



PROVIDENCE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY JOURNAL[®]

A Herald of New Covenant Theology

*In
Loving Memory
of Jackson &
Barbara Boyett,
and
Charles Sild*

– 1 Corinthians 15:58 –

“...be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord” (NASB).

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Welcome to the PTSJ

“...since the prophetic Scriptures have their fulfilment in the person and work of Christ, biblical theology must take as its starting point a Christ-centered interpretation of the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments. It must be based upon the way in which the New Testament interprets the Old....How we go about developing this pattern of biblical theology is where the difficulty arises and remains the challenge now and for the future. “Why PTSJ?” The mission for PTSJ is to faithfully work to help meet this challenge by an unwavering stance based upon “Back to the Bible” by “sola Scriptura” all to the glory of God.”

– Gary D. Long, PTS Faculty President –

*Welcome to Providence Theological Seminary Journal (PTSJ)! The PTSJ is an official publication of Providence Theological Seminary (PTS). This journal is published on a semi-annual basis and is unapologetically devoted to the biblical Gospel and New Covenant Theology. PTS has established this periodical with a *fourfold* purpose: (1) to serve as a herald of the Doctrines of Grace, New Covenant Theology, and Baptist ecclesiology, (2) to help break down the middle walls of doctrinal partition that exist within and between Dispensational Theology and Covenant Theology, (3) to further establish PTS as a theological institution, and (4) to *positively* contribute to the ongoing reformation of the Church’s collective*

understanding of Scripture, the Gospel, and orthodox Christian theology.

No issue of the *PTSJ* will include any paid advertisements or endorsements. Furthermore, the exhibition of an author’s article does **not** constitute an endorsement (on the part of *PTS*) of every aspect of his or her theology. That being said, *PTSJ* will **never** publish any article, whose content does not firmly agree with the essentials of biblical Christianity. As the seventeenth-century German theologian Rupertus Meldenius once said, “In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity.”¹ We earnestly hope that the *PTSJ* will edify all those who read the articles contained therein.

PTS gladly welcomes questions, comments, or feedback regarding the content of the *PTSJ*. Please e-mail all editorial material and questions to info@ptstn.org and Zachary S. Maxcey, the editor of the *PTSJ*, at zmaxcey@ptstn.org. We cordially welcome all those who are likeminded to support the seminary through prayer. Graphic design of the *PTSJ* is jointly credited to Ron Adair and Zachary S. Maxcey. *Soli Deo Gloria! Ecclesia Reformata Semper Reformanda Secundum Verbum Dei!*

Providence Theological Seminary

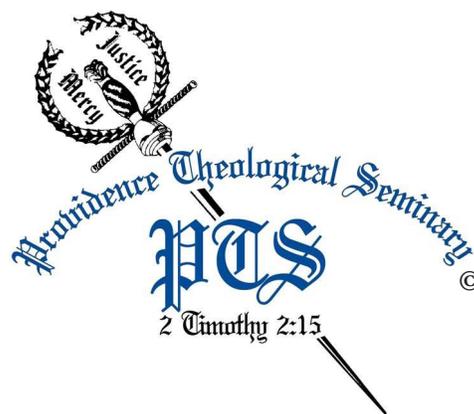
¹Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VII: Modern Christianity and the German Reformation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1910; reprint 1974), 650.

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– 2 Timothy 2:15 –
“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth” (NASB).

Introducing Providence Theological Seminary

Providence Theological Seminary (PTS) inaugurated resident night classes in Colorado Springs, CO on September 4, 2007. A full curriculum was offered during the inaugural year of studies less the Biblical Languages. Instruction in the Biblical languages commenced with the fall semester of 2008. In 2015, PTS moved from Colorado Springs, CO to Franklin, TN.

- Degree Programs -

- Primary emphasis upon a *Master of Divinity* (M.Div.) degree for training gifted men for the pastoral ministry
- Two bachelor level programs:
 - *Bachelor of Divinity* (B.Div.) degree
 - *Bachelor of Theology* (B.Th.) degree
- *Diploma in Theological Studies* (DTS)

- Doctrinal Distinctives -

New Covenant Theology
Doctrines of Grace
Baptist Ecclesiology

- The Need For PTS -

One of the greatest needs of the Church today is the teaching and proclamation of sound doctrine in the context of obeying the two greatest commandments: love of God and neighbor. The Apostle Paul charged Timothy to “be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15, NASB). In light of this apostolic exhortation and focus upon the ministry of the Church in carrying out the Great Commission, PTS is committed to the training of scholars-saints to become preachers and teachers of the Word of God witnessed by personal holiness in life, both in word and deed.

- Doctrinal Reasons For PTS -

The doctrinal reasons for PTS can be summed up in *The Three Phrases*; *New Covenant Theology* (NCT); *the Doctrines of Grace*; and *Baptist Ecclesiology*. The latter two areas are taught in other Christian institutions of higher learning. But the first areas of emphasis, NCT, is not widely and openly taught in the American evangelical educational system. Not to be detached from holiness of life, the focus of NCT, is upon Christ as revealed in the whole counsel of God inscripturated in the 66

books of the Holy Bible. Instruction is grounded upon the exegetical, biblical-theological and systematic teaching of principles of biblical interpretation (hermeneutic). The hermeneutic is based upon the way that the Lord Jesus and the writers of the New Covenant Scriptures understood and explained the fulfillment of the final revelation of God’s eternal redemptive purpose. In brief, this is what is meant by the term *New Covenant Theology*.

- The Educational Purpose for PTS -

The educational purpose of PTS, an English-speaking theological institution, is twofold: **(1)** to train spiritually gifted (Rom. 12:3-8) and qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7) called by God to preach and teach the gospel of Christ; and **(2)** to train spiritually gifted women to exercise their gifts (Rom. 12:3-8) in a woman’s role (Acts 18:26; 1 Tim. 2:12-14; 2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15) in the service of Christ (Rom. 16:1).

- The Educational Purpose for PTS -

The philosophy of education places primary emphasis on training the student to understand and explain the redemptive purpose for the people of God from the sacred text. The principles of interpretation of the Bible for the Christian church are derived from the New Covenant Scriptures. PTS understands the need to consider and interact with gifted scholarship of the past and present, but emphasis would be placed upon the contextual exegesis and exposition of the biblical text itself. Care will be taken to not over-burden the student with hundreds of pages of reading and reporting on writings of contemporary scholarship. Students will be exhorted to be diligent in their studies to handle accurately the Word of God and to put in practice their faith and walk in their personal life and workplace. Emphasis is placed upon their family and upon active participation in a mission-oriented, doctrinal local church while daily beseeching their Heavenly Father to enable them to love God with all their heart, soul and mind and their neighbor as themselves.

For More Information:

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THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE REVELATION CHAPTER 6¹

Dr. J. David Gilliland

Introduction

A special blessing is promised to the ones who read and heed the teachings of this book (Rev. 1:3). But it also presents quite a unique challenge. For many it means venturing into uncharted waters, as it seems to be a very mysterious communication, even by biblical standards. Before we go to the text and by way of introduction, recognizing that there may be some here who are relatively new to the study of this book, let us take a few moments to survey its structure, style, and message.

It is written in what theologians refer to as an *apocalyptic* style. Interestingly, it is a style not particularly unique to the Old or New Testament, as numerous examples can be found in the literature of the pagan nations of biblical history. It was a style of writing used to depict the crucial events of human history – events ultimately ascribed to God or some pagan deity. It was characterized by the use of bizarre *other world* animation and cataclysmic natural disasters to emphasize the spiritual significance of these events. The Greek word for ‘Revelation’ is *apocalypsis*, which is derived from the Greek verb meaning “reveal” or “uncover.” It has more to do with *revealing* the nature of the spiritual realm, than it does the development of a detailed road map for the distant events of the future. In the book of 2 Kings we read of an episode in the life of Elisha that gives us some insight into what we can expect in the book of Revelation. Elisha was being pursued and was ultimately surrounded by the armies of the king because of his faithful preaching of the Scriptures.

Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, “Alas, my master! What shall we do?” So he answered, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” Then Elisha prayed and said, “O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.” And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kgs 6:15-17; NASB)

The Book of Revelation

This phrase, “eyes to see,” is a concept that will be emphasized throughout the book of Revelation. The primary purpose of this book is to give us an understanding of the principles that lie *behind* the events of human history and how that history relates to the plan of God for His people. Views within the Christian community regarding the time frame of its fulfillment range anywhere from entirely within the first century – and often with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. – to the final few years of human history. I think what is more biblically consistent,

¹This article is a revision of a lecture by Dr. Gilliland originally given at the Providence Theological Seminary Conference on Eschatology in Franklin, Tennessee in July 2016.

though, is to recognize that there are elements of both. Remember, this is a book that was written for us, not to us. It was written to a group of recently planted churches in western Turkey sometime near the end of the first century, and to a people living under the oppression of Rome. Although it was written in a style that we are not particularly familiar with, it was written in a way that would have been *real* to them, understandable in their day and applicable to their culture. And yet, it was also written in a way that would use the events of Israel's history and the events of the first century as *types* or pictures of the principles that would define the church age as well as the final events of history. Revelation 17:5-12 is a good example:

And upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, 'BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.' And I saw the woman drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus . . . I shall tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns . . . The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits . . . The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. (Rev. 17:5-12; NASB)

Reading this passage with a twenty-first century perspective is very confusing, to say the least. If you lived in the first century, though, you likely would have recognized that the "seven mountains on which the woman sits" referred to Rome. The "horns" and the "kings" may well have represented the political leaders of that century as well. But there is more involved here than just a reference to the historic city of Rome, as the name "Babylon the Great" suggests that Rome is also a *type* of the political powers yet to come. It is a picture, as well, of the final "Rome" and is a prophetic echo of the first Babel – the secular state and world system that elevates itself above God, God's people, and God's revelation (Rev. 19).

The book is structured around a series of sevens: seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven bowls, all having to do primarily with events on earth that span the church age. Interposed between the discussions of these groups of seven are interludes that depict events in heaven – an arrangement emphasizing the relationship between events on earth and those occurring in the heavenly realm. Revelation 6, more specifically, is typical of much of this book and in many ways a paradigm governing the 7 trumpets, 7 bowls, and the passages addressing the battle between "the great city" and the kingdom of God. These passages are recapitulatory in that they include references to specific historical events or concepts that you would have recognized had you lived in the first century, and yet the text is written in a way so as to reveal the principles and conflicts that would characterize the rest of history and end in the final judgment. Let's turn now to our text in Revelation 6 – a famous scene in apocalyptic literature known as "*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*."

The Rider on the White Horse

Verses 1-2: "*And I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, 'Come.'* And I looked, and behold, a white horse, and he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering, and to conquer." (Rev. 6:1-2; NASB)

The NIV reads, “and he rode out as a conqueror bent on conquest,” which gives a clear sense of the passage. The point, of course, is not that this is a literal white horse and a rider with a bow, but what it represents. This imagery is not particularly new either, as it is similar to one recorded in the book of Zechariah (Zech. 1). The saint in the first century would have understood that whatever the purpose of these riders and horses, they were under the control of God. The picture of a conquering hero mounted on a white horse was a common one in that era, and has endured as a symbol of conquest throughout history. Perhaps you can picture the historic images of Alexander the Great, Caesar Augustus, or Napoleon, to name a few. And it is not just military might that is in view, but the greater specter of political power and authority. It is the concept of political power undergirded by the threat of military force, as opposed to the moral authority of God’s righteousness. Additionally, John may have had in mind the Parthian conquerors from the East who had won an important battle against the Romans in 62 A.D., and were known for their mounted archers.

You may remember, however, that there is another rider on a white horse in the book of Revelation: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it *is* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. And His eyes *are* a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written *upon Him* which no one knows except Himself” (Rev. 19:11-12; NASB). As you might guess, some expositors have suggested that these riders and horses are one and the same, and that what the first seal in Revelation 6 pictures is Christ and the power of the gospel. But I would suggest that there are a number of differences that indicate they are not the same. The rider in Chapter 19 (without question the Lord Jesus) carries a *sword*, whereas the rider in Chapter 6 is armed with a *bow*, the latter commonly associated with God’s judgment in the Old Testament. The *crown* referred to in Chapter 6 is the “victor’s crown” (*stephanos*) as opposed to the “royal crown” (*diadem*) of Chapter 19. Note also, that John was careful to point out that the crown “*was given*” to the rider in Chapter 6. This phrase “was given” is used throughout the book to describe the authority or permission given to wicked forces as instruments of God’s judgment. Additionally, there seems to be a relationship between the four horses that is not as well explained if the first seal represents Christ and the gospel.

What the author does intend to portray, though, is the *apparent* likeness between the two, and underscores one of the major themes of the book – *things are not always as they seem*. How many times in history do political and military leaders come onto the scene appearing as *Christ-like*? How many times have we seen an almost religious devotion to leaders who promise, and often sincerely at first, peace, prosperity, and security? They certainly are seen as a type of *messiah* in the eyes of the gullible masses. The other writers in the New Testament warn us of Christ-like figures that will deceive many and we have seen them throughout history. In the first century, the Roman kings often demanded to be worshipped as gods. And they were often treated as gods – as long as the empire was in the period known as the *PAX ROMANA*.

More contemporaneously, the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have had their share of these “messiah like” leaders as socialist, communist, and fascist leaders come to mind. We think of Hitler and his promise of a Third Reich, Imperial Japan, and Stalin or Lenin and their desire for a great empire or utopian state. Unfortunately, some have walked these shores as well. For example, there was an article written several years ago describing the global initiative of one of our most popular politicians. The goal of the initiative was to identify immediate and pragmatic

solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems (poverty, religious intolerance, global climate change, etc.). Among other things, this politician was referred to as "World Savior." The foreign policy travels of another politician were more recently described by the following proclamation: "He ventured forth to bring light to the world! The anointed one's pilgrimage to the Holy Land is a miracle in action – and a blessing to all of his faithful followers."² Gerard Baker, an editorialist of *The Times* online, recently had this to say, "Every decade or so the people who control the way we see the world anoint some American politician the Redeemer of a Troubled Planet."³ Yes, even the non-Christian world recognizes the principle behind the *rider on the white horse*. And we should stop here for a moment and ask ourselves the following questions: What is the source of our confidence in America? Is it on our military might or the strength of our economy? Is it based on the strength of our 'democratic process' or freedom? Or is it based on faithfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word? Who is our hero on the white horse?

The Rider on the Red Horse

Verses 3-4: "*And when He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, 'Come.' And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men should slay one another; and a great sword was given to him.*" (Rev. 6:3-4; NASB)

We see in this text, as history shows as well, that fast on the heels of a spirit of conquest come war and bloodshed. What started out with a promise of peace eventually (although often over a number of generations) leads – because it is man's system, for his glory, and devoid of biblical righteousness – to a moral breakdown in society, foolish alliances that attempt to substitute for a dependence upon God, and ultimately war. It was certainly common in Israel's history as one king after another lead the people astray with false hopes of safety. Rather than trust in God's providence and blessing, they demanded a king: "We will be like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:20). Compare by contrast those who Jesus says will be victorious, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:4). Note here as well, like the rider on the white horse that was "given a crown", that this rider too was "given a sword." Again, John is stressing that no matter how things may appear the actions and consequences of these leaders and events are under the sovereign control of God. It may have appeared to the saints in the seven churches that Caesar was in control of the events that impacted their lives. But John wants them to understand that even Caesar is under the authority of God.

The Rider on the Black Horse

Verse 5-6: "*And when He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, 'Come.' And I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand.*"

²Gerard Baker, "He ventured forth to bring light to the world," *The Times*, July 25, 2008. Available online at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article2613243.ece>.

³Gerard Baker, "Barack Obama: the new Great Redeemer," *The Times*, May 16, 2008. Available online at <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/opinion/columnists/article2613122.ece>

And I heard as it were a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, 'A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine.'" (Rev. 6:5-6; NASB)

One of the inevitable consequences of war or violence is economic collapse, shortage of essential goods, and famine. This is just as true in our day as it was in the first century. For example, it is estimated that at least 10 million people died of starvation during the economic and agricultural experiments in Stalin's Soviet Union. You can see it in the news from the war torn African and Middle Eastern countries everyday. A denarius was roughly a day's wage for the average worker, and what it took to pay for a quart of wheat. And what should we think about the statement, "Do not harm the oil and the wine?" The commentators are not certain as to its exact meaning. It probably suggests two things. One of the similarities we notice during the first few seals, trumpets, and bowls is that although judgment does come, it is temporary and limited in scope. The vineyards and olive trees were known to have the deepest root systems and would likely be the most resilient during times of famine. This emphasizes the fact that even though the drought was severe it was not total. The recurring message is that there is still time for repentance – the end is not yet. This may also have alluded to the edict of Caesar during one of the major famines during the first century that prohibited the use of vineyards and olive groves for the growth of more desperately needed staples like wheat and other grains. This points to the other inevitable aspect of warfare – poverty. The oil and wine were items of luxury, and the effort to preserve them at the expense of the basic food supply would have the greatest effect on the poor and less fortunate. During war, it was the poor that suffered the most.

This was a reality all too familiar to the early Christians. Unlike a biblical economic environment like we have enjoyed (until recently I should add), where investment and capital growth is part of what it means to be a faithful steward, wealth in the first century usually meant one thing – compromise. The labor guilds were extremely powerful as they were often aligned with the temple cults and emperor worship, a relationship developed in later chapters under the concept of the false trinity: Satan, the beast, and the false prophet. If you didn't participate in those events you suffered economically and often were forced into poverty. Participation in this economic system is part of what John refers to later in the book as *the mark of the beast*. John, in essence, is reassuring them with the thought, "Don't be surprised when you find yourselves in a state of poverty and exclusion from the economic system of the day." One might ask what events the saints of the first century might have thought of after having read these words. Let me read a list of examples that historians have recorded:

- A.D. 60: Earthquakes
- A.D. 62: Defeat of Roman army by Parthian Vologeses on eastern frontier.
- A.D. 64: Persecution of Christians by Nero following the fire of Rome.
- A.D. 68: Suicide of Nero
- A.D. 70: Four-year war of Jews and Romans ending with Jerusalem in ruins
- A.D. 79: Eruption of Vesuvius
- A.D. 92: Serious grain famine
- A.D. 81-96: Reign of Domitian, institutes emperor worship and resulting persecution.
- A.D. 95: Writing of Revelation.

The Rider on the Ashen Horse

Verse 7-8: *“And when the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, ‘Come.’ And I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. And authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.”* (Rev. 6:5-6; NASB)

This is a summation of the prior seals, but there is an additional element as well: “Death and Hades.” The first century saint would likely have recognized that this was a state far worse than physical violence, for it included the frightful dimension of moral and spiritual destitution. *Hades* is primarily a place reserved for Satan and his angels. This is not just a picture of economic destitution, but of moral and spiritual poverty and all that is associated with it. But note here again that the extent of the judgment in this seal is still restricted, in this case to a fourth of the earth. There is still time for repentance. God is not finished calling His people to Himself; the Church is yet incomplete. The imagery points to the end, but it is not here yet. It is similar to the picture we see in our world today; there are places where the reality of these seals is very real, and yet there are some that have been spared to a great extent. But in spite of the obvious chaos from man’s perspective – the phrase “and authority was given to them” emphasizes again that God is in ultimate control. And yet these seals point to more than just the events of the first century.

No matter where these four horsemen have ridden in history, the results are always the same. For example, an excerpt from the history books describes one pastor’s view of the conditions in Germany during the ‘Thirty Years War’ (1618-1648):

...a confused and confusing struggle in which foreign armies [**someone’s white horse I might add**] criss-crossed German territories and tyrannized the population. Multitudes fled before the onslaught of the plundering soldiery and sustained themselves by begging, robbing, and destroying anything that stood in their way. Famine and disease followed in their wake and further decimated the population, so that whole villages were simply wiped out. One of the worst features of the war and its aftermath was the decline of moral sensitivity. “Old and young,” one pastor complained, “can no longer tell what is of God or the devil. Poor widows and orphans are counted for dung, like dogs they are pushed into the street and left there to perish of hunger and cold” [**brackets mine**].⁴

This is the result of a society that separates itself from the principles of God’s word, and attempts to re-create itself in the image of autonomous man. And while the language is set in the events of the first century, these verses are really just a commentary on a passage like Psalm 33:16-21:

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength. A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine. We wait in hope for the LORD; he is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. (NIV)

⁴F. Ernest Stoeffler, “Can These Bones Live?” *Christian History* Issue 10, 1986.

But in spite of all our technology and twenty-first century sophistication, we have never really moved beyond the first century. And ultimately, history will culminate in the final famine, the final war, and the final generation whose life style might be characterized as *hell on earth*.

The Breaking of the Fifth Seal

Verses 9-11: “*And when He broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt Thou refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, should be completed also.*” (Rev. 6:9-11; NASB)

It seems that throughout history, when war, famine, and moral degradation come, it is the Christians that stand for truth and have the real answers that are singled out for the greatest persecution, echoing the cry of the Old Testament prophets, “Oh Lord, how long?” They are not seeking martyrdom, but simply to live lives of faithful obedience. It happened in the first century when Nero blamed the Christians for the unrest in society. Who was blamed for much of the problems during the middle ages? Who is blamed for being “intolerant” and the greatest source of conflict around the world today? Who is blamed for the problems in the Middle East? It is still the Christians, and there is no end in sight. For example, in response to the recent Orlando gay club killings one college professor wrote, “The ISIS thing is a distraction . . . [we should be] looking at the long legacy of anti-gay violence in this country that has itself been stoked and promoted by the Christian right” [brackets mine].⁵

The torture and beheadings of Christians in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa has been well documented in the national media, and according to official sources the number of martyrs has tripled in the last 2 years. That this could be happening now is difficult to conceive of, it seems a better fit for what we know of the first century, or possibly the very end of history. From the world’s perspective, the plight of these people seems bleak, and it appears that they have little choice but to patiently endure. But it is through patient endurance that the justice and deliverance of God typically comes. And the message comes from God in these verses that says, “I know that this is happening. It will continue to happen. But it is happening for a purpose.” And most importantly, we are given a view of the saint’s ultimate destiny – “under the altar” – symbolizing the blessing and protection of their heavenly master, “Lord, holy and true.” It is notable that the word translated *Lord* here is *despotes*, a word commonly used for the master of slaves, and here emphasizing the absolute power of God with respect to the life and destiny of His servants. Josephus, the Jewish historian of that day, reminds us that the early Christians were tortured and martyred for refusing to acknowledge Caesar as *Despotes*. But here, in a dramatic contrast, the saints have been given their reward and exercise their rule under the one true Master. And for those thinking about how this text applies to later chapters, let me point out as well that the description of these saints is virtually duplicated in Revelation 20:4 and goes a long way in explaining the context and application of what is known as *The Millennium*.

⁵Rachel Stern, “Terrorism focus in Orlando shooting distracts from real issue, Katz says,” *The Times*, June 15, 2016. Available online at <https://www.buffalo.edu/ubreporter/stories/2016/06/katz-orlando.html>.

One can only imagine the kind of impact this would have had on the believers in the first century as well as those Christians enduring persecution throughout the Church age. There was always a tendency for the first century Christian to see Caesar, in Rome's throne room, as the one with the greatest power, the biggest sword, and the one in ultimate control of their lives. If you wanted to prosper, or even just survive, you had to obey Caesar. Obedience to Jesus, on the other hand, meant hardship or death. In fact, the Greek word for witness is *marturia*, from which we get our word *martyr* and was sadly often the case. Yet this letter from John says that it is only for a little while. The end will come, whether it means the end of your life, of Rome, or ultimately of the world's system, and those who "overcome" (an admonition to which is mentioned in each of the letters to the seven churches) and who are "faithful to the end" will rule with God in heaven – one of the main themes of the book. It is not hard to imagine what encouragement that would have been to those saints, or for that matter, the persecuted saints throughout history? That is why it is so critical to see this book as applicable to today, not just the end of history, although there will be a heightening of persecution in that day.

Another important aspect of this fifth seal is the location of these souls; our hope is not to be found in a perfect political system, a unified conflict-free global community, or even an earthly paradise. Our hope is nothing short of being in the presence of God in heaven. Those that promise in man's system (Augustine's "City of Man" or "Babylon the Great") an ultimate or final peace and prosperity on this earth now, or anytime in the future, are selling a spiritual fool's gold. Witnessing the end of historic Rome's dominance, Augustine gives us an apt summary of man's system:

The earthly city will not be everlasting; for when it is condemned to the final punishment it will no longer be a city. It has its good in this world, and rejoiced to participate in it with such gladness as can be derived from things of such a kind. And since this is not the kind of good that causes no frustrations to those enamored of it, the earthly city is generally divided against itself by litigation, by wars, by battles, by pursuit of victories that bring death with them, or at best are doomed to death.⁶

We saw in the first four seals where an unsanctified desire for temporal prosperity led. But what we long for is what Abraham longed for as the writer of the book of Hebrews records, "For he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10; NASB). And what is God's response to the plight and prayers of God's people? It is far more than just a vision of the life to come.

The Breaking of the Sixth Seal

Verses 12-14: *"And I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood;¹³ and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind.¹⁴ And the sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places."* (Rev. 6:12-14; NASB)

⁶Augustine, *City of God*, Book IV.

The difficulty encountered in attempting to interpret this passage, as is the case with apocalyptic language in general, is trying to determine what specific historical event (past or future) is being described. One of the most important considerations is the frame of reference of the reader. This style of language or *genre* was not new to John's audience. Consider the following passages from the Old Testament dealing with the judgment of God on Israel and the gentile nations:

“And all the host of heaven will wear away, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll; all their hosts will also wither away as a leaf withers from the vine, or as one withers from the fig tree.” (Isa. 34:4; NASB)

“I will drench the land even to the mountains with your flowing blood, and the ravines will be full of you. When I blot you out, I will cover the heavens and make their stars dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give its light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over you, and put darkness on your land, declares the Lord God.” (Ezek. 32:6-8; ESV)

“The mountains quake before him; the hills melt; the earth heaves before him, the world and all who dwell in it.” (Nah. 1:5-6; ESV)

This is the language of *divine judgment*, and the saint of the first century would have put the events described in the sixth seal in the same category. They would have remembered God's judgment of Israel and neighboring Gentile nations as they analyzed the events of their day.

And in fact, some of the judgments that will be described in the chapters to follow sound very much like the Egyptian plagues in the book of Exodus. John wanted his readers to recognize that the God who judged these cities and nations had not changed or forgotten His promises *either for blessing or for cursing*. The first century reader would also have been aware that the Old Testament prophets used the reference to God's judgment of the OT nations as a type of the final judgment. The judgment against Assyria is a notable example: “*I will break the Assyrian in my land, and on my mountains trample him underfoot . . . This is the purpose that is purposed concerning the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations*” (Isa. 14:25-26; ESV). In a similar paradigm, the fact that various elements of vs. 14-16 are repeated in passages dealing with the final judgment at the end of seven trumpets (Rev. 11:18) and seven bowls (Rev. 16:19), indicates that the judgment being referred to is certainly applicable to Rome but not confined to the first century or any specific city or nation, and ultimately a description of the final judgment.

VERSES 15-17: “*And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?’*” (Rev. 6:15-17; NASB)

In this seal, not only are we given a reminder of God's judgment in the past, but a warning that similar judgments are yet to come. In other words, the judgment inflicted on Babylon, Egypt, and Israel will come on Rome and any other nation throughout the church age that exalts itself over God and persecutes His people. And yet, there are aspects of this text that

point to still a more distant future. First of all, there is no mention of a restricted geographic scope. Secondly, we see that it is not only the poor that bear the brunt of the judgment, it is kings and rulers – all classes of men. Finally, how many times have you read in the history books, whether it was after the fall of Jerusalem, Rome, Germany, Japan, or USSR, that the people have collectively recognized that it was God’s judgment that destroyed their nations? Instead, they blamed it on bad economics, foolish politics, weak military, acts of nature, and the list goes on. But these verses describe a different response: a public, ubiquitous, and pervasive awareness of divine judgment, “the wrath of the Lamb.” What we see in this passage is not only temporary or localized judgment, but also a vivid picture of universal and final judgment, the same perspective that you will see at the end of every set of seven judgments, each with a slightly different perspective (Chapters 6, 11, 16). Each cycle of seven starts with events that are recognizable as occurring in the first century, yet clearly relate to all the church age. Each cycle of seven ends in judgment that could apply to many points in history, yet becomes more severe, universal in scope, and focused on the final judgment. Note here the reference to God’s “wrath” (orge), a term we see as well in the sixth Trumpet in Revelation 11:18, “The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth,” as well as exclusively other passages dealing with the final judgment (14:10, 16:19, 19:15).

After thousands of years of biblical history, and thousands of messages preached by His ministers, it is sobering to realize that nothing has changed with respect to the natural man’s reaction to God’s authority. When Adam and Eve sinned and God came looking for them, their response was to look for a place to hide, “Hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne.” Should we be surprised to see the same result at the end of history? But in that day the opportunity for repentance will be gone. The fundamental expression of man’s sin – idolatry, serving the creature and creation rather than the creator – has run its course. Everyone will recognize that the end has come but there will be nowhere to run and nowhere to hide.

Conclusion

How then do we apply these principles in the twenty-first century? The same way they did in the first century. When we see wars, famine, and persecution it reminds us that God still judges *in history*. It may only mean the end of a city or nation, but for those with “eyes to see” it is yet another warning of the final judgment that is yet to come. In spite of all the nationalities, cultures, languages, and religions, there are, in the only analysis that really matters, only two groups of people, and only two destinations. In Revelation 20:11-15 we see the destination of one of these groups:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened . . . and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds . . . And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (ESV)

If that doesn’t motivate us to speak clearly and candidly to a lost culture, then nothing will. But the end is not yet; there is time for repentance and God is also a God of mercy as Habakkuk

prayed, “O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy” (Hab. 3:2; ESV). There is judgment in history, but we are still in the gospel age and God continues to call a people for His Name. The end of Revelation 6 ends in a question that we all must answer: “The great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?” Revelation 7:9-17 gives us the answer, and whether it be the martyrs of the first century, the martyrs in today’s Indonesia or the Middle East, or any of God’s witnesses who struggle to maintain the “testimony of Jesus,” this is the destiny to which they look:

After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, STANDING before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ . . . They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun beat down on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the water of life; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes. [capitalization mine]

That, my friends, is the *big idea* or pastoral message of the book of Revelation. In closing, let me leave you with a wonderful poem from James Hamilton’s commentary on Revelation:

*Through flame and flood, with plague and blood, the gospel is proclaimed
The Spirit flows, the Church it grows, the beast he is enraged
Measuring rod and line outstretched the Father knows His own
As martyrs die the saints will sigh, and they cry out, “How long?”
And then at last, the trumpet blast, and Christ will reign as King
Creation sings the praises ring, for this the world was made⁷*

⁷James Hamilton, *Revelation: The Spirit Speaks to the Churches* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 243.

THE OLIVET DISCOURSE, PART 1: TWO EVENTS SEPARATED BY A GAP OF TIME¹

Francis X. Gumerlock

Introduction

Significant controversy surrounds the interpretation of the Olivet Discourse of Jesus, given in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Some believe that almost the entire discourse is about the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., while others think that almost the entire discourse is about a future tribulation that will be experienced by Jewish people in the last seven years before the Lord returns. I believe, along with many interpreters throughout the ages, that the Olivet Discourse contains prophetic speech about two different events separated by a gap of time: the destruction of the temple that took place some forty years after Jesus delivered the discourse; and the Second Coming of Christ for the Last Judgment, accompanied by the general resurrection, that is to occur at the end of the world. I came to this conclusion after making a few observations.

The Disciples Asked and Jesus Answered Two Questions

The first is an observation about the disciples' questions and Jesus' answer to those questions. Jesus and the disciples were leaving the temple and some of the disciples were marveling about the magnificent buildings of the temple in Jerusalem (Matt. 24:1; Luke 21:5). Then Jesus told them that a time will be coming when not one stone will be left upon another, but every one of the stones will be thrown down (Luke 21:5). Then later in private, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Jesus two questions about his remark. The first was: *When* will these things happen? That is recorded in all three Gospels. The second is: *What will be the sign* that they are about to take place? (Luke), that they are about to be fulfilled? (Mark). Matthew has: *What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?*

The disciples asked two questions: a "when" question and a "what" question. The "what" question had two parts: a) What will be the sign that the toppling of the stones of the temple will take place? And b) What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? In Jesus' answer to both the "when" question and the "what" question, there are indications that He was referring to two different events. One was the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem when not one stone will be left upon another. The other was His coming and the end of the age.

Jesus' Answer to the Question of When

Concerning the question of "when," about the destruction of the temple, Jesus answered it. Matthew and Mark say, "*When* you see the abomination of desolation" those in Judea should

¹This article is a revision of a portion of a lecture by Dr. Gumerlock entitled "The Parable of the Fig Tree, Mark 13:28-33" given at the NCT Conference on Eschatology in Franklin, Tennessee in July 2016.

flee to the mountains. Luke 21:20 records Jesus as saying, “*When* you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near.” It is very clear: You will know *when* the temple is going to be completely destroyed, *when* you see armies surrounding Jerusalem, which Matthew and Mark call the abomination of desolation. When they see that, they should flee to the mountains. So Jesus answered the “when” question regarding the destruction of the temple.

But about the “when” of His coming and the end of the age, Jesus does not tell them. Rather, he repeatedly says that it is not for them to know. In Matthew 24:42, He says, “Keep watch because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.” It is specifically about the Lord’s coming. In Matthew 24:44, he says, “So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect Him.” Again, it is clearly talking about the coming of Christ. People will not know the “when” of this event. In Matthew 24:50 in the Parable of the Faithful Servant, He says, “The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.” It is also about the Master’s coming, and they will not know the “when.”

So, Jesus did answer the “when” about the destruction of the temple, but about His coming, he tells them that the “when” is unknown.

Indications of a Gap of Time

In the Discourse, Jesus many times indicates that there will be a gap in time. It can be argued that when the disciples asked their questions about when the destruction of the temple will happen and what will be the sign of His coming and of the end of the age, they thought both would take place at the same time. But Jesus gives indications in his discourse that these would be two different events, separated by a gap in time.

In Luke 21:24, Jesus says, “They will fall by the sword and be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.” There is mention of this “times of the Gentiles.” In Mark 13:34-35, in the Parable of the Fig Tree, Jesus says: “It’s like a man going away” and after some time coming back. In the Parable of the Faithful Servant, in Matthew 24:48, the wicked servant says, “My master is staying away a long time.” In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, in Matthew 25:5, it says: “The bridegroom was a long time in coming.” Then in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14, he says: “It will be like a man going on a journey.” So, there are at least five statements in the discourse where Jesus indicates that there would be a significant gap of time. This, I believe, is because Jesus was referring to two different events, the destruction of the temple and His Second Coming at end of the world, between which there would be a significant gap in time. After the destruction of the temple, there will be “the times of the Gentiles.” During that time, it will be like a man going away, like a master staying away a long time, and like a bridegroom who was a long time in coming. And then at an hour we do not know, Christ will come in the clouds with power and great glory and execute the Last Judgment.

Conclusion

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus was replying to two questions that His disciples asked. In the questions themselves there is mention of two different events, the destruction of the temple and the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of the age. Jesus told them the “when” of the destruction of the temple, but concerning the “when” of His Second Coming He repeatedly said they were not to know. There are also many indications in the discourse that there would be a gap of time, which he called the “times of the Gentiles.” These observations indicate to me that our Lord’s Olivet Discourse has prophetic information about two different events: the destruction of the temple, which occurred in the first century; and the Second Coming of our Lord, which is yet future.

THE FEASTS OF ISRAEL: SHADOWS OF THE CHRIST AND THE NEW COVENANT¹

Zachary S. Maxcey²

Introduction

“These are the appointed feasts of the LORD, the holy convocations, which you shall proclaim at the time appointed for them” (Lev. 23:4).³ With these words, God instituted seven⁴ feasts for Israel to observe under the Mosaic Covenant. Not only was each of the מועדים (*mô‘ādîm* – “appointed times” or “feasts”)⁵ intimately connected to Israel’s agricultural harvests and thus Yahweh’s provision for the nation, but each also served to remind Israel of Yahweh’s past redemptive acts on her behalf.⁶ In other words, the celebration of these seven feasts year after year recapitulated⁷ the pivotal milestones of Israel’s history so that the nation would remember God’s gracious provision and redemption (cf. Exod. 12:25-28; Deut. 16:10-12). Such truths, however, do not exhaust the Feasts of Israel of their profound significance. Each מועד (*mô‘ēd*) possesses an *eschatological* or prophetic aspect, meaning that each is *essentially* a self-contained prophecy. Colossians 2:16-17 clearly confirms this truth, describing each festival as “a shadow of the things to come.” But to what future realities do these seven feasts point? Colossians 2:17 continues with the following words: “The substance belongs to Christ.” The Gospel accounts clearly teach that the Lord Jesus Christ, the *True Israel*, recapitulates the history of Israel in His sinless humanity (e.g., Matt. 2:13-15; Hos. 11:1). Therefore, if the feasts recapitulate Israel’s history as a nation, and if Christ Himself recapitulates that same history in His sinless person and work, the feasts are shadows of Christ and the New Covenant, ultimately foretelling the entire New Covenant ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of His Church.

¹This article is a revision of a lecture by Zachary Maxcey entitled “The Feasts of Israel: Shadows of the Christ and the New Covenant” given at the Providence Theological Seminary Conference in Colorado Springs in July 2012.

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³All Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

⁴I define the ‘Feasts of Israel’ as the original *seven* feasts given by Yahweh to Israel at Mount Sinai: Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles. I will not discuss the typological significance of the Sabbath or the Jubilee Year in this paper.

⁵*A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (HALOT), ed. William L. Holladay (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971; reprint 1988), 186.

⁶See Leslie McFall, “Sacred Meals,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 750-1; Elwood McQuaid, *The Outpouring: Jesus in the Feasts of Israel* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1990), 13; and Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 13-14.

⁷Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary defines *recapitulate* in the following manner: “to repeat the principal points or stages of: SUMMARIZE.” *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. (Springfield, IL: Merriam Webster, 1993), 975.

Utilizing a *Christotelic*⁸ hermeneutics⁹, this paper will attempt to demonstrate that the Feasts of Israel are typological of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. After a concise overview of the seven feasts, the article will examine in detail the *Feast of Passover*, followed by an analysis of the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*. The fourth section will feature an examination of the *Feast of Firstfruits*, while the fifth segment will explore the *Feast of Weeks* or *Pentecost*. The final three sections will respectively investigate the *Feast of Trumpets*, the *Day of Atonement*, and the *Feast of Tabernacles*.

An Overview of the Feasts of Israel

Although Leviticus 23 distinguishes each of the *seven mō'ādīm* (מוֹעֲדִים), the Scriptures frequently subsume the seven under the *three* major festivals: the *Feast of Unleavened Bread*, the *Feast of Weeks*, and the *Feast of Tabernacles*. In fact, the Torah commanded *all* Jewish males to present themselves before Yahweh in Jerusalem with a gift during these three festivals.¹⁰ Deuteronomy 16:16 declares: “Three times a year all your males shall appear before the LORD your God at the place that he will choose: at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, at the Feast of Weeks, and at the Feast of Booths. They shall not appear before the LORD empty-handed.” According to the Jewish *lunisolar*¹¹ calendar, the first *four* feasts (i.e., Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits, and Pentecost) occur during the *spring* months and correspond with the *barley*

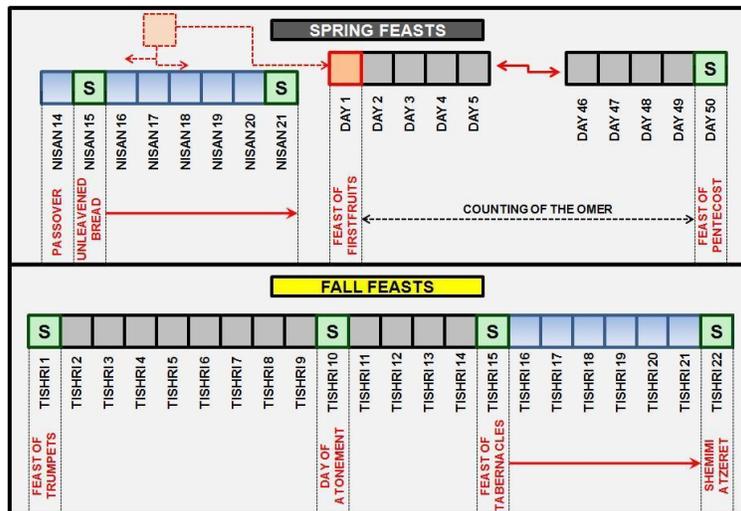
⁸Peter Enns is generally held to have coined the term *Christotelic*. That being said, Enns' view of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture is problematic. Although Providence Theological Seminary views *Christotelic* as a biblical term in light of Romans 10:4, it seeks to distance itself from Enns' views regarding the inspiration and fallibility of Scripture. Therefore, a *Christotelic* hermeneutic, as defined by Providence Theological Seminary, assumes outright that the Old and New Testaments comprise the wholly inspired, wholly infallible, and wholly inerrant Word of God, which is the *sole* authority of faith and practice in the life of a believer.”

⁹The word *Christotelic* results from the combination of two Greek words: Χριστός (*Christos* – Christ) and τέλος (*telos* – end or goal). A *Christotelic hermeneutic* views the Lord Jesus Christ as the ultimate goal or end of God's Word and seeks to consistently interpret all Scripture in view of this great truth. A *Christotelic* hermeneutic, as defined by Providence Theological Seminary, assumes outright that the Old and New Testaments together comprise the wholly inspired, wholly infallible, and wholly inerrant Word of God, which is the *sole* authority of faith and practice in the life of a believer. Furthermore, this particular method of interpretation emphasizes *five* principles: (1) the Lord Jesus Christ is the *nexus* of God's plan in redemptive history, (2) all Scripture either refers to Christ *directly* (e.g. the Gospel narratives, messianic prophecies), refers to Christ *typologically*, or *prepares the way* for Christ by unfolding redemptive history which ultimately points to His person and work (e.g. the Flood, the calling of Abram), (3) the *New Testament Scriptures must have interpretive priority over the Old Testament (OT) due to the former being the final revelation of God*, (4) an accurate analysis of a passage's context is key: local, literary, canonical, and historical, and (5) the principle of historical-grammatical interpretation (guided by the first four principles).

¹⁰Leslie McFall, “Sacred Meals,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, Donald A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 750-1. See also Howard and Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 90-1; McQuaid, *The Outpouring*, 12; and Bruce Scott, *The Feasts of Israel: Seasons of the Messiah* (Bellmawr, NJ: The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1997), 58.

¹¹Bruce Scott describes the Jewish *lunisolar* calendar: “It has both lunar and solar components. The months are determined by the moon, the years by the sun.” Scott, *Feasts of Israel*, 10. See also Ernest L. Martin, *The Star that Astonished the World* (Portland, Oregon: ASK Publications, 1998), 71. Rosenthal similarly writes: “...the timing of these seven feasts is based on the Jewish lunar (moon) calendar of approximately 354-day years. Periodically (seven times every nineteen years), the modern Jewish calendar literally has a thirteenth month to make up for its shorter year.” Howard and Rosenthal, *Feasts of the Lord*, 14.

and *wheat* harvests. The final *three* feasts (i.e., Trumpets, Day of Atonement, Tabernacles) occur during the *fall* season and correspond to the *olive* and *grape* harvests. Five of the feasts constitute or include *special*¹² *Sabbath* days. For example, the *Feast of Pentecost*, the *Feast of Trumpets*, and the *Day of Atonement* (all of which only last *one* day) are *special* Sabbath days; the first and last days of both the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* and the *Feast of Tabernacles* (both of which last *seven* days) are *special* Sabbaths as well. However, the feasts of *Passover* and *Firstfruits* do *not* constitute *special* Sabbath days. Furthermore, the *Feast of Trumpets* is the only feast which occurs on a *new moon*, specifically the *new moon* of the seventh month, *Tishri*.



The Feast of Passover

The first major feast of the Hebrew calendar is Passover which occurs in the spring on the fourteenth day of *Nisan*.¹³ The Hebrew word translated as Passover (פסח – *pesah*) is derived from the verb פסח (*pāsaḥ*), meaning “skip by” or “spare.”¹⁴ Thus, *pāsaḥ* is traditionally understood to refer to the Exodus event where Yahweh “passed over” those Israelites whose doorposts were marked with lamb’s blood:

¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over (יִפְסַחְתִּי – *ûpāsaḥtî*) you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:12-13).

In *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, and Bruce K. Waltke write that *pāsaḥ* also likely means to *defend* or *protect*: “The Lord will protectively

¹²The term “special,” when used in conjunction with the Sabbath, serves to indicate Sabbaths that are in addition to the *weekly* Sabbath.

¹³*Nisan* is the first month of the *religious* reckoning of the Hebrew calendar (Exod. 12:1-2) and occurs in late March to late April on the Gregorian calendar.

¹⁴HALOT, 294. An alternate meaning of *pāsaḥ* is “be lame, limp.”

cover the houses of the Israelites and will not suffer the destroyer to enter.”¹⁵ In other words, Yahweh “passed over” the Israelites by not allowing the destroying plague to harm them.

Passover in the Old Testament

Of all the feasts, Passover is most closely linked to Israel’s beginnings as a nation. Prior to its celebration, every Israelite household, provided it was not too small, was to take for itself a male lamb without blemish on the tenth day of Nisan (Exod. 12:1-5). The lamb was to remain with them until the fourteenth day, when it would be killed at twilight (Exod. 12:6). Each household was to subsequently “take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it” (Exod. 12:7). The lamb itself was to be “roasted on the fire” (Exod. 12:8), and none of its bones were to be broken (Exod. 12:46). Its flesh was to be eaten “with unleavened bread and bitter herbs” (Exod. 12:7-9), and any leftovers were to be destroyed with fire so that nothing would remain until morning (Exod. 12:10). Furthermore, since the Passover occurred in conjunction with Israel’s exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were commanded to eat the Passover meal “in haste” with staff in hand, sandals on their feet, and belts fastened (Exod. 12:11). Passover was immediately followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread, which served to commemorate, among other things, Israel’s haste in leaving Egypt.

So it happened that on the night that the destroyer struck down all the firstborn of Egypt Yahweh led Israel out of Egyptian bondage. On the fourteenth night of Nisan, Yahweh passed “through the land of Egypt,” struck “all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast,” and executed judgment “on all the gods of Egypt” (Exod. 12:12). Only those Israelite houses which were marked with the blood of the Passover lamb were spared from this final plague (Exod. 12:13). Future celebrations of this festival would not include this particular aspect of the historical Passover.¹⁶ Deuteronomy 16:2 also declares that the Israelites were to celebrate the Passover “at the place that the LORD” would choose to have “His name dwell” (cf. Deut. 16:7). Eventually, Jerusalem would be designated by Yahweh as *the* place to observe of the Passover feast.

Christ: Our Passover Lamb

Passover’s ultimate significance is realized *only* in the Lord Jesus Christ and the New Testament Scriptures. Consider 1 Corinthians 5:7: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” Scott rightly states, “Of all the feasts of Israel, none foreshadows our redemption in Jesus Christ in such beautiful detail as the festival of Passover.”¹⁷ The Gospel of John hails the Lord Jesus as the *Lamb of God*, a title which clearly indicates that Christ is “the ultimate fulfillment of the yearly Passover lamb.”¹⁸ For example, John the Baptist remarked of Jesus: “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29; cf. 1:36). In his

¹⁵R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 1 (Chicago, IL: Moody, 1980), 729.

¹⁶McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 751.

¹⁷Scott, *Feasts of Israel*, 37. See also McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 751.

¹⁸See Andreas J. Köstenberger, “John” in Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson. *The Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 428.

first epistle, Peter describes Christ as “a lamb without blemish or spot” (1 Pet. 1:19), and John portrays Jesus in the Apocalypse as “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes” (Rev. 5:6; cf. 5:9). In what ways did the Passover typify Christ?

There are at least *seven* aspects in which the Passover foreshadowed the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. *First*, just as the Passover lamb was selected on the tenth day of Nisan and inspected to ensure that it was without blemish, the Lord Jesus presented Himself to the Jewish leaders and was thoroughly ‘inspected’ beginning on the tenth of Nisan after His triumphal entry (cf. Matt. 21:1 through 23:39).¹⁹ *Second*, just as the Passover lamb was to be sacrificed in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:2, 7), Christ was put to death just outside the city of Jerusalem. *Third*, just as the firstborn of the Egyptian pharaoh (who was worshipped as a god) was killed in the original Passover, the Lord Jesus Christ, the true Son of God was crucified in the *eschatological* Passover.²⁰ *Fourth*, just as none of the Passover lamb’s bones were to be broken, *none of Christ’s bones were broken at His crucifixion!* John 19:32-36 declares:

³²So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him. ³³But when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness- his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth- that you also may believe. ³⁶For these things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: “Not one of his bones will be broken.”²¹

Fifth, just as the blood of the Passover lamb protected the Israelites from the destroying angel, Christ’s sinless blood protects His people from God’s wrathful judgment. McFall writes: “Just as the Passover blood functioned as a shield against Yahweh’s wrath, so in the new age (‘the last days’) Jesus’ blood would serve the same purpose.”²² *Sixth*, just as nothing of the Passover lamb was to remain until the next morning, the Lord Jesus’ body was expediently buried in a nearby tomb since the Sabbath was quickly approaching (cf. Luke 23:50-54; Deut. 21:22-23). *Seventh*, just as the original Passover initiated Israel’s exodus from slavery in Egypt, Christ’s crucifixion initiated the elect’s exodus from the dominion of the devil, the slavery of sin (cf. Matt 1:21), and the bondage of the world. Merrill Unger writes: “The Passover (Lev. 23:4-5) speaks of Calvary and of redemption by blood from Egypt, a type of the world; from Pharaoh, a type of Satan; and from Egyptian servitude, a type of sin.”²³ This understanding is further strengthened by Luke 9:31, where Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection is described as “His departure” (ἐξοδος –

¹⁹McQuaid, *The Outpouring*, 41. In Matthew 21:1-23:39, the Jewish religious leaders thoroughly “inspected” Christ Jesus through their questioning of Him.

²⁰Kevin Howard and Marvin Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), 16.

²¹See Köstenberger, “John,” 502. Commenting on John 19:29-36, Köstenberger writes: “An allusion to the Passover may also be in view...consisting of the hyssop (19:29), the unbroken bones (19:33,36), and the mingled blood (19:34).”

²²McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 751.

²³Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 422-23. See also Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, “1 Corinthians” in Gregory K. Beale and Donald A. Carson. *The Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 708. The authors comment on 1 Corinthians 5:7: “With the mention of unleavened bread, Paul’s mind turns to Passover, that great founding event for God’s people Israel, and the cross, its even more relevant equivalent as a type for the church. Such events and institutions are regarded by Paul as patterns of God’s work of salvation in the OT that point to their greater analogue of salvation in Christ.”

exodon), that is to say, His *Exodus*. Thus, Luke understands Christ's "departure" to be the keystone of the *eschatological exodus* from sin and death.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

Strictly speaking, Unleavened Bread is the second major feast of the Hebrew calendar and begins on the fifteenth day of *Nisan*, the day after Passover. However, because of this festival's close connection with Passover, the New Testament frequently uses the terms *Unleavened Bread* and *Passover* as synonyms for one another (cf. Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:1, 7). The Hebrew word *massāh* (מַצֶּה) means "unleavened bread: flat loaves of flour & water, baked quickly."²⁴ Harris, Archer, and Waltke describe this feast in the following manner: "Because Israel had eaten unleavened bread on the night when they left Egypt (Ex 12:8) and during the first stages of their travels (Ex 12:39), annually thereafter they ate unleavened bread with bitter herbs at the Passover season whether the first or second Passover (Ex 12:14-20; Num 9:10). Eaten with bitter herbs, it is called the bread of affliction (Deut 16:3)."²⁵ The Feast of Unleavened Bread lasted seven days from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of the spring month of *Nisan*. Furthermore, the first and last days of this particular festival were *special Sabbaths*, that is to say, Sabbath days in addition to weekly Sabbath.

Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament

The Feast of Unleavened Bread is first introduced in Exodus 12. Although Unleavened Bread is distinct from the Passover festival, the Israelites were commanded to eat the Passover Lamb "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs" (Exod. 12:8). Beginning the day after Passover (*Nisan* 15), the congregation of Israel was commanded not only to remove *all* leaven out of their houses (Exod. 12:15, 19) but also to eat unleavened bread for seven days (Exod. 12:15; Lev 23:6). If any Israelite ate anything which contained leaven, he or she was to "be cut off from Israel" (Exod. 12:15, 19-20). As stated above, the first and last days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread were *special Sabbaths* (Exod. 12:16; Lev. 23:7-8).

What was the purpose of this feast? This festival, like the Passover, was to commemorate Yahweh's physical redemption of Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exod. 12:17-18). More specifically, the consumption of unleavened bread would stand as a memorial of the Israelites' hasty departure from Egypt (Exod. 12:11; 34, 39), the affliction they suffered there (i.e., unleavened bread is called the "bread of affliction" – Deut. 16:3), and the Lord's gracious deliverance of them. Why would anyone be expelled from Israel if he or she consumed anything with leaven during this feast? The Bible often uses leaven (but not always, cf. Lev. 7:13; Matt. 13:33ff) as a symbol for sin (e.g. Exod. 12:15-19; Deut. 16:3-4; Hos. 7:4; 1 Cor. 5:6-8). Therefore, the Israelites' removal of leaven from their houses and their eating of unleavened bread for seven days symbolized both the removal of sin and the cultivation of holiness. An Israelite who did not heed these requirements was demonstrating not only contempt for Yahweh Himself but also a symbolic apathy with regard to the issues of sin and holiness.

²⁴HALOT, 210.

²⁵Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 523.

Christ: Our “Unleavened” Savior

How did the Lord Jesus Christ fulfill the Feast of Unleavened Bread? Just as this festival symbolizes both sinlessness and holiness, Christ was sinless and perfectly holy. 2 Corinthians 5:21 declares: “For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.” Hebrews 4:15 also states: “For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Howard and Rosenthal write: “As a pure, sinless sacrifice, the Messiah was not under the curse to return to dust.”²⁶ McFall makes an astute observation regarding the connection between unleavened bread and the Lord’s Supper. He writes:

...instead of handing the meat of the Passover lamb to his disciples with the words: ‘this is my body’ (thus making a logical connection), he took the lowly unleavened bread, an adjunct to the meal, and gave it a significance it had never had before....His actions indicated that the death of the Passover lamb was about to become redundant; ‘Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us’ (1 Cor. 5:7). The Passover, in this sense, could never be repeated.²⁷

In other words, Christ’s selection of the unleavened bread of the Passover meal to signify His broken body in the Lord’s Supper indicates the sinlessness of His sacrifice, that He is “the bread of life” from heaven (John 6:33-35), and the imminent non-repeatable nature of the Passover.

The Apostle Paul also applies this festival to the life of a believer in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Paul equates the Passover with Christ’s crucifixion and seems to equate Unleavened Bread (i.e., the festival) with the New Covenant age. In other words, he instructs believers to live “unleavened” (i.e., holy) lives in this present age, since “Christ, our Passover Lamb,” already has been sacrificed. Believers are called to emulate their “unleavened” Savior by living “unleavened” lives by the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Unger rightly states that “Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6-8) typifies the holy walk of a believer after redemption.”²⁸

The Feast of Firstfruits

The third major feast of the Hebrew calendar is Firstfruits occurring during the seven-day long Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Hebrew word translated as ‘firstfruits’ (בְּכֹרִים – *bikkûrîm*) is derived from the verb בָּכַר (*bākar*), meaning “bear early fruit” or “treat as first-born.”²⁹ Harris, Archer, and Waltke define *bikkûrîm* in the following manner: “Only appears in masculine plural and refers especially to the first products of grain and fruit...a portion of which were to be given to the Lord as a thank offering and for the support of the priesthood (cf. Lev. 2:14; Num. 18:12-

²⁶Howard and Rosenthal, *Feasts of the Lord*, 70.

²⁷McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 751.

²⁸Unger, *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 423.

²⁹HALOT, 40.

13).”³⁰ This feast is particularly associated with the first fruits of the barley harvest which were offered to the Lord in thankfulness for His provision.

The Feast of Firstfruits in the Old Testament

This third festival was celebrated “on the day after the Sabbath” (Lev. 23:11). However, there is a significant debate as to which Sabbath day is in view. The Sadducees understood the Sabbath day to be the nearest *weekly Sabbath* after the start of Unleavened Bread, whereas the Pharisees argued that it was the first day of Unleavened Bread which was a *special Sabbath*.³¹ That being said, when the people of Israel entered the Promised Land, they were to present a sheaf of the firstfruits of the barley harvest to the priests (Lev. 23:10). The priest, in turn, would wave the sheaf before the Lord (Lev. 23:11). In addition to the offering of the barley firstfruits, the people were required to make both a burnt offering and a grain offering (Lev. 23:12-13). Furthermore, until the Israelites offered the barley firstfruits to Yahweh, they were forbidden to eat the grain of the new harvest. (Lev 23:14).

So, what is the significance of the Feast of Firstfruits? Kevin Howard writes: “For Firstfruits, a sheaf of barley was harvested and brought to the Temple as a thanksgiving offering to the Lord for the harvest. It was representative of the barley harvest as a whole and served as a pledge or guarantee that the remainder of the harvest would be realized in the days that followed.”³² Similarly, Richard Gaffin states that the wave offerings at this particular Jewish feast were “representative of the total harvest.”³³ He continues:

They are a token expression of recognition and thanksgiving that the whole has been given by God. Thus “firstfruits” does bring into view the initial portion of the harvest, but only as it is part of the whole.... ‘Firstfruits’ expresses the notion of organic connection and unity, the inseparability of the initial quantity from the whole. It is particularly this aspect which gives these sacrifices their significance.³⁴

Thus, the offering of the Firstfruits was both a thank offering to Yahweh and a demonstration of faith on Israel’s part (provided the offering was accepted) that the Lord would graciously bless the rest of the harvest.

Christ: The Firstfruits of the Resurrection

Like Passover and Unleavened Bread, the Lord Jesus Christ is *the fulfillment* of all the Jewish feast days, new moons, and Sabbaths (cf. Col. 2:16-17). So, how does He fulfill the Feast of Firstfruits? Paul describes Christ as “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20), “the firstfruits” of those who “shall be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22-23), and “the firstborn from the dead” (Col. 1:18). Thus, Christ is *the Firstfruits* of the future harvest of the resurrection

³⁰Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 109.

³¹Barney Kasdan, *God’s Appointed Times: A Practical Guide for Understanding and Celebrating the Biblical Holidays* (Clarksville, MD: Messianic Jewish Publishers, 1993), 41. See also Howard and Rosenthal, *Feasts of the Lord*, 76.

³²Howard and Rosenthal, *Feasts of the Lord*, 75.

³³Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg: Baker Book House, 1978), 34.

³⁴*Ibid.*

of the righteous. Coulson Shepherd writes, “Notice, Israel was to bring the sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest on the first day of the week and wave it before the Lord. Christ arose on the first day of the week. That one sheaf represented the whole harvest. The harvest is at the end of this age of sowing and planting. ‘Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at His coming,’ the end of the harvest.”³⁵ In like manner, Merrill Unger states, “Joseph’s empty tomb [i.e., Joseph of Arimathea’s empty tomb] proclaimed that the great first fruit sheaf had been reaped and waved in the heavenly Temple.”³⁶

The truth that Christ is the Firstfruits of the resurrection forms the crux of Paul’s argument against the Corinthians’ mistaken view of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15. The future bodily resurrection of believers is guaranteed by God’s acceptance of Christ as the Firstfruits of the resurrection. Therefore, if there is no bodily resurrection of believers, then Christ Himself has not been raised, since these two resurrections are inseparably united to one another. Concerning this, Anthony Hoekema writes:

In 1 Corinthians 15:20 we read, “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” The word *firstfruits* (*aparchē*) means the first part of a harvest, which guarantees its eventual completion; thus Christ’s resurrection is the proof and guarantee that we who are in Christ shall also arise from the dead. In Colossians 1:18 we read that Christ is “the first-born (*prōtotokos*) from the dead.” The fact that Christ is here called the first-born implies that those who are his brothers and sisters will arise from the dead, so that, as we learn from Romans 8:29, Christ might be “the first-born among many brethren.” In John 14:19, in fact, Christ specifically says to his disciples, “Because I live, you will live also.”³⁷

Gaffin also declares:

His resurrection is the representative beginning of the resurrection of believers. In other words, the term seems deliberately chosen to make evident the organic connection between the two resurrections...His resurrection is not simply a guarantee; it is a pledge in the sense that it is the actual beginning of the general event. In fact, on the basis of this verse it can be said that Paul views the two resurrections not so much as two events but as two episodes of the same event.³⁸

Christ’s resurrection, therefore, is the *firstfruits* or pledge that Yahweh will bring about the future bodily resurrection of His people.

Pentecost: the Feast of Weeks

The Feast of Pentecost (Lev 23:15-21) is the fourth *mô‘ēd* on the Hebrew calendar and is also known as the *Feast of Weeks* (i.e., *Shavout*), the *Day of Firstfruits*, and the *Feast of Harvest*. This festival constituted not only one of “the three major yearly festivals of Israel” when “all

³⁵Coulson Shepherd, *Jewish Holy Days: Their Prophetic and Christian Significance* (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1974), 33.

³⁶Unger, *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 423.

³⁷Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1979), 246.

³⁸Gaffin, *Resurrection and Redemption*, 34-5.

males had to appear before Yahweh with a gift” but also one of Israel’s special Sabbaths.³⁹ The Jews would count fifty days (the so-called ‘counting of the omer’) from the Feast of Firstfruits (Lev. 23:9-14). The Feast of Pentecost was celebrated on the fiftieth day, hence the name ‘Pentecost’ from the Greek for ‘fifty’. For this particular feast, the Jews would bring to the Temple the firstfruits of their wheat harvest. From this offering, the Jewish priests would make “two loaves of bread to be waved...of fine flour, and they shall be baked with leaven, as first fruits to the LORD” (Lev. 23:17). A priest would subsequently present the two loaves before the Lord as a wave offering, in addition to making a burnt offering, a sin offering, and a peace offering to God (Lev 23:18-20).

The Significance of Pentecost

What is the significance of the two wheat loaves baked with leaven which were presented before the Lord as a *wave offering*? *First*, wheat is often a symbol for believers in Scripture (cf. Matt. 13:25-30, 36-43). *Second*, recall that the Bible often uses leaven (but not always, cf. Lev. 7:13; Matt. 13:33ff) as a symbol for sin (e.g. Exod. 12:15-19; Deut. 16:3-4; Hos. 7:4; 1 Cor. 5:6-8). *Third*, the two loaves may symbolize elect Jews and elect Gentiles. Understood in this manner, the two loaves made from *the same* sheaves of wheat appear to symbolize believing Jews and believing Gentiles who have been incorporated into *the same* spiritual body, that is, the Church. The fact that both loaves are *leavened* may symbolize the presence of sin from which believers will be *progressively sanctified* by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:13; 1 Cor. 5:6-8; Phil. 2:12-13). Bruce Scott states:

Even though two loaves were waved before the Lord on the day of Pentecost, they were considered one offering. They were presented in a state of unity, their particles having been baked and joined together to form a new whole. In the same way, the church is composed of two separate groups of people- Jews and Gentiles- joined together to make one new entity” (Eph. 2:13-18)...just as the two loaves on Shavout [i.e., Pentecost] were baked with leaven, symbolic of the presence of sin, so too the church contains leaven or sin from which it will not be completely purified until Jesus returns.⁴⁰

The ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Pentecost occurred when Christ poured out of the Holy Spirit resulting in the formation of the Church, “the eschatological temple which God now indwells by His Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16...Eph. 2:22, *etc.*).”⁴¹

The Firstfruits-Pentecost Connection

Recall that the Feast of Firstfruits was fulfilled in Christ’s resurrection from the tomb. Recall also that Pentecost is the fiftieth day after Firstfruits. The New Testament addresses the spiritual significance of this connection between these two feasts. *First*, Christ is the Firstfruits of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:20-23), and His resurrection is *the* guarantee that believers too will be resurrected at the end of the age. *Second*, the Holy Spirit, who was poured out by the Lord

³⁹McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 750-1. See also Howard and Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 90-1; McQuaid, *The Outpouring*, 12; and Scott, *The Feasts of Israel*, 58.

⁴⁰Scott, *Feasts of Israel*, 72-3. See also Merrill F. Unger, *The Baptism & Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Chicago, Moody Press, 1974), 156.

⁴¹Max Turner, “Holy Spirit,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 557.

Jesus at Pentecost, is “the pledge” of the believer’s “inheritance” (Eph. 1:13-14). What is the inheritance of believers? It is their resurrection in glory. Romans 8:23 declares: “And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” *Second*, McFall notes: “Passover and Pentecost are inseparably joined by a fixed space between them; what was promised by Christ on Passover night (John 14:16-20; 16:7-14) was fulfilled at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.”⁴² In other words, the fulfillment of all that Christ had taught His disciples concerning the Holy Spirit and future His ministry (e.g. John 14:16-17; 15:26; 16:13-14) was inaugurated at Pentecost.

The First ‘Pentecost’ versus the Eschatological Pentecost

The outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost is *the eschatological fulfillment of the first ‘Pentecost,’ that is to say, the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai* (cf. 2 Cor. 2:14 to 4:6; Heb. 12:18-24).⁴³ How so? *First*, both events occurred on/about the same day of the Hebrew calendar: the sixth day of the third month (Sivan). For example, the people of Israel arrived at Sinai “in the third new moon...on that day” (Exod. 19:1). Upon their arrival, the Lord commanded Moses, “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their garments¹¹ and be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down on Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people” (Exod. 19:10-11). Thus, it was about the sixth day of the third month when the Lord descended upon Sinai, three days after Israel reached the mountain, the very day established for the future celebration of Pentecost.⁴⁴ *Second*, fire is associated with the theophany at Sinai and that at Pentecost. Regarding Sinai, Exodus 19:18 declares: “Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke *because the LORD had descended on it in fire*. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly” [emphasis mine].

⁴²McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 752.

⁴³See Gregory K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 599-600; and Max Turner, “Holy Spirit,” 554. Although not the focus of this particular section, Pentecost is also a *cosmic reversal* of the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 610. David Brickner and Rich Robinson *Christ in the Feast of Pentecost* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008), 119; and C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*. Volume I: The Pentateuch (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdsman's Publishing Company, 1973), 175-6.

⁴⁴Richard Booker writes: “While the Feast of Passover marked the beginning of the barley harvest, the Feast of Pentecost was celebrated during the wheat harvest. Notice from the chart that it came on the sixth day of the Hebrew month of *Sivan*. This corresponds to the Gentile months of May-June. The feast lasted for one day....Jewish sages have traditionally taught that God gave the Torah to Moses on the day of Pentecost. We learn in Exodus 19 that the Jews arrived at Mount Sinai in the third month on the Hebrew calendar and possibly on the third day. Exodus 19:1 reads, ‘In the third month after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai.’ The phrase ‘same day’ is interpreted to refer to the phrase ‘third month’. The understanding is that they came to Sinai on the third day of the third month. Three days later, on the sixth of *Sivan*, God came down upon Mount Sinai and gave them the Torah (verse 11)....Because Pentecost is *the* eschatological fulfillment of Mount Sinai, the Church, the spiritual body created at Pentecost, is *also* the eschatological fulfillment of Israel, the national body created at Sinai.” Richard Booker, *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feasts: Discovering their Significance to You as a Christian* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009), 94-5. See also Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 1994), 75. Others writers argue that the giving of the Law occurred in the same general time frame as the future Feast of Pentecost but *not* on the exact same day. See Howard and Rosenthal, *Feasts of the Lord*, 95; and Jill Shannon, *A Prophetic Calendar: The Feasts of Israel* (Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers, 2009), 125.

Regarding Pentecost, Acts 2:3 states that “*tongues as of fire* distributing themselves...rested on each one of them” (NASB, cf. Isa. 5:24-25) [**emphasis mine**]. Interestingly, Philo, the Jewish philosopher, understood the fire of the Sinai theophany as “flame being endowed with articulate speech [i.e., tongues of fire]” in light of Psalm 29:7 (“The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire,” KJV).⁴⁵

Third, the events at Sinai *typologically* parallel those of Pentecost. Just as Moses the Prophet ascended to the summit of Mount Sinai (Exod. 19:20) to receive the Ten Commandments (Exod. 34:28), Jesus Christ, the Prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:15; cf. Acts 3:22; 7:37), ascended to the heavenly Mount Zion (Heb. 12:22) to ‘receive’ the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).⁴⁶ Whereas the Decalogue was written by the finger of God (Exod. 31:18) on tablets of stone (Exod. 24:12; 2 Cor. 3:7), God’s law was ‘written’ upon believers’ hearts (Jer. 31:33; 2 Cor. 3:3; Heb. 8:10) by the Spirit of God (Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:26-27).⁴⁷ Just as Moses interceded for Israel before God (Exod. 32:11-18; 33:12-23), Christ Jesus, our *παράκλητον* (*paraklēton* – “advocate;” cf. 1 John 2:1), intercedes for us before His Father (Rom 8:34; 1 John 2:1). Whereas as Moses descended Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments (Exod. 32:15; 34:29) and placed them within the Tabernacle (Exod. 40:20-21), the Holy Spirit, our other *παράκλητος* (*paraklētos* – cf. John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7) who also intercedes for us (cf. Rom. 8:26-27), ‘descended’ the heavenly Mount Zion and ‘wrote’ God’s law upon the heart of believers (Jer. 31:33), whose bodies are now temples for the indwelling Holy Spirit (Ezek. 36:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:19). Just as the Tabernacle was constructed (Exod. 36:1-40:33) after the giving of the Law by the *Spirit-filled* Bezalel and Oholiab (Exod. 35:30-35) and also served as a location in which Yahweh dwelt (Exod. 40:34-38), the Church was formed by the outpouring of the Spirit and serves as “God’s temple” (1 Cor. 3:16), “a dwelling place for God by the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).⁴⁸

Fourth, just as the giving of the Law at Mount Sinai constituted the establishment of the Old Covenant, the outpouring of the Spirit constituted the establishment of the New Covenant. *Fifth*, a typological contrast exists between the Old and New Covenants with regard to their natures.⁴⁹ The Old Covenant was a “ministry of death, carved in letters on stone” (2 Cor. 3:6-7) and a “ministry of condemnation” (2 Cor. 3:9). Shortly after the Old Covenant was ratified, Israel committed spiritual harlotry via the golden calf, which resulted in the deaths of 3,000 Israelites at the hand of the Levites (Exod. 32:28).⁵⁰ Contrastingly, the New Covenant is “the ministry of righteousness” (2 Cor. 3:9) and “of the Spirit” who “gives life” (2 Cor. 3:6). When the Spirit was poured out upon *believing* Jews at Pentecost, 3,000 souls were added to the Church

⁴⁵Philo, *The Works of Philo*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 522. See also Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 295-6. In a similar manner, Waltke connects Psalm 29:7 with the appearance of the tongues of fire in Acts 2.

⁴⁶See Chumney, *Seven Festivals*, 75.

⁴⁷See Booker, *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feast*, 97; Chumney, *Seven Festivals*, 75; and Batya R. Wootten, *Israel’s Feasts and their Fullness* (Saint Cloud, FL: Key of David Publishing, 2008), 174.

⁴⁸See Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 634.

⁴⁹When the Apostle Paul contrasts “the letter” with “the Spirit” in 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6, he is contrasting two distinct *eras* of redemptive history, the Old Covenant age (characterized by the Mosaic Law) and the New Covenant age (characterized by the Spirit). Regarding “the Spirit-letter contrast” in 2 Corinthians 3:6, Schreiner states that “the Spirit’s work represents the coming of the new era in Christ.” Thomas R. Schreiner, *40 Questions about Christians and Biblical Law* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2010), 144.

⁵⁰See Booker, *Celebrating Jesus in the Biblical Feast*, 97; Chumney, *Seven Festivals*, 75; and Shannon, *A Prophetic Calendar*, 129.

in response to Peter's sermon (Acts 2:41).⁵¹ *Sixth*, whereas the enactment of the Old Covenant at Sinai formed *national* Israel as God's *special covenant* people, the enactment of the New Covenant formed the Church as God's *special covenant* people. Because Pentecost is *the* eschatological fulfillment of Mount Sinai, the Church, by virtue of her union to Christ Jesus— the *True Israel*, stands as the eschatological fulfillment of Israel *as the people of God*.

The Feast of Trumpets

The fifth major festival of the Hebrew calendar is the Feast of Trumpets occurring in the fall on the first day of *Tishri*, the seventh month (Num. 29:1; Lev. 23:23-25). The Hebrew word translated as “trumpets” in Numbers 29:1 (תְּרוּעָה – *těrû ‘āh*) is derived from the verb רָוַע (רָוַע – *rû ‘ā*), meaning “give a great shout,” “shout a war-cry,” and “sound the signal for battle.”⁵² Harris, Archer, and Waltke outline Old Testament's fourfold usage of *těrû ‘āh* in the following manner: “It is used for ‘signal’ (Lev. 25:9), the ‘sound of the trumpet’ for the blowing of the *shofar* on the day of atonement. It is also used for ‘alarm’ as in case of attack (Josh. 6:5; Jer. 4:19)...In addition, it is used for the trumpet in the tumult of battle...(Amos 2:2). Lastly, the noun is used for the exultation of praise to God...(Ps 150:3).”⁵³ In a rather unique manner, this particular festival not only constitutes a *special Sabbath* day, but it also occurs on a new moon.

Jewish Observance of the Feast of Trumpets

The Feast of Trumpets is also known by other names, such as Rosh Hashanah (lit. “the head of the year”) and *Yom Teruah* (lit. “the Day of the Shout/Trumpet”) and was celebrated by the blowing of the *shofar*, “a curved trumpet fashioned from a ram's horn” at the first sighting of the new moon.⁵⁴ Leviticus 23:23-25 outlines this sacred festival: “And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ²⁴‘Speak to the people of Israel, saying, ‘In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest, a memorial proclaimed with blast of *trumpets* (תְּרוּעָה – *těrû ‘āh*), a holy convocation. ²⁵You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall present a food offering to the LORD.’” Howard describes the Feast of Trumpets in the following manner: “In ancient Israel, the New Moon was normally announced by short blasts of the trumpet, but the New Moon of the seventh month [i.e., the Feast of Trumpets] was celebrated by long blasts, emphasizing its solemnity and uniqueness among months.”⁵⁵ Thus, this particular feast was observed with blasts from the *shofar trumpet* at the first sighting of the new moon of the seventh month.

Trumpets in the Old Testament

Apart from its use in conjunction with the jubilee year, the Feast of Trumpets, and the Day of Atonement, the blowing of trumpets served *three* chief purposes in the Old Testament: to assemble Israel before Yahweh (Exod. 19:13-19, 20:18; Num. 10:2; Isa. 27:13), to sound the alarm or battle cry in time of war (Num. 10:9; Josh 6:4, 20; Judg. 3:27, 6:34, 7:8-22; Neh. 4:18;

⁵¹See Victor Buksbazen, *The Gospel in the Feasts of Israel* (Bellmawr, NJ: Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry, 2004), 24; Chumney, *Seven Festivals*, 75; and Shannon, *A Prophetic Calendar*, 129.

⁵²HALOT, 336.

⁵³Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 839.

⁵⁴Howard & Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 106.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 104-5.

Job 39:25; Jer. 4:5, 19), and to signal the coronation of the king of Israel (2 Sam. 15:10; 1 Kgs. 1:34, 39; 2 Kgs. 9:13, 11:12-14). For example, Shepherd states: “An explanation of trumpet blowing is found in Numbers 10. The trumpets were blown in Israel for the calling of the assembly; to sound an alarm; to prepare the people for battle; and as was done at the Feast of Trumpets, as a memorial before their God.”⁵⁶ Howard also writes, “The shofar also *announced the coronation of a new king* as in the cases of Solomon (1 Ki. 1:34, 39), Jehu (2 Ki. 9:13), Joash (2 Ki. 11:12-14), and the treacherous Absalom (2 Sam. 15:10).”⁵⁷

Christ’s Fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets

Not only is the shofar intimately related to the Feast of Trumpets (Lev. 23:23-25), Day of Atonement (Lev. 25:9-10), and jubilee year, but more importantly it is prophetic of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Col. 2:16-17). In fact, the New Testament frequently associates the trumpet with Christ’s *parousía*, a term that likely refers to both Jerusalem’s destruction in 70 A.D. (Matt. 24:29-31) and to Christ’s Second Coming at the consummation (1 Cor. 15:51-52; cf. 1 Thess. 4:15-17).⁵⁸ Although Matthew 24:29-31 (also Mark 13:24-27) is generally interpreted as a description Christ’s return in glory, R.T. France interprets Jesus’ words in Mark 13:5-31 (also Matt. 24:4-35) as describing Jerusalem’s destruction while Mark 13:32 (also Matt. 24:36) initiates Jesus’ teaching regarding His Second Coming.⁵⁹ France also understands Jesus’ allusion to Daniel 7:13-14 in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:29-3; Mark 13:24-27) in the following manner: “That act of judgment will make plain that Jesus has received from God the authority and dominion described in Daniel 7:13-14.”⁶⁰ In other words, Christ’s judgment against unbelieving Israel in 70 A.D. serves as divine confirmation of His heavenly enthronement at His ascension.

Understood in this manner, Matthew 24:29-31 and Mark 13:24-27 may indicate a first-century fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets. Thus, Jesus’ reference to a trumpet in these two passages may well refer to Christ’s messianic enthronement at God’s right hand and His subsequent judgment against unbelieving Israel in 70 A.D. Furthermore, Jesus’ declaration that He would “send forth His angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other” (Matt. 24:31, NASB; also Mark 13:27) may be a symbolic description of Christ’s human messengers being sent forth to ‘gather’ God’s elect via the Spirit-empowered preaching of the Gospel. That being said, such an interpretation does not exclude an additional typological ‘layer of understanding’ regarding the events surrounding the end of the Old Covenant Age (i.e., 70 A.D.). In other words, the events surrounding 70 A.D. are likely typological of the events surrounding Christ’s return in glory.

⁵⁶Shepherd, *Jewish Holy Days*, 59. See also Howard & Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 26.

⁵⁷Howard & Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 107. Ernest Martin also comments, “The Day of Trumpets was also acknowledged as the time for counting the years of their kingly rule. Indeed, it was customary that the final ceremony in the coronation of kings was the blowing of trumpets.” Ernest L. Martin, *The Star that Astonished the World* (Portland: ASK Publications, 1998), 95.

⁵⁸Some theologians argue rather convincingly that the Lord Jesus Christ was also born on the Feast of Trumpets in 3 B.C. See Martin’s *The Star that Astonished the World*.

⁵⁹R.T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 227-239.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, 140.

Whether or not Matthew 24:29-31 and Mark 13:24-27 in fact refer to Jerusalem's destruction in 70 A.D., 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 most likely describe Christ's Second Coming at the consummation. As a result, the references to a trumpet in both passages indicate that Christ's future return also fulfills the Feast of Trumpets. Just as the trumpet was used to assemble Israel before the Lord in the Old Testament, all believers will be resurrected "at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15:51-52; cf. 1 Thess. 4:15-17) and "caught up together...in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17) at Christ's Second Coming. Just as the trumpet was blown to sound an alarm or battle cry in the Old Testament, the Trumpet of God will sound the battle cry for the final climactic battle of God (Rev. 6:12-17; 19:13-20). Just as the trumpet signaled the coronation of the king of Israel in the Old Testament, the trumpet of God will signal the consummation of Christ's heavenly reign in fulfillment of the Davidic promises (1 Cor. 15:24-26). This interpretation appears to dovetail well with Revelation 11:15-18, which states.

¹⁵And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "***The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.***" ¹⁶And the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, ¹⁷saying, "We give Thee thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who art and who wast, ***because Thou hast taken Thy great power and hast begun to reign.***" ¹⁸And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the time *came* for the dead to be judged, and *the time* to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth" (NASB) [**emphasis mine**].

The Apostle Paul declares that when Christ returns in glory "every knee" will "bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue" will "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11).

Christ's Second Coming will also fulfill three additional aspects of the Old Testament Feast of Trumpets. *First*, recall that one of the alternate names for this particular Jewish feast is *Yom Teruah* (lit. "the Day of the Shout"). In 1 Thessalonians 4:16, Paul states, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven ***with a shout***, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first" (NASB) [**emphasis mine**]. *Second*, an intense spirit of watchfulness permeated the observance of this feast, since the trumpets were to be sounded as soon as the smallest portion of the new moon was visible. In a similar manner, the life of a New Covenant believer is to be characterized by an intense watchfulness with regard to Christ's return. Concerning His return, the Lord Jesus declared, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone....Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming....For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think *He will*" (Matt 24: 36, 42, 44; NASB). *Third*, Jewish tradition associates the Feast of Trumpets with the Final Judgment when the judgment "books" are opened.⁶¹ Amazingly, the New Testament stands in agreement with this particular aspect of Jewish tradition. If the *parousia* of 1 Corinthians 15:23, 51-57 is "the end" (1 Cor. 15:24), then the Feast of Trumpets stands fulfilled not only in Christ's return but also in the Great White Throne Judgment. Consider Revelation 20:12-15:

⁶¹Howard & Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 108.

¹²And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, **and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.** ¹³And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; **and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.** ¹⁴And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵**And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire** (NASB) [emphasis mine].

Thus, the New Testament likely indicates that the Feast of Trumpets will be fulfilled *in toto* at Christ's Second Coming when He returns in glory, executes the resurrection, and judges all mankind.

The Day of Atonement

The Day of Atonement (Lev. 23:27-32) is the sixth and most somber feast of the Hebrew calendar. This festival constituted one of Israel's *special Sabbaths* and was celebrated on the tenth day of *Tishri*, the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. Moreover, this particular feast was "the only day of fasting prescribed for Israel."⁶² The Hebrew for "Day of Atonement" is *yôm hakippûrîm* (יּוֹם הַכִּפּוּרִים) which is a combination of יוֹם (*yôm* – "day") and a derivative of the verb כָּפַר (*kāpar*), meaning to "spread over," "cover," "appease," and "make amends."⁶³ The most prominent feature of the Day of Atonement was the elaborate ceremony in which the high priest took the sacrificial blood into the Most Holy Place and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat.

The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament

Leviticus 16:1-34 and Leviticus 23:27-32 are the two primary passages which detail the Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. This 'holy day' was celebrated on the tenth day of *Tishri*, nine days after the Feast of Trumpets and five days before the Feast of Tabernacles. As stated above, the Day of Atonement was not only a *special Sabbath* (Lev. 23:27-32) but also a solemn occasion during which every Israelite was to "afflict" themselves, that is to say, fast (Lev. 23:27, 29). Any Israelite who did not observe the Sabbath or participate in this special fast was cut off from the congregation of Israel. The Day of Atonement was the **only** day that high priest could enter behind the veil which separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies where the Ark of the Covenant was located. After immense preparations (Lev. 16:3-7), the high priest cast lots over two goats. The goat selected by lot would be sacrificed to Yahweh as a sin offering for the people, while the other would be led outside the city as the scapegoat (Lev. 16:8-10).

Prior to sacrificing the selected goat, the high priest sacrificed a bull as a sin offering for himself and his family, took a censer of coals with incense behind the veil, and then sprinkled the blood of the bull seven times upon the Mercy Seat (Lev. 16:11-14). Following this, he would do the same with the goat's blood as an atoning sacrifice for the people of Israel (Lev. 16:15-16). As the last part of this elaborate ceremony, the high priest took the scapegoat and confessed "over it all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins" (Lev. 16:21). Another priest led the scapegoat into the wilderness with the animal symbolically

⁶²Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 453.

⁶³HALOT, 163.

‘carrying’ the nation’s sins. This ceremony was so somber and its implications so serious that there “could be no mistakes, or the result would be a monumental catastrophe and humiliation for the nation- Israel’s sacrifices would be disqualified, leaving the sins of the people uncovered.”⁶⁴ Thus, the people were to “afflict” themselves through fasting to remind them to humble themselves before Yahweh on this great day.

Christ: the Ultimate Atonement

The substitutionary atoning death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross is *the* fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. Scott rightly states: “Using Yom Kippur as a type, God presented a picture of His Son- the ultimate atonement, accomplished through the ultimate high priest, at a price of ultimate sacrifice.”⁶⁵ Hebrews 9:7-25 overflows with ‘Day of Atonement’ language and effectively serves as the quintessential New Testament commentary on the Day of Atonement in light of Christ. For example, Hebrews 9:11-12 declares: “But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.” Verses 24 through 26 continue the Day of Atonement analogy:

For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the holy places every year with blood not his own, ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.

In other words, Christ entered into the heavenly Holy of Holies via His own sinless blood to secure eternal redemption for His people.

Interestingly, the two goats (i.e., one sacrificed and one released) may also find an antitype in Christ being crucified and Barabbas (meaning ‘son of the father’ in Aramaic) being released by Pilate. Additionally, just as the carcasses of the animals sacrificed on the Day of Atonement were taken outside the camp to be burned (Lev. 16:27-28), Hebrews 13:11-14 states the following concerning Christ:

For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the holy places by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹²So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. ¹³Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured. ¹⁴For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

Classical Dispensationalists also teach that the Day of Atonement is ultimately fulfilled in the regathering/repentance of Israel which will occur in conjunction with Christ’s Second Coming.⁶⁶ I am in agreement with such teaching provided that it is a regathering of elect ethnic Israel, not a national regathering of Israel in a literal, earthly, millennium.

⁶⁴Howard & Rosenthal, *The Feasts of the Lord*, 121.

⁶⁵Scott, *The Feasts of Israel*, 102.

⁶⁶See Scott, *The Feasts of Israel*, 102-3; and Shepherd, *Jewish Holy Days*, 10, 69-71.

The Feast of Tabernacles

The seventh major festival of the Hebrew calendar is Tabernacles which is a seven-day long feast beginning on the fifteenth day of Tishri (Lev. 23:34-43). The Hebrew word translated as “Tabernacles” comes from *sukkāh* (סֻכָּה) which simply means “thicket” or “hut.”⁶⁷ Concerning this word, Harris, Archer, and Waltke state that “most commonly, it is used in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles.”⁶⁸ The most prominent feature of this celebration was the construction of *huts* or *booths*, hence why the feast was called *The Feast of Tabernacles*. This festival was also the third and final yearly festival that all Jewish males had to attend in Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16).

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament

This particular feast was celebrated for seven days (Lev. 23:40). Furthermore, the first day of the festival and the day after the feast (i.e., the eighth day) were *special Sabbaths* (Lev. 23:39), “marking not only the climax of the religious year but symbolizing the rest of the believer in his God (Lev. 23:39).”⁶⁹ The Feast of Tabernacles was to be a joyous celebration (Lev. 23:40) occurring immediately after the *olive* and *grape* harvests in the land of Israel. After the Israelites had gathered in the fruit of these harvests, they would construct huts from “the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook” (Lev. 23:39-40) to inhabit for the duration of the feast (Lev. 23:42). In addition to the construction of ‘foliage’ huts, Israel was commanded to offer extensive sacrifices throughout the feast:

The feast was one of the most expensive and lavish of the year, celebrated in gratitude for the people’s freedom from slavery. In the temple the offering for the first day was thirteen bulls, two rams and fourteen sheep. Each day thereafter the number of bulls was reduced by one. The total offering was 71 bulls, 15 rams, 105 lambs and 8 goats. By eating God’s food in a state of purity the people enjoyed real fellowship with their God.⁷⁰

Leviticus 23:42-43 describes the purpose of this festival: “You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, ⁴³that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.” The festival commemorated Yahweh’s gracious provision not only during the wilderness wanderings but also the recent harvests.

Christ: the Tabernacle of God

The Apostle John presents the Lord Jesus as the ultimate Tabernacle of God. On two occasions, he describes the God-Man using ‘tabernacle’ language. In John 1:14, we learn that “the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Interestingly, the word (*eskenōsen*) John uses for “dwelt” is derived from the Greek verb (*skēnoō*) which is related to the noun *skēnos* meaning

⁶⁷HALOT, 255.

⁶⁸Harris, Archer, and Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 624.

⁶⁹Ibid.

⁷⁰McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 753.

“tent.”⁷¹ Blake White comments, “John uses ‘dwelt’ (from *skēnoō* – ‘tabernacled’) to show that God now dwells with his people through Jesus, the true temple.”⁷² Revelation 21:3 states that “*the tabernacle of God* is among men, and *He* shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and *God Himself* shall be among them” (NASB) [emphasis mine]. In effect, the eschatological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles was inaugurated at Christ’s incarnation (John 1:14) and will be consummated at His Second Coming when He ushers in the new heaven and the new earth (Rev. 21:3-4).⁷³

Truly, the Old Testament Tabernacle typified Christ’s person and work. Just as the Tabernacle was the only means of entering into Yahweh’s blessed presence, it is only through Jesus Christ that the elect have “access in one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Even the sacred furniture of the Tabernacle prefigured the Lord Jesus. For instance, the brazen altar foreshadowed His once-for-all-time sacrifice “to put away sin” (Heb. 9:26-28), and the altar of incense speaks of Christ’s current high priestly ministry of intercession on behalf of His New Covenant people (Heb. 4:15). Even the veil separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place prefigured the Lord Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews declares that the Lord Jesus opened for His people “the new and living way” into God’s presence “through the curtain, that is, through His flesh” (Heb. 10:20). Lastly, the Ark of the Covenant pictured both Christ’s propitiatory work and the immanent presence of God in Christ. The God-Man Jesus Christ is the One and only mediator “between God and men” (1 Tim. 2:5).

John also refers to Christ as a tabernacle/temple in such passages as Revelation 21:22 and John 2:19-21. Referring to the New Jerusalem, Revelation 21:22 states: “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.” In John 2:19-21, Jesus “speaking about the temple of His body” tells the Jews: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” Christ likewise fulfills Zechariah 6:12-13, “which repeats that the messianic

⁷¹Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick William Danker, trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 929.

⁷²A. Blake White, *The Newness of the New Covenant* (Frederick, MD: New Covenant Media, 2008), 30.

⁷³In contradistinction to this view, Classical Dispensationalists typically understand the Feast of Tabernacles to be ultimately fulfilled in a literal, earthly, premillennial kingdom. For example, Unger concludes, “The feast of Booths is thus prophetic of Israel’s millennial rest.” Unger, *New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, 423. A literal interpretation of Zechariah 14:16-21 undergirds the Classical Dispensational understanding. That being said, New Covenant Theology (NCT) differs from this interpretation in that it teaches that the New Testament must have interpretive priority over the Old Testament *due to the former being the final revelation of God*. In short, NCT understands Zechariah to be prophesying about future New Covenant realities using Old Covenant terminology, terminology familiar to his original ‘Old Covenant’ audience. Understood in this manner, Zechariah 14:16-21 is symbolically prophesying of Christ’s incarnation (John 1:14), the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer throughout the New Covenant age (John 7:37-39; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22), and the future new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:3-4). Furthermore, Revelation 20 is the *only* New Testament passage that addresses the concept of the millennium, and there is *no* ‘tabernacle’ language in said passage. There is, however, ‘tabernacle’ language within Revelation 21, a passage which details the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:3-4). How, then, should we understand Zechariah 14:16-21? In short, I understand Zechariah to be prophesying about future New Covenant realities using Old Covenant terminology, terminology familiar to his original ‘Old Covenant’ audience. According to this view, Zechariah 14:16-21 prophesies of Christ’s incarnation (John 1:14), the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer throughout the New Covenant age (John 7:37-39; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22), and the future new heaven and new earth (Rev. 21:3-4).

‘branch...will build the temple of the LORD’, and then says he ‘will...rule on His throne’ and ‘be a priest’.”⁷⁴ Moreover, the beloved disciple presents Christ as the antitype of two particular pieces of Tabernacle/Temple furniture. For instance, the golden table of showbread spoke of Christ as the “bread of life” (John 6:48), “the living bread that came down from heaven” (John 6:51), and the sacred lampstand typified Christ as “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Just as the Old Covenant temples were described as sanctuaries from which flowed streams of ‘living water,’ the Lord Jesus Christ is the source of ‘living water’ in the New Covenant. Many New Testament verses verify this particular truth. In His exchange with the Samaritan woman, Jesus said: “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10). Revelation 7:17 states that “the Lamb,” that is Christ, is the One who guides God’s people “to springs of living water.” In John 7:37-39, it is written: “On the last day of the feast, the great day [i.e., the Feast of Tabernacles], Jesus stood up and cried out, ***If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.*** ³⁸***Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’*** ³⁹***Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*** [emphasis mine]. McFall astutely notes:

On the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, a priest would draw water from the pool of Siloam and carry it in a solemn procession to the altar where, it is suggested, he poured it out. This ritual apparently lies behind Jesus’ statement that if anyone would come after him, that person would experience streams of living water flowing from within (John 7:37-39), a reference to the promised Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17; 16:7).⁷⁵

Observe that Christ also “alludes to the water flowing from Ezekiel’s end-time temple in John 7:38 and interprets it of himself and of the Spirit in relation to believers, a passage that further develops the ‘living water’ theme of John 4.”⁷⁶ Jesus’ own testimony is that He “fulfilled the image of Ezekiel foretold in chapter 47 of his prophecy, when he spoke of water flowing from the sanctuary.”⁷⁷ Note that “if Jesus is the true temple of God, he alone gives us the ‘living water’ which takes away the thirst of human sin and longing.”⁷⁸ The Son of God dispensed His ‘living water,’ when He baptized His followers with the Holy Spirit at the Pentecost event, thereby forming the Church. John 7:38 also speaks of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer throughout the New Covenant age (John 7:37-39; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22).

Conclusion

Although New Covenant believers need not keep the Feasts of Israel (cf. Col. 2:16-17; Rom. 14) as they are not under the Old Covenant, it is exceedingly beneficial for members of the

⁷⁴Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 194, 218.

⁷⁵McFall, “Sacred Meals,” 753.

⁷⁶Beale, *Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 345.

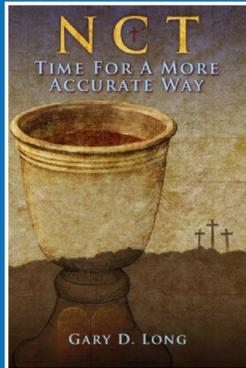
⁷⁷Kim Riddlebarger, *A Case for Amillennialism: Understanding the End Times*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), 79-80.

⁷⁸Ibid., 80.

New Covenant to be familiar with these seven festivals. Why? *First*, the feasts recapitulate Israel's history as a nation and remind us of God's gracious provision for and redemption of the nation of Israel. *Second*, Christ Himself recapitulates that same history in His sinless person and work; thus, the feasts are shadows of Christ and the New Covenant, ultimately foretelling the entire New Covenant ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ on behalf of His Church. The Passover speaks of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross to redeem His people from God's wrath and rescue them from sin and death. Unleavened Bread testifies of Christ's sinlessness and perfect holiness. Firstfruits foretold Christ's resurrection as the guarantee of the general resurrection of believers. The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost typified the pouring out of the Spirit at Pentecost to create the Church. Trumpets relates to Christ's Second Coming at the end of the age to resurrect and gather His people, defeat His enemies, and consummate His present reign as the Davidic monarch. The Day of Atonement foreshadowed Christ's atoning death on the cross and perhaps also speaks of the future regathering of ethnic Israel (Rom. 11:25-32). The Feast of Tabernacles speaks of Christ's incarnation (John 1:14), the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the New Covenant believer (John 7:37-39; cf. 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:19-22), and the new heaven and new earth.

NCT: TIME FOR A MORE ACCURATE WAY

BY GARY D. LONG



“The doctrinal partitions that sadly divide sovereign grace theology held by both Presbyterians and Baptist cannot be broken down for the gospel’s sake without questioning the heart of Reformed Theology’s system of Covenant Theology (CT), namely, its one overarching covenant of grace with its infant baptism of covenant children (the Achilles’ heel to major doctrinal portions of its theological system). Since the writing of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Baptists have dealt with the result of CT for over 360 years by rightly rejecting its doctrine of the church consisting of a mixed multitude primarily caused by the practice of baptizing infants of one or both believing parents. However, they have not adequately dealt with the cause, the heart of CT’s

whole doctrinal system, namely, its teaching that the Old and New Covenants are the outworking of one overarching covenant of grace rather than the covenantal outworking in redemptive history of God’s eternal kingdom purpose (II Tim. 1:9). Now is the “Time for a More Accurate Way” for such middle-walls of doctrinal partition to be broken down biblically, to include differences with CT over the covenantal administration of the Law of God. May our merciful and gracious God bring it to pass.”

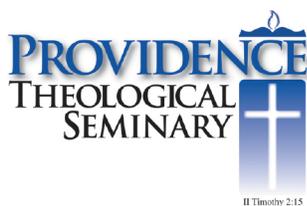
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