

# The Burdensome Stone

***“In that day will I  
make Jerusalem a  
burdensome stone  
for all people.”  
—Zechariah 12:3***

**EVERY DAY THERE IS** news about another attempt to hurt the residents of Israel and to destroy this nation of Israelites regathered in their own land. For example, on November 24, 2002, the *New York Post* reported typical terrorist attacks against Israel with the headline, “*Terror on High Seas.*” The subheading was “*Suicide Boater Bombers.*” The account said:

“Two Palestinian terrorists in boats packed with explosives blew themselves up yesterday and injured four Israeli soldiers after they were intercepted by an Israeli navy patrol vessel near the Gaza Strip.

“The Palestinian boat packed with bombs entered Israeli-controlled waters off northern Gaza when it was approached by an Israeli patrol boat.

“After the Israeli vessel fired warning shots to force the boat to turn around, it exploded.

“The Israeli army closed the waters off the coast of Gaza, barring all Palestinian fishing boats from entering those waters after the attack, Israeli officials said.”

The radical group, Islamic Jihad, later took credit for the blast, saying the two men were homicide bombers.

## **FIGHTING IN BETHLEHEM AND JENIN**

“The suicide attack came as Israeli forces demolished the homes of four activists from militias linked to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat’s Fatah faction, near the West Bank town of Bethlehem.

“Israel reoccupied Bethlehem on Friday after a Palestinian man blew himself up on a Jerusalem bus the day before, killing eleven people, four of them children.

“Since that attack, Israeli soldiers have launched a wave of raids on homes in the West Bank, demolishing six homes and arresting twenty-two people.

“Meanwhile, the Israeli army said a British U.N. aid worker killed Friday during clashes between soldiers and Palestinian gunmen in the Jenin refugee camp, was mistakenly shot by an Israeli soldier who mistook a cell phone in his hand for a grenade.

“An initial army investigation showed that Iain Hook, 50, who was carrying the phone, came out of an alley from which Palestinian gunmen had been firing earlier, when the soldier shot him.

“During yesterday’s funeral of an eleven-year-old Palestinian boy who was also killed in the violent clashes, some 2,000 mourners marched through Jenin, carrying an empty coffin draped with a U.N. flag in memory of Hook.

“Hook was overseeing the reconstruction of homes in the camp which had been bulldozed during a previous Israeli raid.

“The mourners then unfurled a banner reading, ‘Israel killed Hook.’”

## **KENYA, NOT A HAVEN**

A few days later, on November 28, a car bomb blew up the lobby of the Paradise Hotel in Mombasa, Kenya, Africa, an Israeli-owned resort in this seaside city. The bombing that killed 13 people was coupled with a missile attack that narrowly missed downing a crowded jetliner, returning Israeli vacationers back to Israel. The *New York Times*, in reporting on the return of the second group of vacationers on November 30, 2002, had an article entitled “*Israelis Return in Trauma from Supposed Haven.*” The subheading said, “*258 Back from Kenya, Some for Treatment, Some for Funerals.*” The article said in part:

“In Israel it was a second day of emotional homecomings, of hugs and tears at Ben-Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv. On Thursday, the scene was similar as passengers aboard an Israeli charter plane carrying 261 passengers arrived safely, only hours after two missiles narrowly missed it just after takeoff in Kenya.

“It was the same plane that had just brought in the group of tourists checking into the Paradise Hotel when three suicide bombers in a four-wheel drive vehicle struck just outside the hotel lobby.

“On both days, there was the same unsettled feeling about the attacks in Kenya: many of the Israeli tourists had gone for relief from the violence and random explosions of the past two years of renewed fighting between Israelis and Palestinians.

“‘If there is going to be an attack; then this is the best place to be,’ one woman at the airport today said, then began crying.”

Reporting on the investigation taking place in Kenya, the *Times* also said: “The Kenyan police swept through this predominantly Muslim seaside city today for clues to who was behind the bombing that killed thirteen people here and the missile attack that narrowly missed downing a crowded jetliner.

“The police detained a dozen foreigners, but it was unclear what, if any, evidence they had against them.

“With smoke still rising from the ruins of the Israeli-owned hotel destroyed by a car bomb, the Kenyan police and Israeli investigators carried away charred pieces of the sports utility vehicle used in the attack. They posted tiny red flags to mark evidence throughout the ruins of the Paradise Hotel, which was popular with Israeli tourists.

“At the same time, the American Embassy in Nairobi, the capital, sent a team of legal experts to help with the investigation. The Kenyan police sealed off the area where a group of attackers were believed to have fired anti-aircraft missiles in an unsuccessful attempt to shoot down the chartered passenger jet.

“American officials said today that they did not know who was responsible for the attacks, but that early indications pointed to the involvement of either Al Qaeda or Al Ittihad al Islamiya, a Somali terrorist group believed to have links to Al Qaeda.”

Commenting further on the chief suspect, Al Qaeda, the *Times* article reported:

“Both American and Israeli officials have said the attack had all the hallmarks of an Al Qaeda assault: it was synchronized, it employed sophisticated weaponry, and it aimed to kill hundreds.

“It was clear that whoever was behind the attack intended to kill the maximum number of people. The attacks came on the one day of the week when Israel charts a flight in and out of the country. The suicide

attack at the hotel was intended to kill the 140-plus passengers the plane had just dropped off, and the missiles were aimed at the passengers the plane had just picked up.

“Mombasa, a crowded sweltering city of more than 800,000, has long been believed to be one of Al Qaeda’s principal East African bases, the others being Nairobi, the Kenyan capital, and Mogadishu, the Somali capital. American intelligence officials first pinpointed the region in the spring of 1996, when they discovered that a group of Muslim extremists, with links to Osama bin Laden, had set up bases in the area.”

## **A PLEA FOR HELP**

By the time this article goes to press there will be many more incidents of this type and the world will not have a clear picture of the reasons behind these attempts on Israel’s life. In mid 2002, the Simon Wiesenthal Center located in Los Angeles, California, sent a pamphlet to United States citizens. It was captioned, “Action Alert” \* “Israel Is Fighting for Her Life” -“Here’s What You Can Do.” First they listed the lies and misconceptions concerning events taking place in Israel. This was followed by the names, phone numbers, and addresses of people and organizations to contact on behalf of Israel. The list began with the President and Vice President of the United States and principal Senate and House Members. We publish the entire pamphlet to show how truly the prophet Zechariah said that the Lord would in that day (our day) make “Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people.” (Zech. 12:3) The pamphlet began by saying:

“THE STATEMENTS BELOW ARE DISTORTIONS BEING USED EVERYDAY TO UNDERMINE ISRAEL’S POSITION IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT AND THE RESPONSES TO THESE UNTRUTHS. REMEMBER, THERE ARE ALMOST 60 MOSLEM COUNTRIES REPRESENTING NEARLY ONE BILLION MOSLEMS, MANY PARTICIPATING IN A CAMPAIGN TO DELEGITIMIZE THE JEWISH STATE, A COUNTRY THE SIZE OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY. WE CANNOT LET THAT GO UNANSWERED. IT IS UP TO US TO HELP DISSEMINATE THE REALITY ABOUT ISRAEL—TO OUR NATION’S LEADERS, TO WORLD GOVERNMENTS, TO OUR MEDIA OUTLETS, TO ALL WHO WILL LISTEN. THE FIGHT AGAINST TERROR IS OUR

FIGHT. PLEASE STAND UP TODAY AND DO YOUR PART. IF YOU WANT OTHERS TO RECEIVE THIS PAMPHLET, PLEASE SEND US THEIR NAMES AND ADDRESSES.

1. “‘As a people under occupation, the desperate Palestinians must use violent measures, including suicide bombing, to gain their state. Only when Israel withdraws to its pre-1967 borders will the violence stop.’

“Response—At Camp David, then Prime Minister Barak offered Arafat a Palestinian state on 95% of the West Bank, all of Gaza and major portions of East Jerusalem, and the holy sites of the Old City. Arafat rejected the offer with the encouragement of major Arab leaders. President Clinton blamed Arafat for the collapse of the negotiations, saying, ‘I believe Chairman Arafat missed a golden opportunity to make that agreement ... the violence and terrorism which followed were not inevitable and have been a terrible mistake.’

2. “‘The recent Saudi initiative—endorsed by all the Arab states—promises Arab recognition of Israel in exchange for Israeli withdrawal to June 1967 borders and is a real breakthrough for peace.’

“Response—Since 1948, the State of Israel has dreamed of nothing more than living in peace with her Arab neighbors. But no Arab state, except for Egypt and Jordan, has been willing to accept the notion of a Jewish State in the Middle East. Now, Saudi Arabia—tarnished by the revelation that fifteen of the nineteen September 11th suicide terrorists were Saudi citizens—has held out the possibility of peace with Israel. Israel regards this as a development worth exploring and has offered to discuss it with the Saudis directly. But the Saudis have refused. In addition, the recent Arab summit to discuss the peace plan insisted on the ‘right of return’ for millions of Palestinians to Israel, an idea which would lead to the immediate demographic demise of the Jewish State. Meanwhile, as Prince Abdullah talks peace, his Ambassador to London, Gosaibi, writes a poem praising suicide bombers. Also, official Saudi newspapers continue to give credence to the infamous ‘blood libel,’ while at the same time praising the Passover suicide bomber and raising millions of dollars to aid the families of the so-called Palestinian ‘martyrs,’—thereby encouraging young men and women from poor families to volunteer for such missions.

3. ““The European Union has consistently labeled Israeli anti-terrorist incursions into Palestinian cities as violations of human rights, and was considering commercial sanctions against the Jewish State because of it. They also criticized Israel for barring Red Crescent ambulances from the fighting. A Portuguese Nobel Laureate, JosÀ Saramago, summed up the sentiments of some European leaders and media when he said the Jewish State’s incursion was “in the spirit of Auschwitz.””

“Response—The policies and posturing of the EU are hypocritical and based on a double standard. While they are quick to threaten Israel with sanctions and boycotts, they ignore the anti-Israel terrorism emanating from the Arab world. They cite Israel for barring ambulances, but say nothing of the fact that some of those ambulances were caught transporting explosives. Sadly, wars create innocent victims. But, the civilized world must never accept a moral equivalency between those who commit evil and those forced to respond to it. Israel had no desire to invade Palestinian cities, but when Arafat ignored the suicide murders of Israeli citizens on buses, in restaurants and at shopping centers—most committed by Arafat’s own al Aksa brigades—she was left with no choice. If this is called ‘in the spirit of Auschwitz’ then there would be no difference between Hitler’s Blitzkrieg attack on Europe and the Allied landings on Normandy...no difference between Himmler’s cattle cars deporting innocents to the gas chambers and Allied planes that bombed European and German cities in the fight against Nazism. Europe, once late to recognize the threat from fascism, is again blinded because of her dependence on Mideast oil and cannot recognize that Israel is fighting for her very existence against the forces of terror.

4. ““French President Jacques Chirac says, ‘There is no upsurge in antisemitism’ in his country.’ (Feb. 26, 2002)

“Response—Since the outbreak of Intifada II, there have been over 400 attacks against synagogues, Jewish institutions, school children, and pedestrians in France’s major cities, including Paris, Marseilles and Lyons. In one incident the attackers wrote on the destroyed Jewish school ‘Death to the Jews’ and ‘Bin Laden Will Conquer.’ More recently, a Jewish soccer team was attacked by a group of assailants wearing hoods. Yet it wasn’t until April 2002, when a spate of arson attacks over Passover finally forced French Leaders to acknowledge that this anti-Jewish hate was inspired by the events in the Middle East and influenced

by al Qaeda-style extremist clerics. The Center has issued a ‘travel alert’ for Jewish travelers to exercise ‘extreme caution’ when traveling to France and neighboring Belgium, where the Chief Rabbi was assaulted and many religious Jews no longer feel safe walking in public wearing the distinctive kippah (religious skullcap).

5. “‘Israel may not like him, but if peace is to be achieved, they can only reach a deal with the Palestinian’s duly elected leader, Yassir Arafat.’

“Response—Israel has no desire to choose a leader for the Palestinians, but since the 1993 handshake in the Rose Garden, successive Israeli governments, both Labor and Likud, have been forced to conclude that Arafat is either unwilling or unable to make peace. Despite winning a Nobel Peace Prize, he has thwarted every opportunity for peace. At Camp David, he not only spurned Barak’s generous offer for a Palestinian State in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem, but he made no counter-offer whatsoever. Instead, he launched Intifada II as a deliberate attempt to gain further concessions from Israel such as the return of the 1948 refugees. Both Ehud Barak of Labor and Ariel Sharon of Likud agree on one thing: Arafat has shown himself more a supporter of terrorism than a reliable peace partner. Despite this, Sharon seeks peace with the Palestinians and has proposed a regional peace conference with the major Arab states to seek ways of finding a solution.

6. “‘Israel should put its trust in the United Nations and heed the UN’s resolutions on the Middle East conflict.’

“Response—It is difficult for Israel to rely on the UN since it was the UN that precipitated the 1967 war when then-Secretary General U Thant agreed to Nasser’s demands and withdrew UN forces. In addition, a General Assembly dominated by 60 Arab and Moslem countries has a voting bloc that assures the passage of any resolution to condemn Israel. In fact, in the history of the United Nations and its agencies, there have been more than 1,000 resolutions condemning Israel. Yet not a single resolution has ever been passed specifically condemning Arab terror against the Jewish State. Even terrorist groups like Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah have never been repudiated by name in a resolution from the rostrum of the United Nations. Given this history, one can hardly

blame Israel for doubting that the UN can play an objective and constructive role in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

7. “‘In light of the recent Church of the Nativity standoff, Israel cannot be entrusted by the international community to safeguard the religious sites in the Holy Land.’

“Response—The Church of the Nativity standoff occurred when armed Palestinian gunmen, among them terrorists, stormed the Church hoping to create an international incident in order to avoid being captured by the Israelis. Prior to the 1967 Six-Day War, the Old City belonged to Jordan, which barred Jews from praying at the Western Wall, Judaism’s holiest site. Under Arab control, the Old City’s synagogues were destroyed, the Jewish cemetery on Mount of Olives was desecrated, and Jewish tombstones were used to construct urinals. Since 1967, Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Hebron have been opened by Israel to Moslems, Christians and Jews without restrictions.

8. “‘Israeli settlements on the West Bank led to the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization and constitute the central impediment to peace. They must all be dismantled.’

“Response—The Palestinians keep citing the settlements as an obstacle to peace, but those settlements would have been largely dismantled if Arafat had accepted Barak’s offer. It is worth remembering that when Arafat first began his terrorist attacks against Israel in 1964, the entire West Bank, Gaza and the Old City of Jerusalem were under Arab control. There was no Palestine, and the Arab states never considered offering the Palestinians their own state. Arafat’s attacks against Israel then clearly had one objective: the destruction of the Jewish State. Given his rejection of the countless opportunities for peace, there are many who believe he has not altered that objective.

9. “‘America’s response to the September 11th attacks, unlike Israel’s response to suicide bombers, is justified because it is not occupying someone else’s land. Israel, however, is an occupying force.’

“Response—Israel is the only democracy in a region dominated by dictatorships and feudal states, and is entitled to the same rights of self-defense and has the same responsibility to the welfare of its citizens as any other country. Facing deliberate attacks against their civilian populations, European countries, now criticizing Israel, would do exactly

as she has done. On September 11, America was attacked by Arab terrorists from al Qaeda. The United States responded by immediately warning the Taliban to give up the terrorists or face the consequences. When they refused, the US attacked Afghanistan by air, sea and land. Israel has said the same to Arafat since he was elected Chairman of the Palestinian Authority. But Arafat refused to rein in the terrorists, and worse, his own military unit, the al Aksa Brigades, has carried out most of those attacks.”

## **ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY**

The purpose of the pamphlet was to have responsible citizens write to the President, Congressmen, World Leaders, World Organizations, and the News Media on behalf of Israel. If the Simon Wiesenthal Center knew about the prophecy of Zechariah they would realize that such petitions would be of no avail. Zechariah plainly said, “All the people of the earth be gathered together against it [Jerusalem].” (Zech. 12:3) This would be disheartening news to them, except that the prophet also said, “All that burden themselves with it [Jerusalem] shall be cut in pieces.” Salvation for Israel will not come from other nations assisting them. It will only come from the Lord.

What did the Lord mean by Jerusalem being a burdensome stone? Young's Concordance defines the Hebrew word, *maamasah*, a 'weight of very heavy stone.' The Septuagint translates this phrase as a trodden stone, and gives the impression that the peoples of earth will all tread upon her. It reminds us of the words of our Lord Jesus, when he said, “Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.” (Luke 21:24) However, the 'times of the Gentiles' have been fulfilled, so the Septuagint translation is not giving the correct thought. All other translators stress that anyone trying to lift this stone will be badly hurt.

This appears to be the correct thought which is substantiated by words that follow. We note how appropriate is the symbol of Jerusalem being a burdensome stone. Over the centuries when God had blessed Israel and they were in covenant relationship with him, he promised them blessings if they would obey his commandments and keep his law. This they did not do and the punishment for their idolatry was clear, eviction from their land. This punishment continued until our Lord's return. God promised

to regather his people and establish them in their own land again. God faithfully kept his promise and we all have witnessed the miracle of this people being regathered and established as a nation. It is now pictured as a heavy stone, and those who have tried to lift it and cast it into the Mediterranean Sea have been hurt, and will continue to be hurt by so doing. The *New International Version* states the matter well when it says, “On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves.”—Zech. 12:3

## **ISRAEL REFORMS**

What follows in the prophecy are details of how Israel finally turns to the Lord for help. There is a change in the heart of Judah. God gives them dynamic leadership. Also it tells how they will consume right and left her surrounding enemies, but Jerusalem will remain intact in her place. (vs. 6, *NIV*) The tents of Judah will be saved first as the Lord sets out “to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.” (vs. 9, *NIV*) It is at that time that God pours out his spirit upon this people. “I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication.” (vs. 10, *NIV*). Then Jesus their Lord and Savior says, “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.” (vs. 10) Judah’s acceptance of Jesus as their Savior shall be extended to all Israel, as they all witness God’s salvation.

The days of stress and prejudice, of being persecuted and cast out, will be ended. The prophecy of their persecutions will come to a close. Instead, the prophecy spoken by Amos will become a reality, “I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.” (Amos 9:14,15) God’s promises are true and faithful.

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## Encouraging Others

***Key Verse: “Who, when he [Barnabas] came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord.”***

***—Acts 11:23, 24***

***Selected Scriptures:  
Acts 4:33-37; 9:26, 27;  
11:19-30; 15:36-40***

**THE EARLY CHURCH** received much persecution at the hands of their kinsmen, Israel. The prejudice and oppression was very severe and they pooled their resources to survive, sharing what they had. At this time the Lord touched the heart of a Levite, named Joses (whose name was later changed to Barnabas, meaning ‘son of consolation’), living on the island of Cyprus, who possessed property. He sold the property and came to Jerusalem and laid the money at the apostles’ feet. (Acts 4:36,37) This was the Lord’s way of bringing Barnabas to Jerusalem where he was needed.

About a year and a half later, the Apostle Paul was converted. He was intercepted on his way to Damascus to place brethren of the Early Church into prison. He was baptized and went to Arabia where he received instruction

from the Lord, and then returned to Damascus. He left Damascus when his life was threatened and went to Jerusalem. The apostles did not receive him, fearing him, and didn’t believe he was a disciple of Christ. It was Barnabas who learned Paul’s story, took him to the apostles and told them of Paul’s conversion. Paul was then accepted by them and worked with the church until his life was threatened again, and he was sent to his home in Tarsus.

Meanwhile, the persecution of the Early Church continued and caused many to leave and go to their countries of origin. The Gospel message was now being preached to others outside of Judea; but only to the Jews.

(Acts 11:19) Gentile Greeks heard the message in Antioch and a great number believed and became members of the Early Church. The news of what happened in Antioch reached the apostles in Jerusalem. They decided to investigate, and sent Barnabas to confirm what they had heard. Their selection of Barnabas was good, his being an older, mature Christian who had lived among the Gentiles for years on Cyprus. Barnabas ‘was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith,’ and ‘much people was added unto the Lord.’—vs. 24

Barnabas knew that the Apostle Paul had been selected by the Lord to be the Apostle to the Gentiles. He went to Tarsus to find Paul and they both came back to Antioch and established a congregation, organizing it and becoming elders along with three other brethren.

It was the Antioch congregation that financed Paul’s first missionary journey together with Barnabas and John Mark. Later, Paul and Barnabas planned a second journey, in particular to deliver a letter dealing with the items of the Law to be observed by the Gentile brethren, but they disagreed about taking John Mark. Mark had left them on their first journey and Paul refused to take him on this second trip. The contention between them was so sharp that they parted, Barnabas taking Mark and going to Cyprus, while Paul took Silas and went to Tarsus and Galatia. This split did not cause lasting hard feelings because Paul mentioned his association with Barnabas several times in his later epistles. He also commended John Mark for his usefulness to him.

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# Obeying the Call

**Key Verse:**  
*“Whereupon, O king  
Agrippa, I was not  
disobedient unto the  
heavenly vision.”*  
—Acts 26:19

**Selected Scriptures:**  
*Acts 25:23 – 26:32*

**THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD** been faithfully serving our Lord Jesus as his emissary for about twenty-five years when he was rescued by Roman soldiers from a mob of Israelites who would have torn him apart trying to kill him. The Romans could not understand why his kinsmen sought his life. When they tried to find out by scourging, Paul used his Roman citizenship to obtain a proper hearing. In Jerusalem he was interrogated by the priests and members of the Sanhedrin. He was taken to Caesarea when a plot against his life was revealed. At Caesarea he had another hearing, with the priests and council before Felix, the Roman governor, who had some knowledge of this new way of Christianity. He kept Paul under house arrest, but free to have visitors, for about two years when Festus became governor.

The priests and council then sought of Festus that Paul be brought back to Jerusalem. They hoped to ambush the escorting party and kill Paul. He, knowing this, appealed to Caesar, and Festus complied and decided to send him to Rome. Festus, however, did not have a clear understanding of the accusations against Paul. When King Agrippa and his sister, Bernice, came to pay their respects to the new governor, Festus told them about Paul’s case, how he had been left by Felix as a prisoner for Festus to judge, and how Paul had appealed to Caesar. Festus wanted to be able to write a clear account of the accusations against Paul, but was unable to do so. Thus, he arranged for a private hearing for Paul. Agrippa wanted to attend it. Festus welcomed his presence hoping that as a king over Judea and the land of Palestine he could interpret some of the accusations being made.

When Paul was brought before Festus and King Agrippa, he voiced his happiness that the king would hear his testimony since he was so well acquainted with the customs of the Jews. He explained how he had been

brought up as a Pharisee, and his life was well known to the Jews. He was now being accused of many things, especially that he had a hope of a promise, shared by his fathers, concerning a resurrection of the dead. He asked the king, “Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”—Acts 26:8

He then proceeded to tell them how he had been opposed to this new sect of Christian believers and how he was determined to exterminate them. He pursued them “even unto strange cities.” (vs. 11) It was as he was going to Damascus with authority from the high priest to place them in prison that a bright light from heaven shined on them and they all fell to the ground. Paul heard a voice speaking to them in the Hebrew tongue, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” When he asked, “Who art thou, Lord?,” he said, “I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” (vss. 12-15) Jesus then gave Paul much instruction as to what he should do and what Jesus would do to help him. “I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light.” (vss. 17,18, *New International Version*) To this Paul responded with the words of our key verse, ‘I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision.’ Indeed, Paul faithfully bore our Lord’s name before kings and Gentiles.

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# Playing a Supportive Role

*Key Verse:*  
**“Timothy’s worth you know, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.”**  
—*Philippians 2:22, Revised Standard Version*

*Selected Scriptures:*  
**Acts 16:1-5;**  
**Philippians 2:19-24;**  
**I Timothy 1:1-3;**  
**II Timothy 1:1-5**

**AFTER PAUL AND BARNABAS** separated because of their differences concerning John Mark, Paul and Silas went to Syria and Cilicia (Paul’s home territory) confirming the churches there. They continued this second missionary journey by stopping at Derbe and Lystra. These were the churches of Paul’s farthest penetration on his first journey in the province of Galatia. Paul had been stoned and left for dead in Lystra, after which he went to Derbe to recover from his wounds. Although the Scriptures do not tell us in whose home in Derbe he recuperated, it may have been the home of Timothy’s family. Timothy was a young teenager then, but as Paul later wrote to him, he said, “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life,

purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch [of Pisidia], at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.”—II Tim. 3:10,11

On this second journey, when Paul and Silas came to Derbe, they found that Timothy had matured. As a young man he was now a consecrated disciple of the new Christian faith and very active with a good report from the brethren at Lystra and Iconium and no doubt in his home ecclesia, in Derbe. He was the son of Eunice, a Jewish believer, and grandson of Lois, another Jewish believer. (II Tim. 1:5) Paul saw in Timothy the ideal young man he needed as his assistant. Since Paul always started his preaching by going to the synagogues of the Jews, he had Timothy circumcised because, his father being a Greek, he had not been circumcised. Timothy became a most valuable assistant, acceptable

to Jews and Gentiles. He was entrusted with tasks such as delivering Paul's special messages to churches that he couldn't visit directly.

The burden of doing God's work does not rest upon the shoulders of a single individual. The Apostle Paul was blessed with special knowledge and revelations given him to assist the early church and us in a clearer understanding of God's plan. (Gal. 1:15-17; II Cor. 12:1-7) It never made him proud, because he first ran in the wrong direction and recognized that he was "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8) because he "persecuted the church of God." (I Cor. 15:9) The great work that the humble Apostle Paul accomplished was shared by his faithful collaborators and helpers. He freely acknowledges these, such as Aquila and Priscilla (Rom. 16:3,4), and the many others in Romans 16:1-16. The preaching work he did was shared by Silas and Timothy as his helpers.—II Cor. 1:19

Throughout Paul's epistles we find reference to Timothy sharing the greetings and the work done by Paul in the early church. Paul wrote to the Philippians that he was going to send Timothy. He was in prison in Rome and wrote, "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare."—Phil. 2:20, *New International Version*

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## Partnering in Mission

**Key Verse:** *“Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.”*

*—Romans 16:3,4, New International Version*

**Selected Scriptures:**  
*Acts 18:1-4, 24-26;*  
*Romans 16:3,4;*  
*I Corinthians 16:19;*  
*II Timothy 4:19*

**WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL** left Silas in Berea and Timothy in Thessalonica because of persecution by the Jews, he went to Athens where they were all to meet after Silas had established the church in Berea, and Timothy had done the same in Thessalonica. Their work in these places took longer than expected and since Athens was not an industrial city, Paul left to go to Corinth where he could work and get funds for self-support. He met Aquila and Priscilla who had been evicted from Rome and who were also tentmakers by trade. (Acts 18:3) They invited Paul to stay and work with them. Whether Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in the synagogue and learned that they were tentmakers, or whether he sought out people with his trade, is not made clear. Paul’s custom was to go the synagogue first and to reason with the Jews about Jesus. All three went to the

synagogue every Sabbath and Paul reasoned with the Jews and Greeks.

At first Paul was reticent in his preaching, remembering well the persecutions of the Jews in Thessalonica and other synagogues. But when Silas and Timothy arrived with the news that the brethren in Thessalonica and Berea were doing well, and taking persecution for Christ’s sake unflinchingly, it inspired Paul to speak boldly in the synagogue concerning Jesus being the Messiah. He began to receive severe opposition and decided to leave and go to the Gentiles. The new congregation of believers met in Justus’ home adjoining the synagogue. Crispus, a ruler of the synagogue, and his family, and other Jews and Gentiles of Corinth believed, were baptized, and joined this

congregation. The Lord Jesus appeared in a vision to Paul and said, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city.”—Acts 18:9,10

Aquila and Priscilla were among Paul’s helpers as he labored in Corinth for one and half years. When he left Corinth to go to Jerusalem, they accompanied him to Ephesus, and established a permanent residence there. The home of Aquila and Priscilla became the meeting place for the congregation in Ephesus. It was Aquila and Priscilla who explained to Apollos the teachings of Paul. When Paul returned from his visit to Jerusalem and Antioch he came to Ephesus and lived with Aquila and Priscilla again. The incident referred to in our key verse where they risked their lives for Paul, occurred when Demetrius, a silversmith, led a riot against Paul to salvage the trade, making silver shrines in worship of the goddess Diana of the Ephesians. The mob went to the home of Aquila and Priscilla seeking Paul, and must have threatened them when they found Paul wasn’t there. The people mentioned in Romans 16 are all from Ephesus in Asia. When Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans, he had not been to Rome as yet. He was in Ephesus and greeted the brethren in Corinth as in I Corinthians 16:19. Paul was in Rome, a prisoner facing death, when he wrote to Timothy who was in Ephesus, asking him to greet these two faithful disciples.—II Tim. 4:19

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***

# The Revelation of Jesus Christ

**THE LAST BOOK** of the Bible is often called the Apocalypse, which is its title in the Greek language. It appears in the King James Translation as “The Revelation of Saint John the Divine,” meaning that it was written by the Apostle John. However, in the very opening sentence of the book, John describes what he is about to write as “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”—ch. 1:1

Then the apostle adds, “which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” (ch. 1:1) The Greek expression here translated ‘signified’ literally means ‘told in signs.’ In other words, the important lessons of this closing book of the Bible are set forth in sign language, or symbolisms.

Beginning with the fourth verse of the opening chapter, John addresses the “seven churches which are in Asia.” It is believed by church historians that John was at that time regarded as an important spiritual guide in these churches. However, just as the other writings of the various apostles, while addressed in the first instance to certain ‘churches,’ or perhaps to individuals, have applied to the church as a whole throughout the entire Gospel Age, so it is with the Book of Revelation.

It is reasonable to believe that the seven churches in Asia to which John addresses the book, are representative, or symbolic, of the church during seven epochs of its development. However, while there is certain descriptive matter applying to each of these churches which would not apply to the others, God’s promises of his care over his people, and of their future reward, if faithful, which are made to each church, are certainly applicable to all.

## **SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA MINOR**

The seven churches of Asia Minor designated as the original recipients of this wonderful message of Revelation, are those at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea. In John’s day

there was a group, or congregation, of believers in each of these places; but in the Lord's providence he used the circumstances associated with each of them as the basis for lessons to the church of the entire Gospel Age.

As we have noted, John introduces the subject matter of the book as the 'Revelation of Jesus Christ,' and in the opening chapter considerable information is given concerning Jesus whose revelation John presents. He is presented as the "faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth."—ch. 1:5

John quotes Jesus directly, saying, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." (ch. 1:8) Translators of the King James Version have used a capital "A" for 'almighty,' in an effort to convey the idea that Jesus, the Son of God, is also the Father. However, the word almighty is not used here as a title, but is merely descriptive of the fact stated by Jesus after his resurrection, when he announced, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." (Matt. 28:18) It was this highly exalted and powerful Son of God, who had died for the sins of the world and had been resurrected from the dead, who addressed John on the Isle of Patmos. John gives us the setting, as follows:

"I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."—ch. 1:12-18

In the last verse of the chapter, Jesus explains that the "seven candlesticks" were the seven churches of Asia, symbolic, of the entire church. The "seven stars" which he held in his right hand represented, he

explains, the “angels,” or messengers, to these seven churches. Thus, through these messengers Jesus has spoken to the church throughout the age. His promises to the “overcomers” in the church are wonderful. We quote some of them:

“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”—ch. 2:17

“He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.”—ch. 2:26,27

“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”—ch. 3:11,12

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”—ch. 3:20,21

## **THE THRONE SCENE**

Immediately after these messages of counsel, warning, and promise to the seven churches, John sees what he identifies as a “throne ... set in heaven.” (ch. 4:2) It consists of a highly symbolic description of the glory of God, the Father, in which four “beasts,” or more properly, according to the Greek text, “living creatures,” and “four and twenty elders,” acclaim him, saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.”—ch. 4:4,8

The fifth chapter gives a highly symbolical presentation of Jesus as the “Lamb” of God who was found worthy to open a “book” which was held in the right hand of the Lord, Jehovah, depicted in the throne scene of the previous chapter. The same ‘living creatures,’ and the same ‘four and twenty elders’ who acclaim the glory of God in the previous chapter sing the praises of the ‘Lamb.’ Joining with them in their song of praises are

“angels, ...ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands.” (ch. 5:11) Their acclamation is:

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, ... and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”—ch. 5:12,13

To summarize briefly, the opening chapter of this marvelous book is concerned mostly with introducing the One, even Jesus, who is the real author of the book. It shows him standing amidst the candlesticks which he identifies as the seven churches, or the one complete church. In this symbolism we see Jesus fulfilling his promise to his disciples, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world [Greek, ‘age’].”—Matt. 28:20

Then, in chapters two and three, are Jesus’ messages to the seven churches, which to some extent are progressive in nature, first promising that he would come quickly, and then, ‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock.’ Thus this personal return of the Master is shown to be different from his presence with the church throughout the age, as symbolized by his standing amidst the candlesticks.

Chapters four and five, as we have seen, present first Jehovah and then Jesus in their glory, with Jesus as the Lamb which had been slain presented as the One found worthy to open the book which was held in the right hand of Jehovah. The Lamb symbolism very beautifully and forcibly emphasizes Jesus’ worthiness to be the great executor of the Divine plan. It was contained in the book, because he was willing to lay down his life as the Redeemer of the world.

## **THE “LAMB” AND THE “BEAST”**

Beginning with chapter six, the Book of Revelation gives a mixed picture of faithfulness and apostasy in a struggle between the forces of righteousness and unrighteousness. In this great struggle the Lamb is seen to lead the forces of righteousness, while the forces which oppose God are dominated by a “beast.” (ch. 6:1) There are variations of this ‘beast.’ In one picture it is spotted like a leopard, and in another it is a scarlet colored beast. There is also an ‘image’ of the beast.

To get the general theme of the drama depicted in the book, it is enough to think of it from the standpoint of mighty forces following, on the one side, the Lamb, and on the other side, the beast. The Lamb is seen opening the seven seals of the book which he took from the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. When he opened the first seal a “white horse” appeared “and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer [he conquered, *Sinaitic Manuscript*].”—ch. 6:2

When the “second seal” is opened a “red” horse appears and power is given “to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth.” (ch. 6:4) With the opening of the “third seal,” a “black horse” appears, “and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.” (ch. 6:5) When the “fourth seal” is opened there appears a “pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.”—ch. 6:8

Much has been written concerning the four horsemen of the Apocalypse, much of it misapplied to struggles between nations and would-be world conquerors. Actually, however, the Book of Revelation is not concerned with worldly kingdoms and empires except as they become linked with the affairs of God’s professed people. So, while we shall not go into detail now, these four horses and their horsemen are symbolic of activities and developments within the ranks of those who, throughout the age, took the name of Christ as their banner, beginning with the ‘white horse,’ symbolical of the purity of the Early Church.

Chapter six continues to narrate what happens as the ‘seals’ are opened. (vs. 1) When the sixth is opened there is a great “earthquake.” (vs. 12) The Lord uses an ‘earthquake’ to illustrate the shakings and upheavals which we call revolutions. Much happens as a result of the earthquake which occurs when the sixth seal is opened. Verse seventeen of the chapter identifies these occurrences as belonging to the “day” of the Lord’s “wrath.”

This expression identifies the time of the events as being in the end of the age. The day of the Lord’s wrath, or vengeance, is shown by many prophecies to be a period of time following our Lord’s return, its purpose being to set aside the “kingdoms of this world” preparatory to the manifestation of the Messianic kingdom.—Rev. 11:15

A remarkable picture is presented to us in chapter seven. The time is still within the day of the Lord's wrath. Great social upheavals are taking place, but restraining influences are revealed. "Four winds" are held back by "angels" standing on the "four corners of the earth." (vs. 1) It is a dramatic setting. Literally, four mighty winds converging from the four points of the compass would create a powerful whirlwind which would be destructive to everything in its path.

These 'winds' are symbolic of certain elements of the trouble throughout the world incident to the day of God's wrath, but they are shown as being held back. The reason given for this is that the work of God in sealing his own "servants ... in their foreheads" might be completed. (vs. 3) This reveals the great importance God attaches to his own people in these closing days of what Paul describes as "this present evil world."—Gal. 1:4

These 'servants' of God are shown in the chapter as being one hundred forty-four thousand in number, divided equally among twelve symbolic tribes of Israel. These are the Gospel Age sons of God. In the beginning of the age, nearly all who qualified for this special position in the plan of God were, by nature, Israelites. John wrote concerning Jesus, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power [*Marginal Translation*, 'the right, or privilege'] to become the sons of God."—John 1:11,12

But there were not enough of these to make up God's foreordained number, so God "at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14) These also become sons of God, but they come into this arrangement under the provisions made in the royal promises to Israel. They are the "wild" olive branches which, when grafted into the Abrahamic promises, become "natural" branches, so are shown in this Revelation picture as being spiritual Israelites.—Rom. 11:17-29

The picture clearly shows that the last of these are called from the world through the power of the Gospel and 'sealed' in their 'foreheads'—that is, given an understanding of God's plan and will for them—during the closing scenes of the age, after the "days of vengeance" have already begun. (Luke 21:22) In fact, the severest of the trouble upon the world is shown to be held back until this work is accomplished. It is marvelous to

realize that the Lord employs such mighty forces on behalf of a few of his little ones. No wonder Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”—Luke 12:32

## **TRUMPETS**

The first verse of chapter eight records the opening of the seventh and last seal. Then “seven angels” appear, and to these are given “seven trumpets.” (vs. 2) They are not, of course, literal trumpets. Generally speaking, trumpets are used in the Bible to symbolize messages which God designs to have delivered. That is the picture given us in connection with these ‘seven trumpets.’

In connection with the “voice” or trumpet of the seventh angel, “in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished.” (ch. 10:7, *New International Version*) In verses eight and nine of this tenth chapter, this finished mystery of God is likened to a “little book,” which, when it is eaten is sweet as honey in the mouth, but “shall make thy belly bitter.”

It is believed by many, that this ‘little book’ symbolizes the great Truth of the Divine plan which the Lord has unfolded to his people in these last days. This Truth is indeed ‘sweet,’ but when it is assimilated, and acted upon, it leads to ostracism, and frequently to persecution.

Another development is recorded in chapter eleven, verse fifteen, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Then, in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses, we are given a brief description of the results of the reign of Christ, from its early beginning to its close. We quote:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great—and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”—Rev. 11:17,18, *NIV*

## **THE ANTICHRIST BEAST**

Chapter thirteen describes the “beast” with “seven heads and ten horns.” (vs. 1) Concerning this ‘beast’ the record states, “It was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power

was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb.”—ch. 13:7,8

In verse one of chapter fourteen, the Lamb is seen standing “on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads.” These are the ‘sealed’ ones of the seventh chapter. By contrast, those who come under the domination of the beast are shown to receive a “mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads.”—Rev. 13:16,17

Thus we have brought before us these two opposing forces. On the one side are the Lamb and those who are with him; on the other, the beast, and those who have its slave marks ‘in their right hand, or in their foreheads.’ It would require a book to analyze all the symbols which are used to describe the struggle which takes place between these two—Christ and Antichrist.

As the scene develops another symbolism is introduced; namely, a city, or more correctly, two cities. One is called “Babylon.” (ch. 17:5,18) It is an unholy city which reigns over the kings of the earth, and commits “fornication” with them. (vs. 2) The other is the “holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven.”—ch. 21:2

The unholy city, Babylon, symbolizes the apostate church. Her ‘fornication’ was in the fact that she allied herself with civil governments. It was while this union was a dominating factor throughout Europe that this combination was represented by the beast. But even after this, the woman, the false church, is shown sitting on the “scarlet coloured” beast.—ch. 17:1-18

According to this seventeenth chapter, it is this beast which finally destroys her. In this chapter, the beast which destroys the woman also makes war with the Lamb. This indicates that the apostate church is destroyed.

Contrary to the picture given us in chapter thirteen, where the beast is shown to overcome the saints, now the Lamb overcomes the beast, and it goes into “perdition.” (vss. 8,11) Chapters sixteen through nineteen reveal in detail the complete destruction of all the Antichrist forces of unrighteousness, including the harlot woman, the beast, the image of the beast, and the false prophet.

Beginning with chapter twenty, the glorious triumph of the Lamb and those who are associated with him is portrayed. In the nineteenth chapter, these associates of the Lamb are shown as becoming the “bride” of the Lamb, (ch. 21:2) in contrast with the harlotry of the woman who committed fornication with the kings of the earth.

Standing sponsor for every attack against Christ and his true church throughout the age has been “that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan,” and in these opening verses of chapter twenty, he is shown to be “bound” by an “angel” which comes down from heaven. We see the resurrection of those who were “beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God,” and “they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”—Rev. 20:2-4

But not alone are those who reign with the Lamb, as his bride, blessed in this glorious triumph of righteousness, for all the dead are raised to participate in the blessings of the kingdom. Other “books” are opened for them (ch. 20:12)—not that ‘little book’ which is so sweet to the saints now—but ‘books’ which contain the will of God for the people of the kingdom age. They are judged by the things written in those books; that is, their trial will be upon the basis of the will of God which the open books reveal. Those who pass the tests will have their names enrolled in the “book of life,” which will also then be opened for the world.

## **“NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH”**

The twenty-first chapter presents another picture of the same kingdom age. Verse one tells of a “new heaven and a new earth.” These are symbols of the two phases of Christ’s kingdom—the spiritual and the earthly. “And there was no more sea.” The ‘sea’ symbolizes the restless, discontented masses of mankind, struggling for their real and fancied rights, particularly during the closing scenes of the age. With the establishment of Christ’s kingdom they will find peace and security so there will be ‘no more sea.’

John sees the “holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (vs. 2) There is no mistaking the meaning of this symbolism, for verses nine and ten explain it. Here we are told that the ‘new Jerusalem’ is the “bride, the Lamb’s wife,” in other words, those whom we previously saw with the Lamb on mount Zion.

The glorious result of the coming of this ‘holy city’ is revealed in verses four and five—no more pain and death; tears wiped away; and all things made new. As we learned from the opening book of the Bible, because of sin, God sentenced mankind to death and withdrew his favor from them. But now, as verse three reveals, God again dwells with the people, and through the agencies of Christ’s kingdom, the sin-cursed and dying race become his people, with the result that “there shall be no more death.”

Chapter twenty-two presents still another picture of the thousand-year reign of Christ. Here the kingdom is symbolized as “the throne of God and of the Lamb.” Proceeding out of this ‘throne’ is a “pure river of water of life, clear as crystal.” “In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.”—vss 1,2

In the opening chapters of the Bible, we saw man driven from Eden and “a flaming sword” used to prevent his returning and partaking of the trees of life. (Gen. 3:24) Now, in this closing chapter, that sword is removed, and an invitation extended to “come” and “take the water of life freely.”—vs. 17

This invitation is first given by the “Spirit and the bride,” and then all who hear are invited to amplify the call. This ‘river,’ of course, is not literal. It symbolizes the fulfillment of those wonderful promises of God which we have found scattered throughout the entire Bible, promises of blessing for all the families of the earth.

Here we see these blessings like a mighty river of refreshing, life-giving waters, emanating from the ‘throne of God and of the Lamb.’ Thus we are reminded that God’s promises to bless all the families of the earth depend for fulfillment upon two things—first, the sacrificial work of the slain Lamb; that is, the redemptive work of Christ; and second, the authority and power of the throne of God. There is to be a real government to rule the people for a thousand years, and it will be the agency for giving everlasting life to all who will then believe and obey.

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*Dawn Bible Students Association*

# The Christian's Sabbath

*“He that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.”  
—Hebrews 4:10*

**IN THE OLD TESTAMENT** the word sabbath in most instances is a translation of a Hebrew word which means ‘intermission,’ with the texts in which it appears indicating that the intermission was for rest from servile and gainful work. Our word rest comes closest to defining the word sabbath. Its meaning in the New Testament is the

same.

In the New Testament the word appears, in all, sixty times. Many of these uses are in narratives of events which occurred on the Sabbath, such as the reading of the Scriptures in synagogues, or visiting synagogues. We are also informed of the accusations against Jesus for healing the sick on the Sabbath. In reply to these charges Jesus explained, “My Father worketh hitherto [on the Sabbath] and I work.” He also explained that “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath.”—Mark 2:27; John 5:17

Jesus gave no direct commands concerning the Sabbath. Neither did any of the apostles. The only use of the word in all the epistles of the New Testament is found in Colossians 2:16, which reads, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath.” In the King James Version the word days is added to sabbath in this text, but it is in italics, indicating that it is an arbitrary addition, not appearing in the Greek text. There is no reference to the Sabbath in the Book of Revelation.

Beginning with Cornelius, Gentiles began accepting Christ and coming into the Early Church. Their background of religious thought and experience was vastly different from that of their Jewish brethren, and this presented a problem to those first believers in Christianity. To what extent should the Gentile believers be expected to conform to Jewish customs and viewpoints?

An apostolic conference was called at Jerusalem to consider this problem. The conclusions reached are set forth in a message, or letter, which was sent to the churches. This letter reads, omitting the two opening paragraphs, “It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well.”—Acts 15:25-29

It is noteworthy that in these ‘necessary things’ from which the Gentile believers were to abstain, no mention is made of refraining from work on the seventh day. Undoubtedly the reason is that the apostles understood that the Jewish Law was not binding upon the followers of Jesus, except those moral fundamentals pertaining to adultery, idols, and blood. In his sermon on the mount, Jesus had given these a higher, or magnified, meaning.

Moses summed up the intent and spirit of the Ten Commandments to mean that we should love the Lord with all our hearts, and our neighbors as ourselves. (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) Jesus, when asked which is the greatest commandment, quotes these words of Moses (Matt. 22:37-39) and made the comment, “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (vs. 40) He was indicating what the spirit of the decalogue involved.

The “new commandment” (John 13:34) which Jesus gave to his disciples goes beyond this, for it calls for the sacrifice of life on behalf of our neighbors, our brethren. We are invited to lay down our lives for them.—John 15:13; I John 3:16

Obviously to have such a love for God as would lead one to follow in the sacrificial footsteps of Jesus would, of necessity, result in purity of life and conduct. One who is laying down his life in the service of God and of his fellows does not need to be told not to steal; not to covet; not to commit adultery; and not to murder.

The Sabbath commandment called for abstention from servile and gainful employment on the seventh day. The true Christian is one who has consecrated all that he has, and is, to the Lord and to his service. All that he may gain by working he acquires for the Lord, so that all his work is holy. Those who have such a viewpoint of, and purpose in, life need not be told to consider one day a week holy to the Lord, for they have already consecrated every day to him.

## **EARLY CHURCH CUSTOMS**

It is clear from the record that the apostles, when opportunity afforded, visited the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath. This was not because they were strict observers of the Jewish Sabbath, but because they knew they would find devout Jews in the synagogues on these days to which they could witness the Gospel of Christ.

They were just as alert for opportunities to serve on the first day of the week, when the early Christians formed the habit of meeting on that day for the breaking of bread in commemoration of the resurrection of Jesus, as they were on any other day. One example of this is Paul's experience at Troas where, when he had preached until midnight, a young man fell asleep and tumbled out of the window and died. After restoring the young man to life, Paul preached the remainder of the night.—Acts 20:7-12

This does not mean that the apostles had adopted the first day of the week to be observed as the Christian Sabbath. It simply means that they were ready and glad to serve their brethren and to bear witness to the Gospel wherever and whenever opportunity offered, regardless of what day of the week it might be.

## **A REST DAY BENEFICIAL**

In connection with the Sabbath, Moses reminded Israel of their slave days in Egypt when, apparently, no day of rest was provided. (Deut. 5:15) It is a recognized fact that human beings need this day of rest from their ordinary occupations, and Christians should rejoice in the opportunities it affords them for worship and service of the Lord. Now, in this modern age of laborsaving machinery, millions enjoy two days a week from their gainful employment.

The commandment relating to the Sabbath simply stated that there were to be six days of labor, and the seventh was to be a day of rest. No

indication is given as to when the six days would or should begin to count. Evidently the spirit of the commandment is that one day in seven was to be a day of rest. Some may insist that man has kept such accurate time that the exact same seventh day of the week which we now call Saturday is the seventh day on which God rested when he had finished the creative work, and therefore no other day could properly be called the Sabbath.

In this, several difficulties are encountered. The first one is that God's rest day was not one of twenty-four hours. No definite starting day can therefore be arrived at in this manner.

Scriptural days are measured from sundown to sundown, and here we are confronted with another difficulty, which means that days of necessity vary according to where one may be located on the earth. For example, this variation is so great that when the International Date Line is crossed, there is a whole day's difference, so our seventh day might be the sixth, or the first, on the other side of the earth.

Besides, for those who may live north of the Arctic circle, or south of the Antarctic circle, there is really only one 'day' in the whole year—six months of sunshine, and six months of darkness. In these areas of the earth twenty-four-hour time divisions are wholly arbitrary, being governed by humanly made mechanical time-measuring devices.

All of this is relatively unimportant to our subject, except to emphasize the difficulties of endeavoring to establish a particular day out of seven as one which the Lord has made holy, or sacred, above the others. We have already quoted Paul's instructions that Christians are not to be judged upon the basis of whether or not they observe certain days above others, or keep the Jewish Sabbath; and when we take all the facts into consideration we can see how truly wise Paul was in giving Christians such advice.—Col. 2:16

## **GOD'S REST**

Our text indicates that Christian believers enjoy a sabbath, or rest, which is similar to the rest which God began when the work of the six creative days was finished. Did God cease all activity in order to rest, in the sense that we think of resting? Was God weary, or tired? The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth

not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding.”—Isa. 40:28

God was not tired, and did not need to rest. It is apparent, therefore, that there is a deeper meaning attached to the statement that we, who have believed, have ceased from our own works, ‘as God did from his.’ Examining the general lesson of which our text is a part, some interesting facts appear. The first verse of the chapter reads, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.” The ‘rest’ here referred to is something far beyond physical rest during one day in seven, whether it be the first or the seventh day.

Verses three and four read, “We which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.” Here is a direct reference to the ‘seventh’ day of God’s rest, with the explanation that the Israelites had failed to enter into his rest—‘although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.’

How revealing are these texts! It was not that God had been resting one twenty-four hour day in seven from the foundation of the world, and that the Israelites had failed to rest with him on those seventh days. No, the works were finished from the foundation of the world, and God had been resting ever since. His rest had been continuous, all the time, and the Israelites had failed to share it with him because of their unbelief.

The apostle then explains that because the typical Israelites had not entered into God’s rest, “therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein.” (vs. 6) Verse seven quotes a prophecy from Psalm 95:7 referring to a “day,” or period, when God’s people of this age would be given an opportunity to enter into his rest. Paul explains that if Joshua (*Marginal Translation*) had given rest to God’s people in the Jewish Age, then the Lord, through the psalmist, would not have spoken of another ‘day.’

The point we wish to emphasize here is that this apostolic lesson pertaining to Christian sabbath-keeping could not possibly be applied to resting one day in seven from physical labor. Paul is not discussing the

importance of one day above another, but is encouraging the Christian to enter into a rest of faith every day.

Verse nine continues the lesson and reads, “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” The marginal translation of this text, which is true to the meaning of the original Greek text, reads, “There remaineth therefore a keeping of a sabbath to the people of God.” This seems to be a reference to a far more realistic sabbath, or rest, which the faithful people of God will attain in the future; but again the reference is to a continuous rest, not an intermittent one-day-in-seven cessation from physical labor.

Then comes our text. It speaks of those who enter into God’s rest, and explains that those who do, cease from their own works as God ceased from his. Here, also, the reference is to something far more comprehensive and important than resting one day in seven. A Christian ceases from his own works, not for the seventh day of each week, merely, but for every day. His rest is as continuous as God’s rest has been; and as verse three indicates, his has been an uninterrupted rest from the ‘foundation of the world.’

What, then, are the works from which a Christian ceases? Is it his daily employment by which he makes a living? No! We believe the Scriptures reveal clearly that they are the works of righteousness by which one might attempt to secure the favor and blessing of the Lord. Paul refers to them as the “works [and ‘deeds’] of the law” by which there “shall no flesh be justified.”—Rom. 3:20; Gal. 2:16; 3:11

How do we cease from these works? It is by placing our faith and trust in the finished work of Christ. Christ, through his shed blood, has provided justification and salvation for us which we could not attain by our own imperfect efforts, or works. Our rest of faith, therefore, is in him. It is a blessed rest we enjoy, because that which we struggled unsuccessfully to attain has been provided by another.

### **“AS GOD DID FROM HIS”**

From this standpoint, Paul’s comparison of the Creator’s rest with ours is most interesting and enlightening. During all those long days of creation Jehovah and his beloved Son together carried forward the work of preparing the earth to be man’s eternal home. John wrote concerning Jesus in his prehuman existence that “without him was not any thing

made that was made.” (John 1:3) This was as the *Logos*, and this title means ‘representative, or mouthpiece.’ Jehovah directed the work, so we hear him saying to his Son, “Let us make man in our image.”—Gen. 1:26

But, with the creation of man, the work of those six days was completed. Man had been created in the image of God, with the ability to know right from wrong. He was told that it was wrong to disobey the Creator’s law, and that disobedience would lead to death. He had been created a free moral agent. Divine power would not therefore be used to restrain him from sin, so man partook of the forbidden fruit and was sentenced to death.

There began the long night of sin and death. The Creator still loved his human creation, but justice demanded that the death penalty continue to be carried out. However, in his wisdom, God had formulated a plan for human recovery from sin and death, a plan which permitted man to experience evil, and to profit therefrom, thus adding to his original perfection that which could be acquired only by experience.

God’s plan called for a Redeemer, one who would take the sinner’s place in death, and, being raised from the dead, serve as the reconciler of the world to God. The one chosen for this was his own beloved Son, the *Logos*. Now, God’s Son, who had worked under his supervision in creating all things, was assigned the responsibility of restoring fallen man, and thus completing the Creator’s ultimate design concerning the earth.—Isa. 45:18

God, therefore, rested from his creative work; rested, that is, in the sense of entrusting its completion to another, even to his own beloved Son. Since the Creator’s confidence in his Son was complete, his rest has been complete. He knew from the beginning that his Son would willingly, gladly, and faithfully carry out every detail of his plan for the redemption and recovery of fallen man from sin and death.

Paul wrote, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.” (II Cor. 5:19) The Creator is the author of the plan of reconciliation; but, as Paul explains, it is accomplished through Christ, and God rests the matter with him. Now we can see how it is that our ‘rest’ is like God’s ‘rest.’ We have ceased from our own works as God did from his because, like God, we look to Jesus to accomplish what we could not do ourselves.

God could not set aside the death penalty and restore sinful man to life because the sentence of death was just, and Divine justice could not be set aside. But Jesus became a ransom, a corresponding price, and thus made possible the release of man from the penalty. We, as members of the fallen race, are imperfect, and cannot approach God in our own merit. But upon the basis of the ransom provided by Jesus, he becomes our Advocate before the Father, so we can be at peace with him, and enjoy a hope of life through Christ.

The Creator's confidence in Christ has always been complete. The extent of our rest in Christ depends upon the degree of faith we exercise in this loving provision which our Heavenly Father has made for us. Our Heavenly Father is active on our behalf even while resting. Jesus said that no one could come to him unless drawn by the Father. And Jesus promised that those who are thus drawn, he would in no wise cast out, but would raise "up at the last day."—John 6:44,37

God draws the sinner, not directly to himself, but to Jesus. (John 6:44,45) Nor can the sinner go directly to God. He also must recognize the need of redemption through Jesus. What is true in the case of one individual member of the fallen race is true of all. Having brought upon himself the Divine penalty of death by transgressing the Divine Law, if man were ever to live again something must be accomplished for him. He must be redeemed, and God gave his Son the opportunity to be the Redeemer.

The Divine permission of evil in human experience might properly be considered as the completion, in the sense of a refining, of the human creation. It is a refining work involving the operation of man's free moral agency. Isaiah wrote that God created the earth "not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." (Isa. 45:18) God knew that inexperienced man would transgress his law. He knew that he could not overlook this transgression. But he also knew that his beloved Son would gladly take the sinner's place in death, and thus provide for his recovery.

Thus the Creator could look down to the close of his day of rest, and know that the earth would be inhabited by restored man, who would not only be perfect mentally, morally, and physically, but possessed also of that strength of righteous character that could be acquired only by

experience. So God rested from his work pertaining to man that this ultimate attainment might be reached through the ministry of Jesus.

The seventh creative day, God's rest day, like the others, began in obscurity. Actually, from the standpoint of light and darkness, it has been more like night than day. However, this long period during which evil has been permitted for the further development of man, is to end in a glorious morning of joy. The psalmist prophesied, "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."—Ps. 30:5

The work of the final thousand years of this seventh day is described by the Apostle Paul as the time of Christ's reign. Not only did Jesus provide redemption for the human race, but during his mediatorial reign will actually restore redeemed humanity to life and to harmony with God. Paul says that Christ must reign until all enemies are put under his feet, and that the "last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."—I Cor. 15:25,26

Paul then adds, "When all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." (vs. 28) It was because God put 'all things' under Christ—all things, that is, pertaining to the redemption and restoration of fallen man—that he rested. But with the recovery of man complete, with 'all the families of the earth' restored to perfection and able to obey the Creator's perfect Law, Christ's work will have been completed, and the Creator will resume his direct relationship with his human creation. The work of the last creative day will then be finished.

Meanwhile, what a glorious incentive we have for fully resting in Jesus to accomplish the Divine purpose both in ourselves as individuals, and on behalf of the whole world. If our rest of faith is complete our peace and joy in him will be deep and full and rich. If we have fully believed, then we can fully rest.

# A Foregleam of Kingdom Power

*“Then was brought  
unto him one  
possessed with a  
devil, blind, and  
dumb: and he healed  
him, insomuch that  
the blind and dumb  
both spake and saw.”  
—Matthew 12:22*

**WHEN JESUS BEGAN HIS** ministry it was written, “This beginning of miracles did Jesus ... and manifested forth his glory.”—John 2:11

When the Divine plan of salvation is properly understood, we see that Jesus not only came into the world to provide a sacrifice for sin, but he made it possible for all who turn from sin to accept his work of Atonement on their behalf. These are to consecrate themselves to God through him, to be made partakers of a heavenly calling, and, if faithful, attain “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” (I Pet. 1:4) He came also to do a work that would completely undo the consequences of the reign of sin and death, which entered the world through one man’s disobedience. (Rom. 5:12) We read, “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.”—I Cor. 15:21

This resurrection of the dead billions of Adam’s race is, according to the Bible, due to take place in “the last day.” Jesus intimated the correctness of Martha’s words when she said concerning her brother, “I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” (John 11:24) Since the fall, mankind has passed through six great days of a thousand years each, under the curse, the reign of evil; and the seventh, or last, day of the great week is the thousand years of Messiah’s kingdom, when this curse of sin and death shall be lifted.

The resurrection work then to take place implies not only an awakening from death, but includes the thought of man being raised up to the perfect state from which he fell in the person of father Adam, a raising up to the perfection of human nature lost through sin. All this is implied in the Greek word *anastasis*, rendered ‘resurrection.’ It means a re-standing, a process of being made right under rule. Hence, the last day,

or thousand-year day of Messiah's kingdom, is spoken of by the Apostle Peter as "the times of restitution" when the earthly paradise, lost through one man's disobedience, will be restored to the willing and obedient of mankind.—Acts 3:19-21

This work is pictured in the interesting, and very striking, miracle performed by our Master and referred to in Matthew 12:22. We could hardly think of a more graphic picture of abject misery: a man blind and dumb, "possessed with a devil [Greek, *demon*, one of the evil spirits]. All who saw this poor creature would surely say his condition was hopeless, that he was beyond the healing touch of the most skillful physician. So some of the soundest judgments among men, including some of the world's poets and philosophers, have said of mankind, that, left to himself, his condition is hopeless; that neither individual nor corporate effort can deliver man from his fallen state, or even bring about tolerably happy social and moral conditions upon earth.

In due time, Jesus appeared on earth, and healed the man possessed with a demon, blind, and dumb. The Bible teaches that Jesus is again to appear—not to help a poor unfortunate one here, and another there, but—for the assistance and deliverance of all mankind. He appears this second time, not as a man on earth, but as the Lord of glory, a glorious Divine being, exercising all power in heaven and in earth. All mankind—for six thousand years dominated, some more, some less, by the spirit of the great Adversary, Satan—will be brought from under his power: he will be bound for a thousand years.—Rev. 20:1,2

Furthermore, the spiritual blindness superinduced by "the god of this world" will be removed from the minds of men (II Cor. 4:4; Isa. 35:5), and the tongues long dumb so far as sounding forth God's praises, telling of his gracious purposes, will henceforth refuse to be silent. Isaiah, describing conditions when all systems of oppression and satanic bondage are overthrown, says, "The whole earth is at rest, and is quiet: they break forth into singing." (Isa. 14:7) Again he says, "Sing, O ye heavens; ... shout, ye lower parts [conditions] of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein." (Isa. 44:23) And again, "The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations."—Isa. 61:11

While we continue to pray for the healing of our spiritual infirmities (Ps. 103:3), let us also remember when we pray, “thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,” the healing touch of the great Physician then to be experienced by all mankind.—Matt. 6:10

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***Dawn Bible Students Association***