

MESSENGER

FULFILL YOUR DESTINY

July 2019

Did Jesus Teach
Different
Commandments?

MESSENGER

Magazine

Issue No. 10 | July 2019

Christ said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." What commandments was He referring to? The ten commandments? The two great commandments about loving God with all your being and loving your neighbor as yourself? Something else? In this issue, we take a close look at Christ's important words, in the article, "Did Jesus Teach Different Commandments?"

Featured Articles

The Kingdom Suffers Violence | 2

Did Jesus Teach Different Commandments? | 3

Why Christians Should Keep the Sabbath | 7

Book Review: Scientists Refute Darwinism | 10

How Will the World Be Different When Christ Returns? (Part I) | 13

Messenger Magazine is published by the
Messenger Church of God.

This publication is distributed free of charge. In his instructions associated with preaching the gospel, Jesus said, "Freely you have received, freely give."

This publication is not to be sold. No part of this publication may be reproduced except in its entirety, other than brief quotes used for reference.

Entire contents copyrighted 2019 by Messenger Church of God (and/or authors of individual articles).

Unless otherwise noted, Scriptures are referenced from the **New King James Version™**

Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License.
(see <https://creativecommons.org/> for details).

This work is supported by the freely given tithes and offerings of the members of the Messenger Church of God, its co-workers and supporters. There is no obligation associated with receiving or subscribing to the magazine, although voluntary contributions are gratefully received.

You may subscribe to the magazine by sending your request to: **subscribemmm@cogmessenger.org**

or

Messenger Magazine
PO Box 542
Peculiar, MO 64078

Donations may be sent to the same address or may be made online. See our website for details:

www.cogmessenger.org

THE KINGDOM SUFFERS VIOLENCE

Rod Reynolds

What did Jesus mean when he said, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force"?

To many it's an enigmatic statement but it's not really that difficult to understand.

First we need to understand that the kingdom of God, or as it's referred to here, the kingdom of heaven (not "in heaven"), is the promise of a literal world ruling kingdom under the direct rule of the Messiah – Jesus Christ. This kingdom will be established when Jesus Christ returns from heaven to take charge on the earth.

The promised Kingdom of God is not just a pie-in-the-sky, Utopian dream, but an actual change in the government of the earth that will occur. It's called the Kingdom of God because it will be a Kingdom, a literal government, established by the divine intervention of God Almighty himself in the world's affairs and it will be ruled directly by God in the person of Jesus Christ (Daniel 7:14; Revelation 11:15).

Part of the reality of that promised Kingdom, however, is the fact that human beings have an opportunity to be participants in it, to have a part in the Kingdom of God, not as mere flesh and blood human beings, but as Sons of God changed into the likeness of Jesus Christ, helping him to administer truth, equity and justice on the earth (Daniel 7:27; Philippians 3:20-21; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2; Revelation 20:6).

But what will it take for that opportunity to become a personal reality for each of us? From a personal standpoint, what will it take for you to be in God's Kingdom?

Jesus addressed this question in a statement which I want to focus on in this article. He pointed out a vital key to being in God's Kingdom that we must implement in our lives if we expect to turn opportunity into reality. A partial answer to the question, "What will it take for you to be in the Kingdom?" is aggressive, determined, effort. That's the point of this article.

Notice again Matthew 11:12: "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." Jesus is here drawing an analogy between the taking of a Kingdom and entering into the Kingdom of God. Both require the same kind of single minded commitment, and aggressive action.

If we want to be in God's kingdom we've got to pursue it aggressively, passionately. It's got to become the number one goal in our lives, and it must be a goal that we seek to accomplish with focus, energy and resolve, just as you would if you were seeking to conquer an earthly kingdom of this world.

How successful would an army be if it were composed of soldiers who were apathetic, disinterested, distracted -- more interested in their own comfort and safety than accomplishing the goal? Would such an army be successful?

Compare its chances with an army of soldiers who are purposeful, committed, determined, energetic and aggressive.

The Greek word translated "violent" in Matthew 11:12, βίαιος (*biastés*), can also be translated energetic, or aggressive. A Conservative Version translation translates the same verse as follows: "And from the days of John the immerger until now the kingdom of the heavens is

treated aggressively, and aggressors seize it."

In a companion Scripture Jesus stated, "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it" (Luke 16:16). Again Jesus implies that to enter the Kingdom requires aggressive, energetic action. This is in the context of choosing which master you will serve, God, or mammon.

John came announcing what the Law and prophets had long anticipated, a new age, the age of the Kingdom of God. Many were stirred and excited by his message. Others treated it with derision and still others with indifference (Matthew 11:18; 21:25-26, 32; Luke 3:2-15).

The same was true when Jesus Christ came bearing the same message. If you believe the message, if you believe in the reality of the future Kingdom of God, that's good. But if you actually want to be a part of it, that belief must stir you to action. You can't passively sit on the sidelines and expect to be a participant in God's government.

Between us and the Kingdom are many obstacles, not least of which is our own flesh, our lusts, the attractions and distractions of the world we live in, the opposition of Satan and his minions. All these require aggressive, determined action on our part to overcome. And Jesus warns that the gift of eternal life, of being in his kingdom, sharing in his power and glory, requires us to overcome (Revelation 2:7,10-11, 26-27; 3:5-6, 21).

God grants each one of us the opportunity to fulfill the destiny for which God created us, the destiny of being in his Kingdom, his family, for all eternity. Indifference, passivity, indolence, lethargy are mortal enemies which can prevent any of us from realizing the fulfillment of the opportunity that lies before us. Jesus sternly warns against such a "Laodicean" spirit (Revelation 3:14-19).

Paul admonished Timothy (1 Timothy 6:11-12), "But you, O man of God, **flee these things**; [flee means run away from, it implies vigorous action to remove yourself from those things that would distract you from your goal of the Kingdom] and pursue [again implying aggressive action] righteousness, [pursue] godliness, [pursue] faith, [pursue] love, [pursue] patience, [pursue] meekness. **Fight the good fight of faith** [notice how genuine faith implies action; true godly faith places you in a position where you must fight; you must fight against all those things which would impede your progress toward becoming like Jesus Christ; and you must fight for those qualities of character which will help you become like Jesus Christ], lay hold on [or **seize**, as it could be translated] eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses."

You may have read in a commentary or heard a preacher make a statement like, "There's the religion of 'do' and the religion of 'done.'" The implication being that Jesus has done everything for us, there's nothing we need to do pertaining to salvation. That's a subtle lie.

God does for us that which we could not possibly do for ourselves. And with his help we can do what he requires of us (Philippians 4:13). But he does require us to do our part (Hebrews 10:36).

If you want eternal life, if you want to be in God's Kingdom, you must overcome the obstacles that stand in your way, whatever they may be. That means you've got to fight, you must pursue your goal with zeal, energy, dedication and determined, dogged effort. So do it.

Are the commandments Christ taught different from the ones revealed in the Old Testament, as some allege? The Sabbath, tithing and certain other laws, the reasoning goes, are not included in the commandments Christ was referring to when he said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). This idea is hardly a new one. It was taught by second century teachers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, and numerous others who followed down through the centuries. But what does God's word say? Did Jesus teach a different set of commandments?

When a rich man asked Jesus, "...what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus answered, "You know the commandments" (Mark 10:17-22; Luke 18:18-23). And he then named some commandments from the Old Testament. We too know the commandments from the Scriptures of the Old Testament (which for years were the only Scriptures the Church had) as well as the New. Every single one of the ten commandments, and many others from the Old Testament, are directly discussed and established within the context of the New Testament. Jesus never suggested to his followers that the Sabbath and other commandments did not apply to them. Much of the four gospels is a record of how Jesus observed the Sabbath, teaching us by example how to observe it (not according to Jewish tradition but according to the true meaning and spirit of the Sabbath). It was still a commandment, and a day on which to rest from one's own labors, after our Savior's death: "...they rested on the Sabbath according to the **commandment**" (Luke 23:56; see also Hebrews 4:9-10).

Whether or not to keep the Sabbath was not an issue in the Church of the original apostles. Evidence concerning the early Church reveals that the Jerusalem Church kept not only the Sabbath well into the second century (having moved to Pella prior to the destruction of Jerusalem), but many of its members observed Jewish traditional law as well. The controversies between some of the converted Pharisees and others within the Church over keeping "the law of Moses" was not over the ten commandments but what was plainly at issue was physical circumcision, and certain laws of the Old Covenant as kept by Jewish tradition.

In the conference recorded in Acts 15 it was believers among the Pharisees who raised the issue of circumcision and the "law of Moses" (verse 5). As the Pharisees used the term the "Law of Moses," it included their oral tradition because they asserted that not only the written law but the oral law, too, was given to Moses at Mt. Sinai. As it's stated in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, "...while the phrase 'Torah (given) to Moses at Sinai' may be understood in a restricted sense [i.e., as the Pentateuch], the

Rod Reynolds

Did Jesus Teach

DIFFERENT COMMANDMENTS?

Pharisaic-rabbinic tradition (originated by the Pharisees and continued by the Talmudic rabbis) viewed it as referring to a wide body of teaching. According to this position, which dominated Jewish thought until the modern era and still commands the allegiance of traditionalists, the encounter between God and Israel at Sinai deposited not only a written Torah (*Torah she-bikhtav*) but also an oral Torah (*Torah she-be'al pe*) that was transmitted from generation to generation" (Fifteenth Edition, vol. 10, "Judaism," 1978, p. 286). Author Alfred Edersheim adds, "According to the Jewish view, God had given Moses on Mount Sinai alike the oral and the written Law, that is, the Law with all its interpretations and applications. From Ex. xx. 1, it was inferred, that God had communicated to Moses the Bible, the Mishnah, and Talmud, and the Haggadah, even to that which scholars would in latest times propound" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 1.8).

When the Pharisees among the brethren wanted to require Gentile converts to "keep the law," it meant they wanted to impose upon them the entire weight of their extra-Biblical oral tradition, not just the commandments written in the Torah.

The "yoke" referred to by Peter (Acts 15:10) is not the ten commandments, not the Sabbath, but the Jewish traditional laws, referred to by Jesus as "heavy burdens" (Matthew 23:4; Luke 11:46). Jesus never upbraided the Pharisees nor anyone else for keeping the Sabbath or other of the commandments of God. He did assail the Pharisees because through their traditions — the "commandments of men" — they transgressed God's commandments and made them of no effect (Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). Joachim Jeremias discusses the Pharisees' traditional laws regarding tithing, purification and other matters which went far beyond Biblical requirements (*Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 246-267). Jesus rebuked the scribes for imposing these burdensome laws when he said "they...will not move [or remove] them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4). The burdens of these rules of men "could be laid on, or moved away, according to the varying judgment or severity of a Rabbinic College" (Edersheim, 1.8). In a similar way, the judgment made by the conference of Acts 15 had to do not so much with the spiritual and everlasting precepts of the law (Romans 7:14; Psalm 111:7-8), but with ceremonial aspects

of the law pertaining primarily to the temple service and Jewish traditional law (compare Acts 15:24-29; 21:18-19; 28:17; Galatians 1:14; 2:3-4, 10-14; 3:3; 6:12-13; Hebrews 9:9-10).

Jewish Pharisaic Rabbis had disagreed among themselves whether adult proselytes should be required to be circumcised to be fully accepted as citizens of the commonwealth of Israel. By the time of Christ they had adopted the affirmative view (Edersheim, 6.12). However, among the Western diaspora ("Hellenists," or "Hellenistic Jews"), Gentiles were accepted into the assembly as proselytes without circumcision. "...Hellenistic Jews,...renounced circumcision [as necessary for the acceptance of proselytes] but not the immersion that washed away the impurity of heathenism" (*New Shaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, vol. ix, "Proselytes," p. 280-281). While circumcision was not required of Gentile converts in the West, **"no concessions were made in monotheistic faith or in moral requirements**, but solely in liturgical [ritual] matters" (ibid., p. 281). The Sadducees, too, held that only future male children of converts must be circumcised, since no other day than the eighth after birth is specifically commanded in Scripture. Part of the *Gerim Halakhah* (binding rules of tradition relating to Gentile proselytes) concerned five specific conditions prerequisite to entering into full citizenship among the Jews. These five conditions, all from the Pentateuch, were circumcision (Exodus 12:48), and abstention from the following: idol sacrifices, blood, food (meat) not bled properly, and sexual immorality (Leviticus 17:7, 10, 12-13; 18:1-26).

The decision resulting from the conference of Acts 15 ruled out adult male circumcision, but confirmed the remaining requirements (representing separation from spiritual and physical defilement or uncleanness) for full acceptance into the community of disciples. Some sources add obedience to Jewish authority, and avoidance of blasphemy, murder and theft to the list of laws obligatory for Gentiles from Leviticus 17-20. In reality, all the laws mentioned in these chapters were to be followed by Israelites and the Gentiles living among them alike (Leviticus 17:8, 10, 12, 13, 15; 18:26; 20:2), and every single one of the ten commandments are given binding authority in the laws laid down in these chapters.

The primary concern being addressed in Acts 15 is how may a Gentile be purified from spiritual uncleanness and hence be fit for acceptance into the congregation. To the Pharisees, in particular, strict observance of laws pertaining to ritual purity was extremely important. Certainly for a Gentile, from the Pharisaic point of view, circumcision would a fundamental first step. Beyond that, however, Pharisaic communities had strict rules of admission. "Before admission there was a period of probation...during the course of which the postulant had to prove his ability to follow the ritual laws.

.....
"Once this period was over, the candidate committed himself to observe the *rules of the community*.... The new member of the community bound himself to observe the *Pharisaic laws on purity and tithes*" (Jeremias, p. 251, emphasis added). Note the emphasis is on ritual laws, and their own traditional laws, which the Pharisees equated with "the law of Moses." The point of Acts 15 is that – contrary to Pharisaic demands – spiritual purity is not accomplished through circumcision of the flesh and adherence to physical rituals of purification, but rather, as the Church had learned, "God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and **works righteousness** is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:34-35). And that God "made no distinction between us and them [Jew and Gentile], **purifying their hearts by faith**" (Acts 15:9; compare also Acts 21:24-25, note the issue there also is ritual purification).

The "necessary things" imposed on Gentile converts in Acts 15 is not intended as a complete list of their obligations to God. For example, baptism, which was required of Gentile converts (Matthew 28:19; Acts 10:48) is not mentioned in Acts 15:29. What is mentioned are common heathen practices – referred to as "abominable customs" (Leviticus 19:30) – by which the nations were defiled. "Purity of the heart" requires separation from these practices, as commanded in Scripture. When we place Acts 15 in its proper context with the rest of Scripture, we see that the approach of the New Testament Church in accepting Gentile converts was similar to that of the synagogues of the Western diaspora. Physical circumcision and ritual purifications revolving around the temple service were not required. But there was no compromise in faith and moral law, including Sabbath observance.

With regard to the Sabbath, much has been made by some of the seven so-called laws of Noah (from Leviticus 17-20, same as listed above but arranged somewhat differently) which were obligatory for so-called

"half-proselytes" (a concept originated by the Rabbis). But overlooked, perhaps deliberately, is the fact that, as *Easton's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* points out, "Besides these laws, however, they were required to abstain from work on the Sabbath, and to refrain from the use of leavened bread during the time of the Passover" ("Proselyte"). In fact the common term for "half-proselytes" – proselytes "of the gate" – comes from the language of the Sabbath law, which specifically requires Gentiles ("your stranger who is within your gates") to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10; Deuteronomy 5:14). There was never a question, either among the Jews nor within the New Testament Church, as to whether a Gentile convert should keep the Sabbath, since it was specifically commanded of them.

Many scholars recognize that the Jerusalem Church was a model for the Gentile churches in doctrine and practice (excepting extra-biblical Pharisaic tradition which continued to be practiced by some converted Pharisees, but was never imposed by the apostles on Gentile converts). This is alluded to by Paul where he says the Gentiles were "debtors" to the Jerusalem saints, having "been partakers of their spiritual things" (Romans 15:27); and imitators of their sufferings at the hands of persecutors (1 Thessalonians 2:14). In Hugh Smith's *History of the Christian Church* we find the following: "The first Christian church established at Jerusalem by apostolic authority became in doctrine and practice a model for the greater part of those founded in the first century." And he states further, "All Christians agreed in celebrating the seventh day of the week in conformity to the Jewish converts" (pp. 50-51, 69; cited in *A History of the True Religion*, A. N. Dugger and C. O. Dodd, pp. 44-45). A number of other church historians could be cited drawing the same conclusions. Jesse Lyman Hurlbut admits, "As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept; but as it became increasingly Gentile the first day gradually took the place of the seventh day" (*Story of the Christian Church*, p. 45).

In addition to Scripture, clear evidence that the apostles, specifically Paul, never taught the Gentiles nor other Christians that they were free to reject God's command to observe the Sabbath and keep as "holy time" any time they chose is provided by Clement, a companion of Paul (Philippians 4:3). Clement wrote (as is generally believed based on available evidence, although not necessarily beyond dispute) when he was pastor of the Church of God at Rome, about 100 A.D.:

These things therefore being manifest to us, and since we look into the depths

of the divine knowledge, it behooves us to do all things in their proper order, which the Lord has **commanded us to perform at stated times**. He has enjoined offerings [to be presented] and service to be performed [to Him], and that not thoughtlessly or irregularly, but **at the appointed times and hours**. Where and by whom He desires these things to be done, He Himself has fixed by His own supreme will, in order that all things being piously done according to His good pleasure, may be acceptable to Him. Those, therefore, who present their offerings **at the appointed times, are accepted and blessed**; for inasmuch as they **follow the laws of the Lord, they sin not**. (*First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, XL).

Samuele Bacchiocchi, a Seventh Day Adventist scholar, spent five years at the Vatican's Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, studying early Christian documents to investigate the early practice of the Church regarding the Sabbath, and the question of when, where and why the practice was abandoned in favor of Sunday worship. He concluded that the change occurred during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-135 A.D.), largely as a result of severe anti-Jewish repression and persecution. It should be noted, however, that some Gnostic Christians, who blended Christianity with pagan religion and philosophy, worshiped on Sunday rather than the Sabbath in the first century (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 7, p. 379, cited by Ivor C. Fletcher, *The Incredible History of God's True Church*, p. 118). Following the pattern of the first-century Gnostic practices, the change in the "catholic" Church was an adaptation of the widespread practice of honoring the sun-deities on "Sunday," the first day of the week. "My conclusion," says Bacchiocchi, "...was that the change from Saturday to Sunday did not occur in the Jerusalem church by apostolic authority to commemorate Christ's resurrection. Rather it occurred in the Church of Rome early in the second century as a result of the interplay of political, social, pagan-religious, and Christian factors, similar somewhat to those that gave rise to the December 25 observance of Christ's birth" ("How the Sabbath Was Changed to Sunday and Why It Matters," *Liberty* magazine, vol. 86, no. 1, January/February 1991, p. 14).

It has been stated in certain quarters that the Sabbath does not "appear in any of the commands or lists of virtues in the New Testament". And this is used as a rationalization for not having to keep it. One has to wonder, how many times must God repeat himself

before men cease their attempts to reason around his law. First, contrary to the above statement, as pointed out earlier, the Sabbath is listed as a command – after Christ's death abolishing the Old Covenant (Luke 23:56).

The Sabbath is mentioned more than sixty times in the New Testament, more than any other of the ten commandments. Nowhere is it stated or suggested that it is not to be kept. The majority of the cases involve Jesus' example in the gospel accounts of how to properly observe the Sabbath, not according to the man-made, burdensome and counterproductive rules of the scribes, but instead keeping faithful to its spirit and meaning as a day to rest from our own works and servile labor, and to keep it as a day of spiritual and physical liberation and restoration (Nehemiah 13:15-22; Isaiah 61:1-3; 58:13-14; Luke 13:10-17; Matthew 12:10-13; Acts 16:13; Hebrews 4:9-10). One does not find examples of Jesus, the apostles, or converted Christians spending the Sabbath buying and selling, working at servile labor for wages, engaging in sporting events, nor in general, pursuing their own carnal interests. One does find them resting from their own fleshly labors and preaching, teaching, praying, healing, and doing similar good works in the service of God. How much plainer could it be made, what our obligations are regarding the Sabbath?

In Matthew 24 Jesus uttered a prophecy for his own disciples. The prophecy concerns events which would precede his second coming. The words apply specifically and directly to the present era between the first and the second comings of Jesus Christ. He warned that during this age many false prophets would deceive many (Matthew 24:11). He warned that lawlessness would abound. He warned of the coming great tribulation. And he said, speaking to his very own disciples, "...pray that your flight may not be...**on the Sabbath**" (Matthew 24:20). Why would Jesus tell his disciples to pray that their flight from the tribulation be not on the Sabbath, unless he expected them to be keeping the Sabbath? Evidently Jesus did not know that his death would render the Sabbath commandment obsolete. Are we more wise than he? How can any honest Bible student contend that Jesus does not expect his own disciples, here and now, to be keeping the Sabbath? (Incidentally, this statement does not necessarily imply that it would be wrong to take flight on the Sabbath if necessary. But certainly it would be preferable not to have to do so).

In the book of Hebrews Paul explains that certain laws of the Old Covenant need not be kept in the letter under the New Covenant. These have to do with physical sacrifices of food and drink (we still sacrifice in to God in other

ways), washings, or rites of purification, and other fleshly ordinances having to do with the temple service (Hebrews 9:9-10). Since there is no physical temple, we could not apply most of these laws in the letter now, even if we wanted to. Had God intended that we not keep the Sabbath – one of the ten commandments – would he not have made it at least as plain as these lesser laws that no longer apply in the letter? Notice, however, that we are not told in the book of Hebrews (nor any other book) that the Sabbath is not to be kept. In fact, we are told just the opposite!

In Hebrews 3 and 4 Paul draws an analogy between the Israelites of the time of Moses and Joshua entering into the promised land and our entering the household (or Kingdom) of God. The time they spent in the wilderness is analogous to our lives now. We are ultimately partakers of the promise of eternal life with Christ only if we remain steadfast in faith to the end (Hebrews 3:6-14). Though the Israelites were under God's rule and guidance in the wilderness, they did not enter his "rest" in the promised inheritance because they were disobedient. In like manner, we have not yet received our inheritance in God's Kingdom, but "a promise remains of entering His rest" for us **if we are diligent to obey** (Hebrews 4:1, 11).

Some teach falsely that we have already entered that rest, but we have not. The rest we are promised follows the return of Jesus Christ, when his Kingdom will rule the earth (and all creation; see Isaiah 14:1-7; 32:16-18; 33:20; Jeremiah 30:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; Revelation 14:13; 21:3-4). Paul said he sought to "attain to the resurrection." Not that he had "already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended..." (Philippians 3:11-13). Paul, in Hebrews, refers to the Sabbath as a type of entering God's Kingdom, his rest (Hebrews 4:4). In Hebrews 4:9 Paul says, "Then remains a sabbath rest to the people of God" (*The Interlinear Bible*, Jay P. Green, Sr., ed.). The Greek word translated "sabbath rest" is *sabbatismos*. It means a Sabbath keeping. And it applies both to keeping the weekly Sabbath as a type of the millennial rest, and to the millennial fulfillment of what the Sabbath prefigures.

Keep in mind that Paul was writing to Jewish Christians, of whom there is no doubt they were keeping the Sabbath. In Hebrews Paul discusses numerous details of the Old and New Covenants and their relationship. This would have been the ideal place for Paul to tell the Jewish Christians that keeping the Sabbath is no longer necessary. But instead, he does just

the opposite. There can be no doubt whatsoever that Paul's statement in Hebrews 4:9, "Then remains a sabbath rest [or sabbath keeping] to the people of God" (*The Interlinear Bible*), would have been taken by Jewish Christians as a clear validation of their practice of keeping the weekly Sabbath, regardless of any additional meaning the statement was intended to have. Especially in light of the next verse, where it is tied in directly with the example of God resting on the seventh day of the creation week, thus creating the Sabbath (compare Hebrews 4:10; Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11).

It's not accidental that the apostate Church, after rejecting the Sabbath, in time rejected also the belief in the millennial reign of Christ. Edward Gibbon notes that the early Church taught the second coming of Christ and his millennial reign. It was believed that this age "...would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection" (*The Triumph of Christendom in the Roman Empire*, p. 25). But eventually, as apostasy became more and more firmly rooted, "The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism" (p. 26).

It's been stated that the annual festivals, or Sabbaths, are "**shadows of the reality**, who is Christ," hence it's reasoned that they are not commanded under the New Covenant. But is this what Scripture says? Scripture says they are [not were] "a shadow [Greek: *skia*, in this context a sketch, an outline, a representation conveying to our minds a pattern; compare Hebrews 8:5] of things to come" (Colossians 2:17). The Sabbaths are formulated according to the pattern of God's plan for mankind. Because they are a representation of a greater reality, does that mean we need not keep them? Baptism is a representation of a greater reality (Romans 6:3-4; Colossians 2:12). Does this mean that baptism is optional, that it's somehow not a requirement for a Christian, because it's a figure or shadow of something else? The same for the Passover symbols of bread and wine, and the Passover itself (1 Corinthians 5:7; 11:23-26). If we did not keep the Sabbaths, would we understand what they prefigure?

How much understanding of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or Trumpets, or Atonement, or Tabernacles does the average Sunday keeping church goer have? Virtually none!

Colossians 2:16-17 does not say we need not keep the Sabbaths. It says "let no one judge you" with regard to them. This could mean any of several things. Biblical scholar A. T. Robertson, a Baptist, having little reason to provide support to those who keep the Sabbaths, nevertheless conjectures that Paul has in mind the regulations and practices of certain ascetic Gnostics, or possibly Essenes or Pharisees, whose rules "went far beyond the Mosaic regulations" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. IV, p. 496). To use an ambiguous Scripture like this to sweep away dozens of clear statements from the Bible is extremely poor exegetical form, to put it mildly!

What is the standard we are being judged by? It is the word of God, the "law of liberty" (John 12:48; James 1:21-25; 2:9-12; Revelation 20:12-13). It is God who judges (Deuteronomy 32:36; Psalm 7:8-11; 96:10-13; Acts 17:31). And it is not the hearers of the law but the doers of the law who will be justified (Romans 2:13; James 2:21-25; Revelation 22:14).

The apostles did not believe that the annual feasts were obsolete relics of the Old Covenant. They had the Church assembled on the day of Pentecost. And God honored their keeping of that annual Sabbath and confirmed it for the New Testament Church in a most powerful way – by the giving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Paul gave detailed instructions to the Gentile Corinthian Church regarding how to properly keep the Passover, one of the seven annual festivals commanded in Leviticus 23. Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning the Feast of Unleavened Bread, "...let us keep the feast..." (1 Corinthians 5:8). "Let us keep the feast" (from *eortazo*) is in the Greek in the form of the hortatory subjunctive; it's an *exhortation* – virtually a command – to *keep the feast of unleavened bread* with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. And this letter went to *Gentile Christians*.

Scripture shows that in the millennium, during the regime of the New Covenant, *all nations* will be required to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Those who refuse will be punished (Zechariah 14:16-19). Why would they be punished if keeping the Feast is not a law, a command, under the New Covenant? Jesus kept the Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day (John 7:10, 14, 37-39). Throughout the New Testament we find thematic material relating directly to the various feasts of God. Keeping the feasts can give life to our comprehension of the subtle, penetrating spiritual lessons of both the Old and New Testaments, because they give us the proper framework for understanding God's word. That's one very important reason why Scripture says, "The fear of the LORD is the

beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who **do his commandments**" (Psalm 111:10).

It's been stated that "at creation, God gave no command to human beings regarding keeping the [seventh] day as a Sabbath." The same source (which I won't dignify by naming) goes on to say that no Sabbath commandment existed until after the Exodus. Based on what evidence? One will not find recorded in Scripture before the Exodus any specific command about stealing. Does this mean stealing was not a sin until God made the Old Covenant with Israel. The same is true of lying, of covetousness, of idolatry, of blasphemy, etc. Did none of these laws exist until the time of the Old Covenant? I think the absurdity of this argument is readily apparent. Abraham knew God's commandments and kept them (Genesis 26:5).

The law of God did not begin its existence at Mount Sinai. It's existence is implicit in the Bible from cover to cover. Paul wrote, "For until the law [the Old Covenant] sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Romans 5:13). As Paul goes on to explain, however, sin was imputed before the Old Covenant was sealed. Adam and Eve were punished for their sin. The entire antediluvian world was destroyed because of their sins. Sodom and Gomorrah likewise. Egypt was punished because of its sins. So we see clearly that the spiritual law of God was in force before the Old Covenant. God has always been the

Supreme sovereign of his creation. He has always been the "one Lawgiver...able to save and to destroy" (James 4:12).

The Old Covenant was an agreement between God and Israel that they would keep his laws and that they would receive blessings for doing so (Exodus 19:5-6, 8). It was a physical covenant; but based on spiritual precepts. The spiritual precepts of the law were written on stones; the priests were human. But all was according to a heavenly pattern. The New Covenant is better, not because its law is better, but because its promises are better (Hebrews 8:6). How are they better? Because the same law, (applied in the spirit and not just in the letter) is written not on stone but in our hearts; and through the primary covenant sacrifice, Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven (2 Corinthians 3:6; Hebrews 8:4-6, 10-12; 9:11-15). Through the New Covenant is made possible the fulfillment of the promise of eternal salvation (Hebrews 9:11-28).

Are we to believe that God created the Sabbath during the creation week, and "blessed and sanctified it" (Genesis 2:2-3), but did not reveal it to Adam and Eve, nor insist that they keep holy what he had blessed and sanctified? Especially when the Sabbath was *created for man*? (Mark 2:27). Nehemiah wrote that in the wilderness God "made known" to Israel the holy Sabbath (9:14). Remember the Sabbath had been *made holy* at creation. The detailed chronology of the flood found in Genesis 7 and 8 makes it clear that the men who wrote and

HEBREWS 4:8-13



"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

preserved the source documents for the book of Genesis were meticulous time keepers, and that they knew God's calendar. It's simply not credible to believe that they did not preserve a knowledge of the Sabbath as well. But in slavery, the children of Israel had lost track of it (compare Lamentations 2:6; the Egyptians did not observe a seven day week, but divided the month into three periods of ten days each). So it was necessary that God make known to them the Sabbath day, the day he had made holy at creation. This was done several weeks *before* the Old Covenant was agreed to at Sinai (compare Exodus 16:1; 19:1). The Sabbath was *already* a law and a commandment to be obeyed before the Old Covenant came into existence (Exodus 16:4, 23, 25-28).

When God gave Israel his commandments at Mount Sinai he told them to "**Remember** the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (Exodus 20:8). In giving the command he reminds us how the Sabbath came to be holy in the first place. "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it" (Exodus 20:11). God hallowed, that is consecrated, set apart the Sabbath for a holy purpose, at the time that he made mankind. The basis for keeping the Sabbath holy is that God made it to be holy at the beginning of man's history.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "...keeping the commandments of God is what matters"

(1 Corinthians 7:19). Paul knew what the commandments were. They were those enjoined in the Old Testament law (Romans 13:8-10). Love is not walking in just Jesus' commandments, but in the Father's commandments (2 John 4-6). Jesus' commandments and the Father's are the same (John 12:49-50).

Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, **till heaven and earth pass away**, one jot or one tittle will **by no means** pass from the law till all is fulfilled [better translated in this context come to pass or established]. Whoever breaks [or looses or relaxes] one of **the least of these commandments**, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever **does and teaches** them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). It's obvious from this statement that Jesus practiced and taught to be kept all the commandments written in the Law and the Prophets. And the commission Jesus gave to the Church included teaching his disciples likewise "to observe **all things** that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

The Old and New Testaments are consistent in teaching that obedience to all the commandments is the principle sign of God's elect (see again 1 John 2:3-6; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18). The commandments God is writing in the hearts of true Christians certainly *includes* the Sabbath, but they are

not limited to the Sabbath. Merely keeping that one commandment does not identify one as a Christian. But surely no one who willfully refuses to keep the Sabbaths, the days God sanctified, can truthfully claim to be keeping the commandments. And make no mistake, the Sabbaths are among the commandments. They are not mere "window dressing" nor an optional "special blessing" for a limited number of "Christians" who deem them worth keeping. Who is any man to say keeping them is not necessary, when it is God himself – Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) – who *commanded* their observance?

The Sabbath is a test for God's people, "whether they will walk in My law or not" (Exodus 16:4). Almost always the Sabbath is one of the first laws to be rejected or made ineffectual by those who depart from the truth. God asked, with regard to the Sabbath, "How long do you **refuse** to keep My commandments and My laws?" (Exodus 16:28). Instead of obeying God, Israel chose to imitate the peoples around them. God appealed to them, saying, "Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers..." (2 Kings 17:13). But they "did not believe in the LORD their God" and "rejected his statutes" (2 Kings 17:14-15). *Disobedience is disbelief!*

Salvation is for those who believe, and obey (Mark 16:15-16; Romans 2:6-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9).

Why Christians Should Keep the Sabbath

Rod Reynolds



Most professing Christian Churches keep Sunday as their day of worship. Have you ever stopped to ask why? Where in the Bible is Sunday commanded to be kept as a weekly day of rest and worship?

On the other hand, if you are a Sabbath keeper, and have never been challenged on this question of Sabbath observance, you almost surely will be at some point in your life.

The Sabbath was set aside as holy time from creation (Genesis 2:1-3). It serves as a memorial of creation (Exodus 20:8-11). It was not made only for the Jews, as some allege. There were no Jews at that time. It was made for mankind (Mark 2:27-28).

The Sabbath is a test commandment. Requiring Sabbath observance is an important test (but not the only test) God uses to distinguish those who are willing to obey him from those who are not (Exodus 16:4-5, 13-30). One of the primary reasons God finally rejected the nation of Israel and sent them into captivity was their refusal to faithfully keep the Sabbath commandment (Ezekiel 20:12-13, 16, 19-20, 24).

Keeping the Sabbath was not only a test of Israel's faithfulness, but it was to be an identifying sign between God and the people he sanctified (Exodus 31:13; Ezekiel 20:12, 20). It was to be kept by the people God had chosen, the Israelites, as a perpetual covenant, to teach them that it is God who sanctifies (Exodus 31:13-18; cf. Genesis 2:2-3).

Those under the New Covenant now constitute the true Church of God, also referred to in Scripture as the "Israel of God" (Galatians 6:16; cf. Romans 2:28-29; Hebrews 8:8-13). Such are sanctified by belief in the truth, receiving the Holy Spirit upon repentance, and being forgiven of sin through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ (John 17:17, 19; Acts 2:38; 26:18; Ephesians 5:26; 2 Thessalonians 2:12-13; Hebrews 10:29; 1 John 1:6-7).

Although the Sabbath command was given to the Israelites, along with the other commandments, it was never intended only for the Israelites, and certainly not only for the Jews. The tribe of Judah constituted only one of the thirteen tribes of Israel. The nation of Judah that emerged following Solomon's apostasy, included those dwelling in the lands allotted to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin,

along with most of the Levites (2 Chronicles 10:17; 11:13-14). Most of the members of the other ten tribes separated from Judah to form the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 11:31-35; 12:16-17). But some of these continued to worship in Jerusalem after the division (2 Chronicles 11:1, 16). The Sabbath continued to be obligatory for all the seed of Jacob (Israel), as far as God was concerned (Isaiah 58:1, 13-14).

In Scripture, the Sabbath is never called "the Jew's Sabbath." The Sabbath is not referred to in Scripture as "Israel's Sabbath." It is referred to as "the holy Sabbath to the Lord" (Yahweh, the Eternal, the Ever Living; Exodus 16:23, cf. Exodus 16:25, *et al.*), and "the Sabbath of the Lord" (Exodus 20:10; Leviticus 23:3; *et al.*). God calls them "My Sabbaths" (Exodus 31:13; Leviticus 19:3; Ezekiel 20:16; 44:24; *et al.*). Jesus said, "... the Son of Man [meaning himself, the Messiah] is Lord even of the Sabbath" (Matthew 12:8).

The people of Israel were to keep the Sabbath, but the "stranger," foreigner, or non-Israelites among them, were also specifically commanded to keep the Sabbath (Exodus 20:10). Israel, had it obeyed God, was to become a nation of priests, to be a model for all nations in how to serve God, and to teach them (Exodus 19:6; Psalm 67:1-7; 96:3-9; 98:2-3; Malachi 2:7). Even the failures of the ancient Israelites, and how God dealt with them, were to serve as examples for all of us (1 Corinthians 10:11). This includes the punishments they received for disobedience to the commandments of God (1 Corinthians 10:5-12; Hebrews 3:7-19; 4:1-11).

In Isaiah is a prophecy pertaining to our time, when God's salvation is near (Isaiah 56:1; cf. Matthew 24:22; Hebrews 9:28). In the context of our time, Scripture says, "Blessed is the man who does this, And the son of man who lays hold on it; **Who keeps from defiling the Sabbath**, And keeps his hand from doing any evil" (Isaiah 56:2). And, "Also **the sons of the foreigner** Who join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, And to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants -- **Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath**, And holds fast My covenant [the New Covenant] -- Even them I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on My altar; For My house shall be called a house

of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6-7).

The true Church of God holds that the Christian Bible, including the Old and New Testaments, is God's revelation to man and is to be studied and obeyed as the word of God (2 Timothy 3:15; 2 Peter 1:20-21). The Bible teaches that Christians are required by God to order their lives according to God's word and obey it (Luke 4:4; John 8:31). Included is the obligation to keep the ten commandments, not only in the letter, but in the Spirit as well (Deuteronomy 10:1; Matthew 5:17-22, 27-28; 19:17-19; Romans 13:9-10; 1 Corinthians 7:19; Hebrews 8:10; James 2:8-12; 1 John 2:3; 5:2-3; 2 John 1:5-6; Revelation 12:17; 14:12).

Every single one of the ten commandments is confirmed in the New Testament as being obligatory for Christians (e.g., Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:5-9; Revelation 21:8). But of all the ten commandments, the commandment specifically mentioned more times in the New Testament than any other is the Sabbath commandment. And in no instance is there any statement or suggestion that the Sabbath is "done away," or no longer binding.

The fourth commandment states in the New King James Version: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates" (Exodus 20:9-10). Scripture further states: "Six days shall work be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, a holy convocation. You shall do no work on it; it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings" (Leviticus 23:3).

Thus the Bible clearly teaches that the seventh day of the week, according to the Hebrew calendar, which has been preserved among the Jewish people for thousands of years, is a commanded day of rest and worship for Christians. In a prophecy pertaining to Christians near the end of this age, when the tribulation of the end time is about to begin, Christ admonished his disciples to "pray that your flight may not be ... on the Sabbath"

(Matthew 24:20). Obviously, Jesus expects his disciples to be keeping the Sabbath at that time.

It's specifically stated: "Then *there* remains a Sabbath rest [Greek: *sabbatismos*] for the people of God" (Hebrews 4:9, English Majority Text Version). The Greek *σαββατισμός* (*sabbatismos*) means Sabbath rest, Sabbath observance, or Sabbath keeping (Greek - *English Lexicon*, Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich; *Analytical Greek Lexicon*). The verse could just as well be translated, there remains Sabbath observance, or Sabbath keeping, for the people of God. The context shows that the Sabbath is a type of God's kingdom, and in keeping it we are prefiguring in a small way the kingdom of God.

From the standpoint of Scripture, and as the Jewish people have understood for millennia, biblical days begin and end at "evening," or when the sun sets (Genesis 1:5; Leviticus 22:6-7; Leviticus 23:32). So the biblical Sabbath coincides with Friday sunset to Saturday sunset according to the common civil calendar used in much of the world.

The original Christianity of the Bible is that taught and practiced by Jesus Christ and his apostles, as recorded in the Scripture. The record of Scripture is that Jesus and the New Testament Church kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2; 18:4). There is no Scripture that indicates that the Sabbath command was altered or abolished. There are a few scattered references to the first day of the week in the New Testament, that some have tried to use as evidence of Sunday keeping, but on close examination none provides any real proof that the New Testament Church kept Sunday in place of the Sabbath.

One of these is found in John 20:19-20. The disciples were assembled "in the evening," from the Greek *ὀψιός* (*opsios*), which can mean afternoon before sunset or evening after sunset. This was in the afternoon of the first day of the week. This was not a religious service to celebrate Christ's resurrection, as some allege, but they were gathered there behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. It would have been customary for them to be staying in Jerusalem during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, or gathering there for meals during the Feast (cf. Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 17-18, 26-27; Luke 24:33). They did not even believe Jesus had risen until he appeared to them in their midst (Mark 16:14; Luke 24:34-41).

Luke recounts in a summary fashion some of the history of the early Church up to about 60 A.D. in the book of Acts. While the Sabbath is mentioned specifically nine times in the book of Acts, in ways that show clearly the

Sabbath was being kept among Christians, the first day of the week is mentioned only once (Acts 20:7). Note they had come together to "break bread," in other words, to eat a meal (not the "Lord's Supper," Acts 20:11, cf. Acts 2:44-46). This was a special farewell meeting at Troas in Asia Minor for Paul and his party. The meeting occurred after the Sabbath, in the evening, because he was to leave the next morning (Sunday morning). The Greek *επαυριον* (*epaurion*) can mean upon the next day or upon the morning. The Greek word *αὔριον* (*aurion*) is derived from a word which means "the morning air," or dawn (*Strong's Greek Dictionary; From Sabbath To Sunday*, Bacchiocchi, pp. 103-104). Paul stayed up all night eating and talking (Acts 20:11), and left after daybreak on Sunday. The most significant thing here is that Paul waited until Sunday morning to leave on his trip, implying that he kept the Sabbath the day before, as was his custom (Acts 16:13; 17:2).

In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, the Corinthians were asked to lay up in store each week on the first day provisions which would later be collected and taken to Jerusalem for famine relief. There is nothing in this Scripture that suggests public assemblies. The Greek in 1 Corinthians 16:2 reads "lay by himself," i.e., in his own home. Darby's translation reads "let each of you put by at home." The Analytical-Literal translation reads, "let each one of you be putting aside [something], storing up." The Green's Literal Translation reads, "let each of you put by himself, storing up whatever he is prospered." A. T. Robertson renders it "Lay by him in store.... By himself, in his home." (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*).

This has nothing to do with a collection at a religious service, but storing up goods at home to be later assembled for distribution. Paul wanted this to be done ahead of his arrival, so he would not have to wait for a collection drive to be made after his arrival, but simply be able to gather and transport the goods that had already been set aside immediately to Jerusalem. The fact that Paul designates the first day of the week to do the work of setting the goods aside shows it was not being kept as a day of rest.

Another Scripture often used to claim the Sabbath is done away is Colossians 2:16-17: "Let none therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in matter of feast, or new moon, or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Darby; the Greek has no word for "is" in this verse, thus it should read, "the body of Christ"). Note that Sabbaths are (not were) a shadow (Greek: *σκιά* [*skia*], shadow, outline), of things to

come. "Are" is from the Greek *ἐστί* (*esti*), which is in the present tense, indicative mood, in this verse, which usually implies present and continuing action. The Sabbaths have prophetic significance, which is often not well understood except by those who keep them. This does not tell us not to keep the Sabbaths, anymore than it tells us not to eat or drink. It's about not allowing outsiders to judge us in these matters, but the Church, whose head is Christ (Colossians 2:18-19; 1:18). The true Church will be keeping Christ's commands (Luke 6:46).

Paul wrote, "One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). If this statement is to be taken as abrogating Sabbath observance, as is often alleged, then it would also mean no special significance should be attached to Sunday, either. Rather, the point is the Church does not enforce arbitrary fast days of human tradition (note the context has to do with eating). The Pharisees typically fasted on Mondays and Thursdays (cf. Luke 18:12). It became a custom in paganized Christianity not only to keep Sunday, but to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. "Canon 69 of the Holy Apostles designates that any hierarch or priest or deacon or subdeacon or reader or chanter who does not fast during Great Lent and Wednesday and Friday is to be deposed. If a layperson does not fast during these times (unless he cannot fast on account of bodily illness), he is to be excommunicated" [*Exomologetarion (A Manual of Confession)*, by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite].

Among non-Christian religions that observe fasts at certain times are Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. The ancient Babylonians, Egyptians and others fasted in honor of Adonis and Osiris (Tammuz; cf. Ezekiel 8:14; *The Two Babylons*, Hislop, pp. 150-152, 170). Sir James Frazer in his work *The Golden Bough* documents a variety of pagan fasts.

Some Protestant commentators deny that Romans 14:5 has anything to do with the Sabbath. *Clarke's Commentary* states on this verse: "That the Sabbath is of lasting obligation may be reasonably concluded from its institution (See Clarke on Ge 2:3) and from its typical reference. All allow that the Sabbath is a type of that rest in glory which remains for the people of God. Now, all types are intended to continue in full force till the antitype, or thing signified, take place; consequently, the Sabbath will continue in force till the consummation of all things." Indeed, the Scriptures show clearly that when God's kingdom is established on earth, the Sabbath will continue to be kept (Isaiah 66:23; Ezekiel 44:24).

Even many non-sabbatarian Bible historians admit that the Sabbath was kept by the early Church. For example, in his book, *The Story of the Christian Church*, Jesse Lyman Hurlbut states: "As long as the church was mainly Jewish, the Hebrew sabbath was kept; but as it became increasingly Gentile the first day gradually took the place of the seventh day" (1970, p. 36). Other scholars have shown that Sabbath keeping was common among Christians even in Gentile areas until well into the second century and beyond (cf. Acts 13:42-44). In fact, in every era since the founding of the New Testament Church, there have been Sabbath keepers among those professing to be Christians. Samuele Bacchiocchi, in his book *Sabbath to Sunday*, offers evidence that the widespread abandonment of the Sabbath among professing Christians did not occur until the time of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), who severely persecuted the Jews and outlawed Sabbath keeping in the Roman Empire (p. 305). He also shows that the impetus for the abandonment of the Sabbath among professing Christians emanated preeminently from Rome (*ibid.* pp. 306-307). Faithful Christians, however, who were in the minority, continued to keep the Sabbath in accordance with God's command.

Some Catholic authorities have admitted openly that there is no Scriptural basis for Sunday worship, and that the sanctification of Sunday as a day of rest and worship rests solely on the authority of the Catholic Church. For example, Jesuit scholar John Gilmary Shea wrote, "... Sunday, as a day of the week set apart for obligatory public worship... is purely a creation of the Catholic Church" (*The American Catholic Quarterly Review* 8; cited in *Sabbath To Sunday*, p. 311 n.). The Catholic Cardinal James Gibbons wrote, "... you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify" (*The Faith of Our Fathers*, sixty-third edition, 1904, pp. 111-112).

Jesus condemned the practice of "vain... worship," "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men," of religious leaders who "reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition," "making the word of God of no effect through your tradition" (Mark 7:6-13).

In accordance with the teaching of Scripture, members of God's Church are obligated to refrain from secular work on the weekly Sabbath (and annual Sabbaths listed in Leviticus 23, as well). Allowance is made for genuine emergencies or spiritual work, such as attending

Sabbath services, teaching the Bible, praying and healing (Mark 1:21; Mark 3:4-5; Luke 4:16; Acts 13: 44; 16:13). However, the Sabbath law forbids routine work at a secular occupation on the Sabbath, and other activities not in keeping with the sanctity of the Sabbath (Isaiah 58:13-14).

To be in God's Kingdom, to be faithful disciples of Christ, we must strive to keep God's commandments, including the Sabbath (John 14:15; Revelation 22:14).

"The original Christianity of the Bible is that taught and practiced by Jesus Christ and his apostles, as recorded in the Scripture. The record of Scripture is that Jesus and the New Testament Church kept the Sabbath (Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2; 18:4)."

Scientists Refute Darwinism

Book Review

by

Rod Reynolds

Evolution From Space: A Theory of Cosmic Creationism

Sir Fred Hoyle and Chandra Wickramasinghe

New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981. 176 pages

The authors are widely recognized as two of the world's leading scientists. Hoyle has made major contributions to astronomy and was knighted in 1972 for his achievements. He has headed the Royal Astronomical Society, is a fellow of the Royal Society, an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a foreign associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He has taught at universities in England and America. Chandra Wickramasinghe, a recognized authority on interstellar matter, first collaborated with Hoyle in 1962 when they proposed a radically new theory for the origin of interstellar dust which has since gained general acceptance. Wickramasinghe is professor and head of the department of applied mathematics and astronomy at University College, Cardiff, Wales. For some years the authors have been examining the question of how life came to exist and the possibility that it might have reached earth from Space. Their investigations have convinced them that organic life such as exists on the earth requires the pre-existence of a non-organic intelligence.

When one views modern evolutionary ideas from an historical standpoint, it's remarkable how little the theory has been subjected to ordinary scientific criticism. Part of the reason may be that "Darwinism makes few precise statements, and for this reason it is a hard theory to nail." When faced with contrary facts, proponents of the theory take refuge in vague speculations about what "might have" happened, or what "could have" been (pp. 11-12). The authors, who discuss some of the many fatal weaknesses in the concept of organic evolution, also point out that most scientists have wanted to believe in evolution, "and because scientists believe in Darwinism there is a strong social tendency...for everyone to become satisfied with a weak explanation" (p. 22). Yet, the authors point out that "there are so many

flaws in Darwinism that one can wonder why it swept so completely through the scientific world, and why it is still endemic today" (p. 133).

The reasons, they say, have to do with past history and educational continuity. Darwinism was part of an intellectual revolt against the world's Christianity and its political dominance and moral restraints. "...the biggest thing going for Darwinism was that it finally broke the tyranny in which Christianity had held the minds of men for many centuries" (p. 133). Darwinism was the best, most plausible explanation for an origin of life apart from God that men at the time could devise. Largely because of the temper of the times it soon became widely accepted. "Once the whole of humanity becomes committed to a particular set of concepts, educational continuity makes it exceedingly hard to change the pattern. You either believe the concepts or you will inevitably be branded as a heretic" (p. 137). Few have been willing to take that risk, so few within the scientific establishment have effectively criticized the general concept.

For their part the authors say: "We have received hints and even warnings from friends and colleagues that our views on these matters are generally repugnant to the scientific world. We in our turn have been disturbed to discover how little attention is generally paid to fact and how much to myths and prejudice.

"It is not hard to find writings in which the myth is stated that the Darwinian theory of evolution is well proven by the fossil record" (p. 147). Through such claims and devices such as diagrams illustrating imaginary evolutionary connections between separate groups of living organisms, "...the general scientific world has been bamboozled into believing that evolution has been proved. Nothing could be further from the truth" (p. 87). Far from proving a gradual evolution of one kind of creature into another kind, the fossil record rather demonstrates T he

authors are widely recognized as two of the world's leading scientists. Hoyle has made major contributions to astronomy and was knighted in 1972 for his achievements. He has headed the Royal Astronomical Society, is a fellow of the Royal Society, an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and a foreign associate of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He has taught at universities in England and America. Chandra Wickramasinghe, a recognized authority on interstellar matter, first collaborated with Hoyle in 1962 when they proposed a radically new theory for the origin of interstellar dust which has since gained general acceptance. Wickramasinghe is professor and head of the department of applied mathematics and astronomy at University College, Cardiff, Wales. For some years the authors have been examining the question of how life came to exist and the possibility that it might have reached earth from Space. Their investigations have convinced them that organic life such as exists on the earth requires the pre-existence of a non-organic intelligence.

When one views modern evolutionary ideas from an historical standpoint, it's remarkable how little the theory has been subjected to ordinary scientific criticism. Part of the reason may be that "Darwinism makes few precise statements, and for this reason it is a hard theory to nail." When faced with contrary facts, proponents of the theory take refuge in vague speculations about what "might have" happened, or what "could have" been (pp. 11-12). The authors, who discuss some of the many fatal weaknesses in the concept of organic evolution, also point out that most scientists have wanted to believe in evolution, "and because scientists believe in Darwinism there is a strong social tendency...for everyone to become satisfied with a weak explanation" (p. 22). Yet, the authors point out that "there are so many flaws in Darwinism that one can wonder why it swept so completely through the scientific world, and why it is still endemic today" (p. 133).

The reasons, they say, have to do with past history and educational continuity. Darwinism was part of an intellectual revolt against the world's Christianity and its political dominance and moral restraints. "...the biggest thing going for Darwinism was that it finally broke the tyranny in which Christianity had held the minds of men for many centuries" (p. 133). Darwinism was the best, most plausible explanation for an origin of life apart from God that men at the time could devise. Largely because of the temper of the times it soon became widely accepted. "Once the whole of humanity becomes committed to a particular

set of concepts, educational continuity makes it exceedingly hard to change the pattern. You either believe the concepts or you will inevitably be branded as a heretic" (p. 137). Few have been willing to take that risk, so few within the scientific establishment have effectively criticized the general concept.

For their part the authors say: "We have received hints and even warnings from friends and colleagues that our views on these matters are generally repugnant to the scientific world. We in our turn have been disturbed to discover how little attention is generally paid to fact and how much to myths and prejudice.

"It is not hard to find writings in which the myth is stated that the Darwinian theory of evolution is well proven by the fossil record" (p. 147). Through such claims and devices such as diagrams illustrating imaginary evolutionary connections between separate groups of living organisms, "...the general scientific world has been bamboozled into believing that evolution has been proved. Nothing could be further from the truth" (p. 87). Far from proving a gradual evolution of one kind of creature into another kind, the fossil record rather demonstrates a history of genetic stability over many generations.

Insects serve as an example. "...no forms with the wings at an intermediate stage of development have been found. Where fossil insects have wings at all they are fully functional to serve the purposes of flight, and often enough in ancient fossils the wings are essentially identical to what can be found today" (p. 86). The authors summarize by writing, "The factual evidence is overwhelmingly confined to lines of creatures that do not change very much from generation to generation.... Wherever one would like evidence of major changes and linkages...the evidence is conspicuously missing from the fossil record" (p. 89). The authors go on to remark, "The fossil record is highly imperfect from a Darwinian point of view...because the slow evolutionary connections required by the theory did not happen" (p. 147).

What of "examples" of evolution such as variant types of moths or birds often referred to in biology textbooks? "The examples are often concerned with the colours of birds and insects which alter so as to keep a match with some aspect of the physical environment. There are also examples in which bacteria appear to adapt very quickly so as to become resistant to the particular drugs used in hospitals. We doubt, however, that anything more is involved in these cases than the selection of already existing genes. They are simply unusual cases of artificial selection" (p. 5). This conclusion can be supported by specific examples (such as light

and dark moths) and experimental data (see Gardner and Snustad, *Principles of Genetics*, sixth ed., pp. 295, 548-549).

The authors also discuss the information content in the genetic codes of living forms and how it got there. "...the genomes of mice, humans, flowers...are enormous, fantastic, quite out of all nonbiological experience" (p. 4). Even in the "simplest" organisms "the information standard remains extremely high" (p. 8). (For example: there are an estimated 4 million instructions in the DNA of the bacterium *E. coli*, and an estimated 10 billion in the DNA of some higher organisms).

Many features of living organisms derive from the code written in the DNA of their cells. Each organism begins with just one cell. And the information controlling its development must be encoded in the genetic material (including the DNA) of that original "seed." That includes its skeletal, muscular, nervous and other systems. Also its vital organs such as kidneys, liver, etc. The exact structure of the eyes, ears and other sensory organs must be included. The code in the seed or germ of the organism determines the size, shape and kind of body it will have. (Although as it develops environmental factors will have some influence as well, but nevertheless based on the original encoded information).

A computer receives its instructions in the form of a binary code, which consists of two "letters" or numbers (zero and one). The sequence in which these numbers are strung together determines the information received by the computer (and what it produces), as the sequence in which the letters of the alphabet are strung together determines the information contained on this page. In the same manner the sequence in which the four bases (adenine, guanine, thymine, and cytosine) found commonly in DNA are strung together determines the information it contains.

The essential question is, how did the specific information get there? That is, the specific information not only to synthesize the complex proteins, etc., but to direct their being assembled into a fully functioning biological entity consisting of many different perfectly coordinated parts fulfilling diverse functions (what the authors refer to as the "main program"). Essentially there are two choices: (1) The information got there by random shuffling. Or: (2) It was programmed into the original ancestors of each individual family of organisms by an outside intelligent being.

For illustrative purposes, the authors isolate one particular problem, namely, the synthesis of the 2000 or so enzymes necessary for biological functioning and which are found in most living things. The authors calculate the

probability of obtaining all of them through random associations in an organic soup as one part in $10^{40,000}$, "an outrageously small probability that could not be faced even if the whole universe consisted of organic soup" (p. 24). To obtain another specialized complex protein, the histone H4 (the shortest of the five common histones), the authors calculate is one chance in $(20)^{100}$, "a number larger than the total of all the atoms in all the stars and galaxies visible in the largest astronomical telescopes" (p. 27). Another example or two is mentioned. Then the authors explain that "our discussion so far is still quite peripheral to really explaining the origin of life from a terrestrial organic soup of bases, amino acids, phosphates.... Nothing has been said of the origin of DNA itself, nothing of DNA transcription to RNA, nothing of the origin of the program whereby cells organize themselves, nothing of mitosis or meiosis. These issues are too complex to set numbers to" (p. 30). In this connection it's interesting that the chance of obtaining randomly the DNA in a single higher organism has been calculated as about one in 10^3 billion (one followed by 3 billion zeros). And the process of evolution through natural selection from chance mutations, if it were to occur, would be entirely random. By contrast, if the universe is taken to be 20 billion years old, "only" 6.3×10^{17} (63 followed by 16 zeros) seconds have passed since it began. The authors state, "Darwinian evolution is most unlikely to get even one polypeptide [protein] right, let alone the thousands on which living cells depend for their survival" (p. 148).

The authors conclude, "...the probability of life originating at random is so utterly minuscule as to make the random concept absurd..." (p. 141). "For life to have originated on the Earth it would be necessary that quite explicit instructions should have been provided for its assembly" (p. 30). That leaves the other choice: "The theory that life was assembled by an intelligence" is vastly more probable than the alternative "of being the correct explanation.... Indeed, such a theory is so obvious that one wonders why it is not widely accepted as being self-evident. The reasons are psychological rather than scientific" (p. 130). So the authors are led to conclude from their analysis of the evidence that organic life can only have come into existence through the intervention of an intelligence non-organic in origin. "The speculations of *The Origin of Species* turned out to be wrong.... It is ironic that the scientific facts throw Darwin out, but leave William Paley, a figure of fun to the scientific world for more than a century, still in the tournament with a chance of being the ultimate winner" (pp.

96-97). William Paley was an eighteenth and nineteenth century theologian and philosopher, who wrote a book titled *Natural Theology*, in which he appeals to the design inherent in creation as evidence for God.

The authors remark that their writings have been met by a wall of silence from their colleagues. They speculate that the reason is perhaps when you destroy the concept of life having arisen by chance combinations then you leave open the door to the question of purpose. "...and to involve purpose is in the eyes of biologists the ultimate scientific sin, worse even than to express doubt about the validity of Darwinism" (p. 32). "The revulsion which biologists feel to the thought that purpose might have a place in the structure of biology is...revulsion to the concept that biology might have a connection to an intelligence higher than our own" (p. 33). We might extend this thought further and say that an intelligence higher than our own with a purpose for our existence implies an authority superior to that of man. And that is what man has a revulsion to. "...they did not like to retain God in their knowledge..." (Romans 1:28).

In place of Darwinism the authors propose the concept of directed panspermia. That is, the idea that intelligent non-organic beings – not necessarily God – manufactured genetic material and "seeded" the earth with it at various times in the past. This need not detain us. The Bible offers a superior alternative, the one that's true.

The Bible, since it is true, is corroborated by the physical evidence (as opposed to man's often false interpretations and speculations). But the Bible as God's revelation goes further and tells us what man's materialistically oriented investigations cannot. It gives us a broad outline along with certain *key details* of what God has done which reveal the *principles and purposes* according to which God works. Among those truths which are revealed having a direct bearing on the discussion at hand are the following:

(1) God has from the beginning and throughout all the ages since had a *specific purpose* in mind for His creation. In Ephesians 3 Paul writes about the mystery of God's *eternal purpose* "which from the *beginning of the ages* has been hidden in God who created *all things* through Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:9-11). Other Scriptures reveal that the purpose involves reproducing Himself or, if you will, reproducing seed after the God kind.

(2) God *designed and made* the living creatures of the earth and their component

parts. The psalmist, referring to "Living things both small and great," writes, "O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom [denotes intelligent design, planning and purpose] You have *made them all*" (Psalm 104:24-25). "The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The Lord has made them both." (Proverbs 20:12). In His remarkable discourse to Job the Eternal tells him in effect that it is His wisdom (again, implying intelligence, purpose and creative skill) that enables the hawk to fly (Job 39:26). "God, who made the world and everything in it...gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:24-25).

(3) God's *eternal purpose is reflected in the design of organic life and the manner in which it reproduces*. God specifically created organic life so that any individual of each kind, or family, is *formed according to the peculiar characteristics inherent in the seed or life germ of its own kind*. God is responsible for the "main program" that determines the form and function of every living entity. He designed all the systems and specialized organs of each form of life. He designed the basic molecular materials out of which the organisms would be made, and the processes by which life would be renewed each generation. He's the one who coded the information and planted the code in the cells of the first parents of each distinctive form of life. Notice: "...God gives it a body [its own peculiar form] as He pleases [or more correctly: as *He purposed*], and to *each seed* its own body" (1 Corinthians 15:38). As is apparent from the Biblical and physical evidence, God placed in the seed of each kind of organic life its own particular code. Thus, "All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds" (1 Corinthians 15:39).

Very interestingly, Paul is using this analogy of the seed containing (in code) the form of the creature that shall arise out of it to show how we, as the seed of God, shall bear the image of God in heaven, whose spiritual seed we are, if genuinely converted (1 Corinthians 15:49). As old generations give rise to new, the information in the genetic code is passed on. "In all cases... reproduction entails the faithful transmission of the genetic information of the parents to the progeny" (Gardner and Snustad, *Principles of Genetics*, p. 83). In a spiritual sense, God is placing in those truly converted, as spiritual seed, the information necessary to reproduce His own spiritual likeness. "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His [spiritual] creatures" (James 1:18). As James makes plain in James 1:21, the implanted word is essential to our receiving the gift of eternal life. *Implanted*

word is the meaning of the original Greek in verse 21. And it is analogous to the physical genetic code by which the image of the parent is passed on to its offspring.

There are other lessons to be learned from the parallels which exist between the physical and spiritual creations. One of the evils of the Darwinian theory of evolution is that it obscures those lessons and destroys our ability to understand them. The book reviewed is a useful introduction to criticism exposing some of the principle fallacies of the theory.

"When one views modern evolutionary ideas from an historical standpoint, it's remarkable how little the theory has been subjected to ordinary scientific criticism. Part of the reason may be that "Darwinism makes few precise statements, and for this reason it is a hard theory to nail." When faced with contrary facts, proponents of the theory take refuge in vague speculations about what 'might have' happened, or what 'could have' been (pp. 11-12)."

How Will the World Be Different When Christ Returns?

Rod Reynolds

Part I

For approximately the past 6000 years, since mankind rebelled in the Garden of Eden, the earth has been under the curse of Satan's rule. Satan has not ruled without restraint. God has remained supreme over the universe, including the earth, but to a large extent he has allowed Satan to influence mankind. And Satan, within certain parameters, has remained, as referred to in 2 Corinthians 4:4, and other Scriptures, as the "god of this age," or of this world.

The result of Satan's influence has been a history of oppression, warfare, famines, widespread poverty, deception, ignorance, disease, crime, and other evils that have plagued mankind. What the world needs is a new kind of government, a government not of Satan, nor of men, but of God, the benevolent Creator, and author of every blessing, including life itself (James 1:17-25; Acts 17:24-25). The time when that new government appears may not be far off, although no one on earth knows for certain the exact time when it will happen (Matthew 24:30-36).

How that future world will be different is the exciting and greatly encouraging subject of a planned series of articles, of which this is the first.

Few understand how the festivals of God commanded in the Scriptures have profound prophetic meaning, revealing in a step-by-step sequence God's plan of salvation for mankind. One of those festivals kept annually, the Feast of Tabernacles, points to a time in the future when the kingdom of God will supersede the kingdoms of this world, and Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the second person of the Godhead, will rule on the earth personally, under the authority of the Father in heaven.

The weekly Sabbath also points to the future kingdom of God on earth. And all the other annual Sabbaths and feasts commanded in the Bible lead up to or are directly connected with the establishing of the kingdom of God on earth in what they represent (Revelation 11:15; Daniel 7:13-14; Hebrews 4:4-11). "Let no one judge you ...regarding... **sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come...**" (Colossians 2:16-17; "shadow" from Greek *skia*: shadow, sketch, outline; cf. *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*).

The resurrected saints shall rule with Jesus Christ, under his authority, as servant leaders in the Kingdom of God on earth. "Then the kingdom and dominion, And the greatness of

the kingdoms under the whole heaven, Shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, And all dominions shall serve and obey Him" (Daniel 7: 27; cf. Revelation 20:6).

There are many prophecies in the Bible that give us insight into what the world will be like under the rule of Jesus Christ, as opposed to what it is like now, and has been historically up to the present.

First in the list of differences, is an:

(1) End to Oppression

Throughout history, most human beings have been oppressed. An article, "Proclaim Liberty," posted on our website (cogmessenger.org), documents the pervasive physical slavery that has afflicted mankind. The oppression of involuntary servitude in one form or another, in other words, slavery, has been the lot of vast numbers historically, virtually the world over, including the vast majority of Europeans during the Middle Ages. But in addition to physical oppression, mankind has been subject to the oppression of spiritual blindness. Throughout human history, all but a handful of humans have been oppressed by one or the other or both of these forms of slavery.

Added to that, consider other forms of oppression, including deprivation, disease, and other evils. But when Jesus Christ returns to establish his kingdom, the oppression of human beings will come to an end.

Satan, the great oppressor, and his system of deception and oppression, will be overthrown.

"It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon [a metaphor for Satan in this passage], and say: **"How the oppressor has ceased,** The golden city ceased! The Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of the rulers; He who struck the people in wrath with a continual stroke, He who ruled the nations in anger, Is persecuted and no one hinders. The whole earth is at rest and quiet; They break forth into singing" (Isaiah 14:3-7).

Speaking of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, ruling on earth: "He will **break in pieces the oppressor**" (Psalm 72:4). And further: "He will spare the poor and needy, And will save the souls of the needy. He will **redeem their life**

from oppression and violence; And precious shall be their blood in His sight" (Psalm 72:13-14).

Concerning Israel: "I [Yahweh] will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns. **No more shall an oppressor pass through them,** For now I have seen with My eyes. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, **your King is coming to you;** He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall speak peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.' As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, **I will set your prisoners free** from the waterless pit" (Zechariah 9:8-11).

From a prophesy concerning Egypt which applies to the millennial period: "...they will cry to the Lord because of the **oppressors,** and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and **He will deliver them**" (Isaiah 19:20).

The psalmist foresees near the end of Psalm ten how oppression will cease under Christ's government: "The Lord is King forever and ever; The nations have perished out of His land. Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will prepare their heart; You will cause Your ear to hear, To do **justice to the fatherless and the oppressed, That the man of the earth may oppress no more**" (Psalm 10:16-18).

So not only peoples descended from Israel, but all peoples of the world under Christ's rulership will be delivered from oppression.

(2) Just Government

The governments of this world under Satan's rule have been anything but just.

"I have seen everything in my days of vanity: There is a just man who perishes in his righteousness, And there is a wicked man who prolongs life in his wickedness" (Ecclesiastes 7:15).

In a description of the injustice of the present age: "The **wicked** in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts. **His ways are always prospering;** Your judgments are far above, out of his sight; As for all his enemies, he sneers at them. He has said in his heart, 'I shall not be moved; I

shall never be in adversity.' His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and oppression; Under his tongue is trouble and iniquity. He sits in the lurking places of the villages; In the secret places **he murders the innocent**; His eyes are secretly fixed on the helpless. He lies in wait secretly, as a lion in his den; He lies in wait to catch the poor; He catches the poor when he draws him into his net. So he crouches, he lies low, **That the helpless may fall by his strength**. He has said in his heart, 'God has forgotten; He hides His face; He will never see.' Arise, O Lord! O God, lift up Your hand! Do not forget the humble. **Why do the wicked renounce God? He has said in his heart, 'You will not require an account'**" (Psalm 10:4-13).

These words characterize how the world has been all too commonly, and how it is by and large today: **"No one calls for justice**, Nor does any plead for truth. **They trust in empty words and speak lies**; They conceive evil and bring forth iniquity. They hatch vipers' eggs and weave the spider's web; He who eats of their eggs dies, And from that which is crushed a viper breaks out. Their webs will not become garments, Nor will they cover themselves with their works; Their works are works of iniquity, And the act of violence is in their hands. **Their feet run to evil, And they make haste to shed innocent blood; Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity**; Wasting and destruction are in their paths. The way of peace they have not known, And **there is no justice in their ways**; They have made themselves crooked paths; Whoever takes that way shall not know peace. Therefore **justice is far from us**, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness!" (Isaiah 59:4-9).

And further: "In transgressing and lying against the Lord, And departing from our God, Speaking oppression and revolt, Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. **Justice is turned back**, And righteousness stands afar off; For truth is fallen in the street, And **equity cannot enter**. So truth fails, And he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. Then **the Lord saw it, and it displeased Him That there was no justice**." (Isaiah 59:13-15).

While injustice is permitted now, the day is coming when the wicked will be held accountable for their wickedness: "Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, **And your justice as the noonday. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him**; Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, Because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; **Do not fret**

-- **it only causes harm**. For **evildoers shall be cut off**; But those who wait on the Lord, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. **The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming**. The wicked have drawn the sword And have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, And their bows shall be broken." (Psalm 37:5-15).

God's judgments are just. **"God is a just judge**, And God is angry with the wicked every day" (Psalm 7:11). Those who are wicked will eventually be punished. Those who seek to live righteously before God will be granted salvation, and dwell with God.

"I know that the Lord will maintain The cause of the afflicted, And **justice for the poor**. Surely the righteous shall give thanks to Your name; The upright shall dwell in Your presence" (Psalm 140:12-13).

The promise of God's word is that, in due time, Jesus Christ will establish justice in the earth: "Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will **bring forth justice to the Gentiles.... He will bring forth justice for truth. He will not fail nor be discouraged, Till He has established justice in the earth; And the coastlands shall wait for His law**" (Isaiah 42:1-4).

(3) End to War

Throughout history, from the time of Cain and Abel, men have been in conflict with one another, killing one another. The history of the world is largely a history of strife, conflict and warfare. Untold millions, perhaps billions, of human beings have been slaughtered in warfare, besides the countless numbers who have been deprived of loved ones, impoverished, and victimized in many other ways by the wars of mankind.

Behind these wars is the malevolent spirit of Satan the devil, who organized a revolt against God, and sought to overthrow him. The first war as far as we know was a war between Satan and God, that resulted from violence within the heart of Satan:

"You were the **anointed cherub who covers**; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; You walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was

found in you. By the abundance of your trading **You became filled with violence within**, And you sinned; **Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God**; And I destroyed you, O covering cherub, From the midst of the fiery stones" (Ezekiel 28:14-16).

Satan, which means adversary, had previously been called Lucifer (or Hebrew *Haylel*), meaning morning star, or light bringer. He had been one of three archangels who were "covering cherubs," associated with God's throne (cf. Exodus 25:18-22; Luke 1:19; Jude 1:9). As a result of his rebellion Satan was cast out of his place in the third heaven, where God's throne is, and confined, for the most part, to the earth. Jesus, the second person of the Godhead, said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

Satan is the father of murder and of lies. "He [the devil, Satan] was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44).

Under his influence the world before the flood was filled with violence. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and **the earth was filled with violence**. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth" (Genesis 6:11).

God can make war on his enemies when it's necessary. But God loves peace, not war. One of the titles of Jesus Christ is "Prince of Peace." When he establishes his throne over the nations he will put down rebellion, and establish peace on the earth. It will be a just peace, and a peace that will result in security, joy and happiness for all of mankind.

"For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And **the government will be upon His shoulder**. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of His government and **peace** There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever" (Isaiah 9:6-7).

No longer will nations be calling up armies to fight each other, nor will they be spending vast sums of money for weapons of war. "Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the Lord's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, To the house of the God of Jacob; **He will teach us His ways, And we shall walk in His paths**.' For out of Zion shall go forth the

law, And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; **They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore**" (Isaiah 2: 2-4).

Speaking of Israel restored under Christ's rule in the kingdom of God: **"They shall be safe in their land;** and they shall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bands of their yoke and delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them. And they shall no longer be a prey for the nations, nor shall beasts of the land devour them; but they shall dwell safely, and **no one shall make them afraid**" (Ezekiel 34:27-28).

As a result of Christ's rule, wars will cease from the earth: **"He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.** Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (Psalm 46:9-10).

"In that day... **Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth,** To make them [his people] lie down safely" (Hosea 2:18).

(4) Harmony Among Races and Nations

God is the author of diversity among peoples. He made mankind in such a way that out of the first parents would spring descendants of a variety of families, each with its own distinctive characteristics.

God separated the nations early in the history of the earth, to give to each family or "ethnic" group its own inheritance on the earth. In Genesis we read of the various family groups, and the lands each of them were given. "These were the sons of Shem, according to their families, according to their languages, **in their lands,** according to their nations. These were the families of the sons of Noah, according to their generations, **in their nations; and from these the nations were divided on the earth after the flood**" (Genesis 10:31-32).

Then in Genesis 11 we are told how the nations came to be separated into their various languages and locations. The nations were at first all of one language, and were located in a narrow geographical area, in what came to be called Babylonia.

In a spirit of rebellion against God they had sought to build a city and a tower in Babylon, which was an affront to God, to avoid being scattered to their habitations, as God intended.

"Now the whole earth had one language and one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a

plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there. Then they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They had brick for stone, and they had asphalt for mortar. And they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, **lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth.**' But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of men had built. And the Lord said, 'Indeed the people are one and they all have one language, and this is what they begin to do; now nothing that they propose to do will be withheld from them. Come, let Us go down and there confuse their language, that they may not understand one another's speech.' So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they ceased building the city. Therefore its name is called Babel, because there the Lord confused the language of all the earth; and from there the Lord scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth" (Genesis 11:1-9).

But the nations have not been able to live at peace with one another. Between the various ethnic and national groups there has been an unending pattern of hatred, conflict and warfare. Jesus said, "And you will hear of **wars and rumors of wars.** See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. **For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.** And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows" (Matthew 24:6).

Despite the differences in the various racial, national and ethnic groups, they all have in common the fact that they are God's children, and all have the same potential to share life eternally with God as sons and citizens of his eternal kingdom (Isaiah 9:7; Ephesians 2:19; Revelation 21:7).

It's been God's intent from the first that the nations should live in peace, and that they should all seek to have a relationship with the true God, as his children. "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, **so that they should seek the Lord,** in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own [Greek] poets have said, '**For we are also His offspring.**'" (Acts 17:26).

When Christ's kingdom is established on the earth, all nations will come to know God, and learn to serve him in peace and harmony.

"The kings of Tarshish and of the isles Will

bring presents; The kings of Sheba and Seba Will offer gifts. **Yes, all kings shall fall down before Him; All nations shall serve Him**" (Psalm 72:10).

"**All nations** whom You have made Shall come and worship before You, O Lord, And shall glorify Your name" (Psalm 86:9).

Old enemies, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Israel, will together serve God. "Then the Lord will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it. And the Lord will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the Lord, and He will be entreated by them and heal them. In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria -- a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, '**Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance**'" (Isaiah 19: 21-25).

"**All the ends of the world Shall remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations Shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the Lord's, And He rules over the nations**" (Psalm 22:27-28).

When all nations recognize and learn to serve the true God, all men will be brothers, children of God not only in a physical sense, but in a spiritual sense as well. All will learn to love and respect one another. "Beloved, **let us love one another,** for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. And we have seen and testify that **the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.**" (1 John 4:7-14).

Hatred of other people, made in the image of God, as all human beings are, has no place in the hearts of those who love God. "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that **he who loves God must love his**

brother also" (1 John 4:20-21).

In this article we've discussed four ways in which the world will be different when Christ returns. There will be an end to oppression, a just government, an end to war, and harmony among races and nations.

The impact of just these differences alone are incalculable. But there are many more very profound differences yet to discuss in future installments in this series.

REVELATION 21:1-7 | TLV



"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

I also saw the holy city—the New Jerusalem—coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

I also heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is among men, and He shall tabernacle among them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them and be their God.

He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more. Nor shall there be mourning or crying or pain any longer, for the former things have passed away." And the One seated upon the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new!" Then He said, "Write, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Then He said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will freely give from the spring of the water of life.

The one who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son. "



IN THIS ISSUE

"The Kingdom Suffers Violence" – Jesus said in Matthew 11:12, "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." At first, this scripture may seem confusing; what did Christ mean by this? Join us as we uncover the meaning of these profound words!

"Did Jesus Teach Different Commandments?" – When Christ said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" in John 14:15, what commandments was He referring to? Are they the same or different than those in the old testament? In this article, we analyze this important statement from Christ.

"Why Christians Should Keep the Sabbath" – Today, it is common practice for Sunday to be kept as a day of worship in mainstream Christianity. Why is this, and is this acceptable as a 'Sabbath' to God? We take a close look at this and what it means for you in this article!

Book Review: "Scientists Refute Darwinism" – We know Darwinism has often been contrasted with the Biblical account of creation, but how does it stand up to scientific standards? This review analyzes a book written by two leading scientists that attempt to answer this question.

"How the World Will Be Different When Christ Returns | Part I" – We see the world around us, with all of the stresses and conflict within it. The Bible shows that this world is currently under the influence of Satan. But how different will it be when Christ returns? Join us as we begin the exploration of this fascinating and exciting subject, and what it means for mankind!

Looking for Answers?

Find sermons and articles regarding these subjects and more at **cogmessenger.org**!