

UNDERSTANDING YOUR HEBREW ROOTS

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INTRODUCTION

When you thought about studying the Hebrew roots of your Christian faith, did you have an abrupt encounter with your own prejudices? Have you watched the news with a feeling of detachment...a sense of relief that the fighting and turmoil is happening “over there” and not here?

Let’s look at Romans 11:1-21, and you will see that God has promised to do a wondrous work in Israel! Paul spoke to those who were struggling with the question of whether God had abandoned His chosen people:

“I ask then: Did God reject His people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew. Don’t you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah - how he appealed to God against Israel: ‘Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me’? And what was God’s answer to him? ‘I have reserved for Myself *seven thousand* who have not bowed the knee to Baal.’ So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace...I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!

I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I make much of my ministry in the hope that I may somehow arouse *my own people* to envy and save some of them. For if their rejection is the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches.

If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, ‘Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.’ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you either” (Rom. 11:1-21).

According to Rabbi Shmuel Suran, who leads a Messianic congregation in Jerusalem, there are *now* 7,000 Believing Jews in Israel – brothers and sisters in Christ!

What does the Scripture say about God’s chosen nation?

“This is the word of the Lord concerning Israel. The Lord, Who stretches out the heavens, Who lays the foundation of the earth, and Who forms the spirit of man within him, declares: ‘I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling. Judah will be besieged as well as Jerusalem. On that day, when *all the nations of the earth are gathered against her*, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves. On that day I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness,’ declares the Lord. ‘I will keep a watchful eye over the house of Judah, but I will blind all the horses of the nations. Then the leaders of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘The people of Jerusalem are strong, because the Lord Almighty is their God.’ On that day I will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves. They will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place” (Zechariah 12:1-6).

There is increasingly a spirit of universal hostility against Israel, but rest assured that every nation that has come against Israel will be punished! Does this mean that the Israeli people are unequivocally correct in their policies and actions? Absolutely not! But as Israel goes, so goes the world. As we are told in Psalm 122:6-9, **“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem...”** and it seems that when there is peace in Israel, there is peace in the world. She has gone from crisis to crisis, as the political and geographical key to the rest of the world. It began long ago, with the sons of Isaac and the sons of Ishmael fighting for possession of that Holy Land. Economically, when Israel has problems, the NASDAQ (stock indicator) falls.

What has this got to do with you and your faith? Paul makes it clear that Gentiles were *added* to the birthright promised to God’s chosen people - we can draw from that nourishing sap! Christians today are rooted in everything *except* Judaism: Hellenism, Greco-Romanism, and enculturation with all the false “ism’s” of our day, such as Buddhism and Hinduism (the root of the New Age Movement so prevalent in America).

1. Most Christians go through their lives with a gnawing feeling that “something is missing!”
 - A. There has to be more to the Christian life than I am experiencing. There must be a vital *“missing piece of this puzzle”* called the Christian life.
 - B. Week after week as they go through the motions of “Christian worship,” there is a sense of a lack of fulfillment: *“Surely there must be something more!”* Certainly this is not the *“...worship in Spirit and truth”* of which Lord Jesus spoke. (John 4:24).
 - C. Some seek to fill that *“worship emptiness”* with more and more *ritual* and *liturgy*.

- D. Others seek to fill it by chasing after *spiritual experience* – going from one emotional high to another.
 - E. I would suggest to you that the missing “*foundational piece of your spiritual puzzle*” is your *Jewish roots*.
 - F. Cut off from them, there will always be a sense that something vital is missing in both your *understanding* and *experience* of the Christian life.
2. Ever since the publication of Alex Haley’s book “*Roots*,” – and the subsequent TV documentary of it - people around the world have been more interested in their “racial roots.”
- A. Since most American Blacks were forcibly brought to America as slaves, most have felt a sense of “cultural rootlessness.”
 - B. Even though they live in America and hold American citizenships, they do not feel totally “American.” They feel *culturally disconnected*.
 - C. Geographically they live in one place – while their racial roots are in another. They are a people of *two cultures*.
 - D. The Christian is in a similar situation. We live geographically in America – but our “spiritual roots” are in *Judaism*.
3. When I took my first trip to Israel and the “Holy Land,” I immediately begin to feel a sense of being “*at home spiritually*.”
- A. The more I traveled, saw, experienced, and studied - the more that growing sense of “*at homeness*” grew in my spirit.
 - B. I knew that I had begun to dig down past my *Westernism* and *Americanism* to the soil in which my faith was originally rooted. I had begun a spiritual archaeological dig that would forever alter my Christian faith – or my *Judeo-Christian faith!*
 - C. Each subsequent trip has only deepened my love for the Holy Land and increased my sense of *spiritual connection* with that *people* and *place*.
 - D. However, I am not speaking here of much of modern Israel and contemporary Judaism - as it is largely practiced today. I am referring to the older, historic Judaism that the Bible records - and archaeology - continues to dig up!

- E. That's why I hope you will go with me on one of our "Holy Land Bible Study Tours" where we can continue to learn and grow together.
- F. To me, one tour of Israel was worth far more than years in Bible School or Seminary as far as true insight and understanding of the Bible!



- 4. This study is designed to help you get back to your "spiritual roots" – which are Judaic...Hebraic.
- 5. Again, let's read what the Apostle Paul wrote:
"If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the *nourishing sap from the olive root*, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: *You do not support the root, but the root supports you*" (Rom. 11:17-18).
- 6. Our faith is the "*Judeo-Christian Faith*" – not just the "*Christian Faith*."
- 7. Contrary to some people's thinking, *Jesus was not a Christian* – He was a *Jew*. We will look at this in more detail in a later section.
- 8. The roots of our faith are *Hebraic* and *Judaic*. Christianity first grew in the spiritual soil of Palestine.
- 9. However, we are not seeking to *Judaize* people. This study is to help you develop a *Jewish consciousness* - a *Jewish world-view* - not to *Judaize* you and make you *culturally Jewish*.
- 10. As we will briefly look at in the next section, from the Second Century on, *much of Christianity was cut off from their Jewish Roots, and grafted into Hellenism* – or *Greek thought*. Later the *Roman world-view* was also adopted to the degree that most Christians today have far more of a *Greco-Roman world-view*, than a *Judeo-Christian world-view*.

- A. Tragically, from the Second Century on, Christians became increasingly *Judaeophobic...Anti-Jewish...Anti-Semitic.*
- B. But as Christians our “spiritual roots” are not in the *Greco-Roman World... Roman Catholicism... Greek Orthodoxy... Anglicanism... Calvinism... Arminianism ...Wesleyan... Pentecostalism* – but in **JUDAISM!**
- C. Therefore, in searching for our spiritual roots we should not go back to *Luther in Germany... Calvin in Geneva...or Wesley in London.*
- D. Nor should we go back to the *Archbishop of Canterbury...the Patriarchs of Constantinople...the Pope of Rome.* We should go back to the *Church in Jerusalem!*
- E. It is also unfortunate that our mental picture of Jesus has been far more influenced by *Classical Art* than by the Bible. Many great art works portray Jesus as a *light-skinned Aryan with sandy hair and blue eyes.* He is a *Western Jesus* – rather than a *Jewish Jesus!*



10. To think *Biblically* is to think *Hebraically!*

- A. If we are going to *correctly interpret* the Bible – so that we can *correctly apply* it to our lives – we must learn to read it through a *Jewish mind-set.*
- B. Many of us need to go through a “mental conversion” that will replace our *Western world-view* with a *Hebraic world-view.*

11. According to St. Paul, every Christian is *spiritually Jewish:*

“A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code...” (Rom. 2:28-29).

“The stronger a man’s Christian faith, the more Jewish will he regard himself”¹

Stuart E. Rosenberg

12. We Gentiles (Goyem) are *spiritual Jews* because we have been grafted into the *Jewish Olive Tree*:
- A. **“If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the *nourishing sap from the olive root...*”** (Rom. 11:17).
- B. Paul further reminds us that we are citizens of the commonwealth of Israel:
- “...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, *excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, Who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away (Gentiles) and peace to those who were near (Jews). For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone”*** (Eph. 2:12-20).
13. We need to be nourished afresh from our rich Jewish Roots, and quit drawing from the poisonous sap of *Greco-Romanism...Religious traditionalism... Western secular humanism...naturalism...and relativism!*
14. We need to begin the process of restoring our view of Christ, and our Christian faith, from hundreds of years of “Systematic Theology” (ignoring Scripture that is contrary to our preconceptions or beliefs) and erroneously adapting our beliefs to encompass heretical “politically correct” tolerance.

The purpose of revelation is to put the mind of God into the mind of man, so that the character of God can be in the character of man!

The purpose of God communicating with us is to give us information... to lead to application... leading to adoration and transformation!

FURTHER STUDY

- “The roots of Christianity run deep into Hebrew soil. Though the Hebrew heritage of the Church is rich and extensive, many Christians are regrettably uninformed about it. Most of it has been treated either passively and superficially, or more often, it has simply been left unexplored...Christian seminaries, colleges, and other educational institutions have been largely responsible for this lack.”²
- “...many Christians seem to have little knowledge about their Biblical roots. They have never really penetrated the inner world of biblical thought...How does today’s Christian learn to think and approach life as Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets did, and as Jesus, Paul, and the apostles did? This knowledge comes only by uncovering the over-arching mind-set that the writers of Scripture reflect. We must enter their world and become conversant with their culture. We too must ‘look to Abraham our father.’...The Bible reflects a view of reality which is essentially Hebraic. Indeed, for the earliest Church, to think ‘Christianly’ was to think Hebraically. It should not be surprising that the understructure and matrix of much of the New Testament is Hebraic...so Hebrew culture and language gave birth to and nourished Christianity.”³
- “The roots of Christianity run deep into the soil of Judaism...As a child is bonded to mother, Christianity could not exist without Judaism.*...‘the very matrix of Christianity is Judaism: Christianity is the very bone of Judaism.’**
 - * See John Shelby Spong, “The Continuing Christian Need for Judaism,” *Christian Century* (September 26, 1979): 918-22.
 - ** W. D. Davies, *The Gospel and the Land* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p. 383.”⁴
- “...‘Hebraic mortar cemented the foundations of American democracy.’*
 - * Quoted in David de Sola Pool, *Why I Am a Jew* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), p. 185.”⁵
- “We have emphasized the importance of understanding the Bible through Hebrew eyes. ‘The writers are Hebrew, the culture is Hebrew, the religion is Hebrew, the traditions are Hebrew, and the concepts are Hebrew.’*
 - * David Bivin and Roy B. Blizzard, *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* (Austin, TX: Center for Judaic-Christian Studies, 1984), p. 22. In relating the above perspective to a section from the Gospels, David Bivin, director of the Jerusalem School for the Study of the

Synoptic Gospels (a group of Jewish and Christian scholars engaged in translating the Greek Gospels back into what the School believes was an original Hebrew life of Jesus), states: ‘When you read Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount [in Hebrew], you feel you are right back there, hearing a rabbi speaking. Anything we can’t translate into Hebrew is suspect for us’ (interview reported in ‘Who Was Jesus?’ *Time Magazine* [August 15, 1988], p. 40).”⁶

- “...the biblical writers reflect a Hebraic mind-set. These authors, in both Old and New Testaments, find their primary orientation in the Semitic culture of the East. Accordingly, we have argued that Christianity does not derive from pagan, Hellenistic sources, or from speculative worldviews. Neither is it a syncretistic religion rooted in mystery cults, Gnostic sects, naturalistic philosophies, or polytheistic thought. Rather, the Christian faith is divinely revealed and securely anchored in the Hebrew Bible – the Law, Prophets, and Writings. God breathed His word into the minds of the biblical authors within a Jewish cultural environment. Consequently, for us, in the most succinct terms, ‘to ignore Hebraic ways of thinking is to subvert Christian understanding.’* ”

* John Dillenberger, “Revelational Discernment and the Problem of the Two Testaments,” in *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*, ed. Bernard W. Anderson (repr. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), p. 160.”⁷

- “One may say that for a Gentile to have a right relation with God he must humbly accept and appreciate a Jewish Book, believe in the Jewish Lord, and be grafted into a Jewish people, thereby taking on their likeness through a commonly shared stock.”⁸

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2. Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham: Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1989, p. xv.
3. Ibid., pp. 4-12.
4. Ibid., p. 19.
5. Ibid., p. 23.
6. Ibid., p. 30.
7. Ibid., p. 135.
8. Ibid., p. 16.

I. JUDAISM & THE EARLY CHURCH

1. Until Acts 10 and the *conversion of Cornelius and his family*, all of the first Christians were either:
 - A. *Jewish, or*
 - B. *Jewish proselytes*
2. Before Pentecost there had always been Gentile believers in Judaism – and they were known as “*God-fearers*” or “*proselyte Jews.*”
3. As long as the Temple in Jerusalem stood, *the Jewish believers continued to worship at the Temple* (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:20; 21:26, etc.) – in addition to in their homes, which was again Jewish worship (Acts 2:42-47). Until the second Jewish Revolt in AD 135, the *Jerusalem Church* was almost totally Jewish.
4. However, when the Gentiles became co-heirs with the Jewish believers of the Kingdom of God – largely through the ministry of Paul - major changes began to take place in the faith and practice of the early church.
5. It is important to remember that faith in *Yeshua* was widespread among the Jewish population in the First Century (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7; 21:2, etc.).
 - A. However, as the Church spread - through persecution, and the ministry of Paul - Gentile believers began to outnumber the Jewish believers.
 - B. This numerical majority increasingly gave the Gentile believers greater influence in the spiritual culture of the church outside of Israel.
 - C. Today, the faith and practice of *Yeshua* hardly resembles the faith of the First Century believers in and around Jerusalem!
6. During the *Diaspora* throughout the Roman Empire after 70 AD, the Church underwent radical changes as far as her Jewish heritage was concerned.
 - A. *Anti-Jewishness* became increasingly popular and grew in the church.
 - B. Most of the *Church Fathers* from the *Second Century* on were increasingly *anti-Semitic*.
 - C. Church Fathers like *Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Origin, Jerome, Augustine*, were especially *biased against Judaism*. And the heretic, *Marcion*, added to this anti-Jewish process by removing anything and everything Jewish from his first compilation of the Bible. Even though his “translation” was rejected – and he condemned as a heretic – his influence was widespread in the Second Century Church. Since he had

completely severed the Old Testament from the New Testament in his version, he also completely separated the God of the Old Testament from the Father of the New, and Israel from the Church. Marcionian thinking continues to this day in the lives of many Christians!

- (1) Many of these early Church Fathers interpreted the sack of Jerusalem as *God's punishment on the Jews* for the crime of crucifying Jesus.
- (2) The theme of "*Christ-Killer*" became increasingly popular among Christians.
- (3) In their attempt to rescue the faith from the "Jewish Scriptures," many of these early Church Fathers began to use "*Allegory*" to interpret the Bible – thereby totally replacing Israel and the Jewish people with the Church.
 - (a) Everything Jewish was *spiritualized* and *allegorized* to re-interpret anything Jewish. Everything became a *typology* of Christ or Christian truth – and the historic Jewish roots of Christianity were severed.
 - (b) They clothed everything Jewish in "Christian Dress." This wrenched the Biblical text from its natural historical context, and brought disastrous effects to Biblical studies.
 - (c) This was not *exegesis* but *isogesis* – not letting the text speak for itself, but reading into the text your own prejudices and perspective.
 - (d) Much of this same *allegorical exegesis* is still going on today. It is still very popular with several theological schools of thought.
 - (e) This was the genesis of what is known as "*Replacement Theology*" that is still very popular today – where the church has become the "*New Israel*" that completely replaces the Jews.
- D. Roman Emperors like *Nero*, *Titus* and *Hadrian* were especially hostile to the Jews – and severely persecuted them. *Anti-Semitism was considered patriotism in Rome.*
- E. By the beginning of the Fourth Century, *Constantine* had become both Emperor of Rome and head of the Church. In 312 AD, he decreed that *Christianity was the official religion of Rome.*

Obviously the Roman masses were not converted – they just embraced a new *religious system* called Christianity! With one royal edict, Rome embraced Christianity – which became the “*Embrace of death*” for every form of Jewishness in Christianity! Since Constantine was personally very Judeophobic and anti-Semitic, he forbade the recognition of anything that remotely resembled Jewishness! In 325 AD, *Constantine* called the *Council of Nicea*.

- (1) He purposely did not invite Jewish Christian leaders.
- (2) Laws were passed that forbade Jewish believers to circumcise their children, and to raise their children as “cultural Jews”.
- (3) He forbade the commemoration of all Jewish Festivals and Feasts. Until that time, the church had been commemorating the death and resurrection of Christ on the *Day of Passover*. Constantine purposefully changed the date of this celebration to make it correspond with the pagan carnival called “*Easter*,” instead of the Jewish Passover.
- (4) Jewish believers were forced to become in every way Gentile in their practice.
- (5) *Pagan Festivals* such as *Easter* (Babylonian fertility goddess), *Lent*, *Christmas* (Roman birthday of their sun god), and *Sunday* were substituted for the Biblical Festivals of Judaism.
- (6) Constantine’s impact on the early Church can be summarized in his own words:

“Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries...therefore this irregularity (Passover Celebration) must be corrected, in order that we may no more have anything in common with (the Jews) the parricides (definition: “Someone who murders either or both of his parents”) and murderers of our Lord.” (Our Lost Legacy, John Garr, p. 22).

- F. By the Middle Ages, the Christian Church and Christian Culture almost totally excluded and vilified Jewish influence.

- G. During the Crusades, Jewish Synagogues were torched and Jews were killed and persecuted along with the “Infidel Muslims.”
- H. *So the Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum!*
- (1) From the Second Century until the Twentieth Century, there had been a constantly growing anti-Semitism that paved the way for the horrors of the Holocaust!
 - (2) One of the greatest contributing factors to the Holocaust was that *the Christian Church had largely forgotten her Jewish Roots*. This prejudiced mindset made it easy for many Christians to turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the horrors of the Holocaust.
 - (3) The church not only forgot her Jewish Roots – she became *hostile to everything Jewish!*
 - (4) The church went from a position of “*De-Judaizing*” to “*Anti-Judaism*” and finally to “*anti-Semitism*.”
 - (5) Tragically, much of that Judeophobia and anti-Semitism still lingers in the Church today. Jews are still often the objects of scorn...the butt of racial jokes...and individuals to be carefully avoided in evangelism!
 - (6) This is an attitude that every Christian needs to repent of...ask forgiveness for...and replace with a love for the people that God especially loves! They are called the “apple of His eye”!

**“How odd of God to choose the Jews;
But odder still for us to choose the Jewish God –
and spurn the Jews!”**

FURTHER STUDY ON THE JEWISH CHURCH

- **“Anti-Semitism in the Middle Ages:** In the Middle Ages, Christian culture largely excluded Jews. Jews sought to avoid social, economic, and ecclesiastical pressures by living in secluded quarters of cities. They were considered useful primarily for one purpose, money-lending. This isolation from the larger society led Christians to accuse Jews of being a pariah people. Stripped of many personal liberties and victimized by an elitist ‘Christian’ culture, Jews were required to wear a distinctive hat or patch sewn on their clothing. The very idea of “Hebraic” was commonly equated with ‘satanic.’ [Lapide, *Hebrew in the Church*, p. 3.]

The Church launched the First Crusade in 1096. Pope Urban II called for soldiers of Christ to liberate the Holy Land from the Muslim invaders. On the way, however, the ‘infidel’ Jews suffered gravely at the hands of the Crusaders. Thousands of Jews who had refused baptism were murdered in the streets. Numerous mass suicides also occurred. Synagogues were torched. But with all of this persecution, most Jews steadfastly refused attempts at conversion.”¹

- “...the Holocaust did not happen in a vacuum. Though it was devised in a country with an enviable reputation for brilliant culture and intellectual sophistication, the seeds of anti-Semitism had been planted much earlier. The Holocaust represents the tragic culmination of anti-Jewish attitudes and practices which had been allowed to manifest themselves – largely unchecked – in or nearby the Church for nearly two thousand years. Perhaps the most important reason the Holocaust happened is that the Church had forgotten its Jewish roots.”²
- “The tearing away from Jewish roots resulted in the Church defining itself largely in non-Jewish terminology. The word *Christianity*, derived from a Greek rendering (*Christos*) of the Hebrew *mashiah*, meaning ‘Messiah’ is representative of this process...by the middle of the second century, ‘Christianity ultimately accepted and used Greek philosophy.’* As the ‘new’ Israel sought to gain a hearing for the gospel among Gentiles, the Church moved, as it were, further from Mount Sinai and closer to Mars Hill.

Justin Martyr had been influenced by Platonic thought before his conversion.** After he became a Christian, Justin brought many of Plato’s ideas into his teaching. As the Hebrew Scriptures were used to bring Jews to Christ, Justin used Platonic thought to reach Greeks. In the following century, Clement and others from Alexandria would place even greater emphasis upon reading the Bible through Platonic eyes. One of the results was that third century Christians began to view the physical world of flesh and matter as evil. The perpetuation of this view throughout the centuries would have dire consequences for the Church, especially in the understanding of such areas

as salvation, spirituality, marriage, and the family. Platonism and Gnosticism have had such a profound effect upon the thinking of the Church.

* See Samuel Sandmel, *Judasim and Christian Beginnings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 410. Thorleif Boman confirms Sandmel's observation by stating that 'it is not accidental that during the first five foundation-laying centuries of the Christian Church, Plato was its philosophical authority' (*Hebrew Thought compared with Greek*, trans. Jules L. Moreau [repr. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970], p. 53.)

** For a discussion of the influence of Plato upon early Christian thought, see Ranald Macauley and Jerram Barrs, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1978), p. 42ff."³

- **“From De-Judaizing to Anti-Judaism:** From the biblical period to the present day one would be hard-pressed to find a single century in which the Church has not in some significant way contributed to the anguish of the Jewish people...The point is that Christian hostility to Judaism has also usually brought in its wake hostility to Jews. The two are so intimately connected that they are often inseparable. The term *anti-Semitism*, however, was not introduced until 1879, with Wilhelm Marr, German political agitator.”⁴
- **“The Early Fathers: Blaming the Victims:** By the middle of the second century the writings of the Church Fathers reveal considerable antagonism between gentile Christians and Jews. The Letter of Barnabas and the works of Ignatius of Antioch and of Justin Martyr are particularly worthy of note.

The posture of the Church was decisively set against the Synagogue. Whereas one gentile nation after another had responded positively to the Christian missionary outreach, the Synagogue continued to cling stubbornly to its ancestral faith, leaving the Church increasingly frustrated and embittered. Sermons, dialogues, diatribes, and polemics became the order of the day. The Church sought to conquer its opponent by demonstrating with every possible evidence that Judaism was dead and legalistic faith. Thereby the schism became greater as Jews increasingly became victims of discrimination and contempt at the hands of those whose faith was said to have superseded theirs...The two thwarted Jewish Revolts against Rome provided the gentile Church with an ideological leverage that it applied immediately. The overthrow of the Jewish nation – especially the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple – by gentile armies was seen as chastisement, proof that God had rejected His own chosen people. The crushing defeat of the nation provided ammunition for apologists who now insisted that the Church was the authentic Israel of God. The death, exile, or slavery of thousands of Jews allowed for further arguments against Judaism. In the Roman empire Judaism lost its status as a *religio licita* ('legal religion'), a lawful exception to

the cult of emperor-worship. No Jew was allowed to come near the city of Jerusalem. The *Pax Romana* would not be denied. Forever cast away, Jews were now condemned to wander among the so-called Christian nations, those inheritors of the covenant promises.

The Church also viewed the sack of Jerusalem as punishment of Jews for the crime of crucifying Jesus. Jewish suffering and ostracism were attributed to the ignorance and apostasy of a reprobate people who had put to death the Christ. The theme of 'Christ-killer' is accordingly now picked up in writings of the Church fathers."⁵

- "In the first part of the book of Acts two diverse groups of Jewish Christians appear. One group was the Hebraists, or 'Hebrews.' These were Hebrew-and/or Aramaic-speaking Jews, most of whom were native to Palestine. The Hebraists kept firm commitment to their Jewish faith and ancestral customs. With a concerned eye focused upon those non-Jewish cultural influences around them, the Hebraists maintained close ties to the Jerusalem Temple.

The Hellenists were the other category of Jewish Christians. These 'Grecian Jews' were – with varying degrees of strictness – Jewish in matters of faith, but adopted the Greek language and customs. Most of these Hellenistic Jews had their roots in, or affinities with, the Greco-Roman world of the Diaspora. Generally they were more free-thinking and open to change than the Hebraists. In dress and thought, the Hellenists gave evidence of their daily contact with the gentile world about them. They had to balance traditional loyalty with new challenges from life in the Diaspora.

...Stephen was one of the leaders of the Hellenistic group in the Jerusalem Church. He and six other Hellenists – all seven have Greek names – were chosen to oversee a problem which had arisen between the Hellenistic Jewish Christians and the Hebraists. Hellenistic Jews complained that their widows had been overlooked in the daily distribution of food (Acts 6:1). The problem was solved by the seven, and the whole Church was pleased (Acts 6:3-5). This gracious and cooperative spirit shown by the Hebraists to the Hellenists was a vote cast in favor of maintaining a pluralistic unity within the Jerusalem Church...at least until the end of the Second Jewish Revolt in A.D. 135 – the Jerusalem Church appears to have been made up almost exclusively of Hebraists. [F.F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, p. 162]"⁶

- "In his providence, God used the stoning of Stephen to propel the early Christian witness beyond the confines of the mother congregation...The first Jew to take the gospel outside Jerusalem was Philip. As one of the Hellenist leadership of the Jerusalem Church (6:5), he was doubtless prepared to move with greater ease in broader cultural settings. His travels took him northward to Samaria, then to Gaza, and then along the coastal road to a Azotus (Ashdod) and Caesarea. When the Jerusalem Church learned how the

Samaritans had accepted Philip's message, they sent Peter and John – two Hebraists – to minister there (8:12-14). This vanguard outreach by Philip paved the way so that Peter and John might be able to preach the gospel in many Samaritan villages (8:25). Thus the Jerusalem Church was starting to confirm the ministry of the Hellenists.

God was sovereignly working through both groups to further effect his plan to **'declare His glory among the nations'** (Ps. 96:3)."⁷

- "...A Diaspora Jew from Tarsus, Paul was uniquely equipped for this gentile mission. He was knowledgeable in the rich legacy of his people through his Pharisaic training under the famous Jewish teacher Gamaliel. But being a Roman citizen (Acts 22:25-29) from a Mediterranean seaport, he was also thoroughly acquainted with the prevailing customs of the Greco-Roman world. Furthermore, many of Paul's letters reveal an intimate knowledge of the Septuagint. This Greek translation of the Hebrew scriptures, originating around 250 B.C. and written in the lingua franca of Paul's day, was an enormous asset in making Paul's message understandable throughout the non-Jewish world. Before his call, Paul sought to root out – even as far as Damascus – any believers he had driven out of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 9:1-3). But his heavenly commission turned him into a fiery apostle to the Gentiles, and most influential single voice in the early Church."⁸
- "...The vital issue for the Church is to decide whether to look for roots in Judaism and consider itself an extension of Judaism, or to look for roots in pagan Hellenism and consider itself as an antithesis to Judaism.'*
 - * Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), pp. 169-170."⁹
- "At the time of Peter, James, John, and Paul, a major question confronted the primitive Church. The question was not whether Jews could belong to this new, Spirit-born community (cf. Joel 2:28-29); instead, the issue was whether Gentile could, upon repentance of sin, belong to a totally Jewish community. The New Testament is irrefutable about the beginnings of the Church: in its origin, Christianity was Jewish to the very core. The essentially non-Jewish character of today's Church is a matter of history, not a question of origins."¹⁰

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-

II. THE JEWISH JESUS

1. Contrary to what a lot of people seem to think – *Jesus was not a Christian!* While what we now refer to as “Christianity” originated with the life and teachings of Christ, *Jesus was fully Jewish!*
2. As we will shortly see, *He was born a Jew, and He died as a Jew – and He will be a Jew when He returns to earth at His Second Coming.* Throughout His entire life, His practices, lifestyle and teachings reveal a deep commitment to the Jewish beliefs and practices of His day.
3. Let’s look at the Jewish pattern of His entire life – from birth to death:
 - A. Jesus was *born of Jewish parents* (Matt. 1:16) – “...**the son of David, the son of Abraham**” (Mtt. 1:1).
 - B. When the *magi* came from Persia, they asked: “**Where is He that is born King of the Jews?**” (Mtt. 2:2).
 - C. Therefore, His *racial and spiritual ancestry was Jewish*. Speaking of the privileges and responsibilities of the Jewish people, Paul wrote:

“Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, Who is God over all, forever praised! Amen” (Rom. 9:3-5).
 - D. As a Jew, He specifically sprang from the “...**tribe of Judah**” (Heb. 7:14) – the “ruling tribe” from which Messiah had to come (Zech. 10:4; Mtt. 2:6; Rev. 5:5).
 - E. In keeping with the Jewish Law, Jesus was *circumcised on the eighth day* (Lk. 2:22).
 - (1) His birth and circumcision were followed by Mary’s “...**time of purification according to the Law of Moses...**” (Lk. 2:22; c.f. Lev. 12:2-3).
 - (2) After that 33 day of purification was over, “...**Joseph and Mary took Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is**



written in the *Law of the Lord*, ‘Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord’), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the *Law of the Lord*: ‘a pair of doves or two young pigeons’” (Luke 2:22-24).

Note: This is the “birth offering of the poor” who “...cannot afford a lamb...” (Lev. 12:8).

- (3) So concerning His birth and early life, Joseph and Mary perfectly fulfilled the Jewish Law:

“When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong; He was filled with wisdom and the grace of God was upon Him” (Lk. 2:39-40).

- (4) As good observant Jews, His parents continued to go yearly to Jerusalem and the Temple to worship:

“Every year His parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover...” (Lk. 2:41).

- F. As a boy, Jesus annually celebrated the *Jewish Passover*, and interacted with the Jewish teachers in Jerusalem – who were amazed at His insight and understanding (Lk. 2:41-47):

“When He was twelve years old (customary age of the Jewish *Bar Mitzvah* – which in Judaism is the “age of accountability” and “age of responsibility” when He became a “*son of the Torah...a son of the Law*”), **they went up to the Feast, according to their custom”** (Lk. 2:42).

- G. Is it any wonder then that Luke summarizes the so-called “silent years” of Jesus with these telling words:

“And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Lk. 2:52).

- H. He began His public ministry with a *public baptism*, or *mikveh* (“*ritual bath*”), presided over by another Jew by the name of *John the Baptizer* (Mtt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21; Jn. 1:31-34).

- I. During His public ministry, He frequently visited the *Jewish Synagogues* on the *Sabbath* “...as was His custom” (Lk. 4:16).

J. A primary focus of His public ministry was to seek and save the “...**lost sheep of Israel**” (Mtt. 15:24). When He sent out His disciples on their first missionary journey, they had a specific *Jewish focus*:

“Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the *lost sheep of Israel*. As you go, preach this message: ‘*The Kingdom of heaven is near*’ (A specific Messianic Message). *Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons* (All of these signs were to fulfill the Messianic prophecy of Isa. 35:4-6; 61:1). **“Freely you have received, freely give” (Mtt. 10:5-8).**

K. In addition to the common people who “...**followed Jesus gladly**” (Mk. 12:37; KJV); there were many prominent Jewish people and leaders who followed Him (Lk.8:1-3; Jn. 12:32; 19:38-39).

L. Like other Jewish men – and especially rabbis of His day – Jesus regularly wore the:

- *Tallit*, or *prayer shawl* – especially at the Temple, Synagogues, and during times of prayer; and at the Jewish Festivals;
- *Tefillin* or *phylacteries* during prayer and Torah reading;

M. We know for sure that He wore His *Tallit* in public from time to time because people were eager to “...**touch the fringe of His garment**” so that they might be healed (Mtt. 9:20; 14:36; Mk. 6:56).

N. This “fringe” on their *Tallit* was called the *tzitzit*, or *tassels* – which were reminders to the Jew of the 613 Laws of the Torah:

- **“The Lord said to Moses, ‘Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘Throughout the generations to come you are to make *tassels* on the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each *tassel*. You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will *remember to obey all My commands* and will be consecrated to your God’” (Num. 15:38; Duet. 22:12).**
- (After Christ’s Second Coming, and during His reign from Jerusalem, we read):

“In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew *by the hem of his robe* and say, ‘Let us go

with you, because we have heard that God is with you” (Zech. 8:23).

- O. Without an understanding of these Scriptures, we will not understand why people constantly wanted to “...touch the hem (*tzitzit*) of His shawl.”
- P. So in every way, Jesus lived as a *Torah-observing Jew*.
- Q. When He died, He *died as a Jew*. When He was hung on the cross, Pilate had a sign inscribed in *Aramaic, Latin and Greek* - which was nailed above His head - which read: **“THIS IS JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS”** (Mtt. 27:37; Jn. 19:19). This infuriated the Jewish leaders, who wanted Pilate to change it – but he said: **“What I have written, I have written”** (Jn. 19:22). So in the primary languages of the day, everyone could see a written testimony of **“Jesus, King of the Jews!”**
- R. When Jesus was resurrected, He was *raised as a Jew* in fulfillment of Messianic prophecy – as Peter preached on the *Festival of Pentecost*:

“Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through Him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you with the help of wicked men, put Him to death by nailing Him to the cross. But God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him. David said about Him... ‘You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay’” (Acts 2:22-27; Ps. 16:10-11).
- S. Finally, when Jesus returns, He will *return as a Jew* to the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem from which He ascended (Acts 1:12; Zech. 14:4).

CONCLUSIONS

1. We cannot fully understand the Lord Jesus apart from *His Jewishness*.
2. In the Western Church, we have all been brainwashed and prejudiced by the Greco-Roman world-view to the degree that we find it very difficult to see the real *historic Jewish Jesus*.
3. Our minds have been almost indelibly imprinted with paintings and pictures of Jesus that do not remotely resemble the true *Jewish Jesus of Biblical history*.

4. This Nordic, Aryan-looking Jesus with light skin, sandy blow-dried hair, blue eyes, and a somber look – is an eternity away from the *true Jesus!*
5. This *Western Jesus* is nothing more than “...another Jesus” from the pages of a “**different Gospel**” inspired by a “**different spirit**” that the Bible warns us about (II Cor. 11:4)! Tragically, many of our *Western Jesuses* are very similar to the many *counterfeit, cultic* and *cosmic Jesuses* that are nothing more than the “**false Christs**” that the true *Jewish Yeshua* warned us about – who would “...**deceive even the elect – if that were possible**” (Mtt.14:24);
6. We can certainly be saved without this understanding of the *Jewish Jesus* – but there will be many things about His life and ministry that we will only at best superficially understand unless we rediscover our *Jewish spiritual roots!*
7. It is my prayer that this seminar will start the process in your spirit...mind...and emotions that will help you re-discover the real *Jewish Jesus of the Bible* – and freshly fall in love with Him.

FURTHER STUDY ON THE JEWISH JESUS

- “This again is a great contradiction: though He was a Jew, His followers were not Jews. (Voltaire)”¹
- “...I began reading the New Testament through new eyes. How could I have missed it! Jesus’ true-blue Jewishness leaps out from Matthew’s very first sentence, which introduces Him as ‘the son of David, son of Abraham.’

In church we affirmed Jesus as ‘the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds...Very God of Very God.’ Those creedal statements, though, are light-years removed from the Gospels’ account of Jesus growing up in a Jewish family in the agricultural town of Nazareth. I later learned that not even converted Jews – who might have rooted Jesus more solidly in Jewish soil – were invited to the Council of Chalcedon that composed the creed. We Gentiles face the constant danger of letting Jesus’ Jewishness, and even His humanity, slip away.

In historical fact, we are the ones who have co-opted *their* Jesus. As I got to know Jesus, the realization sank in that he probably did not spend His life among Jews in the first century merely to save Americans in the twentieth. Alone of all people in history, He had the privilege of choosing where and when to be born, and He chose a pious Jewish family living in a backwater protectorate of a pagan empire. I can no more understand Jesus apart from His Jewishness than I can understand Gandhi apart from his Indianness. I

need to go back, way back, and picture Jesus as a first-century Jew with a phylactery on His wrist and Palestinian dust on His sandals.”²

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-

III. THE JEWISHNESS OF PAUL

1. Many Christians wrongly believe that the Apostle Paul totally set aside the Law in favor of grace through faith. A more careful study of the New Testament will clearly reveal otherwise.
2. Throughout his entire lifetime, Paul remained a Jew...His only Bible was the *Tanack*...His God was the “God of his fathers...His Messiah was a Jew by the name of Jesus – *Yeshua!*”
3. Just as Jesus was “**...born under the law**” (Gal. 4:4), and recognized its authority throughout His life (Rom. 15:8); Paul likewise upheld the authority and validity of the Law. He studied under Gamaliel, and some 80 times Paul quotes from the Law to establish the spiritual authority for his arguments – and quoted often from the 10 Commandments (Rom. 13:8-10). Note several verses that verify his love and loyalty to the Law:
 - A. **“Do we, then, nullify the Law by this faith? Not at all! Rather we uphold the Law”** (Rom 3:31).
 - B. **“...the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good”** (Rom. 7:12).
 - C. **“I delight in God’s Law”** (Rom. 7:22).
 - D. **“We know that the Law is *spiritual*...”** (Rom. 7:14).
 - E. **“We know that the Law is *good*, if one uses it properly”** (I Tim. 1:8).
4. The only time Paul seemed to speak negatively about the Law was when people were trying to wrongly use it as a basis for self-righteousness – rather than as a “**...tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith**” (Gal. 3:24; NASV).
5. Because of his love and loyalty to the Law, Paul felt at liberty to follow such Jewish practices such as *circumcision* (Acts 16:3), the *Nazarite vow* (Acts 18:18); and *purification rituals* (Acts 21:20-26). Even toward the end of his Third Missionary Journey, he still wanted to get to Jerusalem to celebrate *Pentecost* (Acts 20:16).



6. Paul was born a Jew...was converted as a Jew...lived as a *Jewish Christian*...died a Jew. He spent his entire life...

- loving the God of “**Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob**”
- loving, studying and teaching the *Tanack*, the *Jewish Scriptures*;
- loving and reaching out to the people of Israel;
- loving and participating in Jewish worship!

7. Now let's turn to some examples of Paul's continued observance of the various Jewish Festivals – long after the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus. This is an important understanding that we need to regain since many Christians wrongly believe that Paul basically set aside all of his Jewish worship and practice in his ministry to the Gentiles.

A. “...If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ***circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee...***” (Phil. 3:4-6).

B. “Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, ***he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken*** (Nazarite vow). They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He himself went into the *synagogue* and reasoned with the Jews” (Acts 18:18-19; c.f. Num. 6:1-21).

C. “...we sailed from Philippi after the ***Feast of Unleavened Bread***, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed ***seven days***” (Acts 20:6).

D. (Paul's Farewell Discourse to the Ephesian Elders)

“Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for ***he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost***” (Acts 20:16).

E. We see a similar commitment to celebrate the Jewish Feasts in his letter to the church at Corinth:

“After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you - for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until *Pentecost*, because a

great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me” (I Cor. 16:5-9).

F. “When we arrived at *Jerusalem*, the brothers received us warmly. The next day Paul and the rest of us went to see James, and all the elders were present. Paul greeted them and reported in detail what God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard this, they praised God. Then they said to Paul: ‘You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their *purification rites* and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law. As for the Gentile believers, we have written to them our decision that they should abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality.’ The next day Paul took the men and purified himself along with them. Then he went to the temple to give notice of the date when the days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them” (Acts 21:17-26). [NOTE: This event was about 29 years after Christ’s Resurrection.]

G. (Paul’s Trial before Felix)

“Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix... ‘We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the *Nazarene sect* and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him.’ The Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true. When the governor motioned for him to speak, Paul replied: ‘I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me.

However, I admit that I worship the God of our fathers as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. *I believe everything that agrees with the Law and that is written in the Prophets*, and I have the same hope in God as these men, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man. After an absence of several years, *I came to Jerusalem to bring my people gifts for the poor and to present offerings*” (Acts 24:1-2; 5-17).

The Nazarenes were not popular in Judaism for two reasons:

- 1. They believed the Messiah would suffer first before setting up an earthly kingdom;**
- 2. They allowed God-fearing Gentiles and Gentile Christians to join them without obeying all of the cultural Jewish laws – and many did so!**

So they were rejected by both the Jews and the church.

H. (Paul's Sermon under Roman arrest)

“Three days later he called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, Paul said to them: ‘My brothers, although *I have done nothing against our people or against the customs of our ancestors*, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. They examined me and wanted to release me, because I was not guilty of any crime deserving death. But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar - not that I had any charge to bring against my own people. For this reason I have asked to see you and talk with you. It is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain” (Acts 28:17-20).

I. These verses show that long after the Resurrection of Christ, Paul still visited the Temple and celebrated various Jewish Feasts. This was in keeping with what he wrote to the Corinthian Church:

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all

this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (I Cor. 9:19-23).

FURTHER STUDY FOR THE JEWISH PAUL

- “...for Paul, Diaspora Jew that he was, a deep rooting in the Hebrew Scriptures and rabbinic thought, Paul was proud of being a Jew (2 Cor. 11:22), in his words, ‘A Hebrew of Hebrews...a Pharisee’ (Phil. 3:5). As in the case of ancient Israel, so with Paul, God channeled ‘His Word thought by Hebrew minds, even when their lips spoke and their hands wrote Greek.’*
 - * Claude Tresmontant, *A Study of Hebrew Thought*, trans. M. F. Gibson (New York: Desclee Co., 1960), p. x.”¹
- “Paul wrote in Greek, the lingua franca of his day. But his inner world of the spirit reflects primarily his Hebrew heritage, fed from sources which originally flowed from Jerusalem. So at the core, Paul’s theology was essentially Hebraic, albeit in his letters dressed in Greek words. This was the spiritual mindset of Paul the Jewish scholar of Tarsus.”²
- “Just as Jesus, ‘born under law’ (Gal. 4:4), recognized its authority throughout His life (cf. Rom. 15:8), so Paul upheld the validity of the Law. In his terms, ‘Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law’ (Rom. 3:31). Some eighty times Paul quotes from the Law to establish the authority of his arguments. He emphasizes that ‘the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good’ (7:12). He also says ‘I delight in God’s law’ (7:22). He recognizes the Law as ‘good’ (1 Tim. 1:8) and ‘spiritual’ (Rom. 7:14), and he builds his theology by drawing heavily on the Old Testament Decalogue (13:8-10).”³

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IV. JEWISH WORLD-VIEW

1. Before we look at the *Jewish world-view*, we need to first define exactly what a *world-view* is.
2. Basically, your *world-view* is “*how you view the world.*”
 - A. In other words, all of us have some kind of “rose-tinted glasses” through which we view life and the world around us. The *tint* or *hue* of those glasses largely determines how we see and interpret life.

Principle:

“Our insight determines our sight.”

- B. If our *insight is damaged...dirty...distorted* – then that is how we will view life.

“To the pure, all things are pure...” (Titus 1:15).
- C. As a result of the Fall, all of us have an *eye problem!* We all have a *damaged...distorted...damaged world-view* – that was first passed on to us through our parents.
- D. Only the *new birth* can give us *new eyes* through which to view the world. It is the *Word of God* and the *Spirit of God* that give us a correct *world-view*.
- E. Tragically, many Christians continue to have a *worldly world-view* rather than a *Biblical world-view!* It is only through a *correct interpretation of the Bible* that we can have a *healthy world-view* – which is the purpose of *revelation*.
- F. God began this *Self-revelation* process through people like *Adam... Enoch...Noah* – and especially *Abram*, later to be known as *Abraham*. God had specifically *sovereignly chosen Abraham* for the purpose of revealing to him the nature of the true and living God – and so that he would pass this understanding on to his children:

“I have chosen him, so that he will *direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord* by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him” (Gen. 18:19).
- G. Not only was God going to correct Abraham’s world-view through revelation – He intended that he pass that corrected world-view on to

his children. It was through Abraham that God began to give a *true world-view* to the world.

3. Because of *God's revelation*, the *Jewish world-view* is radically different from the *Western world-view* – and all other world-views of other religions and cultures.
4. Whereas the *Jewish world-view* was shaped by God through *revelation* through the *Tenak (Tanak, Tanakh)*, or *Torah*; all other world-views are determined by either *human tradition* or *Satanic deception*.
5. Our *Western world-view* is a toxic mixture of both! Humanly and historically speaking, our Western world-view has largely been shaped by the *Greco-Roman world-view*.
6. This means that more of the presuppositions of our Western world-view have come from the thinking of Greek philosophers like Aristotle and Plato – rather than Moses...Isaiah...Jesus...Paul!
7. Their system of thought became known as *Platonic dualism*, which gave rise to other distorted views like *Gnosticism...mysticism...monasticism*, etc. – that infiltrated the early church – and remains to this day. We will discuss this more later – without becoming too philosophical!
8. Now, let's look at some of the basic principles of the *Hebraic world-view*...



HEBRAIC WORLD-VIEW

The various aspects of the *Jewish world-view* are obviously all *interrelated*. It is almost impossible to discuss one apart from the other. However, for the sake of emphasis, we will discuss them one at a time – and interrelate each one with the wider world-view.

1. **The experience of truth versus the exposition of truth:**

- A. The Jew is far more interested in *experiencing* truth than he is in *explaining truth*:
- (1) The Bible never *argues the existence of God*; it just assumes and states the existence of God.
 - (2) To the Jew, God is not primarily a being to be *understood theologically or philosophically* – He is to be known *experientially and functionally*.
 - (3) The Jew correctly understands that you only truly *know God by experience*.
 - (4) The Hebrew thought of God *pictorially* in terms of His *activity* – which were usually very *earthy*, rather than abstract. Unlike Western thinking, the Jew seldom got caught up in the *theoretical arguments...philosophical reasoning...or apologetic defenses* of the nature and existence of God.
 - (5) We in the West spend much time trying to *prove and defend the existence of God* through *reasoning, argumentation, and apologetics* (theological, anthropological, teleological, epistemological, ontological, etc.) - which certainly have their place - but seldom convert people!
 - (6) To the Jew, God is first of all a *Person to be experienced*; not a *theological or philosophical concept to be understood!*
- B. It is totally impossible to develop a *systematic theology* from Biblical writers. In the West we like to *systematize* everything in a *logical, sequential order*. This was not the primary aim of Biblical writers – as we will see when we look at the *Jewish Bible*.
- C. The Jewish writers were writing to challenge the people to *obey the truth* rather than to *understand the truth* – knowing that *you only truly understand a truth when you apply it!*

- D. The Hebrew concept of *knowing* means to “*know by experience*” - rather than to know *rationally...cognitively... intellectually... mentally*.
- (1) In the West we value *cognitive knowing* more than *experiential knowing*.
 - (2) The Biblical writers clearly understood that we can have great *mental knowledge* that we do not apply to our daily living. As we will see when we study the *Jewish Bible*, the Hebrew language is *verb oriented* – not *noun oriented*, like most of our Western languages.
 - (3) The Hebrew word for “faith” or “believe” is the verb *aman* (from which we get *amen*). To the Jew, *believe...faith...trust* – are “*action words*” – not *mental...theological...theoretical* words!
 - (4) To the Jew, “**...walking in the truth**” (III Jn. 4) was far more important than just *mentally* or *theologically knowing the truth*.

**Believing Christians
versus
Behaving Jews**

- (5) That’s why *unapplied truth* is one of the greatest problems with Christians! As someone rightly said: “*Unapplied orthodoxy is the great sin of the Church!*”

2. **Dynamic Unity versus Dualism:**

- A. The Jewish world-view is basically *wholistic* rather than *dualistic*.
- (1) The *Jewish world is not divided* – but rather an *integrated whole* created, and presided over, by a sovereign God.
 - (2) This is not *Eastern monism* that believes that God is “*one with His universe.*”
 - (3) Rather, this is the Jewish understanding of *dynamic unity* that says that God has created all of reality as an *integral interrelated whole*.
 - (4) In Jewish thinking, the *whole is more important than individual parts*. As a result, their thinking is more *wholistic*, rather than *dualistic*.

- B. As we briefly saw earlier, before the First Century was over, much of the Christian Church had begun to swap *wholistic thinking* for *dualistic thinking*. By the middle of the Second Century, *dualism had all but taken over the thinking and theology of the Church!* This was one of the most *tragic theological departures in Christian history!* Let's look further at the *dualistic world-view* without becoming too philosophical...
- (1) The Greek philosopher *Plato* is the fountainhead of this *dualistic world-view*. Just as the word "*dual*" indicates, Plato divided the world into two major parts. This physical, material world is nothing but an *imperfect copy* of the higher spiritual world. So this produced a *bifurcation of life*.
- *Physical and spiritual*
 - *Body and soul*
 - *Flesh and spirit*
 - *Worldly and other-worldly*
 - *Evil and good*
 - *Impure and pure*
 - *Lowly and lofty, etc.*
- (2) Rather than one world created by God, you had *two worlds...two spheres...two realms* – one *sacred* and the other *secular...one spiritual* and the other *material*.
- The higher and holier one was created by a God who became unknowable and unreachable – because pure spirit could have nothing to do with impure matter.
 - This lower...lesser...material world was created by a lesser, inferior god or demi-god.
 - The material world was a poor...imperfect...inferior copy of the higher...better...spiritual world.
 - Man was condemned to live as a prisoner in this evil...sinful...tainted...fallen body. Hopelessly bound in this inferior flesh – man could only hope to be released through death – and then only to start another hopeless cycle of *reincarnation*.
- (3) *Gnosticism* was a philosophical and theological product of *dualistic thinking*.
- This heresy stressed *salvation through a secret "gnosis" or "knowledge."*

- Several forms of gnostic thinking infiltrated the early First Century Church to the degree that both John and Paul addressed and condemned it in their writings.
 - *Prologue to John's Gospel* (Jn. 1:1-14)
 - *Paul's Letter to Colossae*: (Col. 1:15-19; 2:6-9; 20-23)
 - *John's Epistle* (I Jn. 1:1-4; 4:1-3)
- (4) Many in the First and Second Century Church were subtly brainwashed by this *dualistic, gnostic world-view*:
- Many in the Church moved from *Mt. Sinai* to *Mars Hill*.
 - They theologically moved from *Jerusalem* to *Athens* – *geographically close but theologically worlds apart*.
 - They swapped *Abraham* for *Aristotle* – the *Patriarchs* for *Pericles*.
 - They exchanged the *prophets* for *Plato*.
 - They exchanged *theological thinking* for *philosophical thinking*.
 - They exchanged their *Jewish roots* for *Greco-Roman fruit*.
 - Gradually, the early church – like Esau – “**despised their spiritual birthright**” (Gen. 25:34), and gave up altogether *Hebraic thinking* for *Hellenistic thinking*.
 - As a result of this wrong theological thinking – many Christians have had a *wrong worldly world-view* ever since!

3. **This worldly versus other worldly:**

- A. Because of the *dualistic world-view* that infiltrated the church, there was a growing emphasis upon the *world to come* rather than this *present world*. The *heavenly* became more important than the *earthly*.
- B. To express it in a more earthy way, they turned their attention from the *nasty here-and-now* – to: “*Pie in the sky in the sweet by-and-by!*”

- C. Since this physical, material world was fallen...sinful...evil...dirty – there was a growing spirit of *escapism* and *separatism* by many in the Church. Many *Holiness Movements* to this day still emphasize this.
- D. For many, *disengagement with the world* became the ideal. By the Third Century, this resulted in a growing *monastic movement* – where *spirituality was increasingly equated with a total withdrawal from the world*.
- E. The *separation mentality* can be seen in the *Essene Sect of Judaism*; as well as in teachings of the “*Desert Fathers*” of Christianity – who followed in Origen’s teaching, which became popular.
- (1) Origen (c. 185 – 254) was one of the most influential thinkers and theologians of the early church.
 - (2) Born in Egypt, he ultimately became head of the school in Alexandria, Egypt, and later in Caesarea - where he became famous.
 - (3) He was one of the most influential *Greek Fathers* of the church – so much of Greek thinking was formative in his mind. Origen was a *seminal thinker* – but he was also a *Greek-oriented thinker*.
 - (4) He is one of the earliest Church Fathers to set forth a *systematic theology of the Faith*, as well as one of the first *Bible Commentaries*.
 - (5) But like others in his day, *Origen followed an ascetic mode of life* – which reflected this *Platonic dualism*.
- F. There is still much of this *other-worldly* orientation in many parts of Christianity.
- G. While this emphasis on the *heavenly* is Biblical – it must be balanced with the equal Biblical emphasis on the *earthly*.
- H. Obviously, the key here is *balance!* We can have a *heavenly focus* that is Biblical and balanced – or we can have one that is based on a theology of escapism...separatism...dualism.
- I. Likewise, we can have either a balanced or unbalanced perspective of this earthly life. Many Christians have a wrong *worldly view of heaven* – and an equally wrong *heavenly view of earth*.

- J. The *Hebraic* view was a far more *balanced view* of both the *heavenly* and the *earthly*.
- K. It is both interesting and instructive to note that *there is not a great deal of revelation in the Tenak about heaven and the after life*.
- L. That's because God wants us to first and foremost love Him for who He is – rather than what He will do for us in the next life. He wants us to relate Him to every area of our life NOW – not at some future point in heaven!

4. **The community versus the individual:**

- A. The Jewish world-view is far more oriented toward the *community* than it is to the *individual*.
- B. The Jews generally have a much stronger view of *community* than we Westerners. This can be seen in the entire Bible through the emphasis upon:
 - Marriage
 - Families
 - Tribes
 - Koinonia
 - Corporate worship
 - Communal living and sharing
- C. This commitment to *community* can be seen in modern Israel through the many *kibbutz* – where *individual rights* are subordinated to the *community life*.
- D. The fact that every person must serve in the Israeli Army shows their emphasis upon *national responsibility for every citizen*.
- E. As we saw earlier, when the early church began to sever itself from its Jewish roots – they became vulnerable to *Hellenism* and *dualism* with their emphasis upon *separatism* and *individualism*. This was gradually manifest in several ways:
 - (1) *Aceticism*, with its emphasis upon separation from the world, became popular with many Christian leaders. The *more austere the lifestyle, the holier the person*. Any form of the enjoyment of life was frowned upon.
 - (2) The *Christian Hermit*, who lived in complete *separation* and *isolation*, became a *model of higher spirituality* – and the *more*

remote the isolation, the more spiritual the hermit was deemed to be.

(3) Along with this came an emphasis upon *celibacy* as a higher and more spiritual lifestyle. Because of the influence of *dualism*, the body was seen as a dirty and defiled prison for the spirit. Therefore, all forms of *sexuality* and *sensuality* were repressed and denied. Sexual intercourse was disdained – and to be totally avoided in the pursuit of the higher and holier life. Some Church Fathers even went to the extreme of castration to make themselves a eunuch for life!

F. Obviously this kind of thinking...living...acting was spiritual light years from the Hebraic world-view!

G. *Aceticism* and *celibacy* run totally contrary to the Jewish emphasis upon *marriage...family...community...corporate worship*.

H. It would be totally impossible and unthinkable to be a good practicing Jew – and at the same time a *celibate...acetic...hermit!*

I. All of the Feasts and Festivals of Judaism were corporate by nature – beginning in the *nuclear family*, and incorporating the *national family* of Israel!

J. In Hebraic thinking, the individual finds his true identity in *community* – not in *isolation* and *individualism*.

5. **The respect of elders versus the worship of youth:**

A. Whereas the Western world-view exalts *youthfulness*; the Jewish world-view honors the *elderly* and *aged*.

B. Certainly the Hebraic world-view places great value upon children, who were a “...**crown to the aged**” (Prov. 17:6). However, Biblical thinking did not allow for the *pampering* or *indulgence of young people*.

C. In Judaic thinking, childhood was a time for *learning* and *instruction*. They did not practice our Western model of *prolonged adolescence indulgence* – where a young person has many of the *rights of adulthood*, with few of the *responsibilities!*

D. In Judaism, there was great emphasis upon the *extended family* – where the elderly were loved...cared for...revered...respected. The older the person, the more the respect. Grey hair was a symbol of wisdom – not something to be colored out by hair dye!

- E. The *elderly* were the *repositories of truth, wisdom and tradition* – who were to pass this along to the children and grandchildren (Deut. 4:9).
- F. In the West, we have a “cult of youth” where *youthfulness is the ideal* – and *being young...looking young...acting young* is what everyone pursues.
- G. In the Biblical world-view, *youthfulness* tends to be associated with *foolishness* and *rebellion* – while *wisdom* is associated with the elderly. In Jewish thinking, neither *rebellion* or *foolishness* were to be allowed or tolerated. They must be swiftly disciplined or punished – even unto death! (Lev. 20: 9; I Sam. 15:23; Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Eph. 6:1:4).
- H. Whereas *ignorance, immaturity, and foolishness* were normative for a child – wisdom was to be normative for the elderly. In the words of Job: **“Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?”** (Job 12:12).
- I. While Hebraic thought highly values children and the young – they do not worship them. Instead they *instruct* and *discipline* them.
- J. In the West we *worship at the altar of youth* – and as a result we *despise our elderly*. Rather than revering them and caring for them in their old age, we put them away in “retirement centers” and “rest homes” – which goes totally against the Biblical model (I Tim. 5:3-5, 8).
- K. We in the West need to regain our *responsibility for children*, and our *respect for the elderly*.
- L. Restoring our Jewish roots will help us regain this crucial Biblical balance on *being young* and *being old*.

6. ***Home-centered faith versus Building-centered religion:***

- A. In Hebraic thinking, the *home was the center of faith* – not the Temple or Synagogue.
- B. In Judaism, a man’s home was not his *castle* – his home was his *sanctuary*.
- C. For the Jew, the home is a “miniature temple”...a “small sanctuary” – with the father being the *priest of the home*.
 - Biblical Judaism practiced the *priesthood of the parents* – not the *priesthood of the professional*.

- They did not subscribe to the duality of *sacred* and *secular...* *laymen* and *clergy*.
- Faith began in the home – although it did not stay in the home.

D. God gave this clear instruction to Moses in Deut. 6:4-9:

“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. *These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates*” (Deut. 6:4-9).

- (1) We can clearly see from these verses that God ordained that the *home be the center for spiritual instruction and worship*.
- (2) The *Sabbath* and *Passover Meal* were home centered. They may have also included Temple or Synagogue attendance – but *the worship began in the home*.
- (3) To help make the home the center of spiritual instruction, and to reinforce the parents as the primary spiritual instructors, God gave the Israelites many physical *visual aids*. These would help their children understand and remember the spiritual lessons, and practical application:
 - *Mezuzah* on the door and gate posts
 - *Menorah* in the home
 - *Prayer Shawls* (Tallits)
 - *Phylacteries* (Tefillin)
 - Candles, bread, salt and wine, etc.
- (4) All of these visual aids were to help the parents **“...impress them on your children.”**

E. This “home teaching” began with the parents – and especially the mother. It is interesting that the word *Torah* is feminine. Perhaps that is why the rabbis taught: *“...knowledge of the Law may be looked for in those who have sucked it in at their mother’s breast.”*

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Prov. 22:6).

- F. However, both parents must be vitally involved. As Proverbs says:
- **“Listen my son, to your *father’s instruction*, and do not forsake your *mother’s teaching*” (Prov. 1:8).**
 - **“My son, keep your *father’s commands* and do not forsake your *mother’s instruction*. Bind them upon your heart forever; fasten them around your neck. When you *walk* they will guide you; when you *sleep*, they will watch over you; when you awake they will speak to you. For these commands are a *lamp*, and this teaching is a light, and the corrections of discipline are the *way to life*” (Prov. 6:20-23).**
- G. From these and other similar verses, we can see that *God intended the parents to be the primary spiritual instructors* – not the priest or rabbi.
- They were to first of all carry this out in the home – and only supplement through Temple or Synagogue worship;
 - The *family meal time* at the *family table*, was the primary time and focal point of prayers...instruction...worship... fellowship;
- H. In Biblical Hebrew understanding, by the time a child was 12 -- he or she had reached the *“age of accountability.”* They had reached the *“age of responsibility”* – and had now become a *“son or daughter of Torah.”*
- I. *In the West we have shifted the center of spiritual learning...Biblical instruction...and worship from the home to the church.*
- J. We expect the pastor...Sunday School teacher...youth director to teach our children the things of God. Then when it does not “take” we complain: *“The church failed my children! The church did not reach my teenager!”*
- K. But the teaching in the home did not end with spiritual instruction; it also included *vocational instruction*.
- The Talmud states: *“He who does not teach his son a trade is considered as having taught him thievery.”*
 - We see this reflected in the movie and play *Fiddler on the Roof*, when the boy sang: *“At three I started Hebrew school; at ten I learned a trade.”*

- L. We can clearly see this demonstrated in the early life of Jesus in that His earthly father, Joseph, obviously taught Him a trade. That's why Jesus was later called:
- “...the carpenter's son” (Mtt. 13:55)
 - “The carpenter” (Mk. 6:3)
- M. Likewise, the Apostle Paul was a *tentmaker* (Acts 18:3) who often worked with his hands in hard, time-consuming manual labor (Acts 20:34; I Cor. 4:12; I Thess. 4:11; II Thess. 3:6-10; Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:23).
- N. In the West we parents send our children off to church for *spiritual education* – and to school for *secular education*. And if our public schools and colleges fail to prepare them for life – we send them off to a *vocational school* for further training.
- O. I believe that it would revolutionize the family life in many Christian homes if they would *re-connect with their Jewish spiritual roots*, and *re-establish their homes as the primary place of spiritual instruction and worship!*

**There were specific times for prayer: at the time of the morning sacrifice, noon, and at the time of the evening sacrifice. And the Hebrew prayed the prayer book!
How might our prayer lives grow if we kept our prayer focused on God's Word!**

7. **The dignity of *manual labor* versus the *deification of mental labor*:**
- A. In Jewish thinking, great premium was placed on *thinking* and *learning*. However, it was not deified as it is in much of the West.
- B. Since the Hebrews were originally a “*people of the land*,” they put great emphasis upon the dignity of manual labor.
- C. They only gave up farming when they lost their land. Once they gained it back in 1948, they have again become a “*people of the land*.”
- As a result of their great passion for physical work, we have seen them turn Israel into one of the top agricultural nations of the world.
 - In fulfillment of prophecy, we have literally watched as they have made the “...**desert bloom like a rose**” (Isa. 35:1).

- D. Jewish prosperity of old, and Jewish prosperity today is partly because they make little division between *work* and *worship*. In fact, the Hebrew word *abad* - meaning “to work,” “to labor,” “to serve,” - is also translated “to worship” in Isaiah 19:21.
- E. Even though the Biblical Jew religiously observed the *Shabbat* – the Saturday rest - they did not see it as an *escape from work* – but a time to focus on God.
- F. The Hebrews were not *dualists* when it came to *work* and *worship*. They made no dichotomy between the sacred and the non-sacred occupations. Every domain of life belonged under the lordship of the King of the universe!
- G. It was because of this *wholistic world-view* that the Biblical Jews did not separate and segment their lives. *All of life was sacred!* We can see this attitude reflected in many Bible verses:
- “**I have set the Lord *always before my eyes***” (Ps. 16:8).
 - “**In *all your ways acknowledge Him*, and He will direct your paths**” (Prov. 3:6).
 - “***Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might...***” Ecc. 9:10).
 - “**So whether you *eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God***” (I Cor. 10:31).
 - “**If anyone *speaks*, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone *serves*, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that *in all things God may be praised***” (I Pet. 4:11).
- H. What a difference it would make in the way most people go to work each day if they had this Biblical Jewish perspective of *work as worship* - if every Christian could have the knowledge that he can please and worship God through his vocation – just as long as it is an honest and honorable vocation.
- I. No longer would millions of Christians divide and separate their lives between the...
- *Sacred and secular*
 - Between *Sunday* and *Monday*
 - Between the *market place* and the *ministry place*

- Between *manual labor* and *mental labor*
 - Between *working with my hands* and *working with my head*
- J. Being reconnected to our spiritual Jewish roots will help us regain the *Biblical work ethic* that will motivate us toward *glorifying God in every sphere of life!*

8. **Understanding *linear time* versus *cyclical time*:**

- A. For man, *time has always been a mystery*. That's why there are so many different perspectives of time, and systems of reckoning time.
- Did time have a beginning? If so, when and how?
 - Is there some god of force behind time?
 - Is time eternal?
 - Will time ever end?
 - Are there any consequences to my use of time?
 - Do I control time, or does time control me?
- B. Different civilizations, religions and cultures have different views of time, and different means of reckoning time. Calendars differ from country to country:
- When I am in Ethiopia I am 7 years younger;
 - When I am in Nepal, I am 50 years older!
- C. *How we view time will largely determine how we view life – and how we live life.* Depending upon our world-view, we can either...
- Mark time
 - Waste time
 - Kill time or
 - *Redeem time*
- Which one you do will largely depend upon how you view time!
- D. Simply put, because of the revelation of the Bible, the Jewish people have *God's perspective on time*.
- (1) In Hebraic understanding, *time originated with God* – Who alone is *eternal* and *exists outside of time*. So *God is eternal* – but time is not.
 - (2) Because God created time, it has both an *alpha point* and an *omega point*.
 - (3) That means that the *doctrine of reincarnation* is really a “**...doctrine of demons**” (I Tim. 4:1) that hopelessly locks

people up in a closed system of time that is based upon the *Law of Karma*.

- (4) According to the Bible, *time began with God*, and *time will end with the Messianic age* and *eternal age*. It is not mindlessly going in an *eternal endless circle* – time is moving toward a definite *consummation point in Christ*.
 - (5). As God's agent of creation, Jesus created time (Jn. 1:3)...came in the “**...fullness of time**” (Gal. 4:4)...will come again when the “**...times have been fulfilled**” (Heb. 9:28). Until then, we are to “**...redeem the time**” (Eph. 5:16);
 - (6) Therefore, time is not *causal* but *covenantal*. The Bible assures us that “**...grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time**” (I Tim. 9; Titus 1:2).
 - (7) Unlike the millions who believe in Eastern mysticism and monism, we do not live by *fate*, we live by *faith*.
 - (8) Our lives are not determined by the *stars* – but rather by the *Son!*
- E. When we return to our Biblical Jewish roots, we will be like the “**...men of Issachar, who understood the times and knew what Israel should do...**” (I Chron. 12:32)!

CONCLUSIONS

1. All of us have some kind of *world-view*. The only question is: “*Do we have a worldly world-view, or a Biblical world-view?*”
2. As we have seen in this study, when the early church cut itself off from its Jewish roots, it ceased to be enriched by the rich sap of the olive tree.
3. Needing to draw nourishment from somewhere, the church turned to the poisonous sap of the Greco-Roman world.
4. The church philosophically moved from *Mt. Sinai* to *Mars Hill*...from *Jerusalem* to *Athens*. She became increasingly rooted in the shallow and polluted soil of *Greek Philosophy* and *Roman paganism*.
5. While it would be impossible and impractical for us to try and become culturally Jewish, it would be very beneficial for us to begin the process of working back to the spiritual inheritance of our original Hebraic roots.

6. Like the Apostle Paul during his conversion process, we too need to have “...scales fall from our eyes” (Act. 9:18) – the scales of the *Greco-Roman world-view*, so we can once again have a *Biblical Hebraic world-view!*

FURTHER STUDY FOR THE JEWISH WORLDVIEW

- “To the Hebrew mind, *everything is theological*. That is, *the Hebrews make no distinction between the sacred and the secular areas of life.** *They see all of life as a unity. It is all God’s domain. He has a stake in all that comes to pass – whether trials or joys. And human beings have an awareness of God in all they do.* The psalmist states clearly this aspect of Hebrew thought: *‘I have set the LORD always before me’* (Ps. 16:8). It is also taught in the proverb, *‘In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight’* (Prov. 3:6).

Thus, to the Hebrew mind, all the circumstances of life – the good times and the hard times – come not by chance but under the sovereign control of Almighty God.

Both Testaments emphasize this teaching concerning the *sacredness of all of life*. In Old Testament times the Hebrew farmer recited a special prayer (Deut. 26:5-10a) in order to remind him that the occupation of tilling the soil is sacred.** Reflecting his strong Hebrew background (see Phil. 3:4-6), Paul writes, *‘So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God’* (1 Cor. 10:31; see also Col. 3:17). Likewise, Peter exhorts that in speech as in action, *‘in all things God may be praised’* (1 Pet. 4:11).

* At an early time the Church unfortunately emphasized this distinction through the monastic movement of the cloister and nunnery. W. D. Davies has effectively summarized the historical implications of this loss in the context of the Church’s separation from the synagogue: *‘A double morality arose: a higher morality for life out of the world and a lower one for life in it.* The affirmation of all life as sacred, which has generally characterized the Synagogue was ignored – and *the Christian world became divided into clerical and lay people, secular and sacred institutions, holy persons and holy things being set over against unholy things. The wholeness of life that Judaism has stressed was lost.* Nor has Protestantism escaped the *sacred-secular dualism. The divorce of religion from life is part of the price paid for our neglect of the Synagogue.* This is true despite the separation of things clean and unclean in Judaism, and the separation from the world involved in keeping the Law; *throughout all this ‘separation’ Judaism was attempting to take seriously the application of the Law, that is, God’s will, to all life’* (*The Gospel and the Land*, [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974], pp. 387-388). For a useful Christian critique of this theme, see Randal Macauley and Jerram

Barrs, *Being Human: The Nature of Spiritual Experience* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1978).

** See Walther Zimmerli, *The Old Testament and the World*, trans. John J. Scullion (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1976), p. 10.”¹

- “A person was considered fortunate if he could eat the fruit of the labor of his own hands (Ps. 128:2). The Hebrew verb *abad*, ‘to work,’ ‘to labor,’ ‘to serve,’ is also translated ‘to worship’ (see Isa. 19:21). The ancient Hebrews made no dichotomy between sacred and nonsacred occupations. The very domain of life belonged under the lordship of the King of the universe.

But the Western world today is different. Ours is largely a college-bound, profession-oriented society. Because the occupational status symbol tends to be cerebral rather than manual, we would do well to remind ourselves of the sanctity of hard physical work. Was not Jesus of Nazareth a carpenter (or stonemason; Mark 6:3; cf. Matt. 13:55)? We are in no way advocating that clergy go out and get a second job in the secular world. Few rabbis even do that anymore. But perhaps the village of Anatevka stands as a silent reminder, especially for those of us who sit at desks most of the day, that there remains from the time of creation a dignity to manual labor.”²

- “Some would define religion as a system of ethics, a code of conduct, an ideology, or a creed. To a Hebrew it is none of these; such definitions are misleading, deficient, or inaccurate. Rather, a Hebrew understood his daily life of faith in terms of a journey or pilgrimage. His religion was tantamount to the way in which he chose to walk. Even before the Flood, people such as Enoch and Noah “**walked with God**” (Gen. 5:24; 6:9). If a person knows God, he is daily at God’s disposal and walks in close fellowship with him, along the road of life. Ceremonialism and ritualism alone do not meet God’s requirement for a good life (Isa. 1:11-14; Amos 5:21-23). But those who act justly and love mercy and *walk humbly* with God do please him (Mic. 6:8). Thus we return to the fact that the essence of religion is relationship; it is walking with God in his path of wisdom and righteousness and in his way of service to others.

Everyone who walks through this life chooses a road or way for his journey. There is the ‘**way of the wicked**’ (Prov. 15:9) and the ‘**way of the righteous**’ (Ps. 1:6), and God knows the way a person takes (Job 23:10). God enjoins us ‘**to walk in all his ways**’ (Deut. 11:22), so that we may say before him, ‘**My steps have held to your paths; my feet have not slipped**’ (Ps. 17:5)...In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses this familiar Hebraic imagery to teach about the two ways. The broad one leads to destruction, and the narrow one to life (Matt. 7:13-14). In one of the eight Johannine ‘I am’ pronouncements, Jesus clarifies this concept even further. He states, ‘**I am the Way**’ (John 14:6). In the book of Acts, the early Christians designate their movement as ‘**the Way**’ (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). These uses in Acts are likely connected to Jesus’ identification of himself as ‘the way’; that is, the early Church saw

itself as having the supreme truth about the way to salvation and life...When one errs from God's path into crooked and perverse ways, one violates God's Torah and must 'return.' The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshubah*, suggesting the idea 'turn around,' 'go back.' The way back is the way of Torah; it gives the direction and guidance needed to remain on the way."³

- "...the Hebrews were largely an energetic, robust, and at times, even turbulent people. They were primarily outdoor folk – farmers, fishermen, tradesmen – who lived life to the full. For them, truth was not so much an idea to be contemplated as an experience to be lived, a deed to be done. The biblical writers often use vocabulary which is highly colorful, dynamic, and action-centered. They tell the story of a people on the move, a people who approached living with boldness, drive, and expectation. In a true sense, Israel's religion might be called a 'pup-tent' religion. Israel followed a 'God-on-the-move,' and they were his 'movable treasure' (cf. Exod. 19:5). [Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Old Testament in Contemporary Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973) pp. 43-44.]⁴
- "In Hebrew thought the essence of true godliness is tied primarily to a relationship, not to a creed. The Lord is the God of Israel, and Israel is the people of God (Lev. 26:12; 2 Sam. 7:24; Jer. 31:33; cf. Heb. 8:8-12). Here is the leitmotif of biblical theology. The Torah gives direction to Israel on how to relate to the Creator, His people, and His world. Sin ruptures that relationship, but repentance brings forgiveness and restoration to fellowship. For the Hebrews, personal or individual relationship has always been far more expressive of the heart of religious faith than mere intellectual assent to abstract statements or religious ideas.

In the same vein, today's Church must not forget that the earliest theology in the New Testament is relational or existential rather than propositional or creedal. This is not to imply that doctrine plays an inconsequential role in the New Testament. But note that Jesus initially appoints the Twelve 'that they might be with Him' (Mark 3:14)...In sum, creedal formulation (as expressed in the book of Acts and especially in the Epistles) grows primarily out of the need in the early Church to explain – that is, to make a theological statement about – its personal encounter with Jesus (as recorded in the Gospels)."⁵

- "The Hebrews have sometimes been described as a very visceral people. The New Testament reflects this same visceral Hebraic perspective on human nature...Jesus, the exemplary man, wept (Luke 19:41; John 11:35). This display of emotion was in sharp contrast to the Greco-Roman world of the Stoics, who sought to be indifferent to pleasure or pain. The Hebrews, however, were a very passionate people; they did not hide or suppress their emotions. The Hebrews – both men and women – were able to affirm their full humanity. They gave vent unashamedly to their feelings, for each emotion had 'a time' appropriate for its expression."⁶

- “As students of Western civilization and the history of ideas, we stand in awe of Plato and other Greek philosophers. Their impact has been great not only upon the thought of the ancient world but also upon our world today. We owe much to Plato and his later disciples for what they have taught us through their penetrating insights about reason, truth, wisdom, beauty, and the good life. Nevertheless, another side of Plato and other Greek thinkers has manifested itself through a dualistic kind of thinking that has had largely negative consequences for the Church. We must, therefore, briefly note what this Greek dualism was and how the Hebrew view of mankind and the world differed from it.

Platonism holds that there are two worlds: the visible, material world and the invisible, spiritual world. The visible or phenomenal world is in tension with the invisible or conceptual world. Because it is imperfect and a source of evil, the material world is inferior to that of the spiritual. In this view, the human soul originates in the heavenly realm, from which it fell into the realm of matter. Though human beings find themselves related to both these worlds, they long for release from their physical bodies so that their true selves (their souls) might take flight back to the permanent world of the celestial and divine.

Related to Plato’s dualistic view of the cosmos then, is a dualistic view of man. Plato likens the body to a prison for the soul. The immortal soul – pure spirit – is incarcerated in a defective body of crumbling clay. Salvation comes at death, when the soul escapes the body and soars heavenward to the invisible realm of the pure and eternal spirit. The widespread influence of Plato upon the history of Christian thought can hardly be overestimated. Accordingly, Werner Jaeger sates that “the most important fact in the history of Christian doctrine was that the father of Christian theology, Origen, was a Platonic philosopher at the school of Alexandria...Dualism brought in its wake an emphasis upon asceticism. This lifestyle, a stark departure from the Jewish norm of Scripture, is still present in varying degrees in the Church today. Asceticism results in a debasement of life. The enjoyment of the physical is rejected in favor of the general mortification of the flesh. Physical appetites and pleasures are considered unworthy indulgences which foster entrapment, so the body must be policed by rules. Thus one must seek to restrict or restrain oneself from, to deny or give up, anything enjoyable which may prove a hindrance to the cultivation of one’s ‘spiritual’ life. The abstention from various physical and material pleasures through dietary limitations, self-imposed silence, forfeiting possessions, social seclusion, glorification of hardships, and other austere observances are thought to bring mastery over one’s body....Gnosticism...viewed matter itself as being evil. Much of Gnosticism was influenced by Platonic dualism and was ascetic in nature. Gnostics taught that salvation is the escaping of the body by esoteric knowledge (the Greek term *gnosis* means knowledge) rather than something

presently to be enjoyed in this world. Gnostics tended to treat their bodies austerely...”⁷

- “...*Salvation: Escape or Involvement?* In the Middle Ages the concept of salvation revolved around the idea of being lifted out of life. Salvation came when one was delivered from the world. A glimpse of this salvation was often called the ‘beatific vision,’ which was a vision of God in which the visionary was taken beyond the world to realms sublime...a kind of otherworldly theology proved attractive in medieval times, and still remains a compelling option today. Seemingly, people from all ages have found it relatively easy to focus on the future joys of the heavenly kingdom to come...By contrast, the Hebrews did not primarily view salvation as deliverance from this world. Their commitment was not to escape this life but to know God’s power and presence, which could transform both their lives and their society...As a socially involved people, the Hebrews sought to live life to the hilt, entering into the fullness of the human experience...as people of God, they must affirm His presence in every experience of life, trusting themselves to His mercy and grace. The Hebrews boldly affirmed their God-given humanity.”⁸
- “Unlike most of their neighbors, the Hebrews did not hold to a circular concept of history tied closely to the cycles of nature. Hebrew history was not a monotonous, purposeless, and eternal cycle of happenings. Nor did the Hebrew view life as a race toward death in which one desperately seeks to escape from the clutches of time...The Hebrew view of time and history was essentially linear, durative, and progressive. In short, it was going somewhere; it was enroute to a goal, a glorious climax at the end of this age. The consummation of history in the age to come will see nature transformed through the removal of evil from the earth. **‘On that day’** God will judge the wicked and redeem the righteous and **‘The Lord will be king over the whole earth’** (Zech. 14:9).”⁹

Jewish Worldview: Family/Home

- “The Jew’s home has rarely been his ‘castle.’ Throughout the ages it has been something far higher – his sanctuary.*...As a small sanctuary, the rabbis taught that the home, like the Temple, was set aside for special purposes. These included the worship of God (a ‘house of prayer’), the learning of Torah (a ‘house of study’), and the serving of community needs (a ‘house of assembly’). Just as the *shekhinah* (the abiding presence of God) filled the Temple, and as light, a symbol of the Divine, brightened the holy place through the *menorah* (the seven-branched lampstand), so each home was to reflect God’s glory through prayer and praise. In addition, just as the golden table for the bread of the Presence in the Tabernacle contained loaves of bread set in two rows (Exod. 25:23-30; Lev. 24:5-9), so on Sabbath eve in the home two loaves of *hallah* are set on the table to symbolize God’s sustaining presence among his people. The dinner table of the home became, as it were, the altar

of the Temple.** Here is the origin of the family altar. Eating was to be more than a physical function; it was to be a spiritual instrument of religious service. Seen as an altar, the table was to be consecrated. It was to be a place where more than food was to be passed; it was also to be set apart, that words of Torah might be exchanged. For one 'does not live on bread alone' (Deut. 8:3; c.f. Matt. 4:4; Luke 4:4).

* Joseph H. Hertz, ed., *A Book of Jewish Thoughts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1920), p. 11.

** Rabbi David de Sola Pool points out that 'when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed by the Romans, two leading rabbis of the day helped comfort their people by declaring that henceforth the table in the home could and should take the place of the altar in the Temple' (*Why I Am A Jew* [Boston: Beacon Press, 1957], p. 135).¹⁰

- "The aim of learning was holiness in living – to be set apart unto God in every dimension of life. From early in Israel's history the center of education was the home. Both parents shared in this task (Prov. 1:8; 6:20), though the father bore chief responsibility for the instruction of the children (Deut. 11:19)...Education within the home also included acquiring an appropriate skill, craft, or trade for making a living. A son often learned as an apprentice of his father (Mishnah, Kiddushin 4:14). Sons were also instructed in the skills of farming and sheep tending (1 Sam. 16:11). A daughter usually remained with her mother to learn various domestic procedures such as weaving and cooking (Prov. 31:13ff). Because of the wide use of music and dance among the Hebrews, many parents must have provided instruction for their children in these areas as well (cf. Exod. 15:1-21; 32:19; Deut. 31:30-32:47; Luke 15:25; etc.). Ancient Israel had no system or network of formal schooling, and professional education was not readily available to the masses. As a result, education tended to be quite diverse and mainly informal. The home remained the main source of learning."¹¹
- "In comparison with other cultures, Jewish education was meant to be education with a difference...All education was directed to this end: to be different was the law of existence... 'You shall be different, for I the Lord your God am different.'... 'The Jew was the great nonconformist, the great dissenter of history. That was the purpose of his existence.'* Indeed the world might describe the Jew as 'the protestant of the centuries.' On this point rests the quintessence of Jewish education: 'the ideal of holiness, of separation from all other peoples in order to belong to God.'**

* Leo Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), p. 261.

- ** William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), p. 47.

In contrast, the Greek world did not understand education to be tied to holiness of life. Rather, teaching primarily involved the transference of knowledge in the intellectual and technical areas, such as music, art, reading, or athletics...In short, in secular Greek literature the *didaskalos* ('teacher') aimed mainly at developing the talents and potentialities of his pupil. Unlike the Jewish idea of teaching, Greek teaching did not usually concern itself with the development of the student's whole personality and his education in the deepest sense.*

- * K. Rengstorf, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 2:137.

Furthermore, in ancient Greek society, only the wealthy and leisure classes were enlightened through education.* Indeed, our English words *school* and *scholar* derive from the Greek verb *scholazo*, 'to have leisure,' 'to have spare time,' 'to have nothing to do.'**

- * Among the wealthy, the *paidagogos*, 'child-guide,' 'tutor' (cf. 1 Cor. 4:15; Gal. 3:24-25), played a special role. While his pupil was between 7 and 18, the *paidagogos* accompanied the boy to school, carrying his books and seeing that he arrived there safely. He was also concerned with his conduct, teaching the boy all that was implied in the Greek term *eukosmia*, 'good deportment, good manners, pleasantness of life.' See William Barclay, *New Testament Words* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), pp. 206-209.
- ** Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Henry S. Jones (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 1747.

Accordingly, a 'school' (Greek *schole*) properly means 'leisure employed in learning.*' But we must emphasize that this Greek word has no counterpart in the Hebrew language. The ancient Jews considered it 'idleness.'**

- * Among the meanings of *schole*, Liddell and Scott (ibid.) give these: 'leisure, spare time, ease'; 'that in which leisure is employed' – especially a learned discussion or lecture; 'a group to whom lectures were given, school.'
- ** Morris Kertzer, *What is a Jew?* (New York: Collier Books, 1960), p. 50. It should also be noted that Liddell and Scott (ibid.) give 'idleness' as one of the meanings of *Schole*.

Judaism has always shunned the Greek idea that physical work is menial, hence only appropriate for slaves.*

* See Abba Hillel Silver, *Where Judaism Differed* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1956), pp. 64-67.

...The Greeks learned in order to comprehend. The Hebrews learned in order to revere.*

* Abraham J. Heschel, *Insecurity of Freedom*, p. 41.”¹²

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 2. *Ibid.*, p. 223.
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V. JEWISH BIBLE OR “YOUR BIBLE IS JEWISH”

I. Biblical Names:

1. The very title of this study can be misleading and confusing. The moment we use the phrase, “The Jewish Bible,” we immediately think of the Bible the Jews read – or what we call the *Old Testament*.

2. The very name “*Old Testament*” is extremely unfortunate and misleading! The adjective “*old*” communicates to our mind the idea of something “*aged... out-of-date... outmoded... antiquated... not contemporary... not relevant.*”



3. Therefore, it is important to remember that the word “*old*” was not divinely inspired by God!

A. When He gave Moses the *10 Commandments* along with all of the other revelations on Mt. Sinai, He did not say to Moses: “*Now tell the people that they should refer to my revelation as ‘old Revelation!’*”

B. Nothing that God says is ever “*old*” or “*out-of-date!*”

C. No, God told them that this was their very *life!* Obedience to His word was their *wisdom...security...prosperity...peace.*

- “**Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may *live* and may go in and take possession of the land...Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you...Observe them carefully for this will show your *wisdom* and *understanding* to the nations who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a *wise and understanding people.*’” (Deut. 4:16).**
- “**Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to**

obey carefully all of this law. They are not just idle words for you – they are your life. By them you will live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess”
(Deut. 32:46-47; c.f. Deut. 30:11-20).

- D. It is very unfortunate that the adjective *Old* was ever put as a prefix to that portion of God’s revelation! As theologian Emil Brunner said, that very word has contributed to a lifetime of “benign neglect” for most Christians. Therefore, they give it only *secondary* importance in their lives.
- E. Regardless of how widespread this attitude is about the Old Testament, it did not originate with the Modern Church. Its inception goes back to the First and Second Centuries.
- (1) As the early church became more and more numerically dominated by Gentiles, there was a growing *anti-Jewish* sentiment.
 - (2) As we saw earlier, the heretic Marcion became the most extreme proponent of this *anti-Jewish...anti-Hebraic...anti-Semitic* perspective. So in his compilation of the Bible, he cut out virtually everything Jewish – which was most of the Bible!
 - (3) This theological perspective became known as “Displacement Theology” or “Supersession Theology.” It taught that the church had so totally replaced and superseded Israel, that it was no longer relevant – nor the Scriptures that focus on it.
 - (4) So the attitude has grown for nineteen hundred years that the Old Testament is *inferior*, while the New Testament is *superior*. Since we now live in the “Age of Grace,” the “Age of Law” is done away with. The “Old” has passed, and the “New” has come!
- F. Many Gentile Christians to this very hour spend very little time studying that portion of *Holy Writ*. They prefer to spend the little time they allot to Bible study -- to the *NEW Testament* – the “*Better Bible!*”
- (1) Even though they would refer to themselves as “Bible Believing Christians” who *believe every word of the Bible* – “*from Genesis to the maps*” – they spend little or no time studying the Old Testament.

- (2) As Marvin Wilson observed: “*They have become de facto ‘quarter-of-the-Bible’ Christians.*” That is because the New Testament has 260 chapters; while the Old Testament has 929 chapters.
- (3) If we are honest with ourselves, we will have to admit that the very words that we use to describe God’s original revelation have caused many of us to minimize its authority and importance – and thereby greatly neglect it in our studies.
- (4) Likewise, most preachers spend too little time systematically preaching from this vital, foundational portion of divine revelation!
- G. So if the title *Old Testament* is not the best, *what should we call that portion of divine revelation? How should we refer to it?*
- H. Let me make a couple of suggestions:
- *Original Testament*
 - *First Testament*
 - *First Covenant*
 - *Hebrew Bible*
 - *Tenach (Tanak, Tenakh)*
- The latter term is what the Jewish people use to refer to what we call the *Old Testament*.
- I. Now I don’t really expect most Christians to use those terms – any more than I expect the various Bible Societies who print Bibles to drop or change the adjective *Old*, in favor of some other, more appropriate word.
- J. I am just sharing these introductory thoughts to stimulate your thinking about how many of us perceive the “*Old Testament*” – usually in negative ways that cause us to avoid it in favor of the *New Testament*.
- K. As we said earlier, the Jewish people refer to what we call the *Old Testament* as the *Tenach*. So they not only do not use the same term we do, their Bible is not divided like ours. The *Tenach* is divided into three parts:

- *Torah* (Law) [5 Books of Moses]
- *Prophets* (Nebi'im) [Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings]
- *Writings* (Ketubim) [Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, 12 Minor Prophets]

L. It would be a fantastic spiritual breakthrough for all of us if we could learn to love the *Tenach* like the Jewish people. How different our knowledge of the Bible would be if we would study it like the Jews – as if there was no further revelation from God!

II. Biblical Language:

1. Even though we all know that the *Tenach* was written in Hebrew, most of us in the West have little working knowledge of it – and we certainly do not speak it!
2. I am certainly not a Hebrew scholar, but I have been greatly enriched by studying the Hebrew language. A Christian does not necessarily have to master the Hebrew language in order to understand some basic principles about its nature as a spoken and written language.
3. Let me share a few helpful principles to understand some of the basic characteristics of the Hebrew language – and therefore understand your *Tenach* better.
 - A. First, Hebrew is a very *colorful language* – and the Biblical writers knew how to use it to great advantage.
 - (1) The very nature of Hebrew is to paint “verbal word pictures” – and with a *large brush, using broad strokes*.
 - (2) Hebrew does not go into *fine details*. It is more concerned with giving the *big picture*.
 - (3) As one Hebrew scholar expressed it: “*Hebrew is primarily a description of what the eye sees, rather than what the mind speculates.*”
 - (4) Hebrew first and foremost *paints a picture* for you to see with the “eyes of your heart.”
 - B. Secondly, Hebrew is a very *earthy language*. Remember that the first Hebrews were “people of the earth.”

- (1) The progenitor of the Hebrew people was Abraham, who was a *pastoralist*. He was a *cattleman* who primarily raised *sheep...goats...camels...cows...donkeys*.
 - (2) That means that you do not talk philosophy with sheep herders – unless it is the “philosophy of raising sheep!” By nature they are very “down to earth people” – not given to a lot of abstract philosophical musings.
 - (3) Because of that fact, you will find that so many of the stories, parables, analogies, and word pictures in the Hebrew Bible are very “earthy.” In fact, they are sometimes so “*earthy*” that many of the translators softened or altered the words so they would not be so *graphic* – and sometimes *offensive!*
- C. Thirdly, because Hebrew is a very *earthly language*, it is also a very *concrete language* - not an abstract one.
- (1) Since it is a *word-picture language*, by its very nature it is very *pictorial* – not *philosophical*.
 - (2) Hebrew is not very much oriented toward the *abstract...ethereal...metaphysical*.
 - (3) Hebrew is not given to a lot of *precision...subtle nuances...minutia*, like some other languages are.
 - (4) That’s why Hebrew would never have been suited for the philosophical; nor the scientists of today who require very precise language.
- D. Fourthly, Hebrew is very much an *action-oriented language*.
- (1) Every word in Hebrew is derived from a *verb root*. And every one of those verbs carries a *word picture*.
 - (2) Most of our Western languages tend to be *noun-oriented*, rather than *verb-oriented*. That means that the *noun* is the key for interpreting the sentence. However, in Hebrew, the *verb* is the key.
 - (3) So Hebrew not only paints *word pictures* – it also almost gives *motion pictures!*

- E. In reading and studying the Bible we must remember that virtually every writer was a Jew – or a Jewish convert.
- (1) Even when they spoke Aramaic, and wrote in Greek – *they thought in Hebrew!*
 - (2) Hebrew was what we today call their “*heart language.*” It was what they had known from their childhood. It was their *natural world-view.*
 - (3) Our problem is that we think with a *Greco-Roman Western mind*, and feel with an *American heart.*
 - (4) Our minds...hearts...world-view have largely been “**...conformed to this world**” (Rom. 12:2).
 - (5) As a result, our *world-view* is almost totally hostile to Biblical thinking – which is basically *Hebraic to the core!*
 - (6) Therefore, we need to have our minds “**...transformed**” by learning to *think Hebraically.*

III. **Biblical Authority:**

1. It is vital to remember that *both Testaments are equally inspired by God* and therefore are *authoritative for every Christian.*
2. For the Christian, the *Old Testament* and *New Testament* are simply *divisions of the same book.*
3. Both should be seen equally inspired by God, and therefore authoritative in the life of the believer.
 - A. Bible scholars remind us of the fact that there are some *1,600 references, quotations and allusions in the New Testament of the Old.*
 - B. So the two testaments are inseparably connected together. When either is separated from the other, there is great loss and damage to the message.
 - C. The Old is incomplete without the New, and the New is incomplete without the Old. The Old is the *root*; the New is the *fruit.* One is the foundation; the other is the superstructure.

- D. The Old Testament is the *lock*, and the New Testament is the *key* that opens the door to understanding.
4. Our attitude toward the *Tenach* must be no less than that of Jesus and the other New Testament writers – and especially Paul.
- A. Remember, the *Tenach* was the *only Bible that Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul ever knew!* What we know as the New Testament had not been written yet, so *the only Bible that was available was what we call the “Old Testament.”*
- B. Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul acknowledged the *full authority of the Tenach*.
- (Jesus said) **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the *Law* or the *Prophets*. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”** (Mtt. 5:17-18).
 - **“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself...He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.’ Then He opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures”** (Luke 24:27, 44-45).
 - **“Scripture cannot be broken”** (Jn. 10:35).
 - **“I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also”** (II Tim. 1:5).
 - (Paul to Timothy) **“...from infancy you have known the *holy Scriptures* which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. *All Scripture is God-breathed* and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work”** (II Tim. 3:15-17).

- **“Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the *Scriptures* we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4; c.f. I Cor. 10:6).**
 - **“And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it...you must understand that *no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation*. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (II Pet. 1:19-21).**
- C. There was only one revelation that they knew, and that was the *Tenach*. They knew no other Bible but the Hebrew Scriptures.
- D. It was only many years later that what we know as the *New Testament writings* became widely circulated, known and read. Even then, they were not read and studied to the neglect of the *Tenach* – especially among Jewish Christians.
- E. The *Book of Psalms* was the *hymnbook* for the early church. They continued to “sing the Psalms” as a vital part of their worship. That’s why Paul wrote:
- “Speak to one another with *psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs*. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:19-20).**
5. If Jesus, the Apostles, and Paul acknowledged the authority of the *Tenach*, we dare not do any less!
6. Since the purpose of Bible study is to develop a *Biblical mentality*, the only way that can take place is through a *balanced study of both testaments!*

IV. Biblical Interpretation:

There are a number of *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* that I have written about in one of our ministry magazines – including my book: *How To Study The Bible*. I will not repeat all of those at this time. However, since we are giving special attention to the *Tenach*, let me quickly share a couple of key principles for interpreting and understanding it.

1. *The Principle of Paradox:*

- A. The Bible is filled with paradox, dialectic, antinomy, polarity, and what seems to be contradiction.
- B. That was not nearly the problem for the Jewish mind that it is for the Western mind – that has largely been *Hellenized*.
- C. The *Greco-Roman mind* has been conditioned philosophically and rationally.
- D. It has been trained to reason and argue from...
Primes ----- Proof ----- Conclusions
- E. Therefore, everything must be *coherent, logical, rational, sequential*.
- F. That is not the case in Hebrew thinking. They have no problem with *paradoxes...antinomies...dialectics* – that seem to simultaneously hold in tension truths that appear to be contradictory.
- G. This fact often drives us crazy when we read and study the Bible!

**“Paradox is truth standing on its head to attract attention!”
G. K. Chesterton**

- H. It is because of this Hebraic way of thinking, that we have so many revealed truths in the Bible that on the surface seem to contradict with each other:

“The Bible...is a Jewish book. It cannot be read and understood and expounded unless we are prepared to become Jews with the Jews.”¹

Karl Barth

Sovereignty.....Free Will

Predestination.....Human Freedom

Divine Election.....Human Choice

“God hardening Pharaoh’s heart.....Pharaoh hardening his own heart”

“Jacob have I loved”.....Esau have I hated”

God of Wrath.....God of Love

God of Judgment.....God of Mercy

“No one can come to Me unless the Father draw him”.....“Whoever will come may come”

Jesus as the Son of God.....Jesus as the Son of Man

“I and the Father are one”.....“My Father is greater than I”

Faith.....Works, etc.

I. The Bible is filled with these kinds of *spiritual paradoxes* and *antinomies*.

- *To find your life, you must first lose it*
- *When we are weak, then we are strong*
- *The way up is down*
- *We are rich when we are poor*

J. Tragically, we Christians swing from one extreme to the other! We must learn to live with these paradoxes and realize that we *find truth in a dynamic tension between these two opposites*.

2. *The Principle of Poetry:*

A. We must remember that Hebrew is a very earthy, down to earth language. It is not primarily philosophical and abstract.

- B. As such, it uses a lot of poetry, word pictures, figures of speech that are sometimes strange to our Western mind.
- C. That means that we must learn to find the truth behind the poetic or pictorial language. To try and literally interpret every portion of the Bible would be disastrous!

Psalm 119

1. **“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word”** (Ps. 119:9).
2. **“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You”** (Ps. 119:11).
3. **“Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in Your law”** (Ps. 119:18).
4. **“Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors”** (Ps. 119:24).
5. **“Take away the disgrace I dread, for Your laws are good”** (Ps. 119:39).
6. **“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out Your precepts”** (Ps. 119:45).
7. **“My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life”** (Ps. 119:50).
8. **“Preserve my life according to Your love, and I will obey the statutes of your mouth”** (Ps. 119:89).
9. **“All Your words are true; all Your righteous laws are eternal”** (Ps. 119:160).
10. **“Great peace have they who love Your law, and nothing can make them stumble”** (Ps. 119:165).

FURTHER STUDY FOR THE JEWISH BIBLE

- "...the history of biblical interpretation proves that at best allegories exegesis is both suspect and risky. The exegetical integrity of the text is surrendered to the wasteland of subjectivity. The authorial intent of the passage stands in jeopardy of being compromised or entirely lost if mystical, figurative, or hidden meanings are thought to burst forth from the text without some criteria of control. That control of a passage is normally achieved when attention is given to the plain meaning of words in context (the immediate context and that of the rest of the Scripture) within the specific historical and cultural setting. The New Testament authors view all of the Old Testament Scripture as having their deepest meaning in Christ."²
- "Vapidity of meaning may not be the only loss sustained by a hermeneutic which focuses primarily on spiritualizing the biblical text. There may be implications for the issue of anti-Semitism as well... 'Christians have tended to be more hostile to the unconverted Jews of their day as they have tended to spiritualize the biblical doctrine of the millennium and advocate an otherworldly, ascetic approach to discipleship.' [Harold O.J. Brown, "Christians and Jews – Bound Together," *Christianity Today* (August 18, 1978): 18.]...the Church – especially since Augustine (ca. 400) – tends toward amillennialism, a tendency accompanied by an increasing disdain for Jewish people..."³
- "The bedrock upon which New Testament faith rests securely is the Hebrew Bible. Christians more commonly refer to it as the '*Old Testament*,' and the Jews *Tenakh* (also spelled *Tenach* and *Tanak*)*. It is the chief source from which our common Judeo-Christian heritage derives.

It was certainly an unfortunate day for the Church when the Jewish Scriptures began to be called the '*Old Testament*.' Such a title implies that this testament is now passé. Indeed, the Church would have been far better off if it had decided from the outset to use a name such as the '*First*' or the '*Original*' Testament...neither Jesus nor the apostles ever declared the first thirty-nine books of Sacred Scripture dead or abolished, and they must never become so for the Church...

* The Jewish community usually refers to the Old Testament as the Hebrew Bible, Jewish Scriptures, Bible, or Tenakh. The last term has reference to the threefold division of the Hebrew Bible, with *T* standing for *Torah* ('Law'), *N* for *Nebi'im* ('Prophets'), and *K* standing for *Ketubim* ('Writings'). Judaism had recognized only one covenant. Thus, Jewish people have frequently considered Christians' reference

to the 'old' covenant as a misleading or condescending way of describing the Jewish faith.”⁴

- “The world of the Hebrews was such that they had long periods of time for uninterrupted meditation. The rhythm of their lives was not ordered by alarm clocks or factory whistles but by the sun. Living outside as shepherds, farmers, and fishermen, the Hebrews were close to both soil and sea. In addition to the weekly Sabbath rest, each day, when the sun was high, the Hebrews took a break from work. When the sun set, their evenings were free. They also had periodic times for fasting...The subject of meditation is crucial for understanding the precise organization of the Hebrew Bible’s threefold division into Law, Prophets, and Writings. Joshua is the first book in the Prophets, the second major division of the Hebrew Bible.* It opens with God commanding the Israelites to meditate on the Law of Moses (the first major division of the Bible) ‘day and night’ (Josh. 1:8). The book of Psalms is the first book in the Writings, the third major division, and it opens with the same motif – that of meditating on God’s Law ‘day and night’ (Ps. 1:2). Elsewhere, the psalmist says, ‘I will meditate on all your works’ (Ps. 77:12). Viewed contextually, these passages indicate that the meditation is the key theme which binds the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible together.

In each of the three texts cited above, the Hebrew word for ‘meditate’ is *hagah*. The word properly means ‘emit a sound,’ ‘murmur,’ ‘mutter,’ ‘speak in an undertone.’

- * The *Nebi'im*, ‘Prophets,’ comprise two sections, the Former and the Latter Prophets. The Former Prophets include *the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings*. The Latter (or ‘Writing’) Prophets include *Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve (or ‘Minor Prophets’)*.”⁵

- “*Hagah* is used in the Hebrew Bible to indicate such varied sounds as the ‘growl’ of a lion (Isa. 31:4) and the ‘moaning’ of a dove (Isa. 38:14). Such passages give graphic insight into what meditation involves. Meditation is the outward verbalizing of one’s thoughts before God, of the poring over his teachings and works. It means to articulate, in a low tone, thoughts of worship, wonder, and praise. But in addition, the use of *hagah* in texts such as Joshua 1:8 and Psalm 1:2 implies that the Scriptures were not primarily written to be read silently. Indeed in the words of Otto Kaiser, the Law itself was to be ‘read aloud’ by day and by night.*

- * From a lecture by Otto Kaiser of Marburg University entitled ‘The Law as Center of the Hebrew Bible,’ at Cambridge University, Faculty of Oriental Studies, May 13, 1987.”⁶

- “The early Church Fathers had to solve the problem of what to do with the Old Testament. Their anti-Judaic stance forced them to view the Jewish Scriptures with its many strange laws and customs as offensive at worst and

little more than antiquated at best. In addition, the position of the Church was that it had replaced Israel. No longer a remnant within Israel, it had become a separate gentile body. Accordingly, it proudly bore a new role, that of adversary to the parent that had given it birth.

Marcion offered one solution. He violently opposed anything Jewish and argued that the Old Testament should be done away with, removed from the canon of the Church. His position was unacceptable to the Church. Although his solution generally reflected the anti-Judaic attitude of the second-century Church, the Church could not totally cut itself off from the Jewish Scriptures. The Church had superseded Israel, and the Old Testament was the descriptive document that defined the inheritance to which this 'new' Israel laid claim.

It found an alternate solution – allegory. In allegory the Old Testament could be made a 'Christian' document. Through their efforts to spiritualize, typologize, and christologize the text, the early Church Fathers were able to find abundant Christian meaning in the Old Testament. Christ, or New Testament thought, was read *into*, rather than *out of*, the biblical text in some of the most obscure places. Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine, and others developed a system of allegorical exegesis that had the disastrous effect of wrenching the biblical text from its plain historical meaning. During the Reformation, Luther denounced Origen's allegories and called allegory 'the scum of Scripture,' 'a monkey-game,' and a 'nose of wax' (i.e., something which can bend any way desired.)*

The transferring of the Jewish Scriptures to the 'new' Israel meant clothing them in Christian dress.

* See John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 82."⁷

- "Hebrew is a very colorful language, and the biblical writers knew how to use it to a great advantage. But Hebrew is not a precise analytical language, prone to conveying subtle nuances of meaning. For example, Hebrew has two verbal tenses. It normally uses the imperfect tense for incomplete action and the perfect tense for completed action. In general, the syntax and grammar of Hebrew are far less complex than the inflectional languages of Latin and Greek.

The nature of Hebrew is to paint verbal pictures with broad strokes of the brush. The Hebrew authors of the Scripture were not so much interested in the fine details and harmonious pattern of what is painted as they were in the picture as a whole. Theirs was primarily a description of what the eye sees rather than what the mind speculates."⁸

- “The Old Testament is the parent of the New Testament and the religion of the Old Testament is the cradle from which Christianity came”* as Emil Brunner observed.

He concluded wisely, therefore, that ‘the normal path to a genuine understanding of the New Testament is by way of the Old. For in the Old Testament we come upon a world completely unaffected by the whole Hellenic Spirit.’ **

For nearly two thousand years Christianity has been a debtor to the Jewish people for sharing this rich legacy. But it is tragic to realize that many Christians have avoided the Old Testament as a matter of ‘benign neglect.’ Typically, these Christians have received little emphasis on the Old Testament in sermons, church school teaching, and group Bible study; they have come to believe that the Old Testament is, for the most part, boring and irrelevant.’

* William Barclay, *Ethics in a Permissive Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 13-14.

** Emil Brunner, ‘*The Significance of the Old Testament for Our Faith*,’ in *The Old Testament and Christian Faith: A Theological Discussion*, ed. Bernhard W. Anderson (repr. New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 249.”⁹

- “...in our concerted effort to be ‘New Testament’ believers, we have too often unconsciously minimized the place and the importance of the Old Testament and the Church’s Hebraic roots. At worst, many so-called Bible-believing Christians have become de facto ‘quarter-of-the-Bible’ adherents (the New Testament has 260 chapters compared to the Old Testament’s 929 chapters.)

This selectivity has had the effect of neglecting the totality of written revelation, severing the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith, and thus eroding the full authority of the Holy Scriptures.

In addition to relegating the Old Testament to secondary importance in preaching and teaching, Neo-Marcionism continues to plague today’s Church in other ways. For instance, it is often found in those theological circles where the displacement or supersession theory is taught concerning Israel. This teaching is tantamount to saying that Israel has been permanently cast aside and thus has had no theological relevance for the last nineteen hundred years. In our opinion, this position fails to give satisfactory explanation to Paul’s argument that ‘a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of Gentiles come in, and so all Israel will be saved’ (Rom. 11:25-26).”¹⁰

- “...the Church has been guilty of overemphasizing the dissimilarities of the Testaments. It has stressed the antiethical relationship of the Testaments rather than their continuity. This problem is very old, for as the early Church

became increasingly influenced by the Greek culture and other non-Jewish thought, 'contrast and contradiction, rather than acknowledgement of roots, relatedness and indebtedness, became perspective.' *

Furthermore, we hear that the New Testament has 'done away with,' 'abrogated,' or 'superseded' the Old Testament, and the New Testament is 'better' than the Old, that the Old Testament 'came *before* the cross,' that we are now in 'the age of grace.' The unhappy result is that many Christians have been semantically preconditioned to view the New Testament as a separate Bible from (and superior to) the Old Testament.

What can be done to overcome the apathy and neglect of this great treasure of our Hebrew foundation? How can the Church become nourished from the Hebraic 'root that supports it'?

* Abraham J. Heschel, *The Insecurity of Freedom* (New York: Schocken Books, 1972), p. 169." ¹¹

- **"The Bible of the Early Church:** A first guideline to restore the Old Testament to its proper place is to follow the attitude of Jesus and the New Testament writers toward the Old Testament. Both Jesus and the apostles granted full authority and inspiration to the Old Testament writings (Matt. 5:17-18; John 10:35; 2 Tim. 3: 14-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Only one document was normative for them; they lived their lives 'according to the scripture.' They knew no Bible but the Hebrew Scriptures, for the New Testament writings were not widely circulated until many years after the death of Jesus. The Old Testament was the primary source used for teaching and the settling of arguments with opponents (including Satan). And the book of Psalms was the 'hymnbook of the early Church' (cf. 1 Cor. 14:26)." ¹²
- "A second guideline is to remember that the Bible is an incomplete book, of limited value, without both Testaments. It is crucial for Christians to understand this point, for the New Testament Scriptures sound the note of fulfillment in looking back toward the Old. Thus, the entire Old Testament is pointing beyond itself. It anticipates a climax and ending. It leans toward the announcement that 'the time had fully come' (Gal. 4:4). As John Bright suggests, it is like a single play with two acts. Without the second act, the first is 'incomplete and unsatisfying; but without Act I, Act II is incomprehensible and impossible.' *

The Testaments are inseparably linked. It should not surprise us, therefore, that scholars point to over sixteen hundred quotations, references, and allusions which connect the New Testament with the Old...hundreds of texts combine to link the Testaments together inextricably...Perhaps no clearer analogy of the relationship between Testaments has been made than the following: 'The Old is incomplete without the New, for in all its portions it is

looking forward to its fulfillment, but the New is also incomplete without the Old. To use it alone is like taking the roofs and towers of a great cathedral in isolation and suggesting that the walls exist only that they may bear the roof.’**

* John Bright, *The Authority of the Old Testament* (repr. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 202.

** H.L. Ellison, *The Message of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1969), p. 11.”¹³

- “A third guideline for overcoming indifference and apathy is to remember that the Old Testament is the theological key for opening the door to the New Testament. The theology of the early Church was Hebraic to its very heart; it was Old Testament theology now raised to its ultimate spiritual significance in the coming of Jesus.”¹⁴
- “How, then, should one interpret the Old Testament, accepting its full and inspired authority? In certain areas, Christianity has emphasized different teachings from those of Judaism; hence we are not to expect a leveling out or complete uniformity between the Testaments. The Bible did not come out of heaven on a parachute all at once, but revelation unfolded progressively over hundreds of years. Thus, within the structural unity of Scripture we encounter variations of theological emphasis. Every text of Scripture is there not to simply take space, but because it is given by the Spirit of God and contains some theological concern which prompted it to be taken, by God’s providence, into the canon.

Though some text are more directly normative for theology than others (e.g., the Ten Commandments may hold greater relevance for Christians by way of application than the levitical laws concerning animal sacrifice), all of the Old Testament is ‘God-breathed and useful’ (2 Tim. 3:16). We must carefully distinguish what the Bible reports from what it teaches. A careful contextual study of what each text says should lead to the theological teaching of the passage in keeping with the original author’s intention. Since every Old Testament is pregnant with theological significance, one should seek the ultimate value and authority of a text at the theological level.*

* For a more detailed study on the entire issue of Old Testament authority, see John Bright, *Authority of the Old Testament.*”¹⁵

- “...the Hebrews were mainly a doing and feeling people. Thus their language has a few abstract terms. Rather, Hebrew may be called primarily a language of the senses. The word originally expressed concrete or material things and movements or actions which struck the senses or started the emotions.”¹⁶

- “Here is one of the most crucial factors which makes the Bible so vital. It is a realistic, down-to-earth piece of literature. Its characters are not halo-bearing, other worldly spirits, but men and women of flesh and blood whose total humanity is boldly displayed. Hence we meet ourselves in the Bible, for its characters are people just like us. Their struggles, problems, and weaknesses are the same as ours. Their feelings and needs, their sorrows and joys, their doubts and dreams are ours too. Their incarnation shows how far down God was willing to come to share the full humanity of His people. Because Christians from every nationality, age in life, and period of history can identify with the people of the Bible, the message of the Bible is timeless. Thus it meets all of us where we are, and still speaks forcefully today.”¹⁷
- “...the authors of God’s Word – virtually every one of them a Jew – have a profoundly Hebraic perspective on life and the world. If we are to interpret the Bible correctly, we must become attuned to this Hebraic setting in the ancient Near East. Thus we must look primarily not to Athens but to Jerusalem for the Biblical view of reality. For the prophets and apostles produced a Book that is, without question, Hebraic in composition and orientation. Succinctly stated, ‘The Old Testament is the foundation for the New. The message of the New Testament is in the Hebrew traditions as against the Greek tradition. Our tutors to Christ are Moses and the Prophets, and not Plato and the Academies.’* ”

* Norman H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 159.”¹⁸

- “The purpose of studying the Bible is to acquire a biblical mentality...Indeed the more biblical one becomes, the more Semitic one will be. It is impossible to be anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic and take the Bible seriously; otherwise one engages in a form of self-hatred. For the Christian, the Old and New Testaments are simply divisions of the same Book.”¹⁹
- “...‘If the Bible is going to be understood in our day, we must develop ‘Hebrew eyes’ and ‘Hebrew attitudes’ toward life.’* ‘Western eyes’ must be replaced by ‘Eastern eyes’ if modern Christians intend to read the Bible the way it was written. The Bible can make sense only when it is viewed and studied in the light of its own distinctive Near Eastern setting and cultural context.

* John Shelby Spong, *This Hebrew Lord* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), p. 31.”²⁰

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VI. JEWISH WORSHIP

1. Jewish worship was centered in the *home*.
2. There were certain Feasts and Festival days that took them to the Temple – three to be exact. The rest of the time *their worship was to be home-centered*.
3. Since the Jewish Festivals were revealed by God, only the Jewish people have divinely revealed Festival Days. The festivals and feasts of all other religions and cultures either originate with *man* or *Satan!* These Jewish Festivals are recorded in Ex. 12:1-30; Lev. 23:1-44; Num. 28-29; and Deut. 16:1-17.
4. Each of these Festivals had *historic, agricultural, and prophetic* significance.
5. There was much *visual symbolism* involved in all of the Festivals. Since God created us and knows our natures, He knows that “*one picture is worth a thousand words*” when it comes to remembering things.
6. This strong *visualization and symbolism* made it easier for the Jewish parents to “**...teach them to your children...**” (Ex. 12:25-26; Deut. 4:9; 6:6; 11:19; Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4).
7. According to Paul, all of these Festivals pointed to Christ:

“These are a *shadow* of the things that were to come; the reality...is found in Christ” (Col. 2:16-17).
8. Tragically, many – if not most – of the Biblical Festivals and Feasts have been replaced by non-Biblical ones like:
 - Christmas
 - Epiphany
 - Lent
 - All Saints Day/Halloween
 - Valentines Day
 - Thanksgiving
 - Fourth of July/Memorial Day
 - Birthday
 - Wedding Anniversaries



- Church Anniversaries
- Etc.

9. All of the Festival days were established by God as “*Days of Remembrance.*” As we study these festivals, it is crucial that we remember that they were *memorial days* instituted by God as an integral part of the divine worship system. They are not a matter of redemption or acceptance before God – but His “*Forever Feasts*” to aid us in our worship of Him “...**in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24).

10. It is also important to note that prophecy indicates that the Feast Days will continue to be celebrated even after the Coming of Christ and the establishment of the *Kingdom Age*:

“Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain. If the Egyptian people do not go up and take part, they will have no rain. The Lord will bring on them the plague He inflicts on the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zech. 14:16-19).

11. It is important to note and understand the significance that there was the *shedding of animal blood* at each of the 7 Festivals.

A. There were *5 types of sacrifices*:

1. Burnt Offerings
2. Guilt Offerings
3. Sin Offerings
4. Peace Offerings
5. Bread Offerings

Each one of these point to Christ’s perfect sacrifice!

B. These are to also remind us that we are to be “...**living sacrifices**” (Rom. 12:1) for the Lord Jesus.

C. In addition there were various *Meal and Drink Offerings* which accompanied the various animal sacrifices - to remind them that all of the works of their hands were to be dedicated to God.

12. Even though Gentile Christians were not obligated to keep the Festivals, it is clear from the writings of Paul that many did. Note carefully what he writes to the saints at Corinth – which was predominantly a Gentile Church. Paul is writing them to discipline – and excommunicate if necessary – an immoral

brother. Paul likens his presence in the church to *leaven* which if left unchecked will “...leaven the whole batch of dough.” Therefore he writes:

“Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (I Cor. 5:7-8).

13. Once again, please remember that the commemoration of these days has nothing to do with *salvation* – but with our *worship*. We are not to get caught up in Jewish culture or ritualism. But some kind of remembrance and celebration of these days can be a great aid to our Biblical understanding and worship of God – because they are Christ-centered and God-honoring in every detail! Even though they are not essential for our salvation, they can be very helpful for our *sanctification* – and can lead us closer to a more Biblical form of worship, honor and praise of God. This fact alone should be reason enough to respect and acknowledge these Jewish Biblical Festivals!

FURTHER STUDY FOR JEWISH WORSHIP

- “...we should not forget that Hebrew worship – including prayer and the study of the holy books – was no sedate or dreary event. It included dancing with tambourine (Ps. 149:3; 150:4), all kinds of instruments – including trumpets and cymbals (Ps. 150) – singing (33:3), hand clapping (47:1), and even shouting (95:1). For the Hebrews, praise was a basic token of being alive; it was the way to observe the command, ‘You shall meditate on it day and night.’”¹
- “Prayer is the means by which Jews – both ancient and modern – have stayed attuned to the concept that all of life is sacred. Jewish prayers tend to be short because the entire working day of an observant Jew is punctuated with sentence prayers. More than one hundred of these *berakhot*, “blessings” are recited throughout the day (cf. Mishnah, Berakhot 9:1-5). They customarily begin, *Barukh attah adonai*, ‘Blessed are You, O Lord.’ As King and Creator of the universe, God’s presence is acknowledged at all times and in every sphere of activity within His world. Moses commanded the Israelites to bless the Lord for His goodness (Deut. 8:10). Building on this and other texts, the rabbis taught, ‘It is forbidden for a man to enjoy anything of this world without a benediction, or he commits sacrilege’ (Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 35a)...These Jews are reflecting the ancient Hebraic belief that everything is theological. This is the way one stays in touch with the Almighty and keeps divine perspective on life. It means constantly praising God for all things, with sentence prayers, throughout the day...Indeed, today’s Christians will fail to

grasp Paul's admonition to 'Pray without ceasing,' that is, 'Pray continually' (1 Thess. 5:17), unless they understand that a main feature of Jewish prayer is its pervasiveness."²

Jewish Worship: Prayer

- “Unlike the practice of most Western Christians today, in Bible times the Hebrew people did not see the need to bless food, drink, or other material things. In prayer they focused only on blessing God, the Creator and Giver. The Gospels indicate that Jesus followed this same custom (e.g., note the NIV translation of Matt. 26:26 and Luke 24:30), one commanded in the Torah: **‘When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you’** (Deut. 8:10).^{*} The Lord alone was worthy of receiving the blessing and praise as divine Provider...The ancient Hebrews would never have thought of blessing what they ate. The idea would have been totally foreign to them; it would also have been an insult, of sorts, to God. If everything God created was ‘very good’ (Gen. 1:31), why should one imply that it is really unholy and profane? The postbiblical notion that one needed to sanctify, cleanse, or purify what God had already created and declared to be good would be strange theology to the biblical writers. It suggests that food and drink, in and of themselves, are unacceptable gifts until suddenly made holy through prayer...How did this practice originate? Again the Church went wrong because it severed its Hebrew roots. Grecianization was the consequence of de-Judaization. The influence of dualistic Greek thought created the need to ‘make holy’ things related to the physical and material world. Hence, bread and wine, the elements of the Eucharist, were not only consecrated but changed into another substance (transubstantiation). The Church also sought to ‘sanctify’ or ‘make holy’ other physical things such as water, burial ground, crosses, and other religious objects.

* See David Bivin, ‘Blessing: Jesus and the Oral Torah,’ *Jerusalem Perspective* 4 (January, 1988): 1-2.”³

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Now let's turn to a more detailed study of the *7 Festivals of Israel*...



VII. GOD'S ORDAINED FEASTS & FESTIVALS

(Ex. 12:1-30; Lev. 23:1-40; Deut. 16:1-17)

“These Are My fixed times, the fixed times of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions. On six days work may be done, but on the seventh day there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest, a sacred occasion. You shall do no work; it shall be a Sabbath of the Lord throughout your settlements...”

(Lev. 23:1-3 Tanakh)

“These are the set times of the Lord, the sacred occasions, which you shall celebrate each at its appointed times: In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, at twilight, there shall be a *Passover offering* to the Lord, and on the fifteenth day of that month the Lord’s *Feast of Unleavened Bread*...When you enter the land that I am giving to you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the *first sheaf* of your harvest to the priest. He shall elevate the sheaf before the Lord for acceptance in your behalf...And from the day on which you bring the sheaf of elevation offering...you shall count off seven weeks. They must be complete: you must count until the day after the seventh week – *fifty days*; then you shall bring an offering of *new grain* to the Lord...

In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe complete rest, a sacred occasion commemorated with loud blasts...Mark, the tenth day of this seventh month is the *Day of Atonement*. It shall be a sacred occasion for you; you shall practice self-denial, and you shall bring an offering by fire to the Lord...For it is a *Day of Atonement*, on which expiation is made on your behalf before the Lord your God...it is a law for all time, throughout the ages in all your settlements. It shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for you...

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month there shall be the *Feast of Booths* to the Lord, to last seven days. The first day shall be a sacred occasion; you shall not work at your occupations; seven days you shall bring offerings by fire to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall observe a sacred occasion and bring an offering by fire to the Lord; it is a solemn gathering: you shall not work at your occupations.

These are the *set times of the Lord* that you shall celebrate as sacred occasions, bringing offerings by fire to the Lord – burnt offerings, meal offerings, sacrifices, and libations, on each day what is proper to it – apart from the Sabbaths of the Lord, and apart from your gifts and from all your votive offerings and from all your freewill offerings that you give to the Lord.”

(Lev. 23:1-38; Tanakh)

Note: These various Festivals and Feasts were governed by the *lunar calendar*, so they did not take place on exactly the same day each year – but rather varied according to the time of the new moon.

THREE PILGRIM FESTIVALS

(Deut. 16:16)

“Three times a year – on the *Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)*, on the *Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)*, and on the *Feast of Booths (Tabernacle)* – all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place that He will choose. They shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each with his own gift, according to the blessing that the Lord your God has bestowed upon you” (Tanakh).

INTRODUCTION:

1. One of the first and greatest revelations of the Bible is that we were created by God “...**in His image**” (Gen. 1:26-27) – even though He formed us physically “...**from the dust of the ground**” (Gen. 2:7). That means that we are a unique blend of the “*dust*” and the “*divine!*” Because of the human, earthy part of our natures – we are so prone to forget our Creator. As a result, the “*dusty*” part of our nature tends to over-rule and over-ride the “*divine*” side of our nature. As the one who created us, God fully “...**knows that we are dust**” (Ps. 103:14). Therefore, He created for His people certain *physical reminders* so they will not forget who they are...Whose they are...why they were created...where they are going.
2. He specifically gave to His *chosen people*, the Jews, a series of religious Festivals and Feasts as regular *reminders* of who they are. Through Moses He in essence said: “**Do these in remembrance of Me**” (Ex. 3:15; Ex. 20:8; Deut. 5:15; c.f. Lk. 22:19);
3. God's *system of remembrance* was based upon the calendar that He inscribed into the universe He created. When He spoke the cosmos into existence, He set the sun, moon, stars, planets into space for “...**signs to mark the seasons and days and years...**” (Gen. 1:14). Therefore, knowing our proneness to forgetfulness, God fixed “heavenly sign posts” to regularly remind us of Himself.
4. Through this study we will clearly see that God attached specific spiritual significance to certain “...**days...seasons...years.**” He created a *spiritual liturgical calendar* that He intricately connected to the *natural seasons*. That way there would be a *spiritual dimension* to the *natural rhythm of life*. Therefore, these are the “...**Lord's appointed feasts**” (Lev. 23:37). They did not originate with man – but with God.

5. Here then are the “heavenly sign posts” that God wrote within His Creation as *daily...weekly...monthly...seasonal...generational reminders*:
- 3 daily times of prayer
 - 1 weekly Shabbat
 - Passover
 - Unleavened Bread
 - Firstfruits
 - Pentecost
 - Trumpets
 - Atonement
 - Tabernacles
6. We can see from this list - and from the above verses of Scripture - that there are *7 Festivals* that God specifically ordained for His people to commemorate and celebrate (Seven is the number of perfection and completion). In reality, there are *3 Feasts* that are interrelated – and they were each “*Pilgrim Festivals*” because “...**all males shall appear before the Lord...in the place that He will choose**” – which was Jerusalem. So on these 3 special Festivals, every adult male Jew had to go to Jerusalem to sacrifice – often taking his family along:
- A. *Feast of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits*
 B. *Feast of Pentecost* (single Feast)
 C. *Feast of Tabernacles, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement*
7. These Festivals and Feasts were God’s annual “visual aids” to remind His people of His uniqueness as the true and living God - and of their uniqueness as His chosen people.
8. Each Festival was tied to *agriculture* – but each one also had a *spiritual* and *prophetic* significance.
9. Each of these 7 Feasts were *foreshadows of their Messiah* – and all point unmistakably to Jesus Christ. Therefore, each Feast uniquely portrays a different aspect of the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus. As the Apostle Paul wrote about various “...**religious festivals...New Moon Celebrations, or Sabbath day**”: “**These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality is found in Christ**” (Col. 2:16-17).

FEASTS OF ISRAEL

E



10. As we will see, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the first 3 Feasts of *Passover*, *Unleavened Bread*, and *First Fruits* in His First Coming. He poured out His Holy Spirit and birthed the Church on *Pentecost*. And we believe He will fulfill the remaining 3 Feasts of *Tabernacles*, *Trumpets*, and *Atonement* at His Second Coming.
11. Let's look at each of these significant Festivals and Feasts as a part of our spiritual birthright as Gentile believers who have been "...**grafted in**" to the olive tree of Judaism (Rom. 11:23).



**PASSOVER
(First Candle)**

“Tell the whole community of Israel...to take a lamb for his family, one for each household...The animals you choose must be year old males without defect...Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. That same night they are to eat the meat *roasted over the fire*, along with *bitter herbs*, and *bread made without yeast*...This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the *Lord’s Passover*.

On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn - both men and animals – and *I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt*. I am the Lord. The *blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are*; and when I see the blood, I will *pass over you*. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

**This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall *celebrate it as a festival to the Lord* – a lasting ordinance”
(Ex. 12:1-14).**

1. **Theme: *Salvation*:** “Deliverance from Bondage”.
2. Passover marked the beginning of the religious Festival season – or the beginning of the *liturgical year* for the Jews. This Feast celebrates the freedom of the Jews from Egyptian bondage.

Exod. 3:12: We can't worship God while we are in Egypt – in our ***natural*** state.

Exod. 19:1-2: The wilderness represents ***carnal*** man – “lost in our desires” – and taking us further and further away from God's presence and promises!

Exod. 19:5-6: The Promised Land represents ***spiritual*** man – our security is an unshakeable Kingdom headed by an unchanging Christ!

3. Passover itself lasted only *half a day* – from midday until evening. However, there were other important events leading up to the actual Passover sacrifice and meal. This Festival celebrates the *salvation*, or *deliverance*, of the Jewish people from captivity in Egypt - which was made possible through the sacrificial “*blood of a lamb*”.

Note: Jewish history tells us that there were at least *500 priests* on duty at this time because of the large number of sacrifices that had to be carried out – in a rather brief period of time (estimates range from 20,000 – 30,000, to 50,000).

4. This Festival is also called *Pesach*.
5. Passover is annually celebrated through the *Seder meal* (means: *order*).
6. During the Passover meal *4 cups* of wine are blessed and drunk to commemorate the 4 “*I wills*” from Exodus 6:6-7:
 - A. “***I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians...***”
 - B. “***I will free you out of their bondage...***”
 - C. “***I will redeem you with an outstretched arm...***”
 - D. “***I will take you to Me for a people, and I will be to you...***”

The four cups are the cup of ***Salvation***, the cup of ***Sanctification***, the cup of ***Redemption*** (the marital or communion cup), and the cup of ***Glorification/Consummation***.

7. After the Temple was built in Jerusalem, the Jewish people came there to celebrate Passover. They sacrificed their lambs at the Temple rather than in their homes. After the destruction of the Temple by the Romans in 70 AD, the Jews again celebrated the Passover in their homes.
8. Because of what it commemorates, the Passover was a time of great joy, thanksgiving and worship to God. The Levites specifically sang Psalms 113 – 118 during Passover.
9. Isaiah 53 prophetically portrayed this Messianic Lamb who would be slain for the sins of the people:

“He was despised and rejected by men, a *man of sorrows*, and familiar with *suffering*... Surely he *took up our infirmities* and *carried our sorrows*, yet we considered him *stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted*. But he was *pierced for our transgressions*, he was *crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him*, and *by his wounds we are healed*...the Lord has laid on him the *iniquity of us all*. He was *oppressed and afflicted*, yet he did not open his mouth; he was like a *lamb to the slaughter*, and as a *sheep* before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. By *oppression and judgment* he was taken away...he was cut off from the land of the living; for the *transgression of my people he was stricken*...Yet it was the *Lord’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer*...by his knowledge my righteous servant will *justify many and he will bear their iniquities*...because *he poured out his life unto death*, and was numbered with the transgressors. For *he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressor*” (Isa. 53:4-12).

10. John the Baptist understood this and introduced Jesus with the words: **“Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world”** (Jn. 1:29). Sadly, then and now, many Jews have a veil regarding the Messiah: **“But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away”** (II Cor. 3:14-16).
11. As the **“Lamb of God,”** Jesus was crucified at the *exact same time* that the lambs were being sacrificed in the Temple – the *third hour*, or 9:00 a.m.
12. The Feast of Passover reminds us of the unimaginable price that God paid to redeem us through the blood of Christ! As Peter wrote:

“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were *redeemed* from the empty way of life handed down to

you from your forefathers, but with the *precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect*” (I Pet. 1:18-19).

When choosing a lamb to offer for sacrifice, the Hebrew had to pick a lamb without blemish, with no visible imperfection. The lamb was examined from the 10th day of Nisan until the 14th day – five full days. Likewise, Jesus was interrogated for five days – until Pilate declared, “I find no fault in this man.”



**FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD
(Second Candle)**

“Commemorate this day, the *day you came out of Egypt*, out of the land of slavery, because the Lord brought you out of it with a mighty hand. Eat nothing containing *yeast/leaven*...For seven days eat bread made *without leaven*, and on the seventh day hold a festival to the Lord. Eat *unleavened bread* during those seven days; nothing with *yeast* in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any *yeast* be seen anywhere within your borders”

(Ex. 13:1-7; Num. 28:16-25; Deut. 16:1-8).

1. **Theme: *Separation & Sanctification*:** Through this Feast we are called to *die to this world and put off the old nature*.
2. This Feast *immediately followed Passover*. Whereas Passover only lasted a half day, the Feast of Unleavened Bread (*matzo*) was celebrated for 7 days – from the 15th – 21st day of Nisan. Technically, the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* did not totally finish until *Pentecost* – seven weeks later.
3. This Feast is a reminder that the children of Israel had to leave Egypt in such haste that they did not have time to put *leaven* in their bread and allow it to rise. So *leaven* is a symbol and reminder to them of their life in Egypt – when they were slaves.
4. Getting rid of all *leaven* before this Feast begins reminds them to put away all of the *leaven of this world* in their lives – and be *separate...sanctified...holy*;
5. It is interesting to note that the yearly cleaning of all of the *leaven* from their homes is the probable origin of “Spring cleaning” to this day.

Leaven penetrates...permeates...*putrifies*...

corrupts and rots what it touches

Salt penetrates...permeates...

***preserves and purifies* what it touches**

**We are called to be “*salt*” –
and when our presence is removed from society...
when the Lord calls us to Himself...
there will be nothing to retard the decline of society.**

6. Because of the *penetrating, permeating, and putrifying* (fermenting) nature of leaven – it is generally used as a metaphor or typology of sin in the Bible.
7. But because *leavened bread* is more tasteful than *unleavened bread* to our palate, it reminds us that as redeemed sinners we all have a *natural taste* for the *desires of the flesh* and the *things of the world* – more than for the things of God.
8. However, since Jesus was *sinless*, there was *no leaven in His life*. That's why He alone qualified to be our *sin-bearer*. As Paul said of Him:

“God made Him who *had no sin* to be sin for us; so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. 5:21).

9. John also wrote of Him:

“But you know that *He appeared so that He might take away our sins. And in Him is no sin*” (I Jn. 3:5).

10. Jesus also pointed to His fulfillment as the true **“living bread”** at the *Feast of Tabernacles* the very same week they were celebrating it in Jerusalem. Shortly after feeding the 5,000, the people came seeking Jesus to perform more miraculous signs – just as Moses had done in delivering the people from bondage and meeting their needs in the wilderness. He said to them:

- **“I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father Who gives you the true bread from heaven (unleavened bread!). For the bread of God is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.**

‘Sir,’ they said, ‘from now on give us this bread.’

Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the *bread of life*. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty...For My Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in Him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.’

At this the Jews began to grumble about Him because He said, ‘*I am the bread that came down from heaven...*’

‘Stop grumbling among yourselves,’ Jesus answered...‘I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. *I am the bread of life*. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. *I am the living bread that came down from heaven*. If anyone

eats of this bread he will live forever. *This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...*'

Jesus said to them, 'I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. *For My flesh is real food and My blood is real drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him. Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever*' (Jn. 6:26-58).

- "Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, 'Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.' He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

'Leave her alone,' Jesus replied. 'It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have Me.'

Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of Him but also to see Lazarus, whom He had raised from the dead. So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him.

The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet Him, shouting, 'Hosanna!' 'Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord!' 'Blessed is the King of Israel!'

Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written,

'Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt.'

At first His disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about Him and that they had done these things to Him.

Now the crowd that was with Him when He called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. Many people, because they had heard that He had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet Him. So the Pharisees said to one another, 'See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after Him!'

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. 'Sir,' they said, 'we would like to see Jesus.' Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

Jesus replied, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am, My servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves Me.

Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name!'

Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.' The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to Him.

Jesus said, 'This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' He said this to show the kind of death He was going to die.

The crowd spoke up, 'We have heard from the Law that the Christ will remain forever, so how can You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up'? Who is this 'Son of Man'?''

Then Jesus told them, 'You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where

he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light” (John 12:1-36).

- “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were *baptized into His death*? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our old self was crucified with Him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin - because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God.

In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:1-14).

11. Just as the Jewish people were to “put away” all of the leaven in their homes; we too are to “put away” the old man with all of the perverted *desires of the flesh*. After reminding the saints at Ephesus about their former days of “...sensuality...impurity...lust,” Paul exhorts them:

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off your old self*, which is being *corrupted by its deceitful desires*; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to *put on the new self*, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:19-24).

12. He likewise wrote to the carnal church at Corinth:

“Don’t you know that a *little yeast works through the whole batch of dough*? *Get rid of the old yeast* that you may be a *new batch without yeast* – as you really are. *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*. Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the *old yeast*, the

yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth” (I Cor. 5:6-8).

Remember that Paul was writing to *Gentile* believers! It is also interesting to note that – *just like today* – the church in Corinth was *proud* of its tolerance!

13. There are many other timely and helpful Biblical exhortations that remind us to “put away” all of the *corrupting leavens* of the *world* and the *flesh*:

- **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to *offer your bodies as living sacrifices*, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will”** (Rom. 12:1-2).
- **“*Do not love the world* or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world – the *lust of the flesh*, the *lust of the eyes*, and the *pride of life* – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever”** (I Jn. 2:15-17).
- **“Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to *abstain from sinful desires*, which war against your soul”** (I Pet. 2:11).
- **“‘Therefore, come out from them and *be separate*,’ says the Lord. ‘Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you will be My sons and daughters,’ says the Lord Almighty”** (II Cor. 6:17-18).

14. So we begin our Christian life through *salvation* – but we continue it through *sanctification*. The first is celebrated by *Passover*, and the second is continued through the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*.

Jesus warned against the leaven of:

- 1. Hypocrisy of the Pharisees**
- 2. Rationalizing and Intellectualism of the Sadducees (Matt. 16:6-12)**
- 3. Political Correctness of the Herodians – the world sets the agenda for the church**

Paul spoke out against the leaven of:

- 4. Immorality of the Corinthians**
- 5. Legalism of the Galatians**

**As the kernel of wheat must
be broken to be fruitful...
As the vial of perfume must
be broken to be fragrant...**

**Blessings flow from
brokenness.
We must be broken to self –
and surrender self,
our desires and our will,
to God.**

**When a sinner sins,
he breaks the law of God;
When a saint sins,
he breaks the heart of God.**



**FIRST FRUITS
(Third Candle)**

“When you enter the land I am going to give you and you *reap its harvest*, bring to the priest a sheaf of the *first grain* you harvest. He is to *wave the sheaf before the Lord* so it will be accepted on your behalf; the priest is to wave it on the *day after the Sabbath*. On the day you wave the sheaf, you must sacrifice as a burnt offering to the Lord a lamb a year old without defect, together with its grain offering of two tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil - an offering made to the Lord by fire, a pleasing aroma - and its drink offering of a quarter of a hin of wine. You must not eat any bread, or roasted or new grain, until the very day you bring this offering to your God. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come wherever you live”

(Lev. 23:9-14).

1. **Theme: *Consecration*.**
2. This Festival was to celebrate the *first fruits* of their barley harvest. The Jews were to bring a sheaf of the *first fruits* of their harvest and present it to the priests in the Temple – who would “**wave it**” back and forth before the Lord in their behalf.

Remember when you read in Scripture of “*a pleasing aroma*” offered to the Lord in the details of sacrifices....

**We are called to obedience and faith –
*that is a pleasing aroma to God!***

3. They were not to “**eat any bread or new grain**” until they had brought their offerings of *first fruits* to God;

“Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine” (Prov. 3:9-10).

4. The symbolism of this was very important. The *first fruits* were representative of the *whole harvest*. So this Festival was a reminder that: **“The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it”** (Ps. 24:1). It was not *their land* but rather *His land* that He gave them. He was the *Owner*, they were the *stewards*;

**We give to God and acknowledge Him *first!* (Prov. 3:5-6, 7, 9-10)
Tithing is not legalistic, but *liberating!***

5. It is also important to note that the *Feast of First Fruits* was celebrated on the *day after the Sabbath* – which means a regular weekly Sabbath, or Saturday. That means that this Feast took place on *Sunday*. This is again a wonderful detail of timing – because that is the exact day that Jesus was resurrected!
6. Therefore, Jesus is again perfectly pictured and foreshadowed in this *Feast of First Fruits!* He was the *first fruit* of all who will be resurrected from the dead. In one of the very earliest portions of the New Testament written, Paul writes to give a defense of the certainty of the physical resurrection of the Believer – based upon Christ’s resurrection from the dead:

“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as *in Adam* all died, so *in Christ* all will be made alive. But each in his own turn; *Christ the firstfruits*, then, when He comes, those who belong to Him” (I Cor. 15:20-23).

7. The physical resurrection of Christ from the grave was the *first fruits* of a great harvest of souls that would follow until the end of the age. When a Jewish person brought their *first fruits*, they did not just bring a single stalk of barley with the new grain. They brought a *sheaf* of barley stalks bound together to be presented to the priest and waved before the Lord. We read that the very same thing literally took place around the death of the Lord Jesus. At the very moment **“...He gave up His spirit,”** the Bible records:

“At that moment the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The *tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died*

were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people" (Matt. 27:50-53).

8. Perhaps this is part of what Paul meant when he wrote about the resurrection and ascension of Christ:

"When He ascended on high, He led captives in His train and gave gifts to men. (What does 'He ascended' mean except that He also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one Who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe)" (Eph. 4:8-10; c.f. I Pet. 3:19).

9. The *Festival of First Fruits* assures the Believer that we have been *spiritually resurrected* with Christ - and will one day experience *physical bodily resurrection* just as certainly as Christ was raised!

10. It is because of Christ's resurrection that we have been *spiritually raised to new life* and have a *new nature* like His nature:

- **"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a *new creation*; the *old has gone*, the *new has come!*"** (II Cor. 5:17).
- **"Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a *new creation*. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the *Israel of God*"** (Gal. 6:15-16).
- **"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to *put off your old self*, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be *made new* in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the *new self*, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness"** (Eph. 4:22-24).
- **"Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have *put on the new self*, which is being renewed in knowledge in the *image of its Creator*"** (Col. 3:9).

Read more about our having been made in the "image of our Creator" in Genesis 1:26-27.

- **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me"** (Gal. 2:20).

- “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We *died to sin*; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may *live a new life*. If we have been united with Him like this in His death, we will certainly also be united with Him in His resurrection. For we know that our *old self was crucified with Him* so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin – because anyone who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we *died with Christ*, we believe that we will also *live with Him*. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him. The death He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life He lives, He lives to God. In the same way, count yourselves *dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 6:1-11).

Although different denominations and individual pastors have their own preference, the baptism by immersion serves to identify us with Christ’s burial and raising up from the dead.

- “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us *birth* through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of *firstfruits* of all He created” (Ja. 1:17-18).
11. In summary, we can see that Jesus perfectly fulfilled these first 3 Feasts that foreshadowed Him. They are all sovereignly ordained and precisely timed events:

- A. In fulfillment of the *Feast of Passover*, Jesus was crucified on Thursday, the fourteenth day of Nisan.
- B. In fulfillment of the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, Jesus was buried on Friday, the fifteenth, and His body rested in the tomb on the Sabbath – which means *rest*.
- C. Then in fulfillment of the *Feast of First Fruits*, Jesus was resurrected on Sunday, the seventeenth of Nisan.



12. These Jewish Feasts and Festivals of the Lord played an *agricultural, historic,* and *prophetic* spiritual role in the life of Israel in anticipation of the Messiah!



PENTECOST (Fourth Candle)

“From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering (Feast of First Fruits), count off *seven full weeks*. Count off *fifty days* up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of *new grain* (wheat harvest) to the Lord. From wherever you live, bring *two loaves* made of two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour, *baked with yeast*, as a *wave offering of first fruits*. Present with this bread seven male lambs, each a year old and without defect...They will be a burnt offering to the Lord, together with their grain offerings and drink offerings – an offering made by fire, an aroma pleasing to the Lord. Then sacrifice one male goat for a *sin offering* and two lambs before the Lord as a *wave offering*, together with the *bread of the firstfruits*. They are a sacred offering to the Lord for the priests. On the same day you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; wherever you live.

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. *Leave them for the poor and the alien*. I am the Lord your God”

(Lev. 23:15-22; c.f. Num. 28:26-31; Deut. 16:9-12).

1. **Theme: *God's Word and God's Power***
2. This spiritual empowerment was prophesied by John the Baptist when he said of Jesus:

"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matt. 3:11).
3. This Festival is also called the *Shavout*, *Feast of Weeks* (7 weeks after Passover), and *Feast of Harvest*. Pentecost was a *Spring Harvest Festival* – celebrating and giving thanks for the *wheat harvest*.
 - A. Just as the *Feast of Passover* marked the beginning of the *barley harvest*; the *Feast of Pentecost* celebrates the conclusions of the *wheat harvest* – and it only lasted *one day*.
 - B. Pentecost took place *50 days* (*Pentecost* comes from the Greek word, *pentekoste*, meaning *fifty*) after the Feast of First Fruits – or on the sixth day of the month of *Sivan*, which would correspond to our months of May/June.
 - C. Just as it was exactly *50 days* between the Feast of First Fruits and Pentecost, so it was exactly *50 days between Jesus' resurrection from the dead and the sending of His Holy Spirit upon His disciples for empowerment*.
4. After the dispersion of the Jews among the nations, the Feast of Pentecost gradually lost some of its agricultural significance as a *harvest festival*.
 - A. According to Jewish *Oral Tradition*, or *Mishna*, the Jews came to believe that Pentecost was the exact same time that God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai.
 - B. Therefore, by the time of Jesus, Judaism had come to associate and celebrate Pentecost as the time God gave them His Law through Moses at Mount Sinai. Literally: *zeman matan toratenu*, or "the time in which God gave us the Torah."
 - C. In their understanding, *Pentecost was the reason for Passover!* God brought them out of slavery in Egypt to make them His *covenant people* as symbolized through the Law. This was the "*Sinainatic Covenant*."
 - D. Without God's Law, they would have just been another nomadic people wandering in the wilderness! It was through the events of Sinai that

they became His unique people – a “*holy nation*.” It was there at Sinai that God said to them:

“You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and *brought you to Myself*. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all nations you will be *My treasured possession*. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be for Me a *kingdom of priests and a holy nation*” (Ex. 19:4-5).

- E. Because of the covenant at Sinai, Moses said that the Israelites would have the attention of the surrounding nations:

“I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for *this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations*, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?” (Deut. 4:5-8).

- F. It was the events of Mount Sinai that forever defined the Jewish people as the “people of God.” That’s when they became the “*people of the Book*”...*people of Torah*.”

Note: When a Jewish boy or girl have their *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah*, they “come of age” as a “*son/daughter of Torah*.” (*Bar* means “*adopted son*” and *Mitzvah* means “*law*” – so at that time they become an “*adopted son of the Law*.”);

- G. At Mount Sinai, God gave His Law to the Jewish people – who in turn have given it to the world.

- H. The significance of this event cannot be overly emphasized for the Jewish people – and for the world! It is crucial to note that the Sinai event is given more space in the *Pentateuch* than any other event – almost *59 chapters* (Ex. 19 – Num. 10)!

5. It is impossible to fully understand the significance of Pentecost and God’s revelation of His Word at Mount Sinai - without noting the prominence of *fire!* Throughout the account, *fire* is constantly associated with God’s revelation:

- It was at *Horeb*, the “mountain of God” – that Moses had his “burning bush” encounter with God (Ex. 3:1-5). Note: *Horeb* is the name for a group of mountains – like the *Rocky Mountains*, *Blue Ridge Mountains*, *Himalaya Mountains*, etc., and Mt. Sinai was a specific mountain in that mountain range.
- It was then that Moses was told of the significance of Mount Sinai: **“When you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain”** (Ex. 3:12). So again, *Pentecost was the purpose for Passover!* God’s people could not **“worship Him”** while they were slaves in Egypt – and neither can we! Therefore we read:

“In the *third month* after the Israelites left Egypt – on the very day – they came to the *Desert of Sinai*...and Israel camped there in the desert *in front of the mountain*” (Ex. 19:1-2).

Remember that what should have taken three months took *forty years* due to disobedience!

- **“The Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear Me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you...Only when the *ram’s horn sounds a long blast* may they go up to the mountain...On the morning of the *third day* there was *thunder and lightning*, with a thick cloud over the mountain and a *loud trumpet blast*. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to *meet with God*, and *they* stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because *the Lord descended on it in fire*. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, *the whole mountain trembled violently*, and the *sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder*. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him”** (Ex. 19:9-19).
- (The writer of Hebrews reminds his Jewish Christian readers of this defining event – and relates it to their situation) **“See to it that you do not refuse *Him who speaks*. If they (Children of Israel) did not escape when they refused Him who warned them on earth, *how much less will we, if we turn away from Him who warns us from heaven?* At that time His voice *shook the earth*, but now He has promised, ‘*Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.*’ The words ‘once more’ indicate the removing of what can be shaken – that is, created things (everything man has built!) –**

so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire’” (Heb. 12:25-29).

Note: Daniel prophesied about God’s permanent, unshakable Kingdom that would ultimately destroy all of the other kingdoms of man:

“...the God of heaven will set up a *kingdom that will never be destroyed*, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself *endure forever*” (Dan. 2:44).

- “Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when He said to me, ‘Assemble the people before Me to *hear My words* so that they may learn to *revere Me* as long as they live in the land and may *teach them to their children.*’ You came near and stood at the foot of the mountain while it *blazed with fire to the very heavens*, with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke to you *out of the fire*. You heard the sound of words but saw *no form*; there was only a voice. He declared to you His covenant, the Ten Commandments...You saw *no form* of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb *out of the fire* (Then follows a prohibition against every form of idolatry and astrology)...**But as for you, the Lord took you and brought you out of the *iron-smelting furnace*, out of Egypt, to be the *people of His inheritance*, as you now are...Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that He made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a *consuming fire, a jealous God*” (Deut. 5:10-24).**
- “Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. *Learn them* and be sure to *follow them*. The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb...The Lord spoke to you *face to face out of the fire*. (At that time I stood between the Lord and you to declare to you the *word of the Lord*, because you were *afraid of the fire* and did not go up the mountain)” (Deut. 5:1-5).
- (After giving the 10 Commandments we read this account) “**These are the commandments the Lord proclaimed in a *loud voice* to your whole assembly there on the mountain from *out of the fire*, the cloud and the deep darkness...Then He wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me. When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the *mountain was ablaze with fire*, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. And you said, ‘The Lord our God has shown us His glory and His majesty, and**

we have *heard His voice from the fire*. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. But now, why should we die? This *great fire* will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any longer. For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God *speaking out of fire*, as we have, and survived? Go near and listen to all that the Lord our God says. Then tell us whatever the Lord our God tells you. We will *listen and obey*.’

The Lord heard you when you spoke to me and the Lord said to me, ‘I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to *fear Me* and *keep all My commands* always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

“...So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; *do not turn aside to the right or to the left*. Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that *you may live and prosper and prolong your days* in the land that you will possess” (Deut. 5:22-33).

- Through the prophet Jeremiah, God also related His Word to *fire*: “‘**Is not My word like fire,**’ declares the Lord...?” (Jer. 23:29).
6. It was *after His resurrection* and *before His ascension* and outpouring of the Holy Spirit that Jesus appeared to His disciples and taught them *His Word*. Therefore, Doctor Luke gives us this account:
- (To the two on the Emmaus Road) “**He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory?’ And beginning with Moses (Torah) and all the Prophets (Nevi’im), He explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning Himself**” (Lk. 24:25-27).
 - (To the disciples in the Upper Room) “**He said to them, ‘This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about Me in the Law of Moses (Torah), the Prophets (Nevi’im) and the Psalms (Kethuvim). Then He opened their minds to they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what My Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high**” (Lk. 24:44-49).

- “In my former book, *Theophilus*, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day He was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen. After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of *forty days* and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the *gift My Father promised*, which you have heard Me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a *few days* you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 1:1-5).

7. Doctor Luke then goes on to give us the account of the fulfillment of this promise on the Day of Pentecost – which took place on another mountain, *Mount Zion*. And it too was accompanied by *heavenly fire*:

“When the *day of Pentecost* came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the *blowing of a violent wind* came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be *tongues of fire* that separated and came to rest on each of them. *All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.*

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: ‘Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs – we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!’ (Acts 2:1-12).

8. Just as the Nation of *Israel* was born at *Mount Sinai* during *Pentecost*, the church was born at *Mount Zion* on the *Day of Pentecost*. Therefore, in one sense Pentecost represents *two birthdays* – the *birthday of Judaism*, and the *birthday of the church*!
9. At this point, we must consider again the significance of the “*two loaves...baked with leaven*” that were waved before the Lord on the *Day of Pentecost*. What do they represent?

- A. First, they no doubt were representative of the *two groups* who would be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit – the *Jews* and *Gentiles*. As Paul later wrote:
- “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written; ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the *blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles* through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit” (Gal. 3:13-14).**
- B. Secondly, the fact that both loaves were *leavened* is a visual reminder that *all of humanity* is *leavened by sin* – Jew and Gentile alike. **“All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23).
- C. However, in spite of the *sinful leaven* that is in all of our lives -- we are still to **“...present ourselves to God as living sacrifices...”** (Rom. 12:1) – just as the priests were to present the two loaves to God at the Feast of Pentecost. Just like He did with the *hundred and twenty* in the Upper Room (Acts 1:13-15), God will still purify and empower us for His *spiritual harvest in the world*.
- D. Just as the *heat* from the *fire* of an oven stops the work of leaven in a loaf of bread – only the *fire of the Holy Spirit* can keep our lives from being totally *leavened* by sin, the flesh, and the world.
10. We must never forget the *agricultural* and *spiritual* significance of the Festival of Pentecost. It was a reminder to both the Jewish people and the Church of the *Word of God* and the *power of God*. Without the *power of God* we cannot take the *Word of God* into the world for a *great spiritual harvest of souls!* That’s why Jesus said just before His ascension – only a few days before the Feast of Pentecost:
- “But you will receive *power* when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”** (Acts 1:8).
11. In the Book of Acts after the Feast of Pentecost - we really see the *acts of the Holy Spirit* empowering the disciples to fulfill the Great Commission. Therefore, we read of these progressive Pentecostal Holy Spirit outpourings in the Book of Acts:
- A. *Jewish Pentecost* (Acts 2)
 - B. *Samaritan Pentecost* (Acts 8)
 - C. *Gentile Pentecost* (Acts 10)
 - D. *Greek Pentecost* (Acts 11)

12. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter reminded the multitude that...
- “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: ‘In the last days, God says, I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out My Spirit in those days...And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’ (Acts 2:16-21).**
13. At Mount Sinai, the “*Word of God*” and the “*power of God*” were primarily for Moses and Aaron – and through them they were transmitted to the people. But on the Day of Pentecost, the “*Word of God*” and the “*power of God*” became available to everyone present. The “**tongues of fire**” rested on “**each of them**” and “**All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit...**” And as a result of this *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, “**...each one...began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them,**” and “**...everyone heard them speaking in his own language.**”
14. Therefore, Peter concluded his Pentecost sermon with these powerful words of exhortation and assurance concerning the availability of salvation and the gift of the Holy Spirit to *everyone*:
- “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).**
15. As a result of Peter’s *powerful Pentecostal preaching*, thousands were converted! The first great spiritual *Pentecostal Harvest Festival* brought thousands into the Kingdom of God! We read:
- “Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day” (Acts 2:41).**
16. Here we have a problem concerning the so-called “*Upper Room*” that the disciples were meeting in on the Day of Pentecost - as well as the “*place of baptism*” for over 3,000 people who were converted!
- A. Although Christians have often associated “**...the house**” spoken of in Acts 2:2 with the small “**...upper room**” in Acts 1:13 as the site of the Pentecost experience – they are probably not the same place. The “**house**” which was filled by the “**...violent wind from heaven**” was most probably the *Temple*, or the “*House of the Lord*” – not a small “**Upper Room**” referred to in Acts 1:13.

B. One of the most often used description in the Bible for the *Temple* was the phrase: “...**the house of the Lord.**” Here are a few examples:

- (God speaking of David) “...**he will build a house for My Name...**” (II Sam. 7:13);
- “...**the Levites are to bring a tenth of the tithes up to the house of our God**” (Neh. 10:38);
- “**I will dwell in the house of the Lord...**” (Ps. 23:6; 27:4; 69:9; 84:10; 122:1; Isa. 56:7; Joel 3:18; etc);
- (Jesus said) “**My house will be called a house of prayer...**” (Mtt. 21:13; Jn. 2:16).

So the “**house**” they were meeting in on the Day of Pentecost was no doubt the Temple – not the “**Upper Room**” recorded in Acts 1. Also, the Temple would have been the logical place for them to be on the Day of Pentecost – since that was where they were required to go to perform their sacrifices. It was a huge building with many rooms... porches...porticos for the thousands of pilgrims to meet in...study in... pray in...worship in. Therefore, the *church was born in the Temple* – not in some “Upper Room.”

C. This fact would also solve the problem of where to *baptize* 3,000 new believers who were converted on the Day of Pentecost. Recent excavations around the Temple Mount have recently revealed some *48 ritual immersion baths, or mikves*. Some archaeologists have estimated that as many as *200 baptismal pools* may have existed to accommodate the enormous amounts of pilgrims who would come to Jerusalem and the Temple on the various Feast Days. So these *mikves* for ritual immersion and cleansing were the probable site of the mass baptism of the 3,000 converts on the Day of Pentecost.

Note: The Day of Pentecost was also the day when *proselytes* – foreign people who wanted to convert to the Jewish faith - were baptized. No doubt there were many of these “Gentile God-fearers” in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was born – making Christianity spread outside of Jerusalem and Judea much more rapidly.

17. Pentecost is a holy day for both the Jews and Christians. Both Judaism and Christianity look to the Feast of Pentecost for much of their spiritual identity. As a Jewish Believer, Paul continued to visit Jerusalem for Pentecost for years after the first Pentecost that ushered in the *Church Age*. We read this telling account in Acts:

“Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus to avoid spending time in the province of Asia, for he was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the *day of Pentecost*” (Acts 20:16).

This passage clearly proves that many early Jewish Christians like Paul, did not cut their ties with either the Temple or the Jewish Festivals – but continued to celebrate their Jewishness long after the church was born!

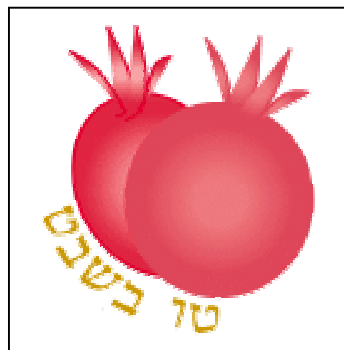
18. If indeed it was on Pentecost that God gave the Law to Moses on Mount Sinai as the Jews believe, then there is also a fulfillment of another covenantal promise. After Jesus was resurrected, ascended and seated at the right hand of God, we read:

“The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this...‘This is the covenant I will make with them after that time,’ says the Lord. ‘I will put *My laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds*” (Heb. 10:15-16; c.f. II Cor. 3:3).

19. Pentecost reminds us that God has written His laws on the *tablets of our hearts* rather than on *tablets of stone* through His indwelling Holy Spirit. As a result of the Holy Spirits *baptism...filling... empowering*, we can...

- “...**be filled with the Spirit...**” (Eph. 5:18);
- “...**live by the Spirit...**”(Gal. 5:16);
- “...**be led by the Spirit...**” (Gal. 5:18);
- “...**walk by the Spirit...**” (Gal. 5:25);
- “...**pray in the Spirit...**” (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20);
- “...**sing in the Spirit...**” (I Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Ja. 5:13);

20. Again, because Pentecost is also called the *Feast of Harvest*, we must never forget that God’s Holy Spirit empowerment is first and foremost for *spiritual harvest!* That means that every Christian is still under the mandate of the Great Commission! God still commissions His people to go out and “reap from the earth” a great end-time harvest of souls for His Kingdom and glory!



May you rejoice in the fruit of the vine and celebrate the benefits of nature with which we are blessed



**FEAST OF TRUMPETS
(Fifth Candle)**

“On the first day of the *seventh month* hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. It is a day for you to *sound the trumpets*. As an aroma pleasing to the Lord, prepare a *burnt offering* of one young bull, one ram and seven male lambs a year old, *all without defect*. With the bull prepare a grain offering...with oil. Include one male goat as a *sin offering* to make atonement for you. These are in addition to the monthly and daily burnt offerings with their grain offerings and drink offerings as specified. They are offerings made to the Lord by *fire* – a pleasing aroma”

(Num. 29:1-6)

1. **Theme: *Rest & Rejoicing***
2. This is the last trilogy of the 3 interrelated *Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement and Tabernacles*.
3. Time: The “...**first day of the *seventh month***” – which was the month of *Tishri* in the Hebrew calendar (September/October).
 - A. To the Hebrew, the number *seven* denoted *completion*. This Festival marked the *end of the harvest season* and the *completion of the calendar year*.

- B. In the Jewish *civil calendar*, Tishri is the *first month* of the Jewish New Year, or *Rosh Hashanah*.
 - C. The grain harvest was now completed and it was a time of *rest* and *rejoicing* for God's covenant people. It would be the third and final time they would be required to journey to Jerusalem until the next Passover.
5. The main purpose of the Feast of Trumpets was to announce the arrival of the *seventh month*, and prepare the people for the *Day of Atonement* – which was 10 days later.
- A. The day was announced by the “*blowing of trumpets*” – which the Jews did to announce each new month. But on the Feast of Trumpets, they blew the trumpets louder and longer. In fact, there were over *100 specific trumpet blasts* throughout the day! So at this Festival, the Jews blew the trumpets all day long!
 - B. The trumpets that they originally blew were the “*silver trumpets*” God had Moses to make (Numbers 10). They were primarily used for 3 purposes:
 - (1) First, to “**...call the community together and for having the camps set out.**”
 - (2) Secondly, they were used to call the Israelites to battle: “**When you go into battle in your land against an enemy who is oppressing you, sound the blast of the trumpets. Then you will be remembered by the Lord your God and rescued from your enemies.**”

Note: When used for warfare – like Joshua against Jericho (Josh. 6), these trumpets were often referred to as the “**horn of salvation**” (II Sam. 22:3; Ps. 18:1-3; Lk. 1:68-69). But they are constantly referred to in the Bible as the means of calling people to war, or alerting them to imminent danger (Ezek. 33:3; Amos 3:6, etc).

 - (3) Thirdly, they were used at their Feasts and Festivals: “**...at your times of rejoicing -- your appointed feasts and New Moon festivals – you are to sound the trumpets...**” (Num. 10:10).
 - C. Gradually the “silver trumpets” were replaced by the *ram's horn*, or the *shofar*. They used this particular horn in remembrance of the ram that God miraculously provided Abraham as a substitute sacrifice for his son, Isaac (Gen. 22:13).

6. But there were other reasons for the trumpets to be sounded. We find them being used in the Scripture for...

A. The *regathering of Israel*:

- “In that day the Lord will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, *will be gathered up one by one*. And in that day a *great trumpet will sound*. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem” (Isa. 27:12-13; c.f. Zech. 9:14).
- (Jesus said) “They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a *loud trumpet call*, and they will *gather the elect* from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other” (Matt. 24:30-31).

B. For the *raising of the dead believers in Christ*:

“Listen, I tell you a mystery. We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed – in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the *last trumpet*. For the *trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed*” (I Cor. 15:51-52).

C. The “blowing of the trumpets” also had great prophetic significance for the “*last days*”...the “*Day of the Lord*”...and the *coming of Messiah*:

**This will be a *Day of Joy* and also a
*Day of Judgment!***

- “...the day of the Lord is near; it will come like destruction from the Almighty...*Blow the trumpet in Zion*; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the *day of the Lord is coming*. It is close at hand – a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was of old nor ever will be in ages to come. Before them fire devours, behind them a flame blazes. Before them the land is like the garden of Eden, behind them, a desert waste – nothing escapes them (an army of locusts!)...The Lord thunders at the head of His army; His forces are beyond number, and mighty are those who obey His command. The day of the Lord is great; it is dreadful.

Who can endure it? ‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning. Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity...Blow the trumpet in Zion, declare a holy fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the assembly; bring together the elders, gather the children...Let the priests, who minister before the Lord, weep between the temple porch and the altar. Let them say, ‘Spare your people, O Lord...’ (Joel 2:1-13; 15-17).

- “The great *day of the Lord* is near – near and coming quickly. Listen! The cry on the day of the Lord will be bitter, the shouting of the warrior there. That day will be a *day of wrath*, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a *day of trumpet and battle cry*...because they have sinned against the Lord...Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to save them on the day of the *Lord’s wrath*. In the fire of His jealousy *the whole world will be consumed, for He will make a sudden end of all who live in the earth*” (Zeph. 1:14-18).
- Note: Another whole study is the various Judgments of Revelation recorded in Chapters 8 – 11 – each heralded by one of the *seven angels* with “**seven trumpets.**” (Rev. 11:15-19 The seventh and final angel heralds the Second Coming of Christ. This will begin His 1,000 year reign).

7. Between the *Festival of Blowing Trumpets* and the *Day of Atonement*, or *Yom Kippur*, there were 10 days. The Jews refer to these days as the “Awesome Days”...“Days of Repentance”...“Days of Awe.” They remind the Jews – and Christians - of the certainty of God’s coming judgment upon the world. This awful time is variously referred to as the...

- **Day of God’s Wrath**
- **Day of Judgment**
- **Day of Indignation**
- **Time of Jacob’s Trouble**
- **Beginning of Birth pains**
(Isa. 13:6-9; 26:16-17; Jer. 30:4-7; Mic. 5:2-3; Matt. 24:3-8; Rev. 12:1-5, etc);

8. One of the major features of a *trumpet blast* is its *startling nature!* The piercing sound rivets your attention...focuses your senses...causes you to listen. It is a “heads up!” – a “wake-up call!” You just can’t ignore a loud trumpet blast! You can almost hear the sounding trumpet in the voice of the

Apostle Paul – who had participated in many Feasts of Trumpets, when he wrote the saints at Ephesus:

- **“Wake up, O sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you”** (Eph. 5:14).

He likewise wrote to the Christians in Rome:

- **“The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light”** (Rom. 13:11-12).

With similar words he exhorted the believers in Thessalonica:

- **“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert...”** (I Thess. 5:5-6).

9. In most of our Western churches today we need an occasional trumpet blast to wake up the Christians! One of the greatest challenges in America today is the *slumbering ecclesiastical giant* known as the church! We could benefit from a regular *Feast of Trumpets* in most churches today! Unless we wake up now – we will be *slumbering* and *sleeping* when that “last trumpet sounds!”

10. Tragically, in many Western churches, the preachers are not sounding forth a clear, clarion call from the trumpet! All over America pulpits are not resounding with the Word of God. Instead, there are lesser messages going forth of political correctness...social concern...peace and prosperity...health and wealth! Rather than sounding forth the trumpet, too many pastors are playing lullabies on soothing violins! Rather than arousing people to battle – they are lulling them to sleep! As Paul said:

- **“If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?”** (I Cor. 14:8).

11. Finally, the sounding of the trumpet also has great significance for the Second Coming of the Lord for His Bride:

- **“According to the Lord’s own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left**

will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words” (I Thess. 4:15-18).

The Feast of Trumpets includes ten days of self-examination, and goes right into the Day of Atonement.





**DAY OF ATONEMENT
(Sixth Candle)**

“The *tenth day* of the *seventh month* is the *Day of Atonement*. Hold a sacred assembly and *deny yourselves*, and present an offering made to the Lord by fire. Do not work on that day, because it is the *Day of Atonement*, when atonement is made for you before the Lord your God. Anyone who does not *deny himself* on that day must be cut off from his people. I will destroy from among his people anyone who does any work on that day. You shall do no work at all. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live. It is a *Sabbath of rest* for you, and you must *deny yourselves*. From the evening of the ninth day of the month until the following evening you are to observe your Sabbath”

(Lev. 23:26-32; c.f. Lev. 16:2-34; Num. 29:7-11).

1. **Theme: *Repentance* and *Purification***
2. Time: 10 days after the Feast of Trumpets in the month of Tishri
3. This Feast is also known as *Yom Kippur* – and it is the *holiest day of Judaism*.
4. This is the one day in the year when the High Priest would go behind the veil of the Temple into the “Holy of Holies” with the blood of the sacrifice to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat:

“The Lord said to Moses: ‘Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the *Most Holy Place* (“Holy of Holies”) behind the curtain

in front of the *atonement cover* on the ark, or else he will die, because *I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover* (“Mercy Seat”). This is how Aaron is to enter the sanctuary area (properly attired in the High Priestly garments, and with the blood of a bull for a sin offering for himself and his family). From the Israelite community he is to take *two male goats for a sin offering* and a ram for a *burnt offering*...He is to cast lots for the two goats – one lot for the Lord and the other for the *scapegoat*. Aaron shall bring the goat whose lot falls to the Lord and sacrifice it for a *sin offering*. But the goat chosen by lot as the *scapegoat* shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making *atonement* by sending it into the desert as a *scapegoat*. (After sacrificing the bull as a sin offering to atone for himself and his household) He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the Lord and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them *behind the curtain*. He is to put the incense on the fire before the Lord, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the atonement cover above the Testimony, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the bull’s blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the atonement cover; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger *seven times* before the atonement cover...

He shall then slaughter the goat for the sin offering for the people and *take its blood behind the curtain* and do with it as he did with the bull’s blood. He shall sprinkle it on the atonement cover and in front of it. In this way he will *make atonement* for the Most Holy Place because of the uncleanness and rebellion of the Israelites, whatever their sins have been...

When Aaron has finished making atonement for the Most Holy Place, the Tent of Meeting and the altar, he shall bring forward the live goat. He is to lay both hands on the head of the live goat and *confess over it all the wickedness and rebellion of the Israelites – all their sins – and put them on the goat’s head*. He shall send the goat away into the desert in the care of a man appointed for the task. *The goat will carry on itself all their sins to a solitary place*; and the man shall release it in the desert...

There were two goats: a sacrificial goat and a scapegoat.

This is a lasting ordinance for you: On the *tenth day of the seventh month* you must *deny yourselves*...because on this day *atonement* will be made for you, to cleanse you. Then, *before the Lord, you will be clean from all your sins*...This is a lasting ordinance for you: *Atonement is to be made once a year for all the sins of the Israelites*” (Lev. 16:1-34).

Notice that the high priest was to lay his hands on the scapegoat as “identification.” The word “atone” means to cover, so sins were not taken away, they were simply covered, and this had to be done year after year after year.

5. These *days of repentance* leading to the high and holy *Day of Atonement* pointed toward a time of national spiritual restoration for the Nation of Israel:

“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a *spirit of grace and supplication*. They will *look on Me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn* for Him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for Him as one grieves for a firstborn son...On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, *to cleanse them from sin and impurity*” (Zech. 12:10-11; 13:1).

6. The writer of Hebrews tells us of the fulfillment by Christ - our sinless High Priest - of the perfect sacrifice He made for us on God's final Day of Atonement. Whereas the earthly high priests had to continue to perform this sacrifice *year after year* on the Day of Atonement, Jesus did it **“once for all.”**

“When Christ came as high priest...He went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves, but *He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption*. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the *blood of Christ*, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God.

For this reason, Christ is the mediator of a *new covenant*, that those who are called may receive the promised *eternal inheritance* – now that He has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant...the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness...*

For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered heaven itself, now *to appear for us in God's presence*. Nor did He enter heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that

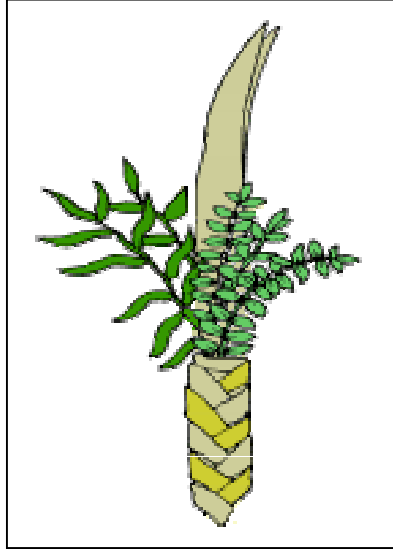
is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared *once for all* at the end of the ages to *do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself*. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to *face judgment*, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and He will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him...we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*.

Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties, again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for *all time* one sacrifice for sins, He *sat down* at the right hand of God. Since that time He waits for His enemies to be made His footstool, because *by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy*" (Heb. 9:11-28; 10:10-14).

Christ's salvation means deliverance – from both the power and the presence of sin! Notice that there was no seat in the "Holy of Holies" – no place to sit down – because the work was never done! But Christ "once for all" sacrificed for our sins, and then "sat down"!

7. Throughout the Book of Hebrews, the writer constantly uses phrases like the following to describe the atoning sacrifice of Christ:
 - "...eternal salvation" (5:11)
 - "...eternal redemption" (9:12)
 - "...eternal inheritance" (9:15)
 - "...perfect forever" (10:14)
 - "...eternal covenant" (13:20), etc.
8. As Christians we rejoice in the foreshadowing of our salvation through the yearly sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. But the word "atone" means "to cover." Therefore, the blood of bulls, calves, rams, and goats could only temporarily *cover* the sins of the people – while the blood of Christ "...**cleanses us of all sins**" (1 Jn. 1:9)!
9. When He takes His bride out of this world – we will be removed from both the power and presence of sin!
10. Jesus was "our scapegoat" Who took all of our sins on Himself.

11. Jesus removed it from us – not just for a year – but forever! One day He will remove it from the world!





**FEAST OF TABERNACLES
(Seventh Candle)**

“Celebrate the *Feast of Tabernacles* for seven days after you have gathered the produce of your threshing floor and your winepress. *Be joyful at your Feast* – you, your sons and daughters, your menservants and maidservants, and the Levites, the aliens, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns. For seven days celebrate the Feast to the Lord your God at the place the Lord will choose. For the Lord your God will bless you in all your harvest and in all the work of your hands, and your joy will be complete (Deut. 16:13-15; c.f. Num. 29:12-39);

So beginning with the *fifteenth day* of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days; the first day is a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest. On the first day you are to take *choice fruit* from the trees, and *palm fronds, leafy branches* and *poplars*, and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days. Celebrate this as a festival to the Lord for seven days each year. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come; celebrate it in the seventh month. *Live in booths* for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.

**So Moses announced to the Israelites the *appointed feasts of the Lord*”
(Lev. 23:39-44).**

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

1. **Theme: *Rejoicing!* A time of *celebration* and *anticipation***
2. This is the “Autumn Festival” that took place at the end of the agricultural year – and is by far the most *festive* and *joyous* of Jewish Festivals. It is also known as *Sukkot/Succoth* (Hebrew for *booth*). There are several other names used to describe it in the Bible:
 - A. The *Feast of Ingathering*, because it was held at the *end of the harvest season* (Ex. 23:16). Because this was the *end of harvest* it was an especial time of *joy* and *celebration*. In fact, Jewish writings say: “*He that never has seen the joy of (Tabernacles) has never in his life seen joy!*” (*Sukkah*). Likewise Jesus reminded the disciples that the final spiritual harvest of humanity would take place at the “**...end of the age**” (Matt. 13:40).
 - B. The *Feast of Booths* because the Hebrews slept in temporary makeshift shelters of branches (booths) to commemorate their wilderness wanderings – and remember how God had been their *Jehovah-Jireh*, or *Provider*, in the wilderness.
 - C. The *Feast of Dedication* because Solomon dedicated the First Temple at this time (I Kings 8:2).
 - D. Finally, it was often called the *Feast of Lights* because of the large golden candelabra that were lighted during this time – along with torches carried by the people. We read this account in Jewish writings:

“There were golden candlesticks there with four golden bowls on the top of them and four ladders to each candlestick, and four youths of the priestly stock and in their hands jars of oil...which they poured into all the bowls...they set the candlesticks alight, and *there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light*...Men of piety and good works used to *dance before them with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises*” (*Sukkah* 5:1-4).

3. During the Old Testament period, an important part of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacle had to do with *prayers and thanksgiving for rain* – an absolute necessity for good harvests! There are many Scriptures that deal with rain – both *physical rains* and *spiritual rains*:
 - **“I will send you *rain in its season*, and the ground will yield its crops and the trees of the field their fruit” (Lev. 26:4).**
 - **“...if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today – to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul – then I will send *rain on your land in its season*, both the *autumn* and *spring rains*, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass in the fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied” (Deut. 11:13-15; c.f. Jer. 5:24-25; Ps. 84:6).**
 - **“Ask the Lord for *rain* in the springtime; it is the Lord who makes the storm clouds. He gives showers of rain to men, and plants of the field to everyone” (Zech. 10:1).**
 - **“Be glad, O people of Zion, rejoice in the Lord your God, for He has given you the *autumn rains* and *spring rains* (“*former rains*” and “*latter rains*”) as before. The threshing floors will be filled with grain; the vats will overflow with new wine and oil” (Joel 2:23-24; c.f. Ja. 5:7).**
 - **“Let us acknowledge the Lord; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the *winter rains*, like the *spring rains* that water the earth” (Hosea 6:3).**
4. It was prayer for the “**latter rains**” or “**winter rains**” that the people especially prayed for during the Feast of Tabernacle. They needed good winter rains to prepare the ground for the spring planting and spring harvest – just as they would need the “**spring rains**” to help those new crops grow.
5. The priests and people would act out their prayers and thanksgiving for rain during this Festival by a special “water ceremony” each day:
 - A. The high priest and his assistants went from the Temple through the “*Water Gate*” to the pool of Siloam – where they gathered golden pitchers full of “*living water*.”
 - B. Another priest held a silver pitcher filled with wine.
 - C. The *shofar* was blown as they approached the Gates to the Temple with the “*living water*” from the pool of Siloam – *and all around the people waved palm branches while singing Psalms 113-118*. Note particularly the closing verses of Psalm 118:

“The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made; let us *rejoice and be glad in it*. O Lord, *save us*; O Lord, grant us success. *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*. From the house of the Lord we bless you. The Lord is God, and He has made His light shine upon us. With *boughs in hand*, join in the *festal procession* up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give You thanks; You are my God, and I will exalt You. Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; His love endures forever” (Psalm 118:22-29).

- D. Each day for 6 days the High Priest fetched this water from the pool of Siloam and sprinkled it around the altar. While this was taking place, the people would sing: **“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation”** (Isa. 12:3).
- E. It is also important to note that every Jew understood the picture of God as the **“...spring of living water”** (Jer. 17:13).
- F. On the seventh day, **“...the last and greatest day of the Feast”** – the Priest would go around the Altar 7 times, splashing it with the water from the pool of Siloam. Because of the significance of the symbolism of this day, it was often referred to as the *“Day of the Great Hosanna.”* At this *time the Jews would particularly pray for God’s salvation through the coming of His Messiah.*
- G. It was this Feast that Jesus attended – and interrupted, as recorded in John 7:

“...when the Jewish *Feast of Tabernacles* was near, Jesus’ brothers said to Him, ‘You ought to leave here and go to Judea, so that Your disciples may see the miracles You do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since You are doing these things, show Yourself to the world.’ For even His own brothers did not believe in Him.

Therefore Jesus told them, ‘The right time for Me has not yet come; for you any time is right...You go to the Feast. I am not yet going up to the Feast, because for Me the right time has not yet come.’

However, after His brothers had left for the Feast, He went also, not publicly, but in secret. Now at the Feast the Jews were watching for Him and asking, ‘Where is that man?’

Among the crowds there was wide-spread whispering about Him. Some said, 'He is a good man.' Others replied, 'No, He deceives the people.' But no one would say anything publicly about Him for fear of the Jews.

Not until *halfway through the Feast did Jesus go up to the Temple courts* and began to teach. The Jews were amazed and asked, 'How did this man get such learning without having studied?' (Controversy builds over who He is...what He is teaching...what miracles He has performed. Some even say that He was "demon possessed!")

"At that point some of the people of Jerusalem began to ask, 'Isn't this the man they are trying to kill? Here He is, speaking publicly, and they are not saying a word to Him. Have the authorities really concluded that He is the Christ? But we know where this man is from; when the Christ comes, no one will know where He is from.'

Then Jesus, still teaching in the temple courts, cried out, 'Yes, you know Me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on My own, but He Who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him because I am from Him and He sent Me.'

At this they tried to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His time had not yet come. Still, many in the crowd put their faith in Him. They said, 'When the Christ comes will He do more miraculous signs than this man?'

The Pharisees heard the crowd whispering such things about Him. Then the chief priests and the Pharisees sent temple guards to arrest Him.

Jesus said, 'I am with you for only a short time, and then I go to the One Who sent Me. You will look for Me, but you will not find Me; and where I am, you cannot come.'

The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we cannot find Him? Will He go where our people live scattered, among the Greeks, and teach the Greeks? What did He mean when He said, 'You will look for Me, but you will not find Me,' and 'Where I am, you cannot come'?' (John 7:25–36).

"On the *last and greatest day of the Feast*, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.' By this He meant the Spirit,

whom those who believed in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified.

On hearing His words, some of the people said, ‘Surely this man is the Prophet.’ Others said, ‘He is the Christ.’ Still others asked, ‘How can the Christ come from Galilee? Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?’

Thus the people were divided because of Jesus. Some wanted to seize Him, but no one laid a hand on Him” (This was followed by a discussion between the Temple guards and the Pharisees as to why they did not arrest Jesus).

- G. So Jesus interrupted this Festival and said that it pointed to Him – and He was the fulfillment of all that their “water ceremony” was commemorating! But He did not stop there...
6. There was also great significance given to *lights* during the Feast of Tabernacle:

- A. In the Temple there were *4 large Golden Candelabra*. They were located in the “Court of the Women” (*). They were *50 cubits high (86 feet)*. When they were lighted, their brilliance could be seen all over Jerusalem. According to the *Talmud (Oral Tradition)*, these *4 Golden Candelabra* were lighted on the first night of this Feast.

Note: The “Court of the Women” was the most public part of the Temple, and was the most common meeting place for worshipers. Women could not go beyond this point into other parts of the Temple. It was surrounded by porches and 13 treasures that looked like trumpets. So the Temple precincts were divided into:

- Court of Gentiles
- Court of Women
- Court of Priests
- Holy Place
- Holy of Holies

- B. The brilliant light was probably a reminder to the Israelites of God’s presence through the “pillar of fire” which led them through the wilderness (Ex. 13:21).
- C. Each evening was filled by dancing and celebration – as we noted earlier from Jewish writings.

- D. Bible scholars also believe that it was at some point in this celebration of the *“Festival of Lights”* that Jesus again interrupted the Feast:

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me (like the Jews followed the “pillar of fire” in the wilderness) will never walk in darkness, but will have the *light of life.*” (John 8:12).

- E. As we would expect, this bold proclamation brought immediate negative reaction from some of the Jewish leaders:

“The Pharisees challenged Him, ‘Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.’

Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on My own behalf, My testimony is valid, *for I know where I came from and where I am going.* But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, My decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, Who sent Me. In your own Law it is written that *the testimony of two men is valid* (*). I am *One* who testifies for Myself; My other witness is the *Father, Who sent Me.*’

Then they asked Him, ‘Where is your father?’

‘You do not know Me or My Father,’ Jesus replied. ‘If you knew Me, you would know My Father also.’

***He spoke these words while teaching in the Temple area near the place where the offerings were put.* Yet no one seized Him, because His time had not yet come.**

Once more Jesus said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will look for Me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.’ This made the Jews ask, ‘Will he kill Himself? Is that why He says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’

But He continued, ‘You are from below; *I am from above.* You are of this world; *I am not of this world.* I told you that you would die in your sins; *if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.*’

‘Who are you?’ they asked.

‘Just what I have been claiming all along,’ Jesus replied. ‘I have much to say in judgment of you. But He who sent Me is reliable, and what I have heard from Him I tell the world.’

They did not understand that He was telling them about His Father. So Jesus said, ‘When you have *lifted up the Son of Man*, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me. The one who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do what pleases Him.’

Even as He spoke, many put their faith in Him” (Jn. 8:12-30).

[Note: These are some of the greatest verses in the New Testament on the deity of Christ]

‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus said, ‘*before Abraham was born, I am!*’ At this, they picked up stones to stone Him, but Jesus hid Himself, slipping away from the Temple grounds” (Jn. 8:58-59).

(*) Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15; c.f. Matt. 18:16; 26:57-68; II Cor. 15:1-11).

- F. In these amazing verses of Scripture, Jesus made some of the boldest claims of deity found anywhere in the New Testament! Unmistakably, *Jesus claimed to be God’s Messiah* – the very one that this Feast of Tabernacle pointed to! He was the Incarnate God who had come to **“... *dwell (tabernacle) among us*”** (Jn. 1:14; c.f. ex. 40:34-35; Ps. 27:5).

Note: The word here meant *“to pitch His tent.”* So in the Person of Christ, the true and living God had once again come to *“tabernacle among His people!”* This was a bold claim to deity on the part of Christ – which the Jews clearly understood! That’s why they **“...picked up stones to stone Him...”**

7. The Feast of Tabernacle was a very significant prophetic Festival pointing to Jesus. It will also be celebrated when He returns to this earth to set up His *Millennial Kingdom* and regather and redeem Israel:

“Then the survivors from all the nations that have attacked Jerusalem will go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, and to *celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles*. If any of the peoples of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord Almighty, they will have no rain...The Lord will bring on them the plague He inflicts on the nations that do not go up to *celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles*. This will

be the punishment...of all the nations that do not go up to celebrate the *Feast of Tabernacles*” (Zech. 14:16-19).

8. An integral part of the *millennial worship* will be an annual celebration of the *Feast of Tabernacles* in Jerusalem – with Christ reigning as King! Just as this historic Feast was a time of *joy* and *rest from labors*; so this will be a time of *millennial rest* for God’s people and the earth!
9. The Apostle John in his revelation had a vision of that future day when the living God would once again “tabernacle among us.” He describes the final eternal state with these words:

“Then I saw a *new heaven* and a *new earth*, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away...I saw the Holy City and a new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a *loud voice* from the throne saying: ‘Now the dwelling of God (tabernacle) is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the *old order of things has passed away*” (Rev. 21:1-43).



CONCLUSIONS

1. There is great richness in the historical, agricultural, prophetic and spiritual significance of each of the *7 Feasts of Judaism* – or more correctly: “*The Feasts of the Lord*” (Lev. 23:37; NKJV). In reality, these are not really “*Jewish Festivals*” at all – but rather “*God’s Forever Feasts!*”
2. They are a part of our spiritual heritage as Christians – but tragically most Gentile Christians have little or no knowledge of the spiritual significance of these Festivals and Feasts. Instead, through *ecclesiastical Judaeophobia* and *anti-Semitism*, we have substituted the largely *pagan* at worst, or *secular* at best – festivals of the world for these God-ordained Jewish commemorations and celebrations.
3. We must remember that ours is not just the *Christian Faith* – ours is the *Judeo-Christian Faith*. Unfortunately, in reality it has become the *Greco-Roman Faith...Platonic Faith...Latin Faith...Western Faith*, etc. As a result, much *paganism* has infiltrated the Church of Jesus Christ!
4. Most of us have spent far too much time celebrating non-Christian festivals in the name Jesus Christ and the Church.
5. As a result our thinking has become *Hellenized...Latinized...Romanized...Secularized... and Paganized!*
6. For too many of us as Christians, we have unknowingly embraced a *dualistic* world-view – rather than a *holistic* world-view.
7. It is my desire that this all-too-brief study will begin to awaken within you a desire to cut away all of this *non-Biblical, secular* and *pagan enculturation* of your faith – and begin a journey back to your spiritual *Hebrew roots* – which are holy.
8. In the words of Paul, that you would be freshly grafted into the ancient *olive tree of Judaism* so you could begin to be enriched by “...**the nourishing sap from the olive root**” (Rom. 11:17).
9. Only as we re-discover our *spiritual roots* in Judaism – and separate ourselves from our *secular roots* in paganism, will we begin to be the people of God that we are called and redeemed to be.
10. It is my prayer that through a fresh engrafting to your Hebraic roots you will begin to enjoy the richness of your spiritual birthright as a *Judeo-Christian* – who has received all of the benefits and blessings of our *Jewish Messiah!*

J.L. Williams