical times. Today, for those Jews and Christians who observe the Feast, worship services also occur daily and are punctuated with music, singing, preaching, and biblical lessons. But sadly, the Feast of Tabernacles is *not observed* by many Christians today, nor does humanity in general recognize this Festival; yet regardless, a day is coming, when Jesus Christ will indeed return as the Feast portrays, and then all people on Earth will gather together and participate in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16). God speed that day!

✠

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times” Charles Dickens once wrote. He was describing the effects on ordinary people of a deep political contrast that existed between two 18th century societies—one English and one French—one free and one oppressed. Of course the story that I’m referring to is *A Tale of Two Cities*. In particular, this novel ends when one friend willingly gives up his life for another. Although Charles Dickens’ drama was a fictional story, there is at least the truth of one universal struggle imbedded within it, and it is this: selflessness versus selfishness. Today, there is a similar struggle between two competing systems of human behavior. In this ‘Tale of Two Kingdoms’ I ask you to consider whether there is any doubt the Kingdom of God will be the best of times and that today’s political kingdom is the worst of times. The defining factor between the two is *selflessness versus selfishness*.

The attitude needed ‘to make it’ in each king-

dom is different: God’s Kingdom calls for *selflessness*, while the political kingdom demands *selfishness*. Jesus said,

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” (John 5:24, NIV)

What were Jesus’ words that we are required to hear, in regards to selflessness versus selfishness, in order to make this crossing from death to life?

“...Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...” (Mark 10:43-45, NIV)

In sharp contrast to this, the way of the political kingdom is: use or be used. In this world, those willing to seize every opportunity are rewarded even if it means abusing others. It’s only wrong, and selfish, if you get caught.

“...Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be



his people, and God himself will be with them... and they will reign for ever and ever.” (Rev. 21:3, 22:5, NIV)

Selfish investments in the political kingdom are often for short-term gain. Politicians will make deals with other politicians, within their own party or outside, in an attempt to make an immediate gain regardless of negative long-term effects. Ultimately, selfishness



is destructive because it is not compatible within God’s provision of life. Jesus said it simply in the parable of the vine (John 15:1-17).

Although the political kingdom should always

come second to God’s kingdom, it does not mean we should throw up our hands and do nothing awaiting God’s return. We are told to give what is due where due, “[g]ive to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matt. 22:21). We just need to remember our priorities and which kingdom comes first. It is also important to remember that not all who participate in the political kingdom of materialism and manna are selfish.

There are many who enter to genuinely work towards the betterment of others and society in general. Unfortunately for them, they are often categorized as selfish with the others, and sadly their good deeds are overshadowed because of the stigmatization.

The political kingdom appears to be going through the worst of times. Today, confidence in elected officials is at an all time low. Despite the brokenness of the political kingdom we should not despair because the Kingdom of God is coming, where

the long-term investment in selflessness will be rewarded.

Yes, we are saved by the grace of the Almighty God, but our individual rewards in this new Kingdom will be according to our works—the works that we do during our journey here on Earth as a Christian. Although we do not know the exact day or hour of the arrival of God’s Kingdom, we must always be ready:

“Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’” (Mark 13: 33-37, NIV)

...for what will be the best of times!



A Tale of Two Kingdoms

by Mark Agnew

Fasting

A Temple Cleansing of Priceless Value

by Bill Watson

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

So how is it that fasting is a temple cleansing experience? Is there a "personal spiritual truth" associated with the physical typology of the Atonement ritual?

The Day of Atonement has always been considered a very solemn and pivotal Holy Day. It was a special time when only certain things happened, *once a year*, in the ritual of this day. Much of it was concentrated on *what* the High Priest did and *where* he did it. Notice:

"Now when these things were thus ordained (the covenant of rites, ceremonies, and divine service), the priest went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second (Holy of Holies) went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people." (Heb. 9:6-7)

This was a special time because the *result* of the sin offering was different. Unlike the conventional sin offering throughout the year that transferred the sins of the people *into* the temple, this sin offering, representing the Lord on the Day of Atonement, cleansed the temple from the sins of the people (Lev. 16:8). In other words, it transferred the sins *out* of the temple, cleansing everything with the blood of the sacrificed (killed) goat, which represented the Lord (Lev. 16:19-20). This was a time to 'clean the house' (temple) and get right with God, achieving 'at-one-ment' with Him.

We understand that much of the physical representation and associated rituals of

the sacrificial system were primarily for the purpose of illustrating the deeper and richer *spiritual* meanings of what God intended for us to know. Notice what is mentioned in Hebrews. The writer is comparing how the Old Covenant sacrificial system signified the way into the holiest of all was "not yet made manifest" while the first (physical) tabernacle was yet standing (Heb. 9:8).

It was a figure for the time then present. But the writer contrasts this with Jesus Christ's sacrifice, illustrating how much greater and more perfect, because His tabernacle (His body, His being) was made without hands—that is to say not of the human realm. Remember, He was God incarnate. He was the Creator God who divested Himself of the glory He shared with the Father as the Word of God before His human birth (Col. 1:13-20) and became flesh, taking on the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16). Therefore, how much more shall the blood of Christ purge our conscience from dead works and our human destiny from eternal death? After all, it is by means of His death that He is able to redeem us so that we may obtain an eternal inheritance as immortals (Heb. 9:8-15).

With this concept in mind, Paul enlarges on this by demonstrating that we are considered temples of God, bought with a price and obligated now to glorify God in our bodies and spirits (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul reinforces the concept that we are the modern day Temples

of God, when he warns us not to become unequally yoked with unbelievers. The possibilities of compromise and potential loss of such a great inheritance was not worth the risk in Paul's judgment.

Clearly, Jesus' knowledge of this new perception was understood when He also explained to the woman at the well a time was coming when the true worshippers of God would worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:21-24). He knew the physical temple, still standing during the time of His ministry, would be destroyed in a few years resulting in a different spiritual understanding of these Old Covenant truths. The concept that human beings are now the temples of God is plainly illustrated throughout the New Testament as one of these new understandings. This *theological shift* was intended to personalize our relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

Superimposing this understanding into the framing of the Day of Atonement, fasting takes on additional meaning. However, let us first consider the definition of an acceptable fast found in Isaiah 58:6-12.

"Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou



seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?..."
(Isa. 58:6-7)

Clearly, what is being described is a cleansing. Fasting should cleanse the soul by loosening the bands of wickedness. This should result in greater charity, brightening our personal example as lights on a hill, portraying God in our lives more profoundly (Matt. 5:14-16). Unquestionably, fasting *figuratively* expunges sin from us, God's living temples.

Admittedly, an additional overlay of fasting is the *symbolic connection* of duty, likened to that of not eating leavened products during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Simply stated, choosing *not* to fast is tantamount to eating leavened products during the Days of Unleavened Bread. Spiritually, by refusing to 'cleanse our temples' by fasting, we clearly make the statement to our God, that we reject His atonement (*at-one-ment*). Sadly, that would be an unfortunate position to take.

Central to the Day of Atonement, which illustrates a significant *difference* from Passover, is the fact we are drawing close to God by afflicting (fasting) our soul, cleansing our temple to avoid His vengeance and judgment. Keep in mind, "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). Paul puts it very succinctly when he says,

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are."
(1 Cor. 3:16-17)

With this outlook in mind, it is clear that an addition dimension of fasting symbolically



exhibits a spiritual and physical detoxification *from sin*. It spiritually *detoxifies* by spending more time in Bible study, meditation, and prayer. This should benefit us with a stronger connection to God. Be assured if we "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you" (Jas. 4:8). Fasting has a way of mutually drawing us more closely to Him.

Physically, fasting will have an actual detoxifying effect on us. Therefore, it is not unrea-

sonable to occasionally expect some physical discomfort and perhaps, a bit of sickness. But clearly, one must admit that this simply adds to the realism of the experience that should illustrate the magnitude of untangling our 'temples' from sin.

Undeniably, for a 24-hour period we are cleansing our temples, both physically and spiritually, drawing nearer to God and separating, or departing from the things in our lives that divide us from Him. Remember: the focus of the Day of Atonement is all about expulsion, departure, exile, separation—the banishment of evil (or sin), including the evil one (Satan the devil) from the 'Camp of God.' And so is fasting; it too is a lesson about removal and expunging for the purpose of achieving atonement with God!

So let us remember, as we occasionally take time to fast throughout our lives, whether on the Day of Atonement or at times we voluntarily choose, understand: the results we are hoping for should provide us with 'at-one-ment' with God. Unquestionably, that will loose the "bands of wickedness" (Isa. 58:6) and empower us to be better examples of selfless servants of charity, while keeping in mind that our future is to become immortal sons of God in His Kingdom, reconciled to Him forever!

A

What Do You Mean "Tabernacle With Men?" continued from page 5

"Marvel not at this," Christ said, "for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth [in a resurrection]; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation [or condemnation]."
(John 5:28-29)

Daniel prophesied of this same time:

"And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."
(Dan. 12:2)

Ultimately God Will Tabernacle With Men

As shocking as it may sound to many, God the Father Himself is now "tabernacling" in heaven. He is there temporarily—He will not remain there—and will soon come down to this Earth and dwell permanently with men. Contrary to the popular 'traditional Christian' opinion, we are not going to heaven (John 3:13; Heb. 11:13, 39-40; Acts 2:34). *God is coming here!* Read it in your own Bible! Christ said,

"And if I go [to heaven] and prepare a place [position] for you, I will come again [to the earth], and receive you unto myself; that where I am [on the earth], there ye may be also." [And] "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth [not heaven]."

(John 14:3; Matt. 5:5)

Continuing, when God's plan as depicted by His Holy Days is complete, we read,

"And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."
(Rev. 21:3)

What a glorious truth! God will dwell on the Earth with the redeemed, as if in a tabernacle or house especially prepared for Him!

We learn God's ways by doing what God says. All things are ready. Come to the Feast!

A

Why We Need the Kingdom of God

by Murray Johnson



What do people mean when they talk about the Kingdom of God? What did Jesus mean when He went to Galilee preaching the gospel of the Kingdom of God? (Mark 1:14-15)

The Kingdom of God is as real as any type of government or kingdom that is currently on the Earth. Just as these human governments rule over us today, so the Kingdom (Government) of God will rule over all nations some day in the near future (Rev. 11:15). The reason we celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles for seven days is to remind us about God's Kingdom that will be established on Earth (Zech. 14:9, 16-21).

We can all think of a variety of reasons why we need the Kingdom of God to come as soon as possible. But let's have a quick look at four particular reasons.

1 War

Since the dawn of time, when mankind started forming nations, there have always been armies to declare war on one another. The history books are filled with these ancient

wars but let's just consider the 20th century for a moment.

From 1914 to 1918, there was World War I—the war to end all wars. In 1919, U.S. president Woodrow Wilson and the victorious allied leaders formed the League of Nations. Here, men of peace and reason came together to settle their disputes without hurting one another. Within 20 years, between 1939 and 1945, World War II erupted. At the close of this conflict, man had invented weapons of mass destruction—namely the atomic bomb: the nuclear age had arrived. From day one, we've had weapons of destruction, but now we've reached the point where we can destroy the whole planet many times over with these nuclear weapons. As any student of military history will tell you, every weapon ever invented has been used in battle.

Shortly after World War II, men of peace and reason gathered again in San Francisco, to form the United Nations. They agreed at that time, the world could not withstand another world war. "We must learn to live in peace, this is our last chance," (General Dwight Eisenhower, *U.N. Meeting*, 1945).

Since that time, how many wars has the world seen? Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, India vs. Pakistan, Israel vs. Egypt, Britain vs. Argentina, Iran vs. Iraq, to name a few. Undoubtedly, more wars will be fought before the return of Jesus the Christ.

2 Government

Leaders of nations claim to be public servants. They have the authority and power to make laws and collect taxes, make rules that govern their nations, and make promises for the benefit of the people. But it seems the only ones who benefit are the leaders, while the majority of the public work to pay taxes. Today's world has four major forms of government:

1. Democracy
2. Socialism
3. Communism
4. Dictatorships

Though there are variations of these governments, many of them have certain things in common and all of them include negative elements: crime, pollution, corruption, injustice, health care problems, racial tensions,

religious conflicts, alienated youth, child neglect, and poverty. All of these forms of government have fallen short of truly helping their people.

3 Religion

Look at the religions of the non-Western world: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and yes—even Islam. In most of the nations where these religions are practiced, we find intolerance, illiteracy, poverty, suffering, and misery. They have not produced happiness or peace. By the same token, even mainstream Christianity is so fractured you can't keep up with the confusion that has resulted in all the different denominations. Sadly, instead of sticking to the Holy Bible, Christians have incorporated pagan rituals into their religious doctrine; they preach a gospel *about* Christ, but never mention the gospel He brought into the world to announce: *the gospel of the Kingdom of God*.

Unfortunately, when indeed they do talk about the Kingdom of God, most traditional Christians will reference it as just some surreal sentiment in the hearts of man—something to hope for, *if* the nature of man ever changes.

Most Christians today refuse to recognize what is mentioned throughout the scriptures. They don't comprehend the *literal* facts concerning Jesus Christ's position and role. Notice what Isaiah says:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders: And his name shall be called wonderful, counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his Kingdom to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever, the Zeal of the Lord of Host perform this." (Isa. 9:6-7)

Jesus was born to become a King. When He was brought before Pontius Pilate He was asked, "Art thou a King then?" Jesus answered, "Thou say that I am a King to this end was I born" (John 18:36-37). Just prior to Christ's birth, an angel appeared to Mary and revealed that her son was to become a King. He would sit on David's throne and his Kingdom would last forever (Luke 1:31-33). We know from

scripture, Christ said He would come again, but this time coming as the rightful Creator God He is, with all the power of the universe. (Matt. 24:30). This world needs Him now!

He is coming as Kings of kings and Lord of lords to set up His government and rule the nations with a rod of iron (Rev. 12:5, 19:15). This will be God's utopian world of peace and happiness. God is coming back to Earth to save man from himself.

4 Human Nature

Why is there crime? Why do people lie, steal, murder, commit adultery, and covet what others have? The answer is human nature, which is just a nice way of saying: *a satanic influenced and/or dominated nature*. But, when Christ returns, Satan will be put away for a thousand years (Rev. 20:1-4). His evil influence will be completely gone.

However, God will not abolish human nature while we are still in the flesh. Rather, He

on into eternity with Him (Dan. 7:17-18, 22, 26-27; Dan. 12:1-3; John 5:25-29; Rev. 2:26-27, Rev. 21:1-7).

God's Government will be a combination of church and state. He will re-educate the whole world showing people the right way to live their lives. His laws will be righteous and just. Nations and people will learn how to live with one another in peace. The scripture says, "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14; Isa. 11:9).

It will be a time when all of mankind will learn to live within God's law, enjoying the peace and happiness that comes with finally obeying God. For approximately 6000 years, God has allowed man to govern himself. Long enough to let humanity know he has missed the mark (he has sinned). The good news is that Christ is coming back to establish *His* government. This Government is real, it is just, it is righteous, and it will last forever. The best part is:



will offer us the divine nature upon true repentance and baptism. God wants everyone to come to the state of real repentance and receive His Holy Spirit. This change from human nature will not happen overnight; it will take time. It's a life-long process. However, with God's help and the resurrected saints who were raised from the dead when Christ returned to the Mount of Olives, they will work to make it possible. Remember, ultimately God's will is that *all* human beings *will have a chance* to become immortal, living

"And I heard a Great voice saying behold the tabernacle of God is with men and he will dwell with them and they shall be his people and God Himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: And there shall be no more death neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: For the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21:3-4)



Judgment

by Dwight Chin

A Time for Revivification of Dry Bones

If we were to closely examine the religious condition of the world, we would have to conclude, that if God is indeed in a battle with the devil to save the world from the evil Satan is conducting, regrettably, God is unequivocally, losing that battle. Notice the 12th chapter of the book of Revelation,

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent [he was created a long time ago, before mankind was created] called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."
(Rev. 12:9)

The harsh reality is that the institutions and most religions of this world are not of God, but are of the devil, including much of what many would consider to be Christian.

God is in fact sending out a message of witnessing and warning to the world of a future Great Tribulation and day of His wrath (especially to those of the modern nations of America, Britain, Canada, Australia, South Africa, etc.), and in addition, calling many unto repentance. However, He is *not* actively trying to save the world now! Only a small select group of people, here and there, scattered throughout the world known as the church, from the patriarchs of the Old Testament

to our present time, are to be part of what is considered the first resurrection of the dead in Christ (Heb. 11; Mark 13:24-27; 1 Cor. 15; Rev. 20:4-6). Indeed, many are called, but few are chosen.

Much of what is written in the Bible can be relatively simple to learn, once God opens our minds to understand His truths, especially scriptures regarding spiritual salvation. On the other hand, because the Bible is written in such a way, the majority cannot understand it; only a few comparably, comprehend it and convert their lives.

"And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: that seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them."
(Mark 4:11-12)

The time is coming, when according to God's plan of spiritual redemption, all of mankind will be given the opportunity to accept eternal life according to the stipulations of His New Covenant (Jer. 31:31-34; Heb. 8:8-13). (If you have not yet read our booklet, *God's Seasonal Plan* please request your FREE copy today! Also available online at:

www.cgi.org/booklets/seasonalplan.cfm)

The Valley of Dry Bones

In Ezekiel 37:1-14, the prophet was given a vision of the time when many in the grave that were dead, will be raised again to *physical* life and be given their first real opportunity to be born into God's family as spirit beings. Notice:

Verses 1-3:

The dry bones depict a large percentage of the human race that have been dead for a very long time.

Verses 4-6:

Depicted here is a revivification or rebirth to a renewed *physical* life.

Verses 7-8:

Surprisingly, most fail to see how these scriptures dispel the false concept held by so many that advances the notion that mankind has an immortal soul. Unfortunately, the false concept of an immortal soul promotes the additional false belief that when a person dies he goes immediately to heaven or hell as a disembodied spirit/soul.

Verses 9-13:

Certainly the category of people being described here is for the most part the ancient Israelites who did not receive the gift of eternal life in the First Resurrection, stemming

from the time they became a nation and later on divided into two separate tribes: the northern ten tribes of Israel and the southern tribe of Judah; primarily the Jews (1 Kgs. 11:31-39).

However, it will also include many of those that are of our current generation—the so called lost 10 tribes of Israel, consisting of the nations of America, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, etc. (Request your free copy of our 12-hour lecture audio series, *The Biblical Origins of The United States and The British Commonwealth Nations.*)

"And ye shall know that I am the LORD, when I have opened your graves, O my people, and brought you up out of your graves, And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the LORD have spoken it, and performed it, saith the LORD."
(Ezek. 37:13-14)

After Millennium Reign of Christ

However, the Second Resurrection will not only consist of the house of Israel and Judah, but ultimately every human being that has ever lived and died (who was not a part of the First Resurrection). As a matter of fact, the Second Resurrection (after the Millennium) also figuratively illustrates the love of God by including, *for the first time*, an opportunity to accept salvation through Jesus Christ for all those non-Israelites (Gentiles) who lived throughout mankind's history without the

opportunity to worship God in Spirit and Truth. Every one of us will get *one* opportunity to accept or reject Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (2 Pet. 3:9).

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened and another book was opened, which is the book of life and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God..."

judged every man according to their works."
(Rev. 20:11-13)

The first books mentioned in this prophesy are a collection of books containing God's inspired Word to mankind, defining His way of life—The Holy Bible. After a determined period of time, each of those individuals resurrected in the Second Resurrection will be judged to enter into either eternal life—God's spiritual family or be cast into the lake of fire (Isa. 65:20) and burned to ash, which is the second death from which there will be no resurrection (Rev. 20:14).

Will these people obey God's Command-

ments or not? This time there will be no excuses because God's law will be written firmly in their minds and hearts, with Jesus Christ ruling the world (Jer. 31:31-37; Zech. 14:9).

White Throne Judgment: A Process

The Great White Throne Judgment will not merely be a time of sentencing, but rather a process by which countless millions will have the opportunity to serve God the *right way* (Dan. 7:9-10). Judgment is a process.

This is the same process Christians in our present generation, who have been given their opportunity for spiritual salvation, must undergo. Remember, judgment begins at the house (Church) of God. We Christians, are being judged *now*, by our actions, according to what is written in the Holy Bible (1 Pet. 4:17). This is why it is so important, once we (Christians) have

been enlightened with the truth, not to turn back to the ways of the world (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Likewise, God holds our spiritual leaders accountable when His church is not properly nurtured, and is allowed to stray (Ezek. 34; Acts 20: 28-30; 1 Pet. 5:2-4).

While the immediate future does not look hopeful for mankind, there is a tremendous light at the end of the tunnel. Upon Jesus Christ's return, we will enter into a new age and salvation will be offered to *all* who will accept and obey Him! Clearly, God's Judgment is just.

✠

Atonement

continued from page 10

So, until total victory over sin, death, the grave, and Satan and his rebellious demons are eliminated, true Atonement cannot be accomplished. However, the Day of Atonement points to that time and assures us *it will be accomplished!*

This will be a time when this mortal must *put on* immortality; a time when the judgment of God will vindicate His plan and justice will

finally be served on the originator, the father of murder and lies, rebellion and malice, in-surrection and defiance. Remember, Jesus Christ did not come to atone (pay) for the unrepentant sinner, Satan, or his demons. Those in that category will have to atone for their own sins (Rom. 6:23; Rev. 20:10).

But finally, when the separation of the good (God's people) from the bad (those following the spirit of disobedience) is complete, we are told,

"Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ...But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
(1 Cor. 15: 54-57)

When this happens, the "transition of power" will be finished, complete, and true Atonement will be achieved and God the Father will come to Earth to finally *tabernacle with mankind!* (Eph. 1:5-12; Rev. 21:1-8).

✠

The concept of who God is can be understood by looking at the family as He originally designed it. God is our Father and we (the Church) are the betrothed or affianced bride of His Son Jesus Christ.

In order to really appreciate the marriage analogy used in the Bible, we need to 'divorce' (pardon the pun) ourselves from the Western concept of marriage and consider the traditional Jewish wedding, which has 3 main phases:

1 Phase one is the legal aspect or betrothal. The groom's father pays the bride price (a legal requirement), while the bride's father gives her a dowry (a part of her inheritance to take into the marriage). The marriage contract is made and sealed by the shedding of blood or symbolically sharing the wine, representing the "cup of acceptance." During the betrothal period, the groom proceeds to prepare a place for he and his bride to live in once the betrothal period is completed. However, the couple is considered legally married. (That's why Joseph wanted to quietly divorce Mary to whom he was betrothed when he found out she was pregnant, because he thought she had broken her marriage contract (Matt. 1:18-21).

2 Once the living place is completed, the groom then returns to the bride's house to claim her as his wife.

3 After this, there is a wedding procession followed by the marriage feast. This celebration lasts for seven days or more, after which, the groom takes his bride to their new home.

The Church of God is now married to Christ. We each accepted and signed the marriage contract at our baptism and renew it each time we take the Passover. By coming under the New Covenant, we entered into a marriage contract with our Savior and husband, Jesus Christ. The book of Hebrews reminds us of this (Heb. 8:8-12, 10:16-17) by quoting Jeremiah 31:31-33:

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith

the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people."

Now that we are espoused to Christ, what kind of bride should we be? Here are a few of the qualities Christ's bride should have:

Purity: As the bride of Christ we must be pure or holy in our character and conduct because He is holy. God desires a pure virgin for His Son. In 2 Corinthians 11:2 we read, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (Eph. 5:26-27). Christ wants a spotless and unblemished bride.

Faithfulness: God is committed to a monogamous relationship and won't share us with any other 'lovers.' He wants our unswerving commitment to Him only. "You shall have no other gods before Me... For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God" (Exod. 20:3-5).

Focus: Christ's bride cannot afford to be distracted by the cares of this life, the things of this world, nor by other relationships (1 John 2:15-17). We must put Him first: "If any man come to me, and hate not [love less by comparison] his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26).

Patience & Preparedness: Since the bride did not know exactly when her husband would return to take her away, she had to be ready and not be caught unprepared. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates this point beautifully (Matt. 25:1-13).

As we await the return of our bridegroom, we should be busy developing the qualities Christ desires in us. Just as the groom would come to take his bride to the place he had prepared for her, Christ is now preparing a place for us, His bride (John 14:2-3).

We can look forward with great expectation

by Ken Allen

The Marriage Supper

to be, not just guests at the greatest wedding feast yet, but the actual bride at that wedding! Revelation 19:6-9 declares:

"Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready." And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'"

What a glorious time that will be! Our marriage to the Lamb is then fully consummated as we become one with Christ (Eph. 5:31-32) celebrating in the marriage supper, a foretaste of which we now have in metaphor: the seven-day *Feast of Tabernacles*.



Anyone living in North America today cannot escape the barrage of investor advice. If a person is inquisitive by nature, even he or she can now scratch the surface of finance and discover some principles that underlie the hype. The basic strategies of investment icons such as Warren Buffet can be discovered, studied, and perhaps learned. How difficult can it be? Just play by the rules, right?

Greed is Good?

In reality, the investing game is very difficult. The stock market is only controlled by a few procedural protocols and regulations concerning activities such as margin requirements or insider trading. If you violate them, you can find yourself facing sanctions, fines, or jail time. I have personally known someone who found himself in this position. Despite the appearance of order, *there is none*. The market is a wild beast that no one can tame.

At the level of the average retail investor, financial markets are ruled mainly by a mob mentality of fear and greed. Even some professional investors slip up and begin to invest this way—regardless of knowing to do otherwise. The mantra of Gordon Gekko, who said that “Greed, for lack of a better word, is good,” reigns supreme (Michael Douglas, *Wall Street*). The investment strategy of the majority is usually ‘get rich quick’ and often leads to ‘get poor quick.’ In contrast, the finesse of investment icons such as Warren Buffet is that they have, over the long term, correctly assessed economic trends and then exercised the iron discipline of sticking to their strategies despite the chaos of the moment. These people do obtain financial wealth.

In addition, access to key financial information is difficult. Day-to-day investing is one long series of best bets. Who can really know what Company XYZ will do next? Management may talk to Warren Buffet’s analysts, but will they talk plainly to the average investor? For some investors, the financial markets can also become one large casino. Over time, they can develop an addiction to investing—not for profit, but for the adrenalin rush that high stakes investing can produce.

What is the investor’s payoff? According to Statistics in Canada, as of 2005, approximately 71% of the Canadian population, for example, had private pension plan assets (suggesting some involvement with the markets) but only 8% of the Canadian population had a “rich man’s” net worth; in excess of

\$1 million, if principal residences are included. The financial hype does not match reality. Something is wrong!

Jesus Asks a Question

The Bible describes an alternative path to wealth in this world. It says that wealth gathered “little by little” endures (Prov. 13:11, RSV). ‘Get rich quick’ is not part of the equation. In addition, the Bible also says that it is the Lord who gives the power to get wealth or even enjoy it (Deut. 8:18; Eccl. 5:19, 6:2).

The Investor

by Steve Agnew



Economic analysis may be a tool that enables wealth gathering, but the source of the tool is still God. Doesn’t God control everything (Psa. 24:1-6)? He also expects some recognition of this relationship by means of tithing. Honor Him thankfully with your increase and He will bless you in many ways (Mal. 3:10-12).

If you are a diligent seeker of financial wealth, Jesus has a question for you. He once asked: “For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life?” (Mark 8:36, RSV). You can use biblical principles to acquire wealth, but *are you right with the Lord* (Rev. 3:14-19)? This is a most important question.

Many years ago, as I sat in the pews of a church, a pastor whom I respected said the following: “If you want to invest—invest in the Kingdom.” Although the pastor did not

know me, he seemed to talk directly to me. As an investor, it was unnerving until I began to understand the message. It was about *priorities*. You must first seek the Kingdom of God (spiritually) and then these things will be added to you (materially, Matt. 6:33). Jesus advises us not to store up material wealth in this world but to store up spiritual wealth for the next (Matt. 6:19-21). This life is but a breath and we are as vapor within it.

What is spiritual wealth and how do we ac-

tain it? Paul hints that *true wealth* may be the “fruit of the Spirit” (Gal. 5:22-23, RSV). Overcomers who attain this Fruit of the Spirit, will receive in the Kingdom of God a new name, an immortal body, and an eternal mission (Rev. 2:17; Rev 2:11, 3:5; 1 Cor. 15:51-57; Rev. 3:12, 21). They will also receive the power and authority to carry out their mission (Rev. 2:26-27). The Fruit of the Spirit, which underscores the qualifications, is attained by means of faith, prayer, fasting, and a desire to be born of God.

What about you?

This world’s wealth is fleeting and temporary at best. An investor’s *jigen-bakudan* (Japanese for time-bomb) is ticking and will explode someday. When it does, it will destroy the wealth of many. So, which certainty will you choose *first*—this *jigen-bakudan* or God’s Kingdom?

We Need You Now

A Lamentation on the immediate need for the return of our Savior, Jesus Christ

by Zion Hezekiah



Why do they peruse their self-seeking desires?
Why do they submit to the will of false gods?
Why do scores of infidels occupy the land?
Don't they know that love does not triumph in iniquity?
It was said that "wealth is worthless in the day of wrath." If so,
Why do men put trust in their riches and disregard the name of the Lord?
Can they not see beyond their own vanity?
How long do they presume their sin will prevail?
They fornicate the globe with their desire for immediate indulgence;
Their conversations are incumbent upon malicious deception.
Though they may breathe, I submit they are in fact deceased.
Those who persistently transgress the laws of God
Are trapped like a rodent in the snare of a snake.
Disregarding the wages of sin,
Wandering aimlessly like beheaded fowl,
Their vanity bears bad fruit all throughout the globe.
Living contrary to sound doctrine, preaching the principles of men
They stroll leisurely, deceptive like a serpent waiting for its prey.
They openly celebrate sodomy in the city streets.
Brothers killing brothers,
Sisters killing sisters,

They slay men effortlessly like a wolf devouring a deer.
All circumventing the great commandments of love.
In carnal accord they reject the Creator
Like a newborn rejects the unfamiliar arms of strangers.
The affliction I have witnessed in this world surpasses all reasoned understanding.
My tears, they sprint like an Olympic athlete.
My yoke is the revolting nature of my agonizing descent.
Like Jonah in the belly of the great fish, I am all swallowed up,
Consumed by filth and torment and malice and wrath.
No matter where I turn, evil besets me.
Behold, O Lord, hear and answer my fervent cry
For this pain pierces my heart like a dagger.
My affliction equates to a hazardous venom that pierces the skin.
I lift up my heart and my hands onto You in the heavens.
Have mercy on us all dear Father God,
For we have all sinned and fallen short of Your magnificent glory.
Rescue the perishing,
Deliver us from the evil one.
I call upon Thy name for immediate reconciliation,
Hide not Thine ear at my cry.
Rather incline Your ear to my supplication,
For, if ever a time we need You to return, 'tis now.

Credits

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3:30 pm CST - Lincoln, Nebraska,

Channel 13

Tuesday:

12:30 pm CST

Canada

VISION (National Cable)

Sunday, 11:30 pm Central

Monday, 12:30 am Eastern

Australia

AUS Brisbane

Briz 31, 7:00 am

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RPN9

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Change is coming...

