

Historic Summary of the Covenants of God

The History of the Covenants of God begins in the Garden of Eden. God creates man and woman, places them in the Garden of Eden, and offers them a correct path to relate to Him, thereby partaking of His righteous character and eternal life. All they have to do is believe Him and obey His voice. At this point, they have only the natural internal spiritual makeup of a human being, which does not possess the righteous character of the Creator (Romans 8:20).

The choice concerning their spiritual and eternal future centers around *two trees* which are 'good for food' - meaning spiritual food - unlike all the other trees, which were only good for the sustenance of the physical body. All things created by God and placed in the Garden, including these two trees, were 'very good' within the sphere of their proper use.

One of the trees was called the Tree of Life, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, and the grace of God that comes to all those who believe in Him and obey His voice. As we progress through the Scriptures, we will see that this is the initial way God establishes any relationship with man.

The other tree represented the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Scripture reveals that this is the Law, or Commandments of God, which give proper wisdom, understanding, and boundaries to moral and spiritual behavior (Deut. 30:15 & Romans 3:20). Within its proper use, this tree was the one that would give man the correct understanding of what God's character of Love truly is; though without the Spirit of God (contained in the Tree of Life) as its spiritual foundation, obedience to the Law would only be the self righteousness of man from man's imperfect motivations (Philippians 3:9). Thus the proper tree had to be partaken of first, in order for the correct spiritual glory to be given to the Creator and His almighty Grace, thereby giving man's true focus of worship and glory to Him. Therefore, it was necessary for them to just believe Him and obey His voice, even though they did not, as yet, have any true sense of right and wrong, or moral values. Had they correctly obeyed, the Law (Knowledge of Good and Evil) would have found its proper use in God's relationship with man, as would all else that God had created. This is the reason that this tree, which was 'very good' in its proper application, was in the Garden in the first place. There was nothing evil about this tree, of itself. God does not tempt man with sin or anything evil (James 1:13).

As we progress through God's covenants, we will see this same pattern emerge repeatedly. First one is asked by God to 'believe' and 'obey' as the focus of their commitment. Afterward, instructions concerning that obedience are given, not before, as if this relationship and all it entails had been earned by former works. We will see this same pattern emerge in God's future relationship with Abraham, as well the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. The issue surrounding God's command to Adam and Eve involved laying the correct spiritual foundation within their lives. Once this had been done, The Spirit of God (contained in the Tree of Life) would enter, converting the internal human into a 'new creature' which contains the Love, or Spirit of God, which is not in the natural human. The laws of God were there for their proper application within the correct spiritual framework of God's love (Romans 7: verses 7&12). Without the Spirit within the Tree of Life, man would be left only with the Law, motivated by his imperfect human motives and nature. In this state, he would be giving the glory to himself and law instead of its source and Creator (Romans 9:30-32). This correct structure and order surrounding these two issues could not be distorted, or else spiritual chaos would result within the relationship between God and man. Glorifying the Law above its correct purpose would result in: 'the table which had been laid before him (for good) becoming his stumbling block'.

Scripture, especially the writings of the Apostle Paul, show that had man taken the correct tree, through obedience and faith in God, the Law (Knowledge of Good and Evil) was then there to add guidance and wisdom to our walk with Him. It could never make us in correct standing eternally (*justify us*) before God in the correct way, even from the very beginning. Only the Spirit of God could do that, as it would alter the inner man. The proper use of the law was to make us guilty before (compared to) God, so that in our commitment to Him, we would have correct guidance in seeing how we need to improve and make effort to overcome this body and state of innocence in which we were created (Romans 8:20). In other words, it was a guide to our growth, and gradual change. To "make us guilty" means that it was there to help us see how insufficient our nature is compared to Him, as we encounter the pulls of the flesh that are inherently within us, comparing them to His law; which is a shadow or reflection of His true love. The only way that a human can understand the true structure of Godly behavior is by the principles of the Law. Without that, man would be left to defining it by his own human nature, which is inherently

self-centered and sold under sin; thus it is called a “body of sin”. God created man in a diminished state, which contains this inherent evil, by His own design (Romans 8:20).

The Law, or Knowledge of Good and Evil, does not contain the Spirit of God, however, and no deeds of it can reach that level of righteousness (Romans 9:30-32). In order for the Law to fulfill God’s character, His Spirit (Godly Love) must be within a human **by God’s grace** as the spiritual foundation **first**. Then the Law can be used as structure for Godly behavior. Without this correct foundation being laid **first**, any obedience to the Law is only self righteousness, for better or worse (Philippians 3:9).

Without the presence of the Spirit, contained in the Tree of Life, the law only brings man into an awareness of death and insufficiency (Romans 7:8-11). That Spirit within the Tree of Life, and later within the Bread of Life (through faith in Christ as the Redeemer) is the only thing which can add the higher spiritual and eternal element to man.

While the law’s order defines good to those who are under it; man’s **glorification** of the law of God while in this state will only eventually bring him to a state of conflict and division between himself and others, as well as God, as they continually use it as a guide to commend themselves and condemn others (Romans 2). This is a result of the vain, imperfect, and self centered, human nature within him. In order for the law to find its true purpose, the Holy Spirit must replace the nature of man, thus correcting this spiritual deficiency. When this happens, the law defines the boundaries and order of God’s love.

In the hands of mankind and his limited evil nature, the law of God can never reach the true and ultimate state of God’s righteousness (Romans 9:30-32 again), though it does define ‘righteous’ acts on its own level – a condition Paul called ‘the letter of the law’. Anyone who has only God’s law can relate to Him and each other only by that limited state.

Within this limited state, the law can only provide stability of true righteous order under the direct hand and control of God Himself, as was originally intended at Sinai. Scripture shows that God has related to mankind in this way.

[Many of the principles addressed here are examined thoroughly within the Book of Job].

The Law (Commandments, or Knowledge of Good and Evil) was meant to be an **instrument** of eternal life.

Had the Tree of Life, containing God’s Spirit and

character been taken first, the Law was there to add proper order, understanding, and structure to that Love. By the law, man could understand the boundaries and principles of that Godly motivation. Thus he would be able to worship in **both spirit and truth**. If the original man and woman had taken of the Tree of Life, giving glory and honor to God’s omnipotent Grace as the source of all, they would have been overshadowed continually by it, as they lived, made mistakes, corrected them by the knowledge of the law, and grew closer and closer to Him and His likeness, while awaiting their change (Romans 8). They would have never known death or a spirit of fear.

However, the Law was changed into an instrument of death by the **improper** manner by which it entered this world and the human experience. It does the same thing to a carnal human’s awareness when his eyes are first opened to understand its true value, and he begins to see how his own nature measures up to its standards (Romans 7:8-10). This confusion originally occurred as a result of Adam’s sin in the Garden. All these principles are explained in detail by Paul in his letter to the Romans.

In the Garden, Satan entered the man/God equation in order to set all this confusion in motion. Through the Serpent, or by taking its form, he convinced Eve that by taking of the wisdom, understanding, and goodness contained in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, contrary to the order and instruction God had given them; they could be “as God”, knowing Good and Evil. God’s statement, in Genesis 3:22, confirms that this Knowledge was the pure realization of correct law as understood by the Creator Himself.

However, Satan had perverted the issues involved, just as he has within his own heart. Within his short statement to Eve, he implies that God gets His righteousness and eternal state from obeying the Law, thus glorifying it over its Creator. Also, he implies that God is a liar, and His reason for denying this tree within His original instruction is to deny man what He has. By the vanity already within them, Adam and Eve take the wrong tree, thus disrespecting God’s instruction, and reject this glorious potential that He had offered. In effect, **Satan states that eternity, or salvation from this physical existence, is by the knowledge and deeds of Law. This is the original lie, and that which created the original chaos in the Garden of Eden.**

Paul examines all these principles in his letter to the Romans, in which he makes a concerted effort to help believers to see each of these principles of Spirit and Truth (law) in the **correct order** -- so that they can begin to obey God in the way He originally intended **before all this chaos happened**. He makes it very clear that the correct order of faith does not abolish God’s commandments, but

establishes them to their pure and correct purpose and order for which they were originally intended (Romans 3:31). The tree representing the Knowledge of Good and Evil (law) was present, and in the man/God equation **before** any sin occurred, because, as the scripture shows, it is the only guide we have to understand the parameters of God's love. It was not added later because of sin!

However, it came into the legal equation between God and man by a sinful and disobedient act. This event perverted its true purpose, and it then took on another role, until this chaos is corrected by the Messiah (Romans 7:11-12). God shuts the Tree of Life off from mankind, and the Law is then the only guide of righteousness, in any form, now available to him/her in this condition.

When Adam and Eve buy into this lie of Satan, the Tree of Life is removed, and shut away from all mankind. It is prophesied to be returned by One who will redeem all of Adam and Eve's children from this state (Gen.3:15). Now, all mankind has been placed under a condition of death, due to the removal of the Tree of Life, and can relate to God and others only through a morality of law (or the letter of the law which they now possess), governed by the goodness or evil inherent within their human hearts (Romans 5:12-14). The law, itself, brings life or death, good or evil, on a physical level (called "under the sun" by Solomon). However, by itself, without the spiritual foundation of God's Love brought only by faith in the Tree of Life or Bread of Life, -which can only be returned by the Redeemer- it can never have an impact on a higher level of spirit or eternity -- as far as the Creator is concerned (See Job 35).

All the creation is placed under a curse, and is now in a legal condition Paul calls "under the law", due to its dominion over the life of a human in this state. This perverted state should have never occurred. The law was originally an instrument to serve as a guide for the path of righteousness to one under God's grace and continual protection. It should never have had the power of death over mankind. Satan created this condition by deceiving Adam and Eve.

Now the entire world is under a curse (in a diminished legal state) because of this. Paul calls this "the curse of the law", as he later explains these issues to the Galatian Gentiles, who he says had been in that condition. Any who are under the law (under the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil) are under a curse (Galatians 3:10-14). They are cursed for being in this legal state, and cursed if they do not obey the law, because in this state, obedience to it is the only blessing

of righteousness you can have. Under God's grace, through faith in the Redeemer, you cannot be cursed at all, as long as you are faithful to that commitment, which included respecting God's law and its proper boundaries (Romans 8, note especially verses 31-39). Only faith in Him as the source of your true relationship with God can bring the Holy Spirit, which was in the Tree of Life, back into the equation and correct this chaos. No obedience to any law may do it.

In addition, the condition of mankind's ability to relate to God and one another is now diminished (Genesis 3:14-19). Thus, laws, or rules, were then added because of the transgression and its tragic results. These laws, while consistent with God's love and commandments, are meant to regulate the diminished situation. They would have never been brought into the equation by God, except for the sin of Adam. (We will see the same pattern emerge, once again, when the Israelites disobey Him at the foot of Mt. Sinai.)

Some falsely claim that mankind was created in a 'perfect' condition and fell from that state. According to this philosophy, law was added because of that sin. Without sin, there would be no need for law. Mankind would automatically, in his so called perfect state, have no need for it. They then theorize that when Christ restores man to his original legal status, the need for law is abolished. This theory is an absolute twisting of Scripture created by plucking certain passages out of Paul's writings, while clearly ignoring, or trying to explain away a tremendous amount of others which refute this philosophy.

Not only the Bible, but common sense, itself, clearly tells us that as long as we are physical humans with human nature and its pulls, the need for law exists. If we, as adults, make a commitment to Christ, do we then not need the Commandments of God to remind us of proper morality? When the imperfection of our spirit begins to be corrected by joining His with ours; do we no longer need truth?

I once heard a man claim that as long as he had Christ in his heart, he didn't need the Commandments on the wall. What about our children? Would they not need them once we are converted? If we have no need of the knowledge of the correct boundaries of good and evil, once Christ is in our hearts; why not just discard our Bibles? After all, if our suddenly 'so called' pure nature does it all for us, and we cannot sin, then we would have no further need for the Scriptures. Why then, did the apostles admonish already converted Christians to search the scriptures, as they were able to make us wise unto salvation (II Timothy 3:15)? The Old Testament was the only 'scriptures' available when this was written.

There is a huge conundrum created by religions who wish to abolish the Commandments in their pulpits; so that they can alter them by changing or keeping the ones they want and discarding the ones they don't want – and at the same time, condemn government officials who wish to take them out of our courthouses. Anyone with the smallest degree of honesty should see the hypocrisy in this.

Is it OK to then make up our own morality 'in Christ' as some propose; advocating deviant behavior 'as long as we do it in love'? The morally bankrupt fruits of this nonsense become apparent with a minimum of clear thinking. This perverted philosophy is abundant with certain 'Christian' churches; and is one of the most prominent reasons for the breakdown of the morality of modern day society.

No, every passage in the Scriptures shows that God's Holy Spirit is in perfect harmony with God's Commandments, which have existed since long before there was ever a Jew, Israelite, or Christian. As long as a human being is physical, he will always have the diminished human nature that GOD CREATED HIM WITH! Even if he is converted through Christ, he is in a constant struggle with that part of himself, as well as Satan's influence. He has a need for a reminder of God's way, so that he may worship Him in Spirit **and** in Truth. Paul eloquently wrote of his own struggle with this (Romans 7:13-25).

Mankind will always need God's law to remind him of truth until he is changed, as a result of the resurrection, and takes on his future spiritual body (I Cor. 15). That does not happen until the time of Christ's second coming, as the Bible clearly shows.

Some claim that this total change, or birth, happens when we 'accept Christ', thus allowing them room to cherry pick certain passage out of context of their true meaning and create a 'lawless', or 'altered law' Christianity. As we progress through the history of the covenants, we will see that the New Testament writers had a few things to say about the evil source which spawns this philosophy, its purpose, and where it will end up. It will, however, deceive many, and God will allow it to do so. But let us address that in the proper time and flow of the Scriptures.

Furthermore, there is no Biblical evidence that mankind was created in a state of perfection and then 'fell'. The Scriptures show that he was created in his imperfect condition (Romans 8:20) and then given a choice to obey God and enter the process which would lead him to a higher, more perfect, state. He was created in a neutral legal condition, with a nature which

was limited to the carnal state, and with the pulls of the flesh (Jer.17:9). While his nature had the human spiritual component, it was carnal, or limited to the physical state of existence. The diminished state of the nature of Adam and Eve are clearly evident BEFORE they obey the voice of Satan. In fact, Eve's covetousness and vanity are the catalyst for her actions. Adam's approval of her actions showed a lack of love for her. It also showed his disrespect for God, along with a lack of concern for his own proper role which had been assigned him. **This was their nature BEFORE they disobeyed!!**

There were laws added **after** their sin because of the diminished condition that occurred. These alone are the laws 'added because of transgression'.

For example, the law change mentioned specifically in Genesis 3:16-19 addresses an alteration of the nature of marriage between man and woman because the Holy Spirit is no longer available in this state. The Garden was shut up so **none** could any longer have immediate access to the Tree of Life. The marriage order then becomes a matter of master/servant instead of mutual love with each sacrificing his/her own life, in their proper role, for one another as originally designed. Without the Holy Spirit, the carnal nature of men and women is not equipped to properly do this. Marriage was originally designed to operate with the element contained in the Tree of Life present in the relationship. The original intended order of marriage is discussed in Ephesians 5, once that element is restored.

When this opportunity was lost in the Garden, God added things which would define the way both He and man and woman would relate to each other until the proper state could be restored. Since the beautiful relationship originally intended was now lost, there had to be a lesser way to ensure some type of order until the restoration Christ would bring. This deals with the issue of having order within a diminished condition which will be motivated by human nature and Satan's influence.

The woman was created for the man; thus he becomes her master, and she takes on a servant role. Later, a sinful son of Cain took two women as wives, and the tragic condition of women degenerated until they were viewed as little more than property. They continue to be viewed as such in some parts of the world today. Ephesians 5 speaks of a new marriage relationship of mutual submission, in love, with each partner taking his/her proper position, as designed by God.

This particular legal issue surrounding marriage is a singular illustration of the matter of 'laws now added because of transgression'. The sacrifice of Abel will show another. It will picture the need for a future blood sacrifice, in order for God's presence to remain with

mankind once sin occurred. This pictures the sacrifice of the Redeemer. Had no sin occurred, this would not have been necessary.

The relationship between God and man was similarly diminished to Master/servant, rather than what God had intended. Hosea 2: 14-23 speaks of a time when that will be improved, as well. In the text of John, chapters 13-16, Christ tells His disciples that He no longer looks on them as servants, but friends. He is addressing a major spiritual change at the foundation of the relationship.

This change in the Garden of Eden, because of the sin, speaks of the laws added because it occurred. **In no way does this mean that there was no law beforehand.** If there had been no law, there could have never been any sin (Rom. 5:13-14).

After all, the truth about these issues should be clear with only a small degree of honest rational thinking. If after accepting Christ, being imbued with the Holy Spirit, and overshadowed by God's grace; we are no longer capable of sin -- it would stand to reason that if Adam and Eve had been in that state originally, they would have been incapable of sin, as well.

John's statement that a believer does not sin should be accurately translated that 'he does not practice sin', as he has rejected that way. Furthermore, he cannot sin (or cannot be practicing sin), if he is truly in Christ; because the two concepts cannot be reconciled together (I John 3:9). You will only remain 'in Christ' if you keep His commandments, as He clearly told His disciples (John 15:9). They are the same as His Father's commandments. He and the Father have been one eternally. To try and abolish the Father's commandments, and reconstruct another bunch of commandments, calling them the 'commandments of Jesus', has to be an extreme act of blasphemy, creating division between the Father and His Son.

There are some who mistake the curses of the Sinai covenant for the 'curse of the law'. This is not accurate. These Gentile Galatians, to whom Paul addressed his letter, had never had any association with the Creator under the Sinai covenant. Understanding the issues of the Garden of Eden helps one to clearly understand the writings of Paul about the issue of 'law and grace'. It takes some time to absorb, as Satan has obscured this matter for ages - but with time and study, it becomes a matter of simplicity.

The most critical issue involved in the opening text of the Scriptures is the understanding that the **Knowledge of Good and Evil, is the**

Commandments and law of God. It was originally meant to be an instrument of eternal life, in its proper place. By its improper entry, through an act of disobedience, it brought death. The 'table' which had been laid before man for good became his initial stumbling block by this sin (Romans 11:9-10, Psalm 69:22-23). This pattern will repeat itself every time man perverts the good which God gives him by allowing his own human nature to dishonor its use.

This diminished condition of man, and how God must relate to mankind until ultimate restoration comes, is now plagued with laws and situations related to this legal state of man; as God navigates him through it.

The failure to properly understand the truth about the second tree in the garden has led to confusion throughout history. Paul's writings, especially Romans, set this matter straight.

To briefly recap, in order to maintain clarity from this point on, we see that:

1. Man was created with a diminished nature, in a neutral legal state; and given a choice to obey God's voice.
2. God put two trees before him, representing purity in spirit (Tree of Life), and truth, or law (Knowledge of Good and Evil). Together, these are the two elements necessary to change the carnal man to a higher eternal plane. They represent a change in His internal spirit, as well as a correct guide of moral knowledge. This is necessary for anyone in the carnal condition. Both these trees, along with everything else God put in the creation, were 'very good' in their proper use and application.
3. God commanded man to take the Tree of Life, thus glorifying God's grace, the holiness of His Spirit and motivation, and obedience to Him, as the path to eternal life. By just believing God and simply obeying, Adam would have entered the process which leads to eternal life.
4. Satan entered and accused God of lying. He told Eve that; armed with the law (truth) and one's own human nature they could be 'as God', knowing good and evil. With this lie, he denied God's omnipotence, and tried to transfer the ultimate glory to God's law, and one's own motivations. This sin was apparently at the center of Satan's own downfall. This lie creates the chaos that ensues. Paul addresses this issue in his letter to the Roman (Romans 9:30). The 'table' which was laid before man for good, has now become a stumbling block.
5. Once Adam and Eve buy into Satan's lie, God then

removes the Tree of Life, so that man cannot take it out of order and bring eternal chaos into the equation. He will now work with mankind in a diminished condition to restore all things, in His own time, and by His own plan.

6. Man is now under the Knowledge of Good and Evil (under the law). It is a cursed condition, but the best there can be for man until all is restored. The law gives a code of good for man while in his physical condition and points to life and well being while in that state; as opposed to lawlessness and chaos, which brings suffering and death for man on the earth. Man is cursed for being in this state, and cursed if he does not obey the law while in this state, as it is all the good he has, as far as spiritual direction is concerned; until the element in the Tree of Life can be brought back into the equation (Gal.3:10).
7. God then adds laws which are indigenous to this diminished state, as this is required to govern the situation that now exists; thus maintaining some semblance of order until the restoration comes. This is a curse on mankind, the earth, and their relationships; and this should have never happened. Their roles and relationships then become much harder.

When the Israelites disobey God at the foot of Mt. Sinai, this same pattern will emerge, once again, as they degenerate further in the way which they may relate to God.

God's Covenant Concerning Mankind's Redemption

Satan has now placed himself in the equation of God's relationship with mankind and will remain so until all that has been done will be undone. God had originally placed all the earthly creation under the dominion of man. Both man's relationship with God and the care of the earth and creation would have remained holy if Adam had obeyed God. Even though man was created imperfect, death and Satan's higher level of evil would not have entered the picture. Under God's grace, man would then have progressed in his growth unto his final destiny – had not this event occurred. His care of the earth would have been correct, as he progressed within his true role.

Satan has now supplanted mankind as the 'god of this world', by convincing Adam to hand that rulership to him. When Satan convinced Adam and Eve to obey him, this rulership was transferred because Adam and

Eve submitted to him. He accomplished this in a very deceitful way. He enticed the woman who had been created for the man.

God's initial instructions to Adam had occurred before Eve was ever created (Genesis 2:16). Though it is clear, from Eve's discourse with the Serpent, that she had become aware of those instructions, it is unclear whether she received them from God or from her husband. The latter is most likely. She had to trust her husband. Satan refuted God and her husband's instructions, appealing to her human nature and vanity. She believed him because it satisfied that urge within her. Then she gave the fruit to her husband who was with her, and he ate it (Genesis 3:6). This order is of utmost importance.

According to God's law, which shows us how God views the structure, authority, and legality of human relationships, Eve had no right or ability to place mankind under the dominion of Satan by any action. Numbers 30 makes it very clear, that as long as a woman is in a legal marriage, her husband has the right to negate what she has done at the moment he learns of it. This concerns vows or any other legal agreement. What she does has no legal binding without this approval. Eve had no dominion over the earth, and without Adam's approval, Satan's will would have been thwarted. However, in Genesis 3:6, we read: *So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate. **Then (after Adam had eaten the fruit) the eyes of both of them** were opened and they knew that they were naked....*

Also, in chapters 4 and 5 of Leviticus, God makes it clear that one is not guilty of sin in the legal judgment of God until he/she becomes aware of the correct morality of the situation. We are told that Eve was deceived. She was obviously motivated by her human nature, but unaware of the impact of what she was doing.

So we see that nothing Eve did was legally valid until Adam approved her actions with his own. Then both their eyes were opened to understand a code of morality by which they began to make value judgments. Scripture states that Adam was not deceived (I Timothy 2:14), as God had spoken His instruction to him directly, thus making his approval of Eve's decision more egregious. All this evidence reinforces the notion that God had no prior interaction with Eve. Nothing legally changed, nor were the eyes of Eve opened, until Adam approved her actions. It is by this legality that Paul later states that by "*one man, Adam*", sin came into the world – not through Eve.

So now, Adam has transferred authority and dominion

of the earth to Satan. All those who come under Satan's sway and follow his influence are the spiritual children of Satan. During the days of Christ, He labeled the spiritual leaders of Judah as epitomizing this state within the children of man (John 8:44-47). All mankind is then covered by this legal condition, unless retrieved from it, in some manner, by God, Himself. All who come to God, by any calling He offers them, become the 'sons' or children of God **within the terms of that particular covenant, or relationship.**

In Genesis 3:15 God makes a statement to the Serpent (Satan) concerning the future of mankind, and how Satan's presence will one day be ended, and all things restored: *"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed: **He** shall bruise your head. And you shall bruise His heel."*

This is the first prophecy of the Messiah, and his role for the deliverance of mankind, who are all Adam and Eve's children. This includes all the races of physical humanity. This prophecy implies that Satan will inflict a wound on the 'son of man' which will attempt to kill Him but will only result in Satan's own destruction.

The Redeemer's purpose will be to die for the sins of mankind, thus paying the penalty of death, which they are now under, due to Adam's sin, as well as their own. By this act, He will *'justify'* mankind. This simply means that he will pay the price for their sins, and put them back in correct standing before God, **so that they may, once again, have the individual choice to relate to Him in the manner Adam and Eve were once offered.** There is no other path to eternal life in this or any other age. It is by this act that the work of Satan is finally undone. All who are born into the world from this moment on are born under the legal condition brought about by Adam and Eve's sin, and are complicit with it by their own imperfection (Romans 5). Even Christ was born into the world under this legal condition, though He was not complicit with it (Gal. 4:4). Paul calls this condition. "under the law".

It is by this covenant promise (Gen.3:15) that God sets in motion the events around which His interaction with the now diminished human race occurs. This covenant promises their redemption from the foundation of the world. **All the later covenants and promises of God draw their legality, in some manner, from this covenant.** This Redeemer will be a *'Son of man'* by this covenant. This is why our Savior is given this designation throughout the New Testament

scriptures. In every case this designation is used, it refers back to this covenant and places His act as our Savior as being originally promised to man at this point. It is by this event of the Redeemer that the Tree of Life (or what it contained) will be brought back and made available to mankind. When this officially happens, it will be called the Bread of Life (John 6).

The angel, Gabriel, delivering the word of the Lord to Daniel, predicts the first coming of the Messiah in Daniel 9. There he predicts the Messiah's ministry which will be brought to the various groups of humanity, in the proper order that has been laid out by the progression of history. Daniel 9:27: *He shall confirm a (the) covenant with many for one week.*

It is this covenant, and all the legal promises and order it contains by that time, which will be confirmed, or finally brought about, just as prophesied. In other words, when the Messiah comes, His actions are confirming all that has been prophesied about Him, His purpose, and work, since the foundation of the world. All that the Messiah will accomplish with mankind originates at this point, though the issues contained within the covenant will further develop as time goes by.

It must also be noted that this original covenant from which the salvation (blessing) of all mankind will originate definitively states that the *seed* from which all this redemptive blessing will come is a **singular HE**.

This will be important to remember as this covenant begins to develop through Abraham. There will be those who falsely claim that the *seed* through which this blessing will come is a plural people; thus beginning a perverted glorification of a singular race of people as being the source of redemption of mankind. Satan is the author of this deception.

'Near' and 'far', or 'far off'

Now that the Tree of Life is removed, mankind is under a condition of death, and can only relate to God through a matter of Law (Romans 5:12). Cain and Abel are allegorical examples of the two spiritually legal conditions in which mankind can exist while in this state. Abel honors God by obeying the law, thus receiving respect from God because of this. We are told that this relationship with God is not equal to that which comes through faith in the Redeemer, however (Hebrews 12:24). In this way, Abel remains near to God, even though in a diminished relationship. Scripture refers to him as 'righteous' Abel, due to his honor of God within the relationship he shared with the Creator (Matt.23:35). Abel brings a blood sacrifice to God, showing the symbolic representation of

the greater Redeemer sacrifice which one day will come, and is now necessary because of the sin of Adam and all who must now follow in his footsteps (Romans 5:12-14).

Cain rejects the law, and becomes *far off* from God; having neither the Spirit, nor the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This condition is called 'without God in the world' by Paul (Eph. 2:12).

In Genesis 4:2, Cain is labeled as a 'tiller' of the ground. The most common translation of the Hebrew word used here is actually 'servant', or worshiper. His association with the ground began because of his perverted worship philosophy. This is what led him into conflict with God concerning the value of his sacrifice.

These two designations become very important as God's covenants with mankind progress. '*Far off*' refers to one completely separated from God, under Satan's sway, and completely on his own; until summoned in some manner by the Creator.

However, if one is in this state, and just through the cause and effect results of the invisible law on his life and relationships, he discovers and practices the good in it; his obedience will be accounted for righteousness to him when God calls him *near* and begins to judge him (Romans 2:14-16).

'*Near*' indicates one who has established a personal relationship with God, in some manner, by the legality of at least one of the covenants that will follow. This does not necessarily refer to eternal redemption.

Cain is cursed by God because of his worship of the creation and cannot gain food from the ground. He gathers men underneath him and **forms the first city**, by elevating himself as a 'savior' of the people willing to come under its protection. While this is supposedly for the protection of the people involved, it is truly a result of Cain's self empowerment and evil. This is the first example of any man trying to represent God over another.

This spiritual degeneration of mankind begun by Cain is discussed in length by Paul in Romans 1:21-32.

First God's glory was rejected in the original choice by Adam and Eve. Then through Cain, mankind began to glorify the creation. God then removed his presence further, and their knowledge of right and wrong then became perverted. In other words, Cain began to decide for himself what was right and wrong and reject God's standards. This is what led to the confrontation with God, which resulted in Cain killing Abel. All of Cain's confusion was wrapped up in the false

glorification of nature, the ethereal creation, and the glorification of one's own 'enlightenment' through knowledge and 'oneness' with the creation. By this perverted belief, the created, or creation, takes the place of God. In one form or another, all these philosophies began to be integrated onto a foundation of Satan's lie, "You shall not surely die". Thus the idea of an immortal soul sent here to be enlightened, or else the idea of continual reincarnation began. All of these forms found their beginning here. This is the religious ancestor of 'New Age' and Eastern Mysticism. These are labeled by the Scriptures as 'witchcraft'. They have found their resurgence in our end time societies. They all attempt to have a form of godliness contained in the true worship of God, but denying the true power. They diminish the truth of Him being a singular entity from which all flows, and seek to elevate the 'ethereal reality', in some form. Supposedly, we are a part of 'god', as is all the creation. Thus we are already an eternal existence, as Satan claimed, on our journey to some sort of 'enlightened' goal.

The text in Romans describes man's perpetual moral degeneration of lawlessness under this satanic philosophy, and where this perversion eventually ends up.

Man's evil abounds to the point where they are destroyed in the Flood. God makes a covenant with Noah and the creation, stating that this will never occur again. The curse is lifted from the ground, as well.

The Covenant to Abraham -- Genesis 12

Here in Genesis 12 El Shaddai makes the initial covenant with Abraham, by which he comes to the Creator by his willing faith and obedience. He had been raised by Terah (father) and Nahor (grandfather) who previously served other gods (Joshua 24: 2-3). All scriptural evidence shows that by this initial faith in El Shaddai, he recognized Him as his Redeemer, which was promised to mankind from Genesis 3:15. The patriarchs Job and Jacob, also expressed faith in Him by this same relationship (Genesis 48:16 & Job 19:25).

The texts in Hebrews 11 and 12 also verify that Abraham's initial relationship with El Shaddai was established by his faith in Him as his Savior and his willingness to obey His voice, unlike Adam and Eve. The first command given to him by El Shaddai was simply to leave his own country and go to one which He would show him. By Abraham's unquestioning willingness to do this, he established his absolute trust and faith before any act of obedience, or righteous work concerning God's law, occurred (Romans 4:2-3, and Genesis 15:6).

Within this relationship which he was establishing with

the Creator, Abraham sought a heavenly reward through his faith in a better resurrection. (Hebrews 11:8-35). Christ also said that Abraham “saw My day and was glad”.

Acts 4:8-12 verifies that there is no other source of eternal life in any age, except through faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. Therefore, these saints of old found eternal life through the same covenant which we call “Christian” even before the literal act of the sacrifice of Christ. They saw it “from afar” (Heb. 11:13).

This initial faith led Abraham to obey His voice (Gen.12:4). As Abraham learned, he also kept God’s commandments, charge (any instruction), statutes, and laws (Genesis 26:5). This sets a pattern for any who would come to eternal life after the pattern of our spiritual father, Abraham.

The New Testament writer, James, emphasizes that this same order is required of any believer in Christ. While acknowledging that salvation is initially established by faith alone, he emphasizes that “faith without works is dead”.

Since all scripture concerning Abraham’s initial covenant relationship with God shows that it was established through faith in Him as his future Redeemer; this covenant, therefore, was purified by the blood of the Messiah, though the event had not yet occurred.

It is the initial covenant by which Abraham’s relationship with God was established. It is the covenant by which he becomes the ‘father’ of those who come to know El Shaddai in the same manner. To be the spiritual children of Abraham, we must come to Him in this manner (Romans 4).

[Though Moses would later become the first one to know the Creator as Yahweh (YHWH), Abraham and the fathers never heard that word or name. They knew Him as El Shaddai, or God Almighty (Exodus 6:3).]

Hebrews 11:39 testifies that these ancient witnesses obtained the same testimony as later believers, but did not receive the eternal promise at that time. It was not literally possible for anyone until Christ presented His blood before the throne of the Most High. Therefore, Abraham did not precede us into that reward.

Furthermore, this covenant relationship Abraham shared with God because of his initial faith (Genesis 15:6), is the same covenant which God will establish with those who will become Abraham’s spiritual children. It required Abraham to obey God’s voice

continually in order to remain faithful. Scripture clearly tells us that this means that Abraham obeyed God’s commandments in all things.

Genesis 26:5: “*because Abraham obeyed my voice (first) and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.* [Parenthesis is mine and is inserted to clearly show the order and development of this relationship.]

This is the same order and requirement which Jesus Christ requires of His followers. We enter into the covenant with Him by faith in Him as our Savior. We will continue (abide) in that love as long as we keep His commandments. This is unquestionably shown as He explains the terms and structure of the New Covenant in John, chapters 13-16.

Conditional rewards promised to Abraham in this covenant

In our covenant with Christ as our Savior, we all have our special calling, gift, and potential for eventual reward. Abraham’s reward was special, in that he was promised to be the ‘father’ of all that would come after, and he was given two special conditional promises within this relationship with God:

1. “In your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (*Spiritual promise concerning eternal life to all people*). This refers back to the original promise of a Redeemer of all Adam and Eve’s children first given in Genesis 3:15. (See Galatians 3:16). All scriptural witness of this *seed* shows that it is singular.
2. “I will make many nations of your descendants. I will curse them who curse you and bless them who bless you.”

This last condition concerns *physical descendants and blessings*. It is enlarged and expanded upon as the history of the covenants continues.

These two conditional promises, which are indigenous to Abraham within this covenant, will become known as the *birthright*, and the *blessings*, as they develop and are passed to his descendants. All who relate to the God of Abraham from this time forth will come to Him by the legality of these two rewards. They are conditional at this point, because they hinge on Abraham’s obedience. They do not become unconditional *promises* until Genesis 22. They will later become known as the ‘two immutable things’, when they become an oath, rather than just conditions of a covenant.

Genesis 13 -- the promises enlarged

Within this chapter, God calls Abraham out and shows

him all the land of Canaan from the east to the west, and north to south. Here God tells him that this land will be the perpetual inheritance of Abraham's descendants, forever. This later becomes a central and eternal part of the second aspect of the two immutable promises.

Genesis 15 Covenant

Here God makes an **additional** covenant to Abraham which is ratified by the sacrifice of animals, showing that it deals specifically with **physical promises**. Within this chapter, the Creator shows that Abraham is honored because of his initial believing faith and reaffirms the two conditional promises previously established. However, the specific focus of this covenant is to verify:

1. His promise that Abraham will have children from his own loins.
2. The events around which the later gathering of his descendants out of Egypt will occur. Abraham's children will be afflicted in a foreign nation for four hundred years, but will return to the land of Canaan. They will be the instruments of punishment upon the Canaanite cultures when their iniquity "becomes full".

It is by this covenant that all the legality of the physical covenant of law at Sinai is later established. All the legality of this covenant falls within the 'blessings' aspect of the two promises.

It is also proper to call this 'covenant' an oath at this point; because this practice of passing between the halves of sacrificed animals bound the participants to whatever was contained in the agreed covenant. Only God passed between the halves of the sacrificial animals. Therefore, He confirmed that these physical promises concerning Abraham's children would occur. At this point, God's word concerning these particular promises becomes an oath and cannot be broken, regardless of the actions of the later participants in these issues.

[Note: Please note that throughout the narrative of Abraham's faith and relationships with God, everything is verified as being established by his initial faith and commitment to obedience when he first believed (Gen.15:6). It is not a result of, or reward for, any previous obedience to God's law. This order becomes of extreme importance when God begins to call all nationalities to this covenant, and is addressed in Romans 4 and 5 by the apostle Paul.]

Circumcision Covenant -- Genesis 17

Here the Creator establishes the covenant of circumcision with Abraham and his descendants. This will identify Abraham's physical children under this covenant. This is done quite some time after Abraham's faith is established, and is not something to be done in order to inherit eternal life, as Paul later states in his letter to the Romans.

The Promises (Oath) -- Genesis 22

This chapter of Genesis relates the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. Due to this extraordinary faith in El Shaddai, the conditional promises to Abraham within the original covenant become immutable. **These two immutable things are:**

1. Blessing, I will bless you (spiritual birthright).
2. Multiplying, I will multiply you (physical blessing).

Because Abraham has now already fulfilled what God required, the Creator has sworn that these two things will occur.

They are the only things by which any who have faith in the God of Abraham have any hope (Genesis 22). This is referred to from here on as the "oath". It is no longer conditional. All the things contained in this oath, will happen, and any faith in the God of Abraham hinges on this matter. Everything God had formerly promised Abraham, along with all that these promises may later develop into, is covered by this oath.

The author of Hebrews calls on this oath to remind believers in Christ of their heritage (Hebrews 6:13-19). The two immutable things confirmed by the oath are "blessing, I will bless you, and multiplying, I will multiply you" (verse 14).

These 'two things' are often misrepresented because of the unwillingness of some to still acknowledge that the second of the promises is still to occur, and cannot be denied. Eternal salvation to all mankind will come through Abraham's Seed. In addition, Abraham's children will possess that land forever (Genesis 13), along with all the physical blessings that will develop after this event. All this became immutable here at Moriah, when Abraham offered up Isaac. To deny either of these two promises is to deny, to one degree or another, the God of Abraham and the true impact He can have in our lives.

As the history of God's covenants progress, we will see some attempt to diminish one or the other, or else 'spiritualize' the second one away into ethereal

spiritualism, in order to deny the legitimacy of the people or way of life associated with both.

Passage of the *promises*

Before Abraham dies, he passes all the promises of God to his son Isaac. After Sarah's death, he had married Keturah, and had several sons by her. He sent all his other sons to the east in order to remove them from Isaac's inheritance. This also is symbolic of the fact they would have no part in the passage of God's covenants with mankind. However, the history of these brothers shows a continual denial of this within the belief systems held by their descendants, along with repeated attempts to inject themselves where they do not belong. We will see this as the history continues. This struggle begins to rear its head between the sons of Isaac.

He has two sons: Esau, and Jacob. Esau is the oldest, so the *birthright* and *blessing* is his by right of birth. However, before his birth, God tells his mother that her younger son will supplant him in the order. Esau is the lawless one, marrying into the Canaanite lineage. The term 'Canaanite' means 'merchant', and these people were hedonistic people who gloried in materialism. Jacob was the one who stayed with his parents and honored God as his fathers had done.

Esau, the oldest, sold the *birthright* to Jacob for a bowl of red soup, placing no more importance on this great spiritual promise than his namesake Adam had done. He was thus called *Edom*, meaning 'red'.

Instead of waiting on God, Jacob tricks Isaac and takes the *blessings* as well. His loss of the physical promise infuriated Esau, thus showing where his true values lay. Hebrews 12:16-17 tells us that he sought the physical things with tears, while placing no importance on the great spiritual promise.

Learning of his brother's plot to kill him, Jacob flees for his life and goes to the land of Syria, where Abraham had sojourned before coming into Canaan from Babylon. His uncle's family still lived there.

There he contracts with Laban (his uncle) to work for seven years in exchange for the hand of his younger daughter, Rachel, in marriage. When the time is up, Laban tricks him and gives him Leah, the older daughter, due to legal obligation. Jacob agrees to work seven more years for Rachel. He worked for Laban for twenty years in all, becoming richer all the time because of God's blessings on him.

This breach of the original covenant by Laban results in animosity between the children of Leah and Rachel, who should have been the original wife, and whose children deserved the original inheritance. **Rachel was barren**, as well, and thus envied Leah. Leah vexed Rachel. This is a theme that will continue between the descendants of these two women until the second coming of Christ (Isa. 11:13).

As the history of Abraham's children progresses, the tribes of Judah (Leah's children) and Joseph (Rachel's children) will be the tribal focal points around which this conflict will exist. **Leah's descendants will deny the descendants of Joseph and attempt to claim all the heritage of Abraham for themselves.**

Due to her being barren, Rachel finally convinced Jacob to bear children by her handmaid, Bilhah. These became Rachel's legal children. Dan was actually the firstborn of the children of that legality. However, Joseph was finally born exclusively to Rachel and Jacob. While giving birth to their second son, Benjamin, she died in childbirth. It is Joseph who will become the inheritor of the promises God made to Abraham, which have become the *birthright* and the *blessings*. God would later reveal this to Joseph in a dream, in which he envisioned a time when his father, mother, and brothers would bow down to him. His mother had long been dead when this dream occurred, showing that it was prophetic for the future and **not something that was related to the time in Egypt.**

Returning to the account of Jacob, we see that he is finally free from Laban. Jacob returns to Canaan, and encounters Esau on the way. During Jacob's absence, God had blessed Esau by giving him the inheritance of Mt. Seir. Esau's dismissal of anything Jacob offers him indicates that he believes that this means that he has already received the blessings he thought he lost. He certainly projects the attitude that he believes he is superior within their relationship, and invites Jacob to come live in his land, which would mean that Jacob would be under his subjection. Jacob tricks him by feigning subjection, and then after Esau has departed, he turns to the west and goes into the land of Canaan, which God has promised to him. This encounter is the first between the brothers after twenty years of separation. It will be the beginning of a continual conflict between them, which will continue until Christ corrects it at His second coming.

Jacob's name is changed to Israel by the Almighty.

Next begins the story of Israel's sons, centered primarily on Joseph and Judah as the principle players.

Israel favored Joseph, as he was the oldest son of the wife that he loved and originally bargained for with Laban. Thus, by rights, Rachel's oldest son should have been the inheritor of the promises. This deceitful act of Laban had

resulted in her children being denied the true rights. Jacob, of course, favored the children of his true love, who was Rachel. The Genesis account shows that God directly had a hand in the birth order of the children; because this conflict between them would eventually serve to work out His will. Even though there was only seven days difference between Jacob's marriage to Leah and Rachel, Leah was given children first because she was not loved.

This favoritism led to strife between the brothers. When Joseph was seventeen years old, his brothers waylaid him and put him in a pit. They likely would have killed him, except for the intervention of Reuben, who was the oldest. Judah was instrumental in taking him out of the pit and selling him to the Midianite traders, who sold him into slavery in Egypt. Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and spent thirteen years in prison before God delivered him. Pharaoh then made him second in command in the land of Egypt, just as his spiritual children will someday be second in command in God's Kingdom, as we shall see.

Scripture reveals that Joseph was the only one of the brothers who duplicated the faithful relationship that the former fathers had shared with El Shaddai.

Judah, on the other hand, was a scoundrel in the family. He had many of the same weaknesses of his uncle, Esau. He would go up to the Canaanite cities with Hirah the Adullamite, his friend. These excursions were undoubtedly to indulge in a licentious lifestyle. While at one of these cities he married a Canaanite woman, just as his lawless uncle, Esau, had done. She bore him three sons prior to her death and God killed the two oldest because of their evil. Tamar, the Israelite wife of the oldest son was almost cheated out of her and her children's inheritance before she took matters into her own hands. She pretended to be a harlot, as she likely knew the reasons for Judah's excursions to the Canaanite cities, and legally took the place as his wife. Initially not knowing that he was the cause of her pregnancy, Judah ordered her killed. When she exposed him, he repented and took the blame for his sins. Perez, her oldest son, then became the legal heir of the firstborn of Judah (not Abraham). Judah's ability to repent will have an eternal impact on his children.

When drought occurred in the entire region, the brothers went up to Egypt, where they encountered Joseph. The drama around this resulted in Benjamin, Joseph's younger brother, being brought back to captivity by Joseph, though they still didn't know who he was. Judah had promised Israel that he would be

surety for the young man, to see that he came back to his father. When, due to Joseph's plan, Benjamin ended up facing a sentence of slavery in Egypt, Judah stepped forward and offered up his own life for him. The brother that had ruthlessly sold Joseph now had a complete conversion of heart and character. This led to the uniting of all the brothers. Then Israel and all his family moved to Egypt, just as El Shaddai had promised in Genesis 15, with Judah leading the way by Israel's command. This great story concerning these brothers, which makes up a great part of Genesis, actually shows a prophetic type of how Yahweh will use the children of Abraham to bring about His plan of salvation for the whole world.

Joseph tells his brothers that God had intended this entire series of events to happen in order that Joseph could be a deliverer for the entire family, as well as the rest of the world (Egypt). Not only had Joseph saved his family, he had saved Egypt, as well.

Joseph, who will be the legal firstborn bearing the promises of Abraham, serves as a 'type' of Christ, the Redeemer. Judah is the 'type' of the betrayer, who later repents to become praised by all his brethren. The name 'Judah' means 'praise'.

Jacob, whose name is now 'Israel', joins Joseph in Egypt as God had promised in Genesis 15.

Before the death of Israel, he called Joseph and his two half Egyptian sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to his side to pass along the *birthright* and *blessings* to them, as the legal firstborn (Gen. 48). He stated that they would take the place of his two natural first born sons, Reuben and Simeon, as they had forfeited any inheritance rights due to their unfaithfulness to their father (Gen.49). Furthermore, his name, "Israel" would be named upon Joseph's sons. Thus they would have the legal status of all the sons of Israel, and not that of only grandsons. Then he passed the *blessings* to both Joseph's sons, **and the *birthright* to Ephraim (Genesis 48:19-20).**

Since this may be an issue of contention with some, let us see it clearly in scripture. We will compare the passage of the *birthright* and *blessings* to Ephraim and Manasseh in Genesis 48 to the original promises contained in Genesis 12.

Genesis 12:1: *Now the Lord had said to Abram; "Get out of your country, from your family and your father's house, to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing.*

Compare: Genesis 48:18: *And Joseph said to his father, 'Not so, my father, for this one is the firstborn; put your right hand on his head.'" But his father refused and said, "I know, my son, I know. He also shall become a*

people, and he also shall be great; but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations.”

Both these passages deal with the physical aspect of the promises. Now compare the two remaining verses in each case.

Genesis 12:3: *I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*”

Compare: Genesis 48:20: *So he blessed them that day, saying, “By you Israel will bless, saying, ‘May God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh!’ And thus he set Ephraim before Manasseh.*

Though some would incorrectly diminish this last statement concerning ‘blessing’ to a simple oath of good will, it is clear that the only reason for placing Jacob’s hand on Ephraim’s head is for the passing of the birthright to the firstborn. Ephraim, took the place of Reuben, as the firstborn of Israel. The blessings were shared and also given in part to all of Abraham’s children, though the sons of Joseph are given the greater portion. There is no other reason for any of this to be mentioned at this historic occasion, as Israel passes on the promises of Abraham.

These scriptures show that the reference to “by you Israel will bless” is referring to fact that the birthright promise mentioned in Genesis 12:3 is being given to Ephraim.

Therefore, his descendants will be the firstborn into the final eternal promise to Abraham, as the scriptures attest, throughout. When his children (spiritual) go into their final inheritance, they will be called by the names of his brothers, or the twelve tribes of Israel. (We will see this occur in Revelation 7&14). This promise is originally given in Genesis 48:6. It is later corroborated by the prophecy of Jeremiah 31.

The reestablishment of the legality of the promises in Rachel’s children is made possible because of the sins of the children of Leah. The history of the sons of Israel that immediately precedes the event of Joseph’s trials shows that Reuben, Simeon, and Levi had forfeited the inheritance due to their unfaithfulness to their father. The law had forbidden a father from taking the inheritance rights from a wife who was not loved (or a bondwoman, or wife of legal obligation) unless there was some justifiable reason. Dan and his brothers had also been unfaithful to their father (Genesis 37:2). Joseph, being the one to expose this, was hated by his brothers. God had also showed Joseph in a dream that eventually his father, mother, and brothers would bow down to him. This prophetic

event most assuredly applies to the future of all these people after Christ returns. By this time, Joseph’s mother had long been dead. Jacob, knowing this, ‘kept these matters in his heart’, and this certainly served to show him God’s will concerning the promises being passed to Joseph, along with how God intended for his sons to fit into God’s future plan.

In Genesis 49, Israel gives the prophetic future of all his sons. Because Judah ‘prevailed’, the promise of the Scepter is given to him. ‘Prevailing’ is a reference to repentance, or overcoming his faults. This is the same reference that God made to Jacob when He changed his name to ‘Israel’. Like his three older brothers, Judah had been unfaithful to his father. He had been guilty of the primary sin of selling Joseph to his symbolic death, thus trying to deny his younger brother his life and rightful place in the promises of Abraham. Thus he was not worthy of the promises, either. However, due to his repentance, he will play a major role in the future deliverance of the children of Israel. The scepter is the throne, king, or ruler which represents the Messiah. He will be a son of Judah.

However, the birthright (salvation) promise is given to Joseph, and specifically Ephraim, as a tribe (Genesis 48:19-20).

Also in Genesis 49, Judah is prophesied to be the caretaker of God’s law until Shiloh comes; this being an obvious referral to the first coming of the Messiah.

Genesis 49:22 begins the prophecy concerning Joseph’s blessings and reveals that he will finally fulfill his proper role allied with this Shepherd, the Stone of Israel. The blessings will come on Joseph and on the crown of Him who is separate from His brothers. (See Young’s Literal Translation). This is the Messiah, allied with the firstborn into eternal life, who are the spiritual children of Joseph and the Fathers (Genesis 49:26 and Jeremiah 31:9) He will be the firstborn of the firstfruits (the spiritual children of Ephraim). Though He is a natural born son of Judah, He will have been betrayed and cast off by them - thus ‘separate from His brothers’.

As the firstborn of the firstfruits, Christ becomes an adopted son of Rachel, the freewoman (Galatians 4:21-31). The gathering of Rachel’s children as the firstfruits is covered in Jeremiah 31 and Jeremiah 3. The firstborn into the eternal promises are the Bride of Christ, along with her Husband, who is the firstborn of the firstfruits.

The prayer of Hannah in I Samuel 2, concerning the Messiah finally coming to His inheritance, states that ‘*She who was barren (Rachel) has now borne seven, and she who has the many children (Leah) has become feeble.*”

Hannah’s prayer is the ‘voice that is heard from Ramah’ (her home town) that concerns ‘Rachel weeping

for her children'. This is the prophetic lament of Rachel for the rights of her children which were taken away. Every time they are diminished, it is symbolic of Rachel's weeping. This will finally end when they come into their true inheritance (Jeremiah 31:9-16).

"*She who was barren has now borne seven*" refers to the adoption of the Messiah as the firstborn of the firstfruits. Rachel had two children of her own and two legal children by her handmaid. Then Jacob gave Ephraim and Manasseh rights as his sons instead of grandsons, with the first natural born son (Manasseh) receiving a double portion. This made six inheritance rights for Rachel's children. The Messiah will be the seventh, when He goes into His inheritance allied with the sons of Joseph; at that time being separate from His brethren, Judah (Genesis 49:24-26).

At the point of the passage of the promises to Israel's children, God has made an adjustment to the birthright part of the promises to include Joseph (children of Rachel) as the firstborn, but Judah (child of Leah) is given the actual King (*scepter*) because of Judah's ability to repent (prevail) when finally confronted with his sin. Eventually, they will work together in unison (Ezekiel 37:15-28), once Christ returns and corrects all the conflict and denial of this truth. This world will no longer envy Joseph and hate Judah. Rachel's children will no longer envy Leah's because their own rightful identity and inheritance will be restored. Leah's children (Judah and all aligned with him) will no longer deny and vex the true children of the inheritance (Isaiah 11: 12-13, Ezekiel 11:13-15).

I Chronicles 5:2 also verifies the truth of the birthright, blessing, and scepter issue. It specifically states that the *birthright* is Joseph's but the *scepter* (king or 'one Seed') is given to Judah.

Not fully understanding the true legality of what is transpiring here, some have mistakenly tried to turn the *scepter* into the *birthright* (spiritual promises) at this point, and claim that the *birthright* is the *blessings* (physical promises). This is confusion. Up to this point, the *birthright* has involved salvation to the entire world, which will be by the 'one Seed'. This is the Messiah (a Jew) allied with the sons of Joseph due to being cast off by His brethren. Therefore, it legally is given to Joseph, just as he once saw in his dream, for which his brothers persecuted him. The *birthright* cannot suddenly become physical promises. The *birthright* involves the salvation issue, the *blessings* are the physical promises, and the *scepter* is the King alone. These are **three** separate things. **Jacob never placed his hand on the head of Judah and passed**

the literal 'two immutable things' to him. They were given to Ephraim!

Some who have misunderstood this issue have claimed that the scepter alone involves the eternal salvation issue, and is solely given to the children of Judah because Christ was a Jew.

They point to the New Testament statement by Christ that 'salvation is of the Jews' to establish this. This is what can happen when one takes a statement out of legal, historical, and literary context, mistakes its meaning, and then tries to read it throughout the scriptures from beginning to end. Spiritual blindness can result, and God shows that He has given some over to this (Isa. 28:13).

Christ had made this statement to the Samaritan woman who was claiming Abraham's heritage. At this period of time, all Jews and Israelites honoring their beliefs had become known as 'Jews', though the scriptures show that many true Israelites have lost their identity. Christ's statement was a referral to an 'Israelite' at that historical period of time, just as some use that name today, mistakenly believing that all Israelites are Jews. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel gave God's proclamations of how they would be viewed once the curses of the Sinai covenant, which resulted because of their disobedience, came upon them. (We will cover that issue when we reach that time in this study.) Paul called himself an Israelite of the tribe of Benjamin (Romans 11:1). He also repeatedly called himself a Jew (Acts 21:39 and Acts 22:3). Benjamites were not Jews. They were the full blood brothers of Joseph. However, Christ spoke to the Samaritan woman in the language of the day, making a comparison between her people and true covenant people of God (Israel), who had become known by the generic term "Jews" by that day. He was not making a legal proclamation concerning the passages of the promises of Abraham through the tribe of Judah alone, which can be incorrectly read back into the scriptures from the beginning, thus negating what was actually written.

We also see this in the statement that salvation is to the 'Jew first, and also to the Gentile'. Once again, the language of the first century would have used the term 'Israelite', and 'Jew' interchangeably, regardless of the true legal inheritance.

When we arrive at the historical time of Jeremiah, we will see how God decreed that the people of Israel would be seen by themselves and the remainder of the world, while they languish under the curses of the Sinai covenant, until He finally lifts them. This condition by which they will all be seen by themselves and the world as "Jews" is a result of the decrees of God from that time forward.

I Chronicles 5:2 shows that the *birthright*, which has always contained the *salvation* issue, was given to Joseph in the tribal sense, but the actual King (*scepter*) would be a son of Judah.

As the history of the transference of the promises of Abraham continues, we will see how this transpires, just as originally prophesied. This is the greatest proof of the truthfulness of this prophecy.

When Christ comes into His kingdom, He will be separate from Judah, and not united with them until they repent at His second coming (Zech. 12). It is the spiritual children of Ephraim, also called Israel, who will be the firstborn into the inheritance of Abraham (Jeremiah 31:9). They will be divided into twelve groups and called by the names of the different tribes of Israel (Revelation 7 and Gen. 48:6) in order to set up signposts, or establish boundaries, for the proper return of all Israel's children to the Promised Land, as promised by God in Genesis 13 (see Isaiah 11 and Ezekiel, chapters 40 – 48)). Joseph, the firstborn son of Jacob's true legal wife within the original covenant he made with Laban, obtained the *promises* of Abraham, as he foresaw in his prophetic dream. He will share them with the fourth son of Leah (Judah), by the fact that the singular Seed, or Ruler, will be his descendant. By this unity, all of Jacob's children will someday be united (Isaiah 11 and Ezekiel 37). Judah's older brothers had forfeited their inheritance by unfaithfulness (Genesis 49:3-7). Judah redeemed himself by his repentance before Joseph when he offered his life for the life of his brother, Benjamin. This is the same man who had once heartlessly sold Joseph to his symbolic death (slavery in Egypt). This act of repentance on Judah's part served as the catalyst to save and unite the family of Jacob in that ancient time (Genesis 44:18-34). This same characteristic of Judah's children will one day unite them again when they finally accept Christ for who He truly is, along with acknowledging their brothers and the Gentiles (Egypt, see Isaiah 19:18-25) who have come to Christ before them (Ezekiel 16:60-63). Here, the Gentiles are referred to as Sodom and her daughters. Ephraim is denoted by 'Samaria', which was the capital of the northern kingdom.

Now let us continue, as we will see how the scriptures unfold the future of Abraham's children from this point, exactly as prophesied here in the book of Genesis.

The Exodus and the Sinai Covenant

After Israel had been in captivity for generations,

God called Moses to be a deliverer for the Israelite people. All scripture proves that Moses shared the same covenant with God that Abraham did, though he is the first one to know Him as *Yahweh* (Exodus 6:3). Though this term may have been used in scripture prior to this historical point, we see that one likely cause of this is because Moses actually wrote the Genesis account. He would have been using terms that he had come to understand.

One other possibility to accurately explain how the term precedes Moses in the scriptures is that it may be due to later editing of the scriptures by the Jews. Editing of the Old Testament is unquestionably apparent throughout its text, even though it was explicitly forbidden by God (Deut.:4:2).

Moses was initially called by God and asked to carry out the entire role as 'deliverer' of the Israelite people from Egypt. Due to his lack of initial faith, God gave him Aaron as a spokesman and later a priest, a role that obviously wasn't originally intended by God.

After the people were delivered from Egypt, they gathered on the plains of Horeb, in the area of Mt. Sinai. Here God gave them the instruction to not work on the Sabbath, which was one of His commandments. This is specifically stated in Exodus 16: 28, showing that God's commandments and laws existed before any covenant at Sinai, or the Law of Moses came into existence. The text of Exodus 16:34 explicitly shows that, in some form, the Testimony was prominently displayed in the Israelite camp before they ever got to Sinai. Any honest study of this term (testimony) in the Old Testament will show that it refers to the Testimony (Ten Commandments) which was later written on tablets of stone and placed in the Ark. In Exodus 18, Jethro advised Moses to teach the people about God's laws so they could manage their own affairs, thus removing Moses from any decision-making process that wasn't absolutely necessary. All this happened before they assembled at Mt. Sinai.

Along with the many other scriptures showing the obedience to God's commandments, laws, statutes, and judgments by the fathers (Genesis 26:5, for one), it is clear that all the Commandments were known by Moses and were available in the camp, though they had obviously been neglected and forgotten by the Israelites while in captivity. The importance of God later speaking these from His own mouth, face to face with the people, out of the smoke and fire, had to do with the direct establishment of His covenant with them, once they arrived at the mountain - to make it legal and official.

Moses' original placement between them and God served to show that Moses related to God in a manner which they did not. His purpose was to bring them

personally to Him. God originally intended a governmental system based on the family system and obedience to the fifth commandment. There was to be no one representing God over anyone else, from a governmental perspective. The ‘elders’, or family heads were the seat of authority within the family and nation. They were not any type of ‘corporate’ representative, nor any agent of an overseeing governmental entity.

In fact, the term ‘elder’ refers to the heads of individual and collective families wherever it is mentioned from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It is the heritage of the firstborn. They are given family authority because of that fact. This order gets its authority from the fifth commandment. Where a group of elders exist collectively, they are representatives of those families in the collective. It is important to remember this as we progress through the Scriptures, as this is also true in New Testament times.

Sinai Covenant

While camped in the general area of Horeb, God made the Sinai covenant with all the people. The terms of the covenant were:

1. He would be their God.
2. They would be His people and holy ‘priests’ as an example to all the nations around.
3. They would ‘obey His voice’ in order for this relationship to occur. This gave Him the right to give them any command from that point to forever, and they were to obey.
4. Their reward would be the ‘promised land’, and all the physical blessings that would go with it.

Notice that the order and foundation of this covenant began with a requirement of initial faith and obedience, just as this had once been required of Adam and Abraham, before any instructions had been issued.

This simple covenant is clearly given in Exodus 19:3-6. It was the simple ‘marriage’ covenant which could never be altered once agreed upon. As with any marriage covenant, it set forth the general guidelines and structure of the unity to be established between two parties, around which all future instruction, interaction, and reward would be centered. Moses took this proposal to the elders, who took it to the people; who promised to join in this covenant agreement with God at this time. Moses took their agreement back to the Lord (Exodus 19:7-8). The covenant was then sealed, or agreed upon legally. It is within the guidelines of this sealed agreement that God then begins to speak to

the people, giving them commands. Notice that this agreement was made prior to direct interaction between God and the people, as that interaction was by the legality of this covenant.

This covenant is reiterated in Deuteronomy 26:16-19, Jeremiah 11:2-5, and again briefly in Jeremiah 7:22.

Thereafter, any referral to the ‘covenant’ is specifically talking about this agreement which cannot be altered without transgression, once agreed upon by both parties. However, any law, command, or charge from the Lord, which will be given by Him, at any time, is also legitimately called ‘the covenant’, as well. It would be included in the covenant, once it is given by the Lord. Their agreement to obey His voice extended without limit into the future, and allowed Him to command them from that point on.

Once the people have agreed to this covenant, they are then bound to God by a dual legality. They are bound to Him by the oath to Abraham, due to the fact that they are his descendants who are involved in the conditions promised in Genesis 15. They enter this Sinai relationship with God, personally, by the covenant which they now make with Him at Sinai. Thus they are now bound to Him by the ‘covenant and the oath’. If the covenant is violated, or negated by the people and their disobedience, they will still be bound to Him by the oath to Abraham, which is also sometimes called the ‘covenant to the Fathers’ (Lev. 26:40-45). It is important to remember this as history progresses. The ‘curses’ of the covenant listed in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 show what will happen if they violate this ‘marriage’ covenant and are legally separated from God by this unfaithfulness. The covenant will end but the oath will continue. They will still retain the rights promised to Abraham, and will eventually be redeemed for *God’s name’s sake* or for the *sake of the fathers*. We may later note, once they have violated the Sinai covenant and have been removed from God directly, He says: “*They despised the oath by breaking the covenant*” (Ezekiel 16:59). This shows, once again, the dual legality involved.

At this point in history, the terms of the Genesis 15 oath to Abraham are being fulfilled by bringing these people to a ‘letter of the law’ relationship with God, whereby they have an abundant life, instead of suffering, bondage, and death. This is accomplished by the ‘letter of the law’ terms He will give them, along with their obedience to those terms (Deut.30:11-20). This covenant involves life, land, and blessings in exchange for obedience.

It is important to remember all these legal issues, in order to understand the legality involved at any particular point in history. The failure to note this has led many to misrepresent the ‘covenant’, or the legal rights in effect at

different points in time.

The initial instruction of God to the people, after this covenant was made, was for them to come up to Him 'face to face' at the foot of Mt. Sinai (Deuteronomy 4:10-13). Moses brought them forward to the proper barriers, while he went past the barriers to God's direct presence. The people were unruly, so God sent Moses back down to correct this; so none would break through and come into His presence inappropriately. Moses went back down, spoke to the people, and corrected this disorder. **Then the Lord spoke the Ten Commandments to the people out of the cloud and fire "face to face"** (Deut. 4: 10-13, Exodus 20:22, Hebrews 12:19). All these scriptures show, without question, that the people heard Him, themselves. He spoke the Ten Commandments and no more (Deut. 5:22).

At this point, the Ten Commandments was the only law that the covenant contained, and on a few occasions in scripture, they are also legitimately called "the covenant", due to this fact. In truth, they are the only laws included in the original covenant before it was broken and thereby adulterated by the people. **They were spoken directly to the people by God.**

The people then refused to come into His presence at the appropriate barrier anymore and went and stood *far off*. They demanded that God speak to them no more. They sinfully requested that Moses be placed between them and Him perpetually. Moses resisted their wishes; admonishing them that God was testing them to see if they would have faith in Him and obey, by coming forth to their proper place which God had ordained (Exodus 20:20). They still sinfully demanded their disobedient rules, claiming that they would be destroyed if they did so.

This was the first violation of the covenant, and altered everything that came afterward. For this reason, God tells us that what then came from Sinai was not the covenant by which He related to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (the fathers), because the people refused this direct association with Him (Deuteronomy 5:2-5). Once again, in this passage, God reaffirms that He spoke to all the people face to face, and then they demanded that Moses be placed between them.

Moses' initial placement between them and God was to show that he related to God in a way they did not know, but he was to bring them to Him. They refused, disobeying the God that they had just promised to obey, thus violating the initial covenant and diminishing the relationship from that point on.

Each of these placements at Sinai had their later

counterparts in the temple, showing what they represented. The Holy of Holies represented the direct presence of God where Moses went. The inner court represented the barriers at the foot of the mountain. This was the proper place where only the nation of Israel could come. The outer court represented the place of the Gentiles, or those who were symbolically *far off* from God, with no heart or knowledge to obey Him. The Israelites rejected their proper place and went and stood in the place which symbolized those who had no heart to obey Him, even though they had promised to do so. This tragedy is reflected in the theme of Deuteronomy, chapter 5.

Furthermore, in this context, God states that this violation was because they had no heart to obey Him, and **they were right in all they had spoken. Sinful and disobedient people, such as they were, most assuredly would have been destroyed in His presence.** At this point, He was bound to them by the Genesis oath to Abraham, which He could not break, regardless of the acts of the people. In some manner, then, He had to alter the relationship in order to carry out what He had promised.

After this, He dealt with them as sinful people who had to be controlled in a lesser relationship. Elements of this relationship, which will now become necessary because of this disobedience, are properly noted as things which are 'added because of transgression' (Galatians 3:19). The Law of Moses, which now becomes necessary, is riddled with instructions that come under this designation. This mirrors what happened after the sin in the Garden, and further diminishes the relationship these people may share with God.

The text of Numbers 3 shows that once the camp was set up in its proper order, the people could no longer approach the tabernacle, upon pain of death. They had to relate to God through the priest or proper representative that God established over them, because of this initial sinful demand.

Paul mentions this to Timothy when he states that the law (of Moses) was not made for a righteous son, but for liars, murderers, sinners, etc (I Timothy 1:5-11).

Moses then went up the mountain and received the Law of Moses from God, which he wrote in a book; along with the Ten Commandments, written in stone, due to the fact that they could not be written in the hearts of these evil people. This is then a 'ministry', or administration of law that will someday be altered when God calls people to Him through faith in Christ. These true believers will not be 'in Christ' unless they are willing to keep God's commandments and relate to Him personally as Moses and Abraham did (II Cor. 3:7-18 & John 15:9). They will accept God's commandments and laws as truth and they

will be written in their hearts (character) by the Holy Spirit.

Everything but the Commandments is correctly called the Law of Moses. The Commandments were later kept in the Ark of the Covenant. The Book of the Law was placed beside it, but not allowed within (Deuteronomy 31:26). This book is alternately called the Book of the Law of Moses, or the Book of the Law of God (See Nehemiah 8, especially verses 1 and 18). All scriptural reference to this book, including passages in the New Testament shows that the entire book of the law is 'The Law of Moses'.

The legalistic system of a physical priesthood serving as a controlling device (bondage), the legalistic application of God's laws which allowed no faith on the part of the observer, many of the physical rewards and punishments, the restricted lesser meanings of God's Sabbaths, along with **many** other things, are signatures of this diminished covenant; and are indigenous to this covenant, once this sinful act on the part of the people diminished it. There are also certain aspects of this law that are only possible to be obeyed in their complete literal sense when the people are actually in the land as a collective nation (Deuteronomy 31:13). In Ezekiel 16:27 God refers to this relationship, as well as what it later became, as one of 'diminished allotment'. This term refers to a wife who has had her rights and inheritance diminished because of her unwillingness to carry out her correct role.

Because of these events, Paul refers to this as a 'schoolmaster' which was to 'bring us to Christ' (Galatians 3:24). In other words, because of God's obligation to Abraham due to the oath of Genesis 15, He used this diminished administration of His Holy Law and it's principles in order to preserve both the knowledge of the principles of God's law, along with the children of Abraham, until the true Tree of Life could be restored by our Savior. It was the best relationship possible for those people, under those conditions, in order for God to fulfill His promise to Abraham.

To be able to relate personally with God in any way made them blessed above any nation on earth at that time (II Cor.3). However, due to this tragic sin, there are many laws in the Law of Moses that had been 'added because of transgression', as pointed out by Paul in his letter to the Galatians. This is a repeat of circumstances that occurred in the Garden of Eden, once the curse of the law was brought on the earth and all mankind.

The initial law 'added because of transgression' was the placement of the 'mediator' between the people and God. The 'mediator system' was then added, along with its entire function, etc. from that time forth.

This later resulted in a partition being placed in the temple to completely separate the people from God. In Ezekiel 43:8, God states that this and other additions in the temple which resulted from their sin had actually defiled His Holy name. This tragic diminishing of the Sinai relationship grew worse every time they disobeyed, historically. In Galatians 3, Paul notes the fact that this covenant being given through a 'mediator by the hand of an angel' was the covenant's signature tragedy.

In II Corinthians 3, Paul calls this an administration of death, primarily because there was never any promise of eternal life in the Sinai Covenant in the first place. It was a covenant of law in exchange for land and physical blessings (Galatians 3:21). Law is not the avenue by which eternal life is imparted to mankind. The Holy Spirit is the only thing which can do that.

Once again, the Sinai covenant, of itself, **never contained a promise of eternal life**. The text in Deuteronomy 30 concerning God setting 'life and death' before them, as a choice, is unquestionably referring to physical life, blessings, and well being, as clearly stated within the surrounding context.

Furthermore, the law in Deuteronomy is God's adding instructions to the covenant that will be required once they go into the land. Deuteronomy 29:1 tells us that they are words of the covenant, in addition to the covenant originally given at Horeb. The covenant allowed God to give them any instruction forever, and they were to obey.

It should also be noted that the original covenant was to Israelites only, as they were the only ones allowed into the full legality of the *blessings* aspect of the *promises*, which gave legality to the Sinai covenant. The strangers, or Gentiles, who went up with them were allowed in only in a diminished capacity, which created enmity, or division between them and Israelites. The commandments, or ordinances, concerning this issue were indigenous to this covenant, and will later have no meaning in the greater covenant brought by Christ, which will be formed by the legality of the *birthright*. This issue is addressed in Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2, by the Apostle Paul.

There are some who falsely claim that what is given in Deuteronomy is a 'different covenant', making an attempt to exclude part of God's law as being valid. There are several versions of this, all in error. In Jeremiah 11 God tells the prophet to go and shout His pronouncement of the curses on all the inhabitants of the land, in every street and every rooftop of every city.

Jeremiah 11:1: *The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, "Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel: "Cursed is the man who does not obey the words of this covenant which I commanded your fathers in the day I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, 'Obey My voice, and do according to all that I command you; so shall you be My people, and I will be your God, that I may establish the oath which I have sworn to your fathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day."'"*

[Notice that here God simply states the original terms of the Sinai covenant given in Exodus 19.]

And I answered and said, "So be it, Lord".

Then the Lord said to me, "Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in all the streets of Jerusalem, saying: 'Hear the words of this covenant and do them. For I earnestly exhorted your fathers in the day I brought them up out of the land of Egypt, until this day, rising early and exhorting, saying, "Obey My voice." Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart; therefore I will bring upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done."

[Note the statement of God in this context. The initial words of the Sinai covenant were "obey My voice" (Exodus 19:5). The final words were the curses proclaimed to happen if they disobeyed, given in the final chapters of Deuteronomy. These were the final words given just before Moses finished his writing of the Book of the Law and placed it by the Ark just before his death (Deut. 31:24-26). God is stating the all the words of that initial covenant (meaning every one of them) had not yet been applied to these particular people. Now that He puts the curses on them, all the words have now been initiated or applied in some manner. This text shows that there is one covenant, covering everything God stated from "obey My voice" in Exodus 19 to the final entry by Moses at the end of Deuteronomy. All His words are part of the same covenant. The false doctrine of a 'second Deuteronomy covenant' is constructed by men trying to play games with God's laws.]

This covenant came about by the legality of the oath

God made in Genesis 15. Therefore, even though they disobeyed, He had sworn to see this event which He promised to Abraham carried out.

Although Hebrews 11 and 12 show that there were some in this and later times that found eternal salvation, it was not due to this covenant (Galatians 3:19-21). However, only those who would obey His law were allowed into the higher covenant, just as Abraham had once been willing ("to those who have, more will be given").

[Note: This is a principle that Christ uses throughout the New Testament to show that when one is faithful with what God has previously given him, the Creator will give him more, or upgrade the relationship.]

This blessing was to selected individuals, but not offered to the people of Israel, as a whole, at this early time. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he clearly states that the administration of law which came from Sinai was not an effort to give anyone eternal life, as that would have violated the original promise given to Abraham which stated that it would come through faith in the 'one Seed' (Galatians 3:16-17). And furthermore, he states that "*if there had been a law which could have given life (eternal), true righteousness (in the eternal sense) would have been by the law*", showing that eternal life was never available through 'law keeping' in the first place. It is only put within us by the presence of the Holy Spirit, which is initiated through faith in Jesus Christ or originally through the Tree of Life.

However, Israel must now obey this diminished covenant in order to maintain an association of 'nearness' to God and inherit the blessings of the Promised Land.

The reason that God maintains this 'nearness' to these people, regardless of their evil, is because of the oath to the 'fathers' which originated in the Genesis 15 covenant. He had sworn that these events would happen. Therefore some (the children of the original adults who made the covenant at Sinai) had to enter into the land, regardless of any disobedience on their part, or the part of their parents (Hebrews 4:6).

Now they will not be a 'nation of priests, holy to the Lord', as He had offered in Exodus 19. They are a nation of sinners bound up in a legalistic, uncompromising code of law, carried out by an authoritarian governmental system of control, under the hand of an angel, as sinful children under a schoolmaster -- until a better thing will come (Galatians 3:23-29), even though they will maintain their eternal designation as God's holy people, due to His oath to Abraham. This 'better covenant' will only be for those people, like Abraham, who will love God and obey His

commandments with their whole heart. God states over and over that these commandments will be 'written in their hearts and minds'. Only the Holy Spirit may do this, and it was not possible for it to be given to these evil disobedient people of old, because of their willfully evil hearts.

Getting back to the events at Sinai, we see that after God gave the next instructions of the covenant, which Moses wrote in the book of the Law (Book of the Covenant), they were read aloud to all of the people, who agreed to obey these initial laws.

God also called Moses, the priests, and certain elders up the mountain to a meal ceremony, whereby He gave them the authority to be the 'mediator' controlling system of the government now necessary to handle these evil-hearted people. This is the official institution of the 'lawgiver' role within this covenant. It is important to remember this (Exodus 24:9-11).

Moses had taken of the blood of the burnt offerings and peace offerings and sprinkled it on the people, signifying their purification to then relate to God within this diminished covenant. Sprinkling of the blood signifies symbolic purification, and was a shadow of the sprinkling of the blood of our Savior by which we may be purified in order to relate to Him (Hebrews 10). This event, alone, proves that there was no promise of eternal life through this covenant. God's initial purpose within the original Sinai agreement did not include various 'burnt offerings or sacrifices' (Jeremiah 7:22). By this time, He was dealing with Israel within a diminished relationship they had sinfully demanded. The people were **purified symbolically** to relate to God within the covenant from that point on. **This act had no bearing on 'sealing' the covenant. That was done by the initial agreement in Exodus 19.** Some have mistakenly made this claim in an attempt to separate some of God's laws into those which are 'eternal' and those which 'are not'. They falsely claim that everything God decreed before this act was an eternal covenant and everything after was by a 'different' covenant. Once again, this shows a lack of understanding concerning the process that was occurring.

So then, what laws are eternal in their application, and which are added because of transgression, and only necessary in a diminished relationship? That is a difficult question to answer specifically, and requires an intimate knowledge of all these relationships with God. This matter would require seemingly endless discussion, and perhaps many would not agree completely, until Christ returns to set the matter

straight.

However, continuing forward within the history of the covenants of God and understanding each development as one goes, helps one to understand what applies to his own life in his personal relationship with the Creator.

None of God's laws are ever done away, as clearly stated by Christ. However, His laws clearly have different applications, which require certain rules, depending on who He is dealing with and the nature of their hearts. Anyone who has dealt with rebellious immature children certainly understands the issues here. There are many rules and boundaries required to control them, which would not be required if they loved their parents and wanted to please them with their whole hearts. Also, there is also only a certain level of maturity they can handle due to their condition. A loving parent understands all this. When a mature love for the parents, along with a true heartfelt desire to do what is right, begins to develop, the nature of the parent/child relationship changes, as well. Paul is reflecting on this principle in the text of I Timothy 1:5-11. Just because certain laws are not applicable to a 'righteous' son, does not mean that their value no longer exists, nor that they can ever be truly 'done away'. **The only way to truly understand the value of different aspects of God's commandments, laws, and statutes – along with their proper application - is to thoroughly study them within the flow of the overall legal context of His covenants with man.** Ever since the sin of Adam and Eve, there have always been many things 'added because of transgressions' that would otherwise not have been necessary nor applicable, in order for God to deal with the diminished condition and keep His presence among sinful mankind. Even the sacrifice offered by Abel would not have been necessary, had this not happened.

The people at Sinai were still 'under the law', or that diminished legal condition they inherited from Adam and Eve, as well. They were not being offered a covenant that would have delivered them from that state. Therefore the law of Moses still had laws that reflected this, such as rules for multiple wives, and the allowance for divorce for reasons that God did not intend from the beginning, had men and women both had His Holy Spirit and been able to experience marriage as originally created. Marriage was originally designed to function properly with this condition in force. The diminished condition of marriage had existed ever since the Tree of Life had been taken away (Genesis 3:16). It would not be returned until men and women accepted Christ, were given the Holy Spirit, and were then able to relate to one another by the relationship of order and God's mutual love, which was outlined by Paul in Ephesians 5. Christ also comments on this matter within the text of Matthew 19, as He discusses divorce. The Law

of Moses had allowances that were not intended by God from the beginning.

The Sabbath Covenant

After confirming the Sinai covenant, God adds another covenant to identify the people who are under it (Exodus 31:16). He proclaims that the keeping of His Sabbaths, which are ‘shadows’ (memorials) of things to come, or God’s plan of salvation, which will be fulfilled in and by Christ (Col. 2:16-17), will be the sign of the people of the Sinai covenant. They were not being offered the ‘reality’ of the opportunity for salvation, which God will later bring to the world. Therefore, keeping the memorials beforehand was the best thing that could be offered them in this situation. By this, of course, the knowledge of this greater plan would be preserved, though they certainly were not aware of its higher meaning at this time (II Cor. 3).

However, neither this covenant, nor the Sinai covenant, brought these memorials into existence. The Sabbath is a part of creation, as the book of Genesis clearly states. In fact, this is specifically noted within the fourth commandment as being the reason it is included (Exodus 20:11). This specific day of the week was blessed by God at creation, thus giving it the intrinsic value it possesses, at that time.

Likewise, the ‘appointed times’ of God (*moed* - Heb.) are also testified to exist in Genesis 1:14. Here the word is mistakenly translated ‘seasons’ in the English. Likewise, the Passover and Unleavened Bread instructions were restored to Israel while they were still in Egypt. The observance of the Sabbath is clearly stated as being one of God’s eternal commandments, and the nature of its observance, part of His laws (Exodus 16:28), before any covenant was ever made with Israel at Sinai. The assertion that these things are ‘ceremonial’ laws, or rituals, originating from Sinai or the text of Deuteronomy, has no truthful basis in scripture. Of course, this does not mean that the keeping of these days is a foundation or avenue for eternal life. Rather, the correct legal understanding of what these memorials are; along with their true value, is noted in order to understand their correct moral value to one who truly wants to honor God in the correct way. The attempt to degrade or replace them with pagan observances, ideas, and philosophy leads to a corruption of God’s ways.

Their observance within this Sinai covenant, however, is limited to their diminished application

within that inferior covenant. Their higher meaning in the New Covenant was not available to these people as long as their hearts were hardened toward God.

The Covenant of Spiritual Purity

As the history of God’s covenants progress, it is easy to gloss over some of them and not realize the historical and eternal impact they possess. This is often caused by a lack of understanding concerning the covenants. When one sees the word, ‘covenant’, in the text of the Bible, they may assume it is talking about the Sinai covenant or the New Covenant. Some falsely teach that there is only one covenant and it is to be ‘renewed’. In truth, there are many covenants; each having its own individual and lasting value and importance.

One such important covenant is the covenant concerning spiritual purity contained within the text of Exodus 34. As the Israelites face their future as the first collective nation, or assembly, to make a covenant with God; He adds this covenant to reveal necessary boundaries required to protect the spiritual integrity of the assembly, as they exist among other people of the world. As this covenant is initially made, it applies to their manner of relating to other people in the land in which they are going.

This covenant first begins to be spoken by God in Exodus 34:10 and ends in verse 27. It is actually given as an edict, and does not need specific approval by the people because they have already agreed to obey anything that is decreed by Him (Ex. 19:7).

He proposes to perform awesome miracles before them as He leads them. He will miraculously protect them and drive out the people before them with no effort on their part. These miracles will be greater than anything that has ever been witnessed on earth. In turn, they are to make no covenant of any kind with the people, thus blending their society and making allies, as opposed to totally trusting in God. They also are to not observe nor honor any religious observance that has originated in any other culture. He clearly implies that to dishonor any part of this covenant will lead to degradation of their spiritual and physical condition, as well as the removal of at least part of His protection.

Furthermore, He clarifies the underlying reason for this covenant in verse 14: “for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God”. Jealousy, like anger, is good in its proper application. It gives a psychological alert to the crossing of proper moral boundaries. Later condemnation of such emotions in scripture denote the lack of control which causes harm when we do not exert proper self control with this issues. God’s jealousy is for His integrity

and our protection, and thus a part of His makeup. All of the names of God in scripture help describe what He is. Thus the underlying spiritual principle given here is linked directly to the character of God which never changes, and it not something limited to these ancient people and their covenant.

Thus, any violation of this issue as one relates to God in any age leads to the same removal of His protection and degradation of one's spiritual condition.

Furthermore, as God forms this covenant, thereby forbidding the adoption of any religious practice born in paganism to honor Him, he gives the memorial and ceremonial practices which belong to Him, and which involve the *'moeds'*, or appointed times, originally given in Genesis 1:14. These were known as God's annual Sabbaths, or Holy Days. Nowhere does he call these observances the "Jews, or Israelites" holy days, or appointed times, though He is giving them to the Israelites alone at this historical moment. In fact, everything contained in the Sinai covenant is exclusively for Israel at this historical time, because He is directly dealing with no other people. Therefore, in later texts He does refer to them as being "for Israel". Added laws at this moment are exclusively for them, as well, due to their disobedient hearts. These laws would not be necessary, otherwise.

Later in scripture, He makes a condemning notation of the days they keep because of the hypocrisy of their hearts and the ways they have polluted and changed His appointed times (Amos 5:21). Thus He is labeling their hypocritical days as worthless, and something that He hates. Those with a contempt for the true value of God's laws have tried to make a 'sleight of hand' switch in reasoning to 'abolish' God's true memorials, calling them "Jewish" and hated by God, and replace them with paganism. This is satanic reasoning.

Thus, not only does He command to avoid anything born in paganism, He also commands to honor what He has ordained, as these observances contain the true symbolism or His plan of salvation (or things to come), which will be fulfilled in the person and deeds of Jesus Christ (Col. 2:17).

Nowhere does the scripture claim that eternal life is a reward for keeping these memorials, and we are not to judge others by such a perverted foundational standard. However, their true value is to be upheld. The covenant of purity emphasizes their importance and shows their true value in differentiating between those who maintain purity in their worship, verses polluting the worship of God with practices devised by

demons (Deuteronomy 32: 16-17).

To illustrate the proof of this covenant's eternal value directly from the scriptures, let us look briefly at how its principles extend through both the Sinai and New Covenants; being honored by both the prophets and the apostles. We will briefly do this now so that we may keep this covenant in mind as we progress throughout this study, as it has ever-present value as we relate to God.

The initial violation of this covenant, in principle, had happened before God actually proclaimed it as a covenant. In Exodus 32 we read of Aaron's construction of the golden calf, by request of the people, and his proclaiming it to be honored by a 'feast to the Lord', which he obviously made up, himself. As a result of this, God separated the congregation according to who would stand with Him and Moses, as opposed to those who wished to disobey. Only the Levites stood with Him. Then 3000 of the people responsible were killed. These were likely of the elders, who were responsible for the actions of their own families. The elders were the heritage of the 'firstborn', as they would take that role traditionally in each tribe and family. This resulted in God removing them from their proper role in their appointed service to Him (initiated in Exodus 24) and replacing them with the Levites (Numbers 3). While they still maintained tribal authority, they had no direct association with God, as originally intended. Each disobedient act of this manner further polluted the Israelite's relationship with God.

Next, on the Plains of Moab, at Acacia Grove, the Moabites, who were their cousins, the children of Lot; seduced them to take part in their pagan rituals, which resulted in a plague on the nation.

After entering the land, Joshua and the people made a covenant of alliance with the Gibeonites, who deceived them. This resulted in God refusing to drive the Canaanites out miraculously, and they remained to be a trial and a test to the faithfulness of the people as time progressed (Judges 2:1-3).

While in the land, the people repeatedly gravitated to the religious practices of the Canaanite people among them, thus polluting their worship of God.

After the kingdom was split when Solomon died, Jeroboam, king of Israel, changed the date and place of God's appointed times. These acts lead to a downward spiral in the spiritual condition of that kingdom which resulted in God removing their presence from them. This practice became known as the *'sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat'*.

Later, Judah followed the same practices and was also cut off from God for their sins (II Kings 23:26-27).

While this was not all the sin involved, it seemed to be

the catalyst for the downfall, in every case.

Later, in the New Testament church, the initial instructions from the Apostles to Gentile converts who had come to know Christ was to avoid the 'pollution of idols', or idolatry (Acts 15:20). Some have tried to play games with the original text concerning this instruction and to diminish its application to only 'eating meat' because that was a major issue at the time and was extensively addressed in further texts. This is dishonest. In fact the scriptures testify throughout that the principles involved here apply to any practice born in paganism. Eating meat (or a meal) associated with a pagan practice is what began the Israelites downfall at Acacia Grove, by the hands of Balaam and Balak.

Furthermore, the apostle Paul also recognizes this covenant given in Exodus 34 in his instructions contained in I Corinthians 8. Here he gives the simple principle that meat or anything else is not evil of itself, as all things have a proper created purpose. To one who has a pure conscience toward God, they may be used for their rightful purpose. However, when it becomes clear that they are associated with idolatry in any way, they must be avoided due to one's own conscience sake and example to others. To cross this line is to pollute both the inner and outer man.

He further comments on this subject in I Corinthians 10 wherein he clearly states that honoring things born in idolatry is the worship of demons, just as God had stated in Deuteronomy 32 (I Cor. 10:-20).

However, texts like Romans 14 show that those who have accepted Christ and are 'weak' in the faith due to the fact that they have not grown out of such things yet, are not to be condemned by one who is further developed in the knowledge of how to more properly honor God. Only God is able to open one's eyes, and only God knows what he expects from each individual. Growth is an individual thing in the New Covenant, and no one is guilty in God's eyes until he becomes aware and convicted in his own heart, as God opens his eyes (Lev. 4 & 5).

Later, many have tried to play games with these passages to justify doing anything in the 'name of Christ' as if that would glorify it and sanctify it in their worship of Him. They claim that anyone wishing to honor God's laws is 'weak in the faith'. This is the spirit of *lawlessness*.

King David was a man after God's own heart and his place in God's kingdom is sealed through his faith in the Redeemer, according to all scripture. Psalm 119 is God's reflection on how a man such as this looks at the value of all His laws.

We will further examine the ever applicable theme of the covenant of purity as we go along. I have discussed it here so that we make notice of how this covenant and its obedience or violation maintains its presence as an eternal principle. This is due to the presence of holy 'jealousy' within the character of God, as He protects and guides His people eternally (Exodus 34: 14 & I Cor.10: 21-22). In the later text, Paul acknowledges the spiritual principle underlying the *covenant of purity*.

God's Government to this Point

God had related to all the Fathers face to face in a direct personal way, just as He did all the righteous individuals from the time of Abel. This, of course, included Moses. There is no indication in scripture that He ever related to any man in any other way until the event at Sinai. Of course, there was order within God's society. The ancient Fathers actually served as 'priest kings', or men who exercised judgment over their tribes and families, as well as being spiritual teachers. There was tribal authority, but structured in a way of freedom where all men had personal responsibilities, and the only decisions made by any 'higher authority' were those that could not be made any other way. The higher authority of the family was the 'elder', or oldest member of the 'father's house'. This was not a hierarchal system of rulership from the top down. See Exodus 18 for a good example of this. Jethro advised Moses to appoint captains over a thousand, hundred, fifty, etc., in order to remove himself from anything that an individual could decide for himself. Moses was to educate the people concerning God's law, and they then were to take personal responsibility. The various captains would never be involved in anything that an individual could decide for himself. Thus, they served as advisors to individuals and mediators to make judgments between differing parties.

These 'captains' would be from the elders, or tribal and family heads, as they alone would logically know their people and be able to properly guide them. They had to be humble and not people who sought after their own gain. Showing partiality in the law due to clan or family association should never be allowed, either.

In this system, the family heads who knew their families well had total control by authorization of the fifth Commandment. Matters of judgment that could not be decided would be taken to the collective elders who had been appointed for this role by consent of the entire collective they represented, due to the fruits of righteousness they had shown in their lives.

Jethro advised Moses to use this system, if God approved. While Jethro was a priest of Midian, he in no

way showed dishonor to what God was doing through the Israelites, as he was apparently aware of the fact that the promises of Abraham would progress through them. He could be properly labeled as one of the 'sages', or priests who preceded the Aaronic priesthood. Balaam was another. All these preceding priests came from the lineage of Esau, Midian, etc. These were the other children of Abraham who collectively opposed the Israelites, constantly seeking to claim the promises for their own. The Biblical history of these men shows that the people of these tribes had already blended their ways with the Canaanite religions. Balaam's hypocrisy, as a 'priest of the Lord' puts an exclamation point on this fact.

Nevertheless, Jethro seems to be a man from this group who was humble in his true role; honoring God in his position, but recognizing he had no part in the passage of the promises. It appears that the advice he gave Moses was good advice, and he deferred to God for its approval. It is safe to assume that his humility in not challenging the true passage of the promises of Abraham through the Israelites could be a reason that God had chosen him to instruct Moses correctly.

However, due to the sin at the foot of Mt. Sinai, there is now an authoritarian, legalistic system designed to control evil hearted people who will not obey God any other way. This theme is written into the entire Law of Moses. This is actually patterned after the sinful way of Cain and Nimrod, who stood between God and men, claiming they were 'God's representatives' over them. This is the way of the Gentiles. The people loved this, because they felt it somehow absolved them from their personal responsibilities. However, God has exposed this as a result of men's evil. The people had chosen this when they went and stood *afar off* from God when He commanded them to come to the proper barriers at the foot of the mountain. They had demonstrated that even though they were now brought *near* to God by His fulfillment of the oath given to Abraham in Genesis 15, they had the same evil heart of the Gentiles, who were still *far off* from God.

The one difference between the mediator systems devised by Cain and Nimrod compared to that of Moses is that while this was a diminished system, Moses was, in fact, a true mediator through which God dealt with the people.

After the people disobeyed, God continued to make adjustments as He historically remained bonded to these people for hundreds of years, for the sake of the Fathers and because of the oath.

One of the more dramatic changes within the Law of Moses happens after the events at the foot of the mountain. The firstborn of each family and tribe had originally belonged to God, to act in service to the people and the priests. However, He trades them for the Levites, and this tribe will serve in that role exclusively. This happened because they were the only ones to stand with God and Moses when the people, as a whole, rebelled. The Levites were not a priesthood, as is sometimes falsely stated, but rather they were servants to the people and the priests, in all manner of public service (Num.3). While in the wilderness, they camped around the tabernacle, and their duties involved its care. Later, when in the land, they were divided into 48 cities within each tribal area, and were the public servants. They served the priests and the temple, each in his appointed time during the year. The firstborn, or elders, within each generation of all tribes should have fulfilled this role, instead. From that time forth, individual connection with God for each tribe was lost. This is another degradation of the covenant, which further distances each tribe from God in the matter of fulfilling their personal responsibilities.

Once again, this change is one of many that came about 'because of transgression'. The priests were sons of Aaron, who also was a Levite, so they were Levites, as well. Therefore, sometimes the terms 'priests' or 'Levites' may be used interchangeably, but only the sons of Aaron were legitimate priests. The later concept of a 'priesthood' and a 'high priesthood' is strictly Jewish fabrication and tradition.

After Sinai

After departing from Sinai, the people travel to Kadesh, where God commands that they send spies to search out the land. They all deliver an evil report because of their fear of the people in the land, except for Caleb, a son of Judah, and Joshua, a Benjamite. His original name was Hoshea, but Moses had changed it to Joshua (*Yeshua*, or *Jesus* in the English), as he would be a type of deliverer, or Savior.

God then passed judgment on all the people, stating that they would wander in the wilderness. All would die there who were not twenty years old or under, except for these two individuals. Only their children would enter the Promised Land.

During this time, the nations of Edom, Ammon, and Moab caused trouble for the Israelites. This brings a curse from God upon them, as they all were closely related. Edom was the descendants of Esau, and Moab and Ammon were the children of Lot.

In God's original covenant statement with Abraham, He had stated that He would '*bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you*'. The only way for the Israelites to be cursed would be for them to sin, and bring such a thing on themselves. No one else could do it, and God would not allow it, under any conditions. Even though they were suffering the penalty for their sins by the wilderness experience, no other nations could touch them, without bringing eventual destruction on themselves. This is a legal condition that exists to this very day. The Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites were their direct relatives, and had the responsibility of treating them as brothers. What they did brought further curses on them from God. **We should always remember this, as we relate to the children of Israel, through the ages. This is also discussed by Paul in Romans 11.**

Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan, however, are destroyed, along with all their people. The Israelites wander throughout this territory until camping at the Plains of Moab, immediately to the east of Jericho on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

The Oath to Phinehas

During this time, Balak, king of Moab, hires Balaam to curse the Israelites. After this fails, Balaam informs him that the only way they can be cursed is if they can be enticed to sin. Balak then invites his 'kinsmen' to a meal of meat offered to his idols, and succeeds in enticing them into ritual fornication and the worship of the gods of Moab.

During this event, Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, and grandson of Aaron, stands up, kills the man and woman involved in ritual fornication, and receives an eternal oath to be the father of an eternal priesthood **because of his zeal for the Lord**. This priesthood will be determined by a spiritual characteristic and not physical lineage, though Phinehas was a Levite. This is the beginning of the end of the Aaronic priesthood that had begun in Egypt. Though Phinehas is a grandson of Aaron, one day the eternal priesthood will be under the legality of this covenant, or oath, that God promises him at this time. We will follow this briefly as the history progresses.

This event involved a violation of the covenant God had decreed in Exodus 34.

It is here on the Plains of Moab that the word of the Lord contained in Deuteronomy is given to add instructions that will be necessary in the land of

Canaan, and to remind them of the previous commitment to God. The Ten Commandments are once again given in the text written by Moses.

When the time to go into the Promised Land arrives, the tribes of Reuben and Gad, along with half the tribe of Manasseh, request to stay on the east side of the Jordan River, as the land is more suited to their lifestyle. This request is granted under the conditions that they will march before all the people into the land of Canaan and fight with them until the entire land is conquered. They agree to this, and later occupy that land on the east of the Jordan. A section of this is later known as the land of Gilead, after a descendant of Joseph. This will be the inheritance of one half of the tribe of Manasseh, who received a double portion of inheritance.

Before entering the land, both Aaron and Moses died. Before Moses' death, God passed his role of authority as the mediator to Joshua. Eleazar becomes the high priest. Both these men fulfilled their roles for many years. Eleazar died after Joshua.

Once they entered the land and conquered Jericho, the people feared them. They were tricked into making peace treaties with some, contrary to God's instructions. Their disobedience led God to pronounce that the people would not be fully driven out before them, but would remain among them to test them. Disobedience to the Exodus 34 *covenant of purity* leads them further and further into trouble within the terms of this covenant.

During the days of Joshua, the people drive more and more of the Canaanites out, but God leaves some of them among them to test them, because of their disobedience (Judges 2:1-4). This is always the case when we decide to compromise with God's instructions.

The Covenant of Joshua

Just before Joshua's death, he calls all the people together at Shechem to reconfirm their original personal commitment to God, in freedom, if they will obey. They make an oath that they will, confirming it three times. Joshua erects a stone as a witness to this covenant they have made to him and God. Immediately afterward, he dies, leaving no successor in the manner of himself or Moses. God is now going to see how they will obey Him in personal freedom and responsibility. This account is given in Joshua 24.

The Judges

During this time, the people, once again, go back into sin. Every time they do, outside nations move in and

oppress them. When this oppression becomes too bad, they cry out to God in repentance and He sends a deliverer. This is called a 'Judge', but this is truly an insufficient term to describe this individual. A 'peacemaker' would be a more accurate term. This individual first drives away the evil, and then becomes the instrument of reeducating the people, who have repented, as to the proper way they should be living. Thus righteousness and peace remains until the 'judge' dies, then the people slowly revert back to their old ways from generation to generation. This shows how evil they were when allowed freedom and personal responsibility. The judges would only become necessary whenever the people became sinful, repented, and cried out to God. This was not a continuous succession of leaders.

One of the notable Judges is Gideon. After he delivers the people from the Midianites, they request that he rule over them, as well as his sons. He refuses, stating that neither he nor his sons are to rule over them. God alone is their ruler, to whom they should be looking.

Upon his death, his son Abimelech kills his brothers, and contrary to his father's instructions, succeeds in having himself crowned king. Jotham, the youngest son of Gideon, gives a parable which is timeless in condemning this method of men governing men and how counterproductive it is to God's will (Judges 9). Eventually, Abimelech and the people who made him king destroy themselves within this convoluted sin, bringing Jotham's prophetic parable to pass.

The Apostles, especially Paul, apparently drew heavily on the principles of the parable of Jotham while establishing the order of the New Testament Church, through guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Aaronic priesthood becomes so corrupt under Eli and his sons that God predicts the eventual end of this order (I Samuel 2). This begins immediately with the death of Eli and his sons.

The Kings

The people come to Samuel, who was the last judge in Israel, and God's voice at that time, and demand a king like the nations around them. Once again, this is a further rejection of God. He relents to their wishes, and gives them Saul, who is a king chosen after the standards respected by the evil people. However, when He calls them together, He informs them that this is the last change that will be made and

they will have to live with whatever comes as a result of this. Their sins will be on their king and the king's sins will be on them. He originally made the covenant with them, and there is no way to hide behind leadership, who they expect to "fight their battles for them". All they ever needed was God, and a close personal obedience to Him. Years later, when this covenant is fully violated, God sends Jeremiah to the people in the streets to remind them that it was all their fault and His judgment has now come on them (Jeremiah 11). **You cannot hide behind leadership.**

When the people had no king, with no one between them and God, they were in a much better condition to relate to God personally and have His true blessings on them, as He told them. However, they had repeatedly turned their personal freedom into lawlessness.

The first king is Saul and his failure is a matter of record. After him, God anoints David, who is a great grandson of Boaz and Ruth. He chooses him because of his heart to obey God, stating that 'man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart', at David's anointing. Saul had been chosen by the superficial standards of the carnal minded people, in order to teach them a lesson.

The Covenant with David

Due to David's obedience, God promises that He will establish David's throne forever. If his son's are evil, God will punish them for a while, but eventually this throne will endure. It is the same throne (or kingship) that Christ will occupy when He returns, as He is a son of David. This is a specific covenant with David. It is not restricted to the Sinai covenant relationship.

Covenant to Phinehas (a continuation of the Levitical covenant)

Saul had killed all the priests except for Abiathar and Zadok (I Samuel 22), thus partially fulfilling the prophecy of God during the days of Eli at Shechem (I Samuel 2). These two men continue to serve David faithfully, even when Absalom rebels against him.

Before David's death, the kingdom has been promised to Solomon, by the will of God. Adonijah, his older brother, tries to take the throne, allied by Joab and Abiathar, the priest. Nathan, the prophet, and Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, manage to stop this coup, and Solomon is made king. He instructs his brother and Joab to go to their homes. He will let them live as long as he sees no evil in them. However, they violate the terms that Solomon has given them. He has Adonijah and Joab killed and

banishes Abiathar to his home, stripping the priesthood from him. This removes the arm (lineage) of Ithamar (Aaron's son) from the priesthood. At the same time, Zadok, who is a descendant of Eleazar and Phinehas (of the Plains of Moab fame), becomes the only legal heir to the priesthood. Thus one 'arm' of Aaron is removed, and also the legality of the priesthood by Aaron -- to whom the original Levitical covenant was given in Egypt -- as prophesied in I Samuel 2, at Shechem. God had told Eli that the 'arm' (lineage) of "your father" with whom the original covenant was made in Egypt (Aaron), and the 'arm' of Eli's lineage (Ithamar) would be removed because of Aaron and his sons continual corruption of the priesthood. Only the 'arm' of Eleazar remains by the legality of the covenant made with Phinehas. This covenant will take on a higher spiritual application when Christ becomes our High Priest, as well. I Kings 3:27 clearly states that this came about because of what God decreed to Eli at Shechem. After the legal change in the days of Solomon, it is known as the priesthood of Zadok, and carries that name forward even to the future temple on this earth after the return of Christ (Ezekiel 44). This extends to the spiritual priesthood, of which Christ is our faithful High Priest. It is not marked by a physical lineage, but given to those who truly had a 'zeal for the Lord'. This transition is linked to the spiritual message in Matthew 22.

[Some try to deny that the priestly lineage is taken from Aaron, claiming that I Samuel 2 removes it from Eli's father (Ithamar) and Eli. A careful reading shows, however, that the expression 'your father', from which it is originally removed, is unquestionably referring to 'your father' to whom God originally made the priestly covenant with in Egypt. This can only refer to Aaron. Eli's lineage is the lineage of Ithamar. Some also try to claim that this event only relates to the removal of Eli and his replacement by Samuel. This is because they fail to follow the progression of this prophecy throughout scripture.]

Kings, cont.

When Solomon becomes king, he obeys God and asks only for wisdom. Because of this, God grants his wish but also gives him great wealth, as well. Solomon obeyed God, and the kingdom during his reign reached its apex in glory. He had peace all around, and was actually a 'typical' forerunner of how God's kingdom will be after the return of Christ. He ruled over all the

land and peoples from the Euphrates River to the border of Egypt, which was the original Promised Land. When older, he allowed his many foreign wives to compromise his worship of God, and allowed the worship of pagan gods from every nation to be brought into the land. Because of this, God told him he would split up the kingdom and take all but two tribes from his sons. The two remaining tribes were left in order to fulfill His promise to David.

Upon Solomon's death, Jereboam, son of Nebat, an Ephraimite, took control of the northern ten tribes under God's command. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, ruled the southern kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam feared the people going back to Jerusalem at the appointed times, so he departed from God's ways and threw the Levites out of the northern kingdom, now called **Israel**, and they lived in **Judah**. They were now two separate kingdoms, and all scripture shows that God considers them as such, until Christ returns to restore them as one nation (Ezekiel 37).

At this point, all the Levites and priests are within Judah, partially fulfilling the promise of the lawgiver not departing from Judah, which was given in Genesis 49. The center of authority of the lawgiver had originally been in the northern kingdom at Shiloh, having been established in Joseph, while leaving Egypt (Psalm 81 and Joshua 18). A summation of all this is recorded in Psalm 78:67-72. This was a summation of the events up to that point in history.

Jeroboam, as stated, departs from God by refusing to come up to Jerusalem as God commanded, and compromising with pagan practices. This sin had originally been brought into the northern kingdom from Assyria by the tribe of Dan, who had set up their own gods since the days of the judges (Judges 18, note verse 31). None of the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel (also called *Ephraim*, or *Samaria* in prophecy, due to that being the place of their capital) ever obeyed God. The wicked king, Ahab, and his wife, Jezebel, who was a Sidonian princess (Canaanite) brought the kingdom to its lowest point.

Eventually, God pronounced the sentence of captivity on Israel, and it was finally brought about by Assyria. This punishment was consistent with terms of the Sinai covenant called the 'curses'. The Assyrians took the Israelites into foreign lands and brought those people to occupy the area of the northern kingdom. When wild beasts caused a problem with their settlement, they brought back a priest of the northern kingdom to teach these new Samaritans the ways of God, which they viewed as the 'god of that land'. However, they blended these ways with their old pagan practices. This is known throughout history as the '*sin of Jeroboam, son of Nebat*', who had actually done the same thing when he threw the Levites out of the northern kingdom in the first place.

At the same time, Judah was as evil as the northern kingdom, but their one temporary saving grace was they did periodically have kings who chose to obey God, and reform the nation. Thus, their existence as a nation continued much longer.

However, Athaliah, (a daughter of Ahab, and apparently Jezebel), who had married the son of Judean king Jehoshaphat, attempted to kill all David's heirs to the throne. Only Joash survived, as a baby, and was protected until he could regain the throne. Athaliah brought all the witchcraft and evil Canaanite practices into the nation of Judah and the temple, and was stopped when the High Priest, Jehoida, had her killed and established Joash as king. He followed God as long as the High Priest lived, and then the people demanded that he allow the nation to return to paganism. When he relented to their wishes, Zechariah, the son of the High Priest, warned the Levites and religious leaders to return to God and chastised them for betraying the faithfulness of his father. They killed him by the altar in the temple. Christ later referred to this event in His condemnation against the Pharisees in Matthew 23, as He labeled them as the spiritual sons of Satan and these evil leaders. The Pharisees were not their physical descendants.

Hezekiah and Josiah were notable kings who turned the nation of Judah back to God; but the evil to which they sunk during the reign of Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, brought God's final judgment on them. He promised that He would cast off Jerusalem and Judah, just as He had cast off Israel (II Kings 23:26-27). Jeremiah 3 tells us that He had legally 'divorced' Israel because of adultery. His marriage with Judah would end in a different way. Judah would murder her husband and 'fill up the transgression' of the nation of Israel, whereby they all would be cut off from God under the curses of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, until their redemption.

By God's instruction, Jeremiah delivers His verdict directly to the people (Jeremiah 11:6-8), as the original covenant was made with them. The evil leadership and what it had become was their responsibility because they demanded it in the first place. This evil by the people had begun when they first demanded the mediator at the foot of the mountain.

God then allows Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, to begin to take the kingdom of Judah and its leaders captive. Jehoiachin was taken prisoner to Babylon and was not killed like the others. It is this man through whom the lineage of David is passed to

the Messiah.

Nebuchadnezzar took all the leaders and the vast majority of the population of Judah captive, and left only a number of poor people to till the land. He destroyed the temple and every vestige of the kingdom God had built, taking all the temple treasures to Babylon with him.

Jeremiah

Jeremiah was God's voice against the nation of Judah, along with Isaiah, during this time period. Though both give the prophesied future of what is to come, I will concentrate on the message of Jeremiah in explaining what is happening at the time of Judah's last days and how the future of the nation and God's covenants will extend into the future.

Jeremiah 3 is recorded during the days of Josiah, after God's final pronouncement of the verdict of Judah's punishment had been given. In this chapter, God remembers the northern kingdom, Israel, and how He had divorced her. He says that He will marry her again, and she will be His wife, when she returns to Him with her whole heart. He had cast her off because of her evil. Then Judah, the wife whom He had kept, had become twice as evil, after seeing what had happened to Israel. Therefore, backsliding Israel (Ephraim) will return to Him. Finally, He will also redeem Judah, after this marriage to Israel. This will happen by a better covenant (the Abrahamic covenant) under which they will no longer give honor to the ark of the covenant, which symbolized the lesser covenant at Sinai, but they will call Him, "My Father" and never turn away from Him again.

The issues surrounding this prophecy are further explained by Ezekiel in chapters 16 and 23. He was a contemporary prophet who wrote during the Babylonian captivity. In Ezekiel's prophecy, he reveals that the Gentiles (Sodom and her daughters) will be brought to God between the remarriage to 'Ephraim' (Samaria), and the return of the more evil Judah. This interim period between the regathering of the two houses of Israel will become known as the *'time of the Gentiles'*.

Chapter 31 of Jeremiah gives more explicit details of the remarriage to the Bride of Christ, who will be the spiritual children of Ephraim (called the firstborn), as promised back in Genesis 48. Then Sodom and her daughters (Gentiles) will be brought to God, and finally Judah, at His second coming. A remnant of Judah will come back among them all, as a shame to Judah and Jerusalem, who had been more evil than Samaria (the northern kingdom), Sodom and her daughters (Gentiles), and even the Amorites, who had dwelt in the land before

Moses. Thus Judah's punishment is to be greater during the interim.

In Jeremiah 25, it is revealed by this prophet that there will be a temporary captivity of Judah, and the desolation of Jerusalem will last only 70 years. Then some of the people will be brought back to restore the city. God's plan for them is not complete under the Sinai covenant, as yet. Judah and Jerusalem will continue as His wife until more than four hundred years afterward, as they still have a part to fulfill in God's plan, while in a state of marital 'diminished allotment'.

In Romans 9:22, Paul refers to this intervening time as God's long endurance of these "vessels of wrath prepared for destruction". At the same time, he reveals that everything will eventually work to fulfill God's plan through His mercy, however.

The two baskets of figs

Jeremiah 24 gives the parable of the two baskets of figs, which is made around the 'typical' groups of Israelites in the land at the time of the captivity. One group is taken into captivity. The other left to be identify with Jerusalem. Those remaining haughtily identify themselves as the good figs, because they had been left, and condemned the others as bad figs because they had been taken away. They had begun to place 'holiness' on Jerusalem, regardless of whether God's presence was there or not. In reality, the good figs were taken into captivity first and will be assimilated into Babylon, correctly obeying God within the rules He gives at this time. The 'bad figs' are those who identify with Jerusalem, and deny the heritage of the first ones taken into captivity, falsely claiming that they alone are the inheritors of the promises of Abraham. Instead, they will receive death and persecution for this. Once God removes His presence from Jerusalem, there is no holiness there. Ezekiel 16, Revelation 11:8 and II Kings 23:27 witness God's view of Jerusalem, once He cuts the city off. It will no longer have any 'holy' presence until Christ returns there (Zechariah 8:3). Today, God views it as 'Sodom and Egypt' (Revelation 11:8). It is, however, viewed as a holy city from a historical perspective, both past and future. However, after 70 years, He would temporarily establish them there, in a state of 'diminished allotment', until the transgressions of the Sinai covenant would be complete.

We know from the prophecies in Ezekiel 33:21-28, that those poor people left in Judea by Nebuchadnezzar actually began to identify themselves as the faithful

children of Abraham through which all the promises would be passed. God tells them that the opposite is true. This obviously comes from their belief that Jerusalem is still holy, even without God's immediate presence, and their presence there is what identifies them as the chosen people. Such a belief actually glorifies the city instead of God, and refuses to acknowledge the legal flow of the issues involved.

Within this same chapter, verses 30-33, the leaders of the people in Babylon come to Ezekiel pretending to want to obey God, but who have only their own greed in mind as they look forward to deliverance.

In truth, though these two groups of people are used as 'types' within the 'two baskets of figs prophecy' in Jeremiah 24, the true baskets of figs are identified by the two kingdoms. The people taken into Babylon were not good compared to those poor people left in the land. They were actually more evil. This lesser fulfillment of this prophecy was only typical.

The true 'baskets of figs' are:

1. The northern kingdom (also called *Israel*, *Ephraim*, or *Samaria*) which was taken into captivity first, though they ended up being the more righteous of the people of Israel and are the 'good figs'. The Jews centered in Jerusalem condemned them in this same way when they were taken into captivity (Ezekiel 16:44-52). Jeremiah 3 and Ezekiel 16 extensively show that they received punishment first, but ended up being much more righteous than Judah and all who were left identifying with Jerusalem.

2. The 'bad figs' are the kingdom of Judah who were left behind, identifying with Jerusalem, but who became more evil than the people of the northern kingdom they had condemned. They had long ago began to deny the true children of Abraham's promises (the children of Joseph, or Ephraim) when they were taken into captivity, identifying their own association with Jerusalem as meaning they had then become the true inheritors of these promises. This is witnessed by Jeremiah 3, Ezekiel 16 and 23, etc.).

Therefore, the greater curse is on them and on anyone who will identify with Jerusalem after this and claim to be the 'true inheritors of Abraham', exclusively; while denying the true children of Israel who remain scattered in Babylon and their successors through history.

Ezekiel 11:14-16 also witnesses the sin of the Jews still identifying with Jerusalem as a 'holy place' and themselves as the 'only chosen people', denying all of Joseph and the remainder of Israel as their brothers. This is the beginning of the practice of the Jews falsely labeling themselves and all aligned with them and their beliefs as the only true Israelites, and children of Abraham's

promises.

This is the future way that both houses of Israel will be seen by the world and those who accept the word of the 'Jews' from this time forth. This is the way that they were seen in the first century when Christ walked the earth and the New Testament writings reflect this.

It was in this atmosphere that the statements of salvation being of the 'Jews' were made. At that historical moment, the entire world viewed the nation of Israel through this lens. However, it is truthful that it can also be a literal true statement for all time, because our Savior, who ushers in eternal salvation, was a Jew.

However, according to the true statements of the Scriptures, **it is the children of Joseph, and specifically Ephraim, who possess the promises of Abraham, not the Jews, as clearly stated in Genesis 48.** The promises only gave Judah the role of the one King (*scepter*), who they would kill, along with the responsibility to preserve the law until His coming. The *birthright* and the *blessings* are Joseph's (see Genesis 48, 49, and I Chronicles 5:1-2).

The common misinterpretation that the *blessings* are Joseph's but the *birthright* becomes the *scepter* and is given to Judah is **not true. These are three separate things.** The firstborn into the Kingdom of God with Christ is Ephraim, who is the birthright tribe and Bride of Christ, allied with Christ, her husband, who is separate from His brethren (Judah) because they killed Him and cast Him off (Genesis 49:26). Jeremiah 31 gives details on this regathering of the 'virgin', who is Ephraim, with that status restored. The continual Jewish philosophy that they alone are all of Israel and the birthright people of Abraham is the act of Leah's children trying to claim the inheritance of the children of Rachel. This wrong will be corrected, as prophesied in Jeremiah 31. The barren wife (Rachel) will weep no more, when the Bride of Christ comes into their inheritance. Though these are actually the spiritual children of Ephraim gathered from among all peoples, the initial calling to faith in Christ is to the people of the scattered northern kingdom. Eventually, Joseph's dream, in which his father, mother, and brothers all would bow down to him, will be fulfilled. We will explore this further when we get to the ministry of Christ.

At any rate, the instructions of God are given in Jeremiah 29 concerning Israel's future responsibilities until the yoke of Babylon is broken off the world at Christ's return.

They are to go into the captivity, blend into the nations, build homes, make their living, raise their children, and wait on the Lord; while praying for the peace and safety of the nation and community they are in. Until their final deliverance, **this place of captivity is their place of safety.** The only true safety is in God's presence, wherever you may be on this earth.

Those who rebel against God's instructions, and resist the governments around them, will bring destruction on themselves.

The pronouncement concerning God's judgment on His people is given in Jeremiah 15:1-2.

Whenever these circumstances occur historically, this is the dual condition of the true children of God, depending on their hearts. Those who are committed to captivity will be given to captivity. Those given to the sword will die by the sword. Revelation 13:9-10 shows that this principle applies to God's people in the end time, as well.

Whenever any 'typical' historical fulfillment of this prophecy occurs, God's people are admonished to flee the environs of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:15-16). Christ applied this admonition to the destruction of 70 A.D, as it should also apply today.

Judah and part of the tribe of Benjamin were returned to Jerusalem after 70 years to occupy that place while they take on their role of 'filling up the transgression' of the Sinai covenant. Whenever they are brought back there, while under the curses; it will be for this purpose. Their presence there in the end time will be the catalyst for the final chaotic events, which will result in the return of our Savior.

The curses of the Sinai covenant given in Leviticus and Deuteronomy state that they will still have a connection to God **under the legality of the oath to Abraham**, even when the Sinai covenant is over (Lev. 26:42-44). Whenever they obey God's laws they will be blessed by Him, wherever they are. If they disobey, this will bring punishment. If they form their autonomous nations, and then disobey His laws, the strangers among them will rise up and put them under their dominion. This will be a sign and a wonder as to who they are. They are to wait on Him for deliverance. This final deliverance will not occur until the second coming of Christ. Eventually, they will be brought back to God for the sake of the fathers and God's immutable promise to them.

In the meantime, once Christ comes and begins to gather His Bride to Him, those of Israel who are denied by Judah and all aligned with their spiritual point of view, will become temporary 'temples', or sanctuaries of God's presence wherever they may exist. This is the only true temple of God on earth once He finally brings about the

physical temple's destruction. This condition will last until His second coming. Paul acknowledges this when he tells Christians that their bodies are the 'temples of the Holy Spirit'. This is not just a New Testament 'spiritual metaphor'. It was decreed in Ezekiel 11:14-16.

The Yoke of Babylon

In Jeremiah 27, God gives the clear instructions that the yoke of Babylon is about to be brought on the world. Babylon and its successors are His instrument for laying a foundation of man's governments and ways, eventually ruling over all the earth. This yoke and what it entails will remain on the earth and Israel until Christ smashes it at His coming. This yoke is still on the world today, and has been passed down from one world power to another. Any who say it is God's will to rebel against this yoke are prophesying falsely. Christ told His followers that we are not to rebel against the governments over us, but to be productive lights to the rest of the world, wherever we may be. The apostles further confirmed this word. Jeremiah wrote a letter to the Babylonian captives, recorded in Jeremiah 29, giving these instructions of God. Those who are still under the yoke of the governments of this world are still under this legal obligation by God, until He frees His children from this yoke at His coming. It is the place of safety to the "scattered." **Those who identify with Jerusalem, clinging to it, while denying that the other tribes of Israel even exist, and claiming all Abraham's promises during this time, will suffer for it, according to the proclamation of Jeremiah 24.**

Having said this - while under this yoke, we are to "obey God rather than men" when their ways conflict with His. This example is set by Daniel and his friends, as well as the Apostles during New Testament times.

Davidic and Levitical covenants

In Jeremiah 33, God proclaims that His covenants with David and the Levites (through the legality of the promise to Phinehas) will never end. These are separate from the Sinai covenant and will extend into the future, regardless of what God is doing with mankind, whether spiritual or physical. Therefore, one should remember that when you see different elements of these covenants in force, such as in the book of Ezekiel, this is no proof that the Sinai covenant is still in force. Some have made that mistake.

Covenant (oath) to the Rechabites

In Jeremiah 35, God makes a covenant (oath) with the Rechabites because they had honored everything their physical fathers had told them for hundreds of years. By this God showed that Israel was well capable of obeying everything He ever commanded them, just out of human motivations. The claim that they couldn't keep the law of Sinai because they didn't have the Holy Spirit is a lie from Satan, seeking to lay the blame for their failure back on the Creator. Keeping the law perfectly was never the path to eternal life, and this great gift was never promised in the Sinai covenant. If they had failed in any aspect of the law, they just had to obey the rules concerning their proper sacrifice of restitution, and they would have been, once again, justified (put in right standing) within that covenant. So therefore, the timeworn argument that they 'couldn't obey the law' and therefore were not worthy of eternal life, comes from incorrectly attaching the 'eternal life' condition to the law and the Sinai covenant in the first place. There was no instruction ever given to these people by God, that they were not capable of obeying within the terms required by the covenant at Sinai, had they been willing (Jeremiah 2:1-13).

The text of Jeremiah 2 clearly states that had God made this covenant with the Gentiles, they would have obeyed it. They were dedicated to serving 'gods' which had never done anything for them; as rocks and sticks are incapable of such. After seeing what God had done for them, the Israelites cast Him aside, and worshipped the rocks and sticks, which was really paying homage to the demons who had contrived this form of worship.

The Captivity

While in the captivity, the prophet Daniel, along with his contemporaries, are good examples of those men who correctly honored God while in this state. Mordecai, whose story is told in the book of Esther, is also another good example. They blended into the society around them, but held fast to God's ways, therefore being a light to others whom they could influence, and a witness to the true God. When faced with compromise, or persecution, they obeyed God rather than man, even to the point of death. They even became instrumental figures within the government, thereby influencing the rules and spiritual conduct of the nation in a correct way.

The prophet Daniel was the instrumental voice that God used to predict the basic outline for His plan for human society until the culmination of all God's plan. The vision in Daniel 2 gives a brief overview of the succession of

governments that the Creator has decreed to exist until the Messiah comes to depose them and set up His rule over the world as King of kings and Lord of lords.

In Daniel 9, Daniel asks God to forgive the sins of Israel and deliver them all back to the Promised Land, thus lifting the curses of the Sinai covenant and restoring the land. He asks this for ALL of Israel, including those who are *near* and those who are *far off*. This would include both kingdoms, which would fulfill all the promises of Abraham. This regathering had been promised within the book of Deuteronomy.

The angel, Gabriel, brings the message of the Lord to Daniel, telling him that it will be a cumulative total of 490 years of God dealing with Israel and Jerusalem in a direct manner until this occurs. Failing to acknowledge the context of Daniel's prayer, or the true theme of the Daniel 9 prophesy, many have taken bits and pieces out of context and done all sort of predictions with it. May their predictions and explanations be tried by God's Word. If what they predict happens, they have a revelation from God. If not, they prophesy falsely. However, the prophecy as given by God relates directly to Daniel's prayer and its subject.

The timeline begins with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem. There will be 49 years (seven weeks) from the decree to rebuild the city until the completion of the temple in Jerusalem. Then will be 434 more years (sixty two weeks) until the anointing of the Messiah, (which occurred at His baptism). This will leave one prophetic week, or seven years.

After the sixty two weeks, the Messiah will be cut off. His ministry will last for one week, but He will be cut off in the midst of the week, or after 3 and one half years. This is the only week remaining and he cannot be cut off at the beginning of the week, or at the time of His anointing. The remainder of His ministry will come later, at the time of the 'later rain' spoken of by the prophets.

[The 'cutting off' of the Messiah in the middle of the confirmation of His covenant with mankind, originating from Genesis 3:15, occurs exactly 3 and a half years after the sixty two weeks ends. This time corresponds with the 'midst' of His ministry. This is when He will cause the sacrifice and oblation to cease. (Daniel 9:27, Heb.9 & 10).]

The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by an army (70 AD) and 'desolations are determined' until the end of the war. This is, of course, referring to the Great War at the end time, as witnessed by Isaiah 6:10-13. 'Desolations' refers to the absence of God's

presence in this city and the former sanctuary. Jesus Christ referred to this prophecy in Luke 13:35 and in Matthew 23:37-39. This event will actually come about due to the murder of Christ by His own brethren. He is the Prince to come, whose people will be responsible for this.

The remaining three and one half years within the prophecy will be fulfilled at the time period of His second coming when He will open the eyes of Judah and all aligned with her, to finally bring these people to redemption. Christ's first ministry to the 'lost sheep' (Ephraim) is called the 'former rain'. The ministry to Judah is called the 'latter rain' (Hosea 6, Joel 2:23). During this time of desolation, God is not dealing directly with the physical nation of Israel except by the legal conditions of the oath to the fathers. Thus they are desolate, or without His direct presence, as the curses foretold.

There will be an overshadowing, or cloak of abomination brought about by one who makes desolate (or resists God's correct presence) upon the remaining people of God, until the consummation is poured out on those who had been formerly desolate (the Gentiles). The Hebrew word translated as 'consummation' is literally rendered as '*completeness*'.

This abomination refers to the 'mystery of lawlessness' that will come on Christ's followers, who are the true sanctuary of God at this time; the sanctuary at Jerusalem having already been made desolate (Matt. 23:37, 39 & Galatians 4:21-31). This evil spirit who accomplishes this is responsible for both desolations.

John, Paul, and Jude spoke specifically about this mystery. They expected it and said it was ordained and prophesied of old. They apparently got their understanding from this prophecy, along with Zechariah 11:15-17. The deception created by this evil spirit will continue until the fullness of the Gentiles (the formerly *desolate*) is brought to Christ. The abolition of this abomination of 'lawlessness' on believers of Christ coincides with the final bringing in of physical Israel at Christ's coming (Romans 11:25). It is quite obvious that Paul's explanations of this time line in Romans 9 through 11 come from his understanding of this prophecy by Daniel. I will take his word for this.

Close examination of scripture concerning this issue reveals that the cloak of abomination will remain on the Church for the same time period that the physical sanctuary will be desolate.

The intervening time in which God is calling the Gentiles is known as the '*time of the Gentiles*'.

This 'beast' (evil spirit) which causes this abomination, has two horns, and speaks with the mouth of a dragon

(Satan). Referring to Revelation 13:11: the ‘two horns’ symbolize the two major heresies which begin to arise when this evil spirit is released by God. The first ‘horn’ begins to arise in Judaism in the days of Babylon. The second, which is a mirror of the first, will arise in the New Testament church and extend to this very day. They involve the deceptions of Judaism and Romanism, both of which get their form and practices from Babylon, attempting to read them into Scripture. The two horns, or spiritual approaches, are ‘like a lamb’ but truly speaking with the deceptions of a dragon (Satan). Having ‘horns like a lamb’ refers to the claim to the true Lamb - which each of these deceptions make.

John calls this great ‘beast’, or evil spirit, the *antichrist*. He states that it has already arisen to begin its worldwide spiritual dominion in his day. Furthermore, it is defined by these New Testament Fathers as one who either ‘denies that Christ is come in the flesh’ (at His first coming)’, or one who promotes ‘lawlessness’ in His name, thus denying what the true Way of Christ entails. The final fulfillment of this Beast power would arise out of the Roman empire and eventually extend control over the whole world, in some form, until Christ destroys it at His second coming (Daniel 2 and Daniel 7).

The Beasts

It is apparent, that during this time, as Israel’s protection from the evil of the world by being an isolated ‘righteous nation’ is gone, God now looses these two ‘beasts’ on the world to begin the final downfall of Satan’s systems and curses on the evil of mankind. One comes out of the ‘earth’, the other out of the ‘sea’ (Revelation 13). The two beasts are actually powerful demons that have been in restraint ever since the flood. One will control the governments of men and the other the religions of men. They are described in various ways, as they carry out their work throughout history. The evil they bring has a singular long term fulfillment, but also has recurring typical fulfillments, as well. It is proper to view the men and systems (heads and horns) under their control and influence at any particular time, as representing that particular Beast.

These beasts and their fulfillments are revealed within the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Much has been written about this issue throughout history, with many applications, and rightfully so, as these spirits have dominated all of men’s governments and religions since that ancient time. They do so today

and will continue until they are destroyed by the Ancient of Days.

Proclamation of the Broken Flask

Jeremiah 19 contains the prophecy of the Broken Flask, which is either misunderstood, or else ignored by many Bible scholars. Within this chapter, God instructs Jeremiah to call together the priests and elders, who were the responsible ‘voice’ of God in the Sinai system, serving as the authority of the ‘lawgiver’. They had fulfilled this role ever since Exodus 24, when God had called them up the mountain to give this role to them. Though the Levites had taken the place of the servants of the Lord, the true authority was never passed to them, only the service. The elders were still the tribal heads. This true authority contained by the priests and elders had been exclusively in Judah ever since Jeroboam had banished those in the northern kingdom. By this they had all ended up ‘between the feet’ of Judah, as prophesied in Genesis 49. However, instead of being faithful in their duties, they had corrupted the ways of the Lord far worse than anyone ever had. Here in Jeremiah 19, the Lord gives the declaration that the destruction of the city and nation is now determined and will be brought on them by the Babylonian Empire.

Within this text, He issues a very important proclamation: Jeremiah 19:7: **And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place...**

At this time, He removes these evil men as the representatives of determining and preserving His law, due to their lack of obedience within the realm of their responsibility. He does, however, leave them associated with Judah until Shiloh comes, although His council has been removed from them.

By their own assertion, they deny what happened here; falsely claiming that He continually approves anything they declare concerning His word. They continue deceiving themselves and others concerning this matter until He finally cuts them off completely at His death (Matt.23:39). Almost unbelievably, some even claim that He honored them in the role of preserving and disseminating the law even after that point. In truth, His counsel was no longer with them, from this moment on. The official religion of Judaism began to develop at the same time period of the Babylonian captivity. It still extends today based on the denial of this proclamation of the *broken flask*. Let us explore this issue a bit more in depth.

Preservation of the Law

During the time beginning the captivity, those in

charge of keeping the law had their ability to ‘inquire of the Lord’ stripped from them because of the evil of their hearts which had put them under the curses. Without this official capacity, the duty of the ‘lawgiver’ had become nullified; even though they will sit in that role until Shiloh comes. The initial duty of anyone who sat in the role of the lawgiver was to never add or to take anything away from it (Deut. 4:2), in order that they may keep it. The Hebrew word translated ‘keep’ is *shamar*; meaning to preserve, or keep intact. Anyone who could not determine an issue concerning the law had to go to a priest or elder for understanding. If the priest or elder could not determine it by what was specifically written, they had to ‘inquire of the Lord’ by means of lots or the Urim or Thummim. Only the appropriate people, within their proper realm of authority, had the ability to inquire of the Lord. No one else had the capacity to contact Him in any way.

Moses did not make decisions without inquiring of God in anything that was not previously addressed by the law. See Numbers 9:1-14 concerning the second Passover, and Numbers 36:5-6 concerning the inheritance rights of daughters that had not previously been addressed.

As an example of how God related to those in official capacities given by God, let us look at a typical example.

When they needed His advice, approval, or input on a decision the law had not specifically stated, they were to ‘inquire of the Lord’.

When the people sinfully demanded a king and God relented to their wishes, Saul was given instructions that he could also inquire of the Lord concerning the responsibilities of the king, but only in a prescribed manner, and through the prophet Samuel. When Saul disobeyed God, the duties of the king were stripped from him on that very day (I Samuel 15:28), and immediately given to David, though Saul stubbornly refused to step down, as God had commanded. The account of this is in I Samuel 15:17 through I Samuel 16:14. When God placed the anointing and Spirit on David in order to fulfill the role of king, they were immediately taken from Saul (I Samuel 16:13-14). Immediately, an evil spirit was sent from the Lord to trouble Saul. When the initial pronouncement of his fate was given to Saul in I Samuel 15, Samuel no more went to see Saul, as his ability to inquire of the Lord within his capacity as king was stripped from him. This meant that though Saul continued to sit in the role of king, God was no longer involved in his activities, and nothing he did had God’s approval; even though God had originally placed him there.

Saul tried to kill David, whom he knew God had named as his successor. David refused to remove Saul when he had the opportunity, stating that he would not lift his hand against ‘the Lord’s anointed’, though the scriptures are plain that David was actually the Lord’s anointed when he made this statement. David did not act rashly. His ancestor, Jacob, did not wait on the Lord to give him the *birthright* and *blessings*, which God had told his mother, would be his prior to his birth; and prematurely took them from his brother. This had caused him much trouble in his life. By contrast, David left it to God to remove Saul in His own time, though God’s will concerning the matter was widely known (I Samuel 21:10).

Finally Saul went to inquire of the witch at Endor because he could no longer inquire of the Lord. His stubbornness knew no bounds, apparently. The spirit in the person of Samuel, called up by the witch, informed Saul that God had long departed from him and he had no business in the role of king. It had been stripped from him on the day he had refused to kill Agag, the Amalekite. The Amalekites were the children of Esau, carrying on their never ending battle to resist God’s will concerning the *promises*.

Comparing I Samuel 15:28 with I Samuel 28: 18, it is clear that the word translated ‘this’ in the later verse should be ‘that’. God stripped the kingdom, along with the ability to inquire of the Lord, from Saul on that very day he refused to kill Agag; not the day he inquired of the witch. The Hebrew word ‘*zeh*’ can be translated either ‘this’ or ‘that’ depending on the context. Although Saul continued in the role of the king until God made the decree of his death through the spirit called up by the witch, God had no involvement in what he was doing during this time, nor was he carrying out God’s will. **Nor did his actions have God’s approval!! Furthermore, all Israel that went up with him in battle the next day died with him!** Those who honored David did not suffer this fate.

The lessons here are consistent with the law of God given in Deuteronomy 29:14-29. Here God states that if someone’s heart is not right in following Him, though he may profess otherwise, God will know and separate him under the pronouncement of the curses for his own calamity, in order that he may learn, or that it will be a witness to those who come after. Leadership may only decide what can be seen, God deals with that which cannot be seen (Deut. 29:29). Scripture shows that God does this by: 1. Sending an evil spirit (as with Saul), and 2. Giving them strong delusion so that they will believe lies that are consistent with the condition of their hearts (II Thes. 2:7-10). By this manner, He delivers just judgment on them. This is what He did with Saul.

It is exactly what He also did with those among Judah who were in charge of keeping and determining the law during the time of the captivity and afterward. Ezekiel 14 and Ezekiel 20 are extensive texts concerning His refusal to allow them to inquire of Him and the reasons for it, once the pronouncement of the curses were placed on them in II Kings 23. He had predicted this in the former prophecies of Jeremiah. See Jeremiah 7:28 through Jeremiah 8:8 for this information. In this final verse (Jer.8:8), God clearly states that those in charge of the law had actually altered it, or written falsehoods.

Furthermore, Isaiah 65:1-5 shows that they had begun to believe that they did not need God's approval for what they did, but rather, He was now subject to them, and **had to approve any decision they made concerning the law of God!!**

Jeremiah 2:28-32 (especially verse 31) also witnesses their now perverted view that their decisions were now superior to God's and He had to honor their practices, and interpretation of the law.

In fact, they were never given any authority to 'interpret' or decide any matter of God's law in such a fashion. This self-righteous view on their part had begun with their false view that Deuteronomy 30:11-14 had given all authority to them, and it is no longer in heaven with God. In their eyes, He is subservient to them in such matters. This same blasphemous view is still retained in Judaism to this day. The Bible is only viewed as a historical document to be viewed through the lens of their oral law documents.

At the historical time that God's word was given through Jeremiah and Isaiah, His condemnation is given to the spiritual leaders of both kingdoms, as these verses clearly state. Thus it applies to **all the families** of Israel who came out of Egypt. Even though the 'lawgiver' representatives will remain in their positions for centuries, God's presence is not with them in what they do, with the exceptions of those prophets that He would use directly during this interim period.

Isaiah 22:15-24 also gives the proclamation of the removal of the oracle of the Lord from the men formerly responsible for it at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Though all English translations mistranslate, or wrongly interpret important information that is in verse 24 of the original Hebrew, by omission, God has made sure this has been preserved for us today.

In addition, Jeremiah 23:33-40 gives explicit details concerning God's removal of the priests and prophets of Judah and Jerusalem as His voice,

beginning at the time of the Babylonian captivity. Once again much of the original text is not transferred to the English translations. Here God explicitly states that the 'avertment' (legal assignment), which is repeatedly defined in the text as being the 'oracle' of the Lord, is being removed from them and no one should listen to them when they claim to still represent Him or hold that role.

Their efforts to stubbornly maintain that role in the captivity had been rejected by God (Ezek. 20, 14, 33, Zech.7). Jesus rejected all they taught (Matthew 23).

They, like Saul, stubbornly refused to acknowledge this, **as many foolishly do today!**

Long after the captivity, the prophet Zechariah reinforces this truth in Zechariah 7. He tells them that the things they devised in the captivity were not from a heart to obey Him, but purely from their own motives. They should have, instead, simply obeyed the word that had been given by the former prophets before any of these catastrophes had occurred. Anything which they devise, from their own vows or individual 'worship', will only be honored by Him when their hearts are finally changed, and as long as it is consistent with His direction and ways. Furthermore, passages such as Ezekiel 33:31 demonstrate the continuous evil motives of these men while in the captivity.

During this time, official *Judaism* began, which is constructed from the desire to blend God's ways with paganism (Ezekiel 20:31-32). Here God rejects these men as His representatives, stating that what they desire will never be and that they may not inquire of Him, showing that He had no involvement in anything they did. In fact, this condition persisted until Christ finally removed them completely (Luke 11:52), just as Saul had persisted until He took the same action against him.

Collectively, these texts from the prophets clearly demonstrate that this state of rejection by God applied both to the priests and the elders of all Israel, including Judah. Any denial of that fact is simply a rejection of God's Word.

It is of utmost importance to recognize the state of these men who had been entrusted with the Law, as nothing they did from II Kings 23 until their cutting off by Christ (Matthew 23:37-39) was consistent with His will, nor had His involvement or approval. Any who look to them for understanding of the Torah, (or Law), falsely believing they are the 'authority of God' during this time, are making a terrible mistake. Remember those who died in battle with Saul!!

Furthermore, Paul admonished the Corinthians that those who did not accept Christ did not understand the true value of the Law of Moses, or its proper application, in the

first place (II Cor. 3:14-15).

The only respite from this evil came from men like Daniel and Mordecai, who like occasional kings before them, sought to lead the people correctly. Ezra and Nehemiah also sought to reestablish the correct Law of God after the captivity (Nehemiah 8-10). The prophets Zechariah and Malachi told of the failure of other Jewish leaders to repent.

Upon the death of the Messiah, which terminated all terms of the Sinai covenant by 'filling up the transgression' of Israel (Daniel 9:24, Matt.23:32, I Thes. 2:16), the legality of those responsible for the preservation and determination of the Law and Testimony is given to Christ's disciples, as witnessed by Isaiah 8:12-18. This will be witnessed by powerful miracles, or signs and wonders, which they will perform at that time. Judah is cut off completely until their final redemption when they accept Christ for who He truly is (Matthew 23:37-39, and Zech.12:10-13)). This is witnessed by both Paul and Peter in their letters to the New Testament Church.

In truth, and according to all Scriptural witness, an accurate understanding of all scripture can only be obtained by viewing God's word through the lens of the writing of the Apostles of Christ. A good place for this beginning is John 1:1.

Return from the Captivity

At the prophesied time, Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerrubabel, and Yeshua were instrumental in bringing back a relatively small number of the Jews, some of Benjamin, and a number of Levites, to rebuild the city. They were resisted by the nations around. Ezra, the priest and scribe, was then instrumental in codifying the scriptures, and reinstating the way of God. He made extreme effort to reestablish everything just as it had been formerly, including the smallest detail. Any decisions on matters that were not written, or clearly understood, were postponed until there could be a priest restored with the Urim and Thummin. There is no scriptural evidence that this ever occurred, as God had stripped them of their ability to inquire of Him. It is claimed by some that Ezra was a 'second Moses' who instituted a new system. This claim, however, is contrary to all scriptural evidence, and is most likely the smoke screen that Judaism uses to blame their alteration of God's law on Ezra. Or rather, they claim that Ezra had God's authority to change things, which is a claim that is contrary to all scripture.

While rebuilding the city, they were troubled on

every side, just as Gabriel had predicted. The project was finally completed under the rule of Nehemiah.

Immediately, the priests and Levites began to corrupt the laws of Moses for personal gain. They showed partiality in the law, which is a fatal flaw of many leaders when they decide in their own minds, that because of their 'exalted' position, the rules for everyone else do not apply to them. They married foreign wives, unjustly divorcing their correct wives. They robbed the offerings and the tithes, and nothing correctly was brought into the storehouse at the temple for God's service. The only tithe that was ever to be brought to the store chambers of the temple was the tithe of the tithe that was given to the priests and the temple by the Levites. It was one tenth of the national tithe, or increase tax. This national tithe went to the Levites in their cities, as they were the public servants, both to the people and to the priests in their temple service at the appropriate time. They had been admonished never to corrupt the ways of God concerning these matters, on penalty of death (Numbers 18:32). When the Levites came up to the temple to serve at their appointed time, they were not given provisions by the priests. Both the Levites and priests had corrupted this procedure.

As a result of all this corruption, the people began to despise the offerings and tithes to the Lord and did not bring them up. This is not the first instance where this corrupt priesthood had done this. It is also noted in I Samuel 2:12-17 where the sins of the sons of Eli are recorded. Their improper use of God's offerings had led to the people abhorring the offering to the Lord.

The prophet Malachi trumpeted God's warning against these priests and Levites concerning their misuses of what was given to God, primarily taking it for their own gain. He tells them that the whole nation is cursed because of this.

Nehemiah returned from Babylon, threw the improper leaders out of the temple, and restored everything in its correct manner. Then the people freely brought what they had been holding back up to the temple (Nehemiah 13).

All the witness of scripture, including Ezekiel 33:30-33 and Zechariah 7 witness that the spiritual leaders of Judah had never repented while in captivity. Despite Ezra's and Nehemiah's efforts, they would continue on a downward spiral for centuries, while claiming they were righteous.

The corruption of Esau

The corruption of the priests and Levites, which is the subject of God's warning given through Malachi, apparently originates from a familiar ancient source. An

emphatic clue to this source is given at the very beginning of the letter. Malachi 1:1:

The oracle of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.

Here God addresses this message to the entire nation of Israel as a warning, much like a public proclamation. This would include the entire nation, not just the people of Judah in the area of Jerusalem. However, the source of condemnation throughout the message is directed toward the corrupt priests and leaders, in order to expose them. Continuing in verse 2:

“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “Yet you say, ‘In what way have You loved us!’ Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” Says the Lord. “Yet Esau I have hated, and laid waste his mountains and his heritage for the jackals of the wilderness.”

Even though Edom has said, “We have been impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places.”

Thus says the Lord hosts: “they may build, but I will throw down; they shall be called the Territory of Wickedness, and the people against whom the Lord will have indignation forever. Your eyes shall see, and you shall say, ‘The Lord is magnified beyond the border of Israel.’”

It is apparent from this text concerning Esau, that these people had begun to make their inroads into the leadership and priestly philosophy of Israel in that day. The term, ‘desolate’, refers throughout scripture to the absence of God’s presence among any people. Thus, an Edomite spiritual or priestly influence is trying to take this role within Israel, in order to restore God’s presence from their point of view.

From the days of his conflict with Jacob, Esau had sought to regain the ‘promises of Abraham’ he had lost. When he met Jacob returning from Syria, his attitude was one of superiority and dismissal of anything Jacob had, apparently believing that God’s gift to him of Seir was the fulfillment of the ‘blessings’ (Gen.33). Jacob had tricked him by feigning submission and agreeing to go and live in Esau’s land, thus being under his rule. When Esau left, Jacob turned and went to Canaan, instead.

Esau was the one who had married into the Canaanite lineage and constantly followed after their ways. His nephew, Judah, was afflicted with the same weakness (Genesis 38). The Edomite’s attempt to regain what was not theirs is the only logical reason for any of this to be mentioned in the opening verses of

Malachi. They continually attempt to usurp God’s will concerning the heritage of Abraham that was proclaimed before Esau’s birth.

Likewise, Judah has continually used the *scepter* promise to try to claim the *birthright* and the *blessings* given to Joseph and his sons in Genesis 48.

At some point during or after the Malachi period, the philosophy concerning a superior ‘priesthood’ from the heritage of the ‘sages’ began, and the opening verses of Malachi give weight to the evidence that it was originating from an Edomite priestly influence. Through this prophet, God states that it is the act of Esau trying to reclaim the heritage of Abraham by coming to ‘reestablish’ what they falsely believe is the presence of God **through them.**

The only Biblical example of this priestly role was the ‘sages’ of Esau, or Teman, which included the most corrupt priest of the Lord mentioned to this time. This was Balaam, son of Beor. The ‘sages’ of Edom are mentioned in Obadiah 8.

There is strong evidence that Job was an Edomite king, as well, and served God correctly. Throughout the ages, there have always been individuals from many heritages who have sought God correctly, as a witness to us all. This does not, however, sidetrack the correct flow of Abraham’s promises. Abraham had been careful to remove all his later sons from the presence of Isaac, in order to relieve him from any confrontation about this matter. Satan has tried to use singular examples to this end, in order to confuse those who are not willing to search these matters thoroughly.

Jethro, Moses’ father in law was also a priest, showing that there was a heritage of priests within the other children of Abraham’s lineage. Jethro’s ancestor, Median, was a son of Abraham by Keturah. It was apparent that while Jethro advised Moses wisely, and likely was his teacher for 40 years, in no way did he try to inject himself into the proper role of a priest of the Lord in the legality of the *promises*. This role was given to Aaron alone. The text of Numbers 10:29-31 shows the humility of Jethro (Reuel), along with his unwillingness to insert himself into the passages of the promises where he did not belong. The history of the other children of Abraham was to deny the true passage of the heritage of Abraham’s promises through Israel and to claim it for themselves. This still continues today, through the heritage of the Muslims and others. Many of these people are the descendants of Midian and Ishmael, who blended together in ancient times.

When the Israelites first came out of Egypt, they were attacked by the Amalekites, who were the children of Amalek, a son of Esau.

In the days of Saul, God had commanded him to destroy

Agag, their king, along with all his people and goods, due to the evil they harbored in their society. Saul's refusal to do so brought about his downfall.

Doeg, the Edomite had been the one who influenced Saul to kill all the priests of the Lord, except for Zadok, and Abiathar.

Haman, a descendant of Agag, had been the one who sought to destroy the Israelites while in the captivity. Only the bravery of Ester and Mordecai had prevented this.

Being the ultimate deceiver, the spirit of Esau now sought to extend his claim of the *birthright* through his priests, who were some of the worst offenders when it came to blending the ways of the Lord with the pagan religions. Instead of standing outside and openly opposing the chosen priesthood, he blended with them. Hundreds of years later, during the reign of John Hyrcanus I (about 129 BC), the physical tribes of Esau blended with the Jews who were centered around Judea, as well.

The heritage of the 'sages' is the lineage from which the Pharisees claimed their role. It has been extended through the Rabbis of today. All this is a false priesthood which extends the perverted practices of Esau.

It is from this early spiritual source that the origin of Rabbinical Judaism begins. It is based on a belief that the Jews were chosen by God, as a biological race and because of genetic superiority, to bring about an earthly Jewish kingdom in which Gentiles adhere to the so-called *Noahide* laws, but are subject to rabbinic authority. Nowhere is this teaching found in the pages of the Scriptures. Notwithstanding, this error seeks to extend the presence of God among men through the *blessings* (physical) aspect of the promises, thus denying the correct order of the *birthright* (spiritual). Their concept of the Messiah is that he will be a Jewish king who will bring this about through the Jews, as a superior people. This seeks to extend the 'redeemer' role through a plural 'seed', which is a blasphemous claim that denies the true Messiah. It is this error, begun and promoted by this corrupt priesthood which had long been removed from God's presence, which precipitated their confrontation with the true Messiah when He walked the earth.

Both Judaism and other so-called, Messianic, faiths extend this foundational error today.

In order to try to refute this, some point to Christ's instructions to obey the Pharisees, as they sat in Moses' seat. They then use this to falsely claim that Christ acknowledged the teachings of these men. This shows

a gross misunderstanding of the legal issues involved. When Israel demanded a king in the days of Samuel, thus setting up a secular government in the manner of the Gentiles, God stated that He would allow no further changes and they would have to live with the convolution that would result (I Samuel 8:18). The failure of the kings of Israel is a matter of record, and God placed the blame for all this squarely on the people who originally demanded it (Jeremiah 11). Then, once placed under the curses, they were to submit to the Yoke of Babylon, which would entail the rule of superior nations which would reign over them. By the time of Christ, this had been passed to the Roman Empire. The corrupt Pharisees sat in the rule of civil leadership by the consent of this Empire, being a further degradation of the civil arrangement the evil hearted people of Israel had demanded, beginning with the 'mediator' at the foot of the mountain, and demanding a king after the manner of the Gentiles. Christ was simply emphasizing His former edict that He had placed on them when they demanded a king. They had to live with what became of their disobedience. Furthermore, the rule of the Pharisees, who bore the evil spirit of the ancient illegitimate 'sages', drew its immediate approval from king Herod, who was actually an Ideumean (Edomite), himself.

Christ repeatedly warned his followers to avoid any of the philosophy and doctrines of both the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt.16:6-12). The Sadducees represented the corrupted Aaronic priesthood, and the Pharisees represented a false priesthood which originated with the philosophy of Esau and the 'sages'.

The message of Obadiah gives God's declaration of how these efforts by Esau will end up. This prophet begins by relating the repeated efforts of Esau's lineage to assist in the destructions of the Israelites. Obadiah 16-17 verifies the establishment of their priesthood on God's Holy Mountain. The final verses of this prophecy verify that all their efforts will be destroyed when Jacob and Joseph are finally restored to their rightful heritage.

This warning is something that should be taken seriously by any who attempt to integrate the Jewish oral law, myths, traditions, or interpretation into their worship of the Messiah. We should be careful in differentiating between the laws, statutes, and commandments of God which He gave to Israel, verses those things which they have turned them into. Likewise, we should be aware of the evil influence which is behind all this apostasy.

Those who refuse to hear the edict of Jeremiah 19:7, or ignore the clear words of Jeremiah 8:8, along with giving credence to the false claim of the 'sages', are playing with fire. Looking to Judaism or any other belief system which denies the true Christ, in order to determine how a believer

in the Messiah should honor God's law, is a deadly trap. Those who do this are going along with the deceptions of Judah which refuse to honor the word of the Lord concerning this issue and attempt to extend an authority and role which was officially stripped from them hundreds of years before Christ, and made complete at the time of His death. Even though the counsel of the Lord was stripped from them in Jeremiah 19, the 'lawgiver' role was not to be officially removed until 'Shiloh comes'. This is the first coming of Christ. This interim time is described by Paul as God's 'long endurance of vessels of wrath prepared for destruction'.

Esau's attempt to regain the promises, and Judah's attempt to take the heritage of Joseph, is blended together, as their peoples merge into one people after the return from the captivity. This evil spiritual alliance will extend through all human history until Christ returns to set this matter in order (Jer. 31 & Obadiah).

This matter is also addressed within the text of Ezekiel: 36:1-3, 5, 8-9, 11.

Furthermore, Isaiah 63 is the reasoning of the mind of the spirit and people of Edom when they seek to take the *birthright* back after Israel's failure. Even though God had committed them to their proper sinful role before Esau's birth, as affirmed by Paul in Romans 9, they seek to claim that He is their God and Redeemer at that time, and then place themselves on His Holy Mountain as the 'proper' children of Abraham's promises. Isaiah 63 begins with the statement of: "*Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments of Bozrah...*" This is Esau, of course. Not understanding the subject or theme of this chapter, most have falsely interpreted it as a prophecy concerning Christ. All capitalized first person pronouns which follow this statement should not be capitalized, as they refer to Esau, and not Christ. Esau comes from Edom boasting of his own rightness to save him. He goes on to witness that his garments have been stained with blood by his warring and vengeance with Israel, and "*there was no one to uphold* (what he considers his just cause); *Therefore, my own arm has brought salvation for me; and my own fury it sustained me. I have trodden down the peoples in my anger and brought down their strength to the earth* (v. 5-6). Obadiah relates how they attacked Israel and aided the enemy at the moment of Babylon's attack. In these words of Isaiah, Esau then speaks of what he perceives to be his honor of God, and of His goodness toward them ("us", the Edomites) and also the house of Israel (verse 7). He then relates the way

that God led Israel and how they betrayed Him. Then the later part of the chapter portrays the mind of Esau as he views himself justified by assuming the role which God has not given him.

Verse 15: *Look down from heaven, and see from Your habitation, holy and glorious. Where are Your zeal and Your strength? Where are Your tender mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Doubtless you are our Father, though Abraham was ignorant of us, and Israel does not acknowledge us. You, O Lord are our Father; Our Redeemer from Everlasting is Your name. O Lord, why have You made us stray from your ways, and hardened our heart from Your fear (Romans 9 10:23)? Return for your servants' sake, the tribes of Your inheritance (originally). *Your holy people* (Israel) *have possessed it but a little while; Our adversaries have trodden down Your sanctuary* (speaking of Israel, their vowed adversary from Genesis 17:14. Amalekites were children of Esau). *We have become like those of old over whom You never ruled, those who were never called by your name.**

A careful reading of Isaiah 63 reveals Esau's reasoning when they seek to establish themselves and their religion on God's holy mountain after Israel is cut off. Malachi 1 and Obadiah's message is God's answer to them. Their presence will remain there, however, until Jacob and Joseph's birthright is finally established at the second return of Christ.

This entire establishment of a false 'priesthood' from the heritage of the 'sages', was precipitated by the evil of Edom trying to reclaim the 'birthright' which he had despised. However, his greed and paganizing of God's ways will permeate the traditions of the Pharisees, along with Rabbinical Judaism, which is an extension of that corrupted spiritual heritage.

Regardless of Ezra's and Nehemiah's best efforts, the return from the exile marked the official beginning of Judaism. This fact is clearly stated in official Jewish religious history. No longer did they view the Scriptures as the source of truth, except in a historical sense. They believe that the Scriptures must only be understood through the lens of their oral documents, which include the Babylonian Talmud, Jerusalem Talmud, Mishna, and Midrash, which were concocted from their oral traditions of the Pharisees and Rabbis. All this oral law tradition had officially been constructed once they had been removed as the counsel of the Lord (Jeremiah 19:7).

Though Ezra made sincere efforts to weed this pollution out and establish everything properly, as witnessed by the scriptures, these men eventually blame all their rejection of what God ordained on him!

Nowhere was Ezra given the right to change

anything, and there is no scriptural evidence that he did.

All this tradition comes from the corrupted Judaism that was brought back from Babylon, and has continued to evolve until this day.

The period of time between the covenants is the time that the enemy came to live in God's 'dwelling place' (I Samuel 2). In this ancient time of Eli, God had declared the progressive end of the physical priesthood. First He stated that He would cut off the arm of Aaron (the father he made the original covenant with in Egypt) and Eli's arm which was the extension of Ithamar's house. This was cut off in the days of Solomon (II Kings 2:27). The only 'arm' left would be that of Eleazar, through Phinehas. When that was interrupted because of disobedience, the 'enemy' would come to dwell in His house until cast down by the High Priest who would walk before His anointed people forever (I Samuel 2:35).

Malachi's last prophecy is to predict the Elijah that was to come, in preparation for the Messiah.

The Two Shepherds

Along with Malachi, the prophet Zechariah was one of the last voices that God used before He went silent in His direct revelation to Israel until the time of Christ. This prophet revealed many events for the future regarding God's people. One of these prophecies foretold the coming of two shepherds who would be sent by God. Zechariah 11 begins this theme by first discussing the downfall of Judah.

Beginning in verse 4, God predicts the coming of the true Shepherd who would be betrayed and sold for 30 pieces of silver. This wage would then be given to the potter. This is the prediction of the Messiah who would come to be betrayed and killed. This act would break the former covenant with the two houses of Israel. This had also been prophesied in Isaiah 8. All this addresses the first coming of the Messiah.

In Zechariah 11:15-17, God predicts that He will also send a false shepherd, who would be marked by his false spirit, regardless of the message he professed. He, and those he inspires, will actually be there to falsely rule and take from those they claim to 'shepherd'. They will be like a predator that kills a sheep, eats all the fat from it, and breaks open the hooves to get at the last morsel of meat for their own food. But this shepherd, and all he represents, will eventually be destroyed.

Ezekiel 14:1-11 had also spoken of a false prophet

that God would send and the purpose of that individual. Within this text, He states that if anyone comes before Him, but does not truly want to obey God's commandments with his whole heart, but instead honor his own idols, He would raise up a prophet for these people according to the weakness of their hearts, and bring destruction on both them and the false prophet. This is actually speaking of the one who would become known as the 'antichrist'. The 'antichrist' is an evil spirit, but each individual or religious system that he will historically work through is also legitimately known by that term. Though he comes by the act of Satan (II Thess.2:6-12), He is actually ordained by God to this end. Here Paul reveals that God actually initiates this deception and allows it for His purpose. It separates those who follow Him with their whole hearts from those who don't, according to the edict of Deuteronomy 29:14-29. The tares are being separated from the wheat.

In other words, if one professes to be of God or Christ, but a love for God's commandments, laws, and ways are not within him, God will not plead with him forever. Eventually, He will send a lying prophet to tell him that the desires of his heart are acceptable to follow, thus separating him according to the edict of Deuteronomy 29. Paul also acknowledges this purpose of heresies and false prophets in I Corinthians 11:18-19.

Jude 4 also testifies of this spirit and its workers as those 'ordained of old to this condemnation'. They go after the 'error of Balaam' (preacher for profit), the way of Cain (rejection of God's laws), and the 'gainsay' of Korah. In the time of Moses, he had sought to place himself where the 'mediator' belonged, including the High Priest. Today, Christ alone is our High Priest and one called to be a servant (minister) should never seek to take the role of what Christ alone may do. Korah and his followers despised their proper role and sought to place themselves where they do not belong in God's order. This was the ancient sin of Satan.

Ezekiel 34 is an extensive text describing the oppression and chaos that the men following this confusion will bring about, along with the harm they do to God's people until the true Shepherd returns, once again, to shepherd His people properly. This condition had existed among the sinful priesthood of ancient Israel, and is passed by this evil spirit to God's New Covenant people, as well. This text states that this condition will exist until He personally returns and corrects it.

Between the Covenants

During the interim between the covenants, the world ruling successors to Babylon ruled over the area of Judea.

The Jews remained there by the will of these nations and still under the 'yoke of Babylon'. The Jewish leaders and priesthood became more and more corrupt. They interpreted God's law to their own advantage, and brought much of Babylonian paganism, along with worship practices of other gods, into their society, just as they had anciently done. The priesthood was a position of power that often went to the highest bidder. Once again, they had not obeyed, and had corrupted God's ways, though still preserved by God's promise to Abraham in this condition of 'diminished allotment'.

As stated previously, much of this perversion is blamed on Ezra. The claim is that he was a 'second Moses' who God used to institute a new worship system. All of this is simple Jewish myth and tradition, which was apparently used as a smoke screen to give their degradation of God's covenants legitimacy. A careful examination of Ezra's letter within the scriptures shows his extreme detail to establish the former order of Moses with no exception. He would not even make decisions concerning issues of judgment until a priest with the Urim and Thummin could stand up. There is no factual scriptural witness that this ever occurred.

God was not ready to cast them off completely under the conditions of the Sinai curses, as He predicted in II Kings 23, until they had fulfilled their final act of evil. Daniel referred to this as 'finishing the transgression' in Daniel 9:24.

Paul refers to this act and assigns it to Judah, as well, in his letter to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:16). Jesus referred to it in Matthew 23:32.

In addition to the spiritual degradation of the Jewish religion during this time, the Jews who had returned to this area began to blend with other people. Around 129 B.C. the Edomite (Ideumeans) nation to the south became one people with the Jews when they were conquered and given this option as the only way they could stay in their land. From then on, the Jews of that area and the people of Esau have become blended together. Esau was always forbidden to have any part in the promises of Abraham. King Herod, at the birth of Christ, was an Edomite who claimed the nationality of a Jew and was accepted as such because, at least on the surface, he accepted their religion.

All of these corruptions existing within the Edom/Jewish population around Judea, along with their first century religion, set the stage for what the Messiah faced when He walked the earth.

John the Baptist

John was the son of a priest and the cousin of Jesus. He was born approximately six months earlier than our Savior.

He was the first fulfillment of the 'Elijah to come' that had been prophesied by Malachi. He came to 'prepare a people' for the Lord (Luke 1:17). He rejected the corrupt religious order that existed in Judea. This order was the last vestige of the corruption which they had made of the 'lawgiver'. John's father was a priest, and he would have been in line to inherit that position himself. However, in order to come out of it and obey God, he chose to go to the wilderness in order to call people out of this corrupt system and teach them the truth. He baptized them unto repentance from disobedience to the Law. He was preparing a people who would at least be obedient to the former covenant correctly, in order for Christ to then call them to the higher covenant.

"To those who have, more will be given. To those who have not, even what he had shall be taken away."

Christ uses this principle in the parable of the talents, but it is first used as He explains His reasons for speaking in parables to the Jews. True to the prophecies of Isaiah, He had come to blind and cut off those in the Sinai covenant that have been disobedient, and to bring a better covenant to those who had previously been willing to obey Him. This issue centers around the final 'cutting off' of the Jews who are formerly disobedient, and offering the New Covenant (Abrahamic covenant) to those who are willing to repent and accept Him as their Redeemer, along with obeying His commandments properly. John the Baptist comes to prepare the initial gathering of these people for Christ's ministry.

The proper understanding of this issue is necessary to understand His statement to the young Jewish ruler who asked Him, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus answered, "If you would enter into life, keep the commandments."

The young man replied, "I have kept them from my youth."

Christ then said, "Then go, sell what you have, give it to the poor and come and follow Me."

The young man then went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. This man was a man of Judah, who would have qualified to have been offered the New Covenant if he had honored the former one, which was based solely on the Commandments written in stone and the Law of Moses - and no more (to those who have, more will be given). Christ didn't question whether he had kept them perfectly, as that was not an issue in the former

covenant. If he had sinned in the former covenant, he just had to repent and offer the appropriate sacrifice, and he would have been justified, or put back in correct legal standing in that covenant. Perfection was not required, as long as one remained faithful to the covenant.

However, one had to at least be willing to obey God's commandments and voice in order to even be considered for the 'eternal' covenant.

It is also clear which commandments were connected to eternal life, as the man had been aware of them from his youth. Christ didn't tell him that it was a different bunch of commandments.

Being a man of Judah, Christ was simply stating that if he had been faithful to the former covenant, he qualified for the new one, as this was the legal moment for the cutting off of Israel who had formerly been disobedient and offering a better covenant to those who had obeyed the former covenant (Isa. 8 and Isa. 28). When the man professed his former obedience, Christ offered Him the New Covenant through faith in Him, just as He initially did His disciples, "Leave what you have and follow me."

The young man then rejected the eternal life covenant through faith in Christ and obedience to His voice and commandments, due to his love for the physical possessions. In fact, it becomes quite clear that he had obeyed the Ten Commandment/Law of Moses covenant in order to obtain the physical blessings.

Some have falsely used this encounter to say that perfect keeping of the Law is rewarded by eternal life. They then try to go and read that error back into the scriptures from the beginning. This shows a lack of knowledge about the legal events transpiring at this moment.

At any rate, the ministry of John was to call a group out of the religious confusion of the day and return to obedience to God's commandments, so they would be prepared to be worthy of the calling Christ would soon offer them, by this standard.

When he encountered the Pharisees and other religious leaders, he called them vipers, and said that the 'ax is now laid to the tree', referring to the soon 'cutting off' of Judah. He continued to tell them that they should not boast of Abraham being their father, as God is able to make stones into children of Abraham.

Here John is simply stating that any who believes on Christ will become children of Abraham. The

Abrahamic Covenant (New Covenant) is for all Adam and Eve's children. In this covenant, which is the *birthright*, there is no Jew or Gentile, as far as physical heritage is concerned. It was promised to all of Adam and Eve's children since Genesis 3:15.

When Christ's ministry begins, He is baptized by John, and the Holy Spirit descends on him, anointing Him to His destiny. John the Baptist, when informed that Jesus' disciples were gathered around Him, states that he rejoiced to "see the Bridegroom and the bride". By this he gave witness to the fact that those first believers in Christ had begun to make up the Bride of Christ. Though, as Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied, the initial calling of this role will be to the 'scattered' of the northern tribes, these men of Judea are part of the 'remnant of Judah' who will be called among the Bride, along with later Gentiles, in order to shame Judah when her time of blindness is over at the time of the 'latter rain'.

Christ's ministry

The Messiah's ministry begins with His anointing by the Holy Spirit for this function at the time of His baptism by John, which He said was necessary as an example for others. There is a twofold purpose for this early ministry.

1. Christ has come to cut off the disobedient nation of Judah and all Israel aligned with them, and place them fully under the curses, as all the Torah prophecies predicted. His final conflict with their evil would lead to His death, which would terminate the terms of the Sinai covenant, and cut them off into outer darkness.

2. At the same time, He will begin to call those who will accept, into the New Covenant, or 'New and Living Way', as it was called by Paul (Matt 13:10-16). The blinding and scattering of Judah, and all aligned with them, is prophesied in Isaiah 6:9-10, and the initial calling of the firstfruits in Isaiah 8:16-19 & Isaiah 28).

In order for these callings to be confirmed, the penalty for mankind's past sins must be paid, in order for them to be *justified* before God. This simply means that they will be put back in 'right standing' before Him, so that they may individually chose to accept or reject the glorious potential once offered to Adam and Eve. That which was in the past, both collectively and individually will be put away for believers. **The Messiah will become that sacrifice which pays the penalty for all the sins of man.** The 'good news' of this great moment, and all it entails for the future of mankind, is called the 'gospel'. The word '*gospel*' simply means '*good news*' in the Greek language.

Christ will begin to restore what was once diminished in the Garden of Eden, just as promised in Genesis 3:15. He

brings the *gospel* of what is called the 'New Covenant' to mankind. This is actually the original covenant offered to man, 'restored'. It can accurately be called a restored or renewed covenant.

By not reading the Scriptures in sequential order and not fully recognizing each legal transition within the Bible, some have mistakenly taken the view that this is the Sinai covenant being 'renewed'. This is such a grievous error and is in so much conflict with Scripture that refuting each inconsistency on an individual basis would be so time consuming as to weary the heartiest soul. One who is caught up in that tangled heresy simply needs to go back and read the Scriptures correctly, from cover to cover. The reason I call this "heresy" is because this belief actually denies what Christ came to do for us, and the potential His action offers.

The New Covenant is the same covenant He originally shared with Abraham. He had offered it to the 'fathers' and those saints who went before, by their faith in Him as the Redeemer. They sought this 'heavenly reward' before His sacrifice occurred. They saw it from afar (Hebrews 11 & 12).

His disciples were the first ones called to this Way at that time. They were then sent to the 'lost sheep', or the children of the northern tribes, just as God had predicted in Jeremiah 3. However, He did predict that only 'one from a city' and 'two from a family' would accept (Jer.3:14). When the true original 'children of the kingdom' are called into this marriage prepared for the Bride, and refuse; any who would come from *far off* and accept it would be allowed into this honor (Matthew 22). This will be the calling of the Gentiles, which had not started during the ministry of Christ. However, when confronted with this issue by a Canaanite woman asking for His mercy, He did acknowledge that 'even the dogs received crumbs from the masters table'. By this He illustrated a timeless principle. Even though there has been a plan and order to what God is doing in redeeming Adam and Eve's children from the time of creation, He is not bound by this. Many believers in Christ found eternal life 'out of order', or through faith in His sacrifice before the event actually occurred (once again, Hebrews 11 & 12).

In fact, the patriarch, Job, is one example of a man who was likely an Edomite who found that path anciently. This does not, however, transfer the promises to him.

This initial calling and the individuals who will fit into this role make up the Bride of Christ. This group will be known as the 'firstfruits'. Many are called to

this role, but few are chosen, and fewer remain faithful to the end.

The initiation of His ministry sets in motion the official fulfillment of the Messiah covenant which was originally promised in Genesis 3:15. He has now come to 'confirm His covenant' with mankind. *This new and living way* was not officially known to mankind, in general, before this great event (Col.1:26, Eph. 3:1-7 & Col.1:7-10).

The New and Living Way is the message or good news (gospel) of eternal redemption and salvation through faith in the Messiah as our Savior, as well as our willingness to keep His commandments and laws as the structure of our walk in that Way. The ultimate goal, and final event in that mystery, is the manifestation of the sons of God, revealed at the Resurrection (regeneration) at Christ's coming (I Cor. 15:23). This entire mystery culminates in the resurrection, which is the ultimate purpose of the Creation (Romans 8:20-24). At the moment this great event commences, the mystery will be fulfilled, as they are glorified. This glorification is the hope of a believer in the Messiah.

It is clear that Christ's ministry took Him out of the immediate confines of Jerusalem, as this encounter with the Canaanite woman was actually in the area of the old Assyrian empire. Only those things which are pertinent to the immediate legalities of the change in the covenants are covered by this history, which is called the 'gospels'. All of His ministry was not in that area, and as John said: "*There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written, one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written*" (John 21:25).

He initially sent his disciples to distant places searching for children of the northern kingdom. They were to perform miracles, which was the sign of the Christ's disciples, as noted in Isaiah 8:16-18. He told them that when they went into a city and inquired if there were any worthy of this calling (Israelites of the northern kingdom), and found that there were -- to go into the houses, preach Christ, and if they accepted, bring them into the Bride. If they did not, the disciples were to dust off their feet against them. It would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the Day of Judgment than for them. They would be placed into 'outer darkness', which means 'away from the light', which is Christ. They will be cut off from God into the same legal state in which Judah is about to be placed. Since Sodom and her daughters (the Gentiles) will be called to Christ before Judah, this means that they will be placed before the remainder of physical Israel in the eternal judgment. Judah had known God and rejected Him. The Gentiles had never known Him. Therefore the Gentiles that are brought in before the second coming of Christ will

have a greater reward because they listened and repented. All these legal issues are given in detail in Ezekiel 16 and Jeremiah 3.

* [It is important to note the legal transition that is transpiring at this time. All this is transpiring by the legality of the **birthright** promise to Abraham which concerned eternal life. The Sinai covenant had been under the legality of the **blessings**, or physical promises, and was solely for Israel, with the Gentiles (strangers) allowed in only in a diminished capacity. Under this New Covenant, all who are called and accept become children of Abraham, from all nations, peoples, and tongues. There is no Jew (Israelite) or Greek, as a **physical** requirement, to enter this covenant (Ephesians 2). Roman 9:8 confirms that these are not children of Abraham by a physical determination, but by the original *promise*. They become Israelites by their spiritual faithfulness, in the same manner as their spiritual father, Abraham.

“By your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed”. The designation of ‘Israelite, or Jew’ and ‘Gentile’, **in the physical sense**, was indigenous to the Sinai covenant.

Those who are called to the Bride become spiritual Israel, regardless of their nationality. Some are natural children; some are adopted in. This gathering of Abraham’s children into this **special** calling of the ‘**firstfruits**’ makes them the spiritual children of Ephraim, or Joseph, who was the original birthright tribe of Israel, as the scriptures repeatedly show (Genesis 48, Jeremiah 3 & 31, etc). So then, all who accept Christ in this time become both **“Ephraim (the Bride) and all those aligned with him”**. As we will see, not all Christians are **called or chosen** to the calling of the Bride.

Since all of Israel that rejects Christ will then fall into the same cut off state as Judah after this event, they will be those aligned with Judah from that time forward -- regardless of their Israelite nationality. This group is later called, **“Judah and all the children of Israel aligned with him”**, in Ezekiel 37. The time setting of this chapter is after the return of Christ to this earth. This is when both these great groups are brought together as one, to fulfill their correct roles under Christ as Lord and King.

It is important to notice this transition as the legality of the covenants shifts from a physical legality to a spiritual one. Who’s who changes.]

Christ also shows that many will be called to the Bride, but few are chosen because they fail to have the proper garments. This refers to the ‘fine linen’, which

are the righteous acts of the saints. Those who fall short will then be placed away from Christ in some manner to be purified. If this does not occur, they may lose out on eternity altogether. If purified, they **may** still be in the Bride, or else end up in the outer court. The calling of the Bride is called ‘the elect’ and is a limited number of believers who will sit in the inner court with Christ as kings and priests in His Kingdom. Those who make it to that destiny, but compromised with idolatry, will sit in the outer court in that kingdom, as servants, but not allowed into the inner presence (Ezekiel 44). Revelation 7 and 14 tell us that the ‘inner court group’, who are the ‘firstfruits’ comprise exactly 144,000 from the time of Abel until the return of the Messiah. With them will be an innumerable multitude of believers who had to have their white robes washed by trial, and will be sent to the ‘fountains of living waters’ (the Bride) in order to correct them in God’s time (John 7:38). The true state of their hearts will be tried and purified through tribulation.

Thus those believers who have faith in Christ and teach the proper keeping of God’s commandments will be **great** in the Kingdom of God. Those who compromise this standard **through ignorance** will be **least** (Matthew 5:18). No believer is truly guilty in the eternal judgment in the eyes of God until he is made aware by the Creator. **This is backed up by Leviticus 5 and Romans 14**. Thus there are two great groups of believers being brought into eternity at this time. Paul also mentions this in I Corinthians 3:11-17. There are those who are committed to each of these groups by God, Himself (Romans 11: 30-32). Both groups have a purpose in fulfilling God’s plan of redemption for all the children of Adam and Eve; just as Judah was also committed to their disobedient role from the time of the prophecies of Genesis.

Christ’s confrontation with the Jewish leaders who deny Him will bring about the final act of transgression of the nation of Israel under the legality of the Sinai covenant. This will be the murder of the Messiah. This role is committed to Judah, as this tribe is the one who always ‘fills up the transgression’ (I Thes. 2:16, Daniel 9:24, Matt.23:32). This final act of transgression under the Sinai covenant will cut off **all** of physical Israel until they are called, or remarried to Christ, in their correct order under the New Covenant (Jer.31:31-34). Christ comes to blind them for this purpose.

Jesus Christ confronts the spiritual leaders of Judah in His Matthew 23 condemnation, which actually shows how far these men have fallen by glorifying the Knowledge of Good and Evil and themselves rather than the Spirit and grace of God, as a spiritual foundation (Romans 9:30-32). Matthew 23 ends with His pronouncement that He will leave Jerusalem (and Judah) desolate until they

acknowledge who He is at His second coming. Therefore, when His presence left that place, it is no longer considered as His sanctuary until He returns (Zechariah 8:3). God had already predicted this casting off of Jerusalem, because of her extreme evil, by the mouth of the prophet Ezekiel and the prophetess Hulda (Ezekiel 16:15-59, II Kings 23:26-27).

Revelation 11:8 tells us that **God then considers this city as Sodom and Egypt until the return of the Messiah to restore it to its former glory.** Without His presence, it has no glory -- only desolation. This is the way He sees it today.

Shortly after this confrontation with the sinful members of the 'lawgiver' then associated with Judah, our Savior was delivered up to be killed. He was crucified and rose from the dead after spending three days and three nights in the grave, symbolizing that neither the law nor death has any power over Him. We are saved by His life and His shed blood and allowed to, once again, go back and relate to God in an eternal covenant once offered Adam and Eve, and which our father Abraham knew.

Legal condition of Judah and all Israel aligned with them while cut off from the presence of God

While in this condition actually ordained for them from the beginning, God still sees them through the legality of the oath to Abraham (Lev. 26:42-45), even though the covenant previously made to them at Sinai is over. They had been bound to God by a dual legality, called 'the covenant and the oath'. They had 'despised the oath by breaking the covenant'. Paul tells us that they are suffering this curse for the rest of the world (Romans 11).

However, while in this condition, they still are the chosen of God by the legality of the oath. Though God had originally divorced Israel (Jeremiah 3), He clearly stated that He was still bound to them (v.14). This is due to the legality of the oath which will endure forever. He was not still married directly to them after divorcing them; but as the God of Abraham, He still has a legal connection with them. He is simply stating that He must bring them back and remarry them when they finally seek Him with their whole heart, by the legality of the oath. Though He legally divorced them, He still has a legal connection. The Hebrew word for 'married', in this text, is 'baal' (*god* or *master*). He is simply stating that He is still their God by legality of the promise to Abraham.

[Some have mistakenly used this verse to incorrectly claim that marriage (between man and woman) still endures after divorce.]

While they are under the condition of the curses, those who wish to honor God will remember a very important aspect of God's original promises to Abraham that has been passed to Israel and all his children: **"I will bless those who bless you and I will curse those who curse you". This is part of the eternal oath.**

In the former time when Israel wandered in the wilderness, as punishment for their sins, the children of Moab, Ammon, and Edom persecuted them and refused to help them. God pronounced curses on those nations from that time forth, for that sin.

If we wish to obey God, we will never cease to help, assist, and pray for these people while in this condition, instead of lifting our heads or hands against them, regardless of their sins or trials (Romans 11:12-36).

[None of the statements made in this document should ever be taken for anti Semitism, as they are not. However, we can only state the true facts contained within the Word of God.]

After the Jews and all of physical Israel now aligned with them, by the act of accepting their belief system, are cut off into a state of *desolation* as prophesied from II Kings 23:27, they still retain some knowledge of God's laws which they previously had. Throughout history, they continue to be integrated, in some manner, into their worship, which is to their advantage. Any retention of God's laws is better than none, even to one *far off* from God. The text of the New Testament shows that the Apostles still mingled with them, honoring that part of their system which did not conflict with God's original instruction (I Cor.9:20). In no way did they go into any society and deliberately cause conflict, though it is clear that their purpose of being there was to spread the better way that had not been known to man in ages past (Romans 16:25-26 & Ephesians 3:4).

This does not mean that the Apostles still felt bound to the former covenant which had been severed when Christ was murdered by His former 'bride'. Some have mistakenly adopted this belief to attempt to extend the lesser covenant forward into the future. God clearly stated that these people will not be brought back *near* to Him until the future, when they will enter the New Covenant through acceptance of Him as their Messiah (Jeremiah 31:34 & Zechariah 12:10-14).

In the next generation after Christ, the oral law of the Jews began to be codified into their written documents, which they view as being superior to the Word of God. These include the Mishna, Jerusalem Talmud, Babylonian

Talmud, and Midrash. These are the primary documents guiding the religion of Judaism, not the Scriptures. The Torah is only viewed through the lens of these documents, as they still view the interpretations of the Rabbi's as being superior to God's.

This is an error which will be taken up by the Roman 'Christian' church, as well, as it and its leader begins to go to a state of apostasy.

Terms of the New Covenant

The terms of this covenant are given by the Messiah in His famous instructions to the disciples in John 13 through 16. Simply stated, the New Covenant is something we enter into by having faith in Him as our Redeemer and being willing to obey His voice and keep His Commandments as a guide of faithfulness. He clearly stated that if we do not, we will not abide (continue) in His love.

Sign of the New Covenant

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you lay down your lives for one another as I have laid down my life for you" (John 13:34-35, & John 15:9-17). Paul refers to this spiritual commitment as 'the cross of Christ'.

Galatians 6:14: *But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified (made dead or cut off) to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation (creature).*

"The cross of Christ" is a spiritual commitment, not two sticks nailed at right angles to one another. This symbol began in ancient pagan rituals and symbolism.

By this extraordinary spiritual commitment to God and one another, we may be 'crucified' or separated from the world. This is the only true delineation to distinguish Christ's true followers.

This spiritual commitment also requires us to lay down our lives for Christ, in uncompromising obedience to His way, even to the point of persecution and death.

Government during this period of time

This is a unique time, as Yeshua (Jesus) walks this

earth as the God who gave the former government to Israel, and who instructs that it is to be followed, in principle, until He changes it. Therefore, He at least told His followers to not rebel against those in authority, but at the same time, introduced them to a better way of relating to Him, by which they would raise up and properly instruct the church once He had ascended.

He is often viewed as a rebel who rejected the establishment. Nothing could be further from the truth. He had given the former establishment to them, and in total rebellion against Him, they had corrupted it. He has now come to pass judgment on them for this sin.

Christ told his followers that the Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, so to do what they said, but not what they did, for they professed to follow Him, but did not. The 'Moses seat' was a literal chair reserved for the highest ranking Pharisee presiding over civil judgment. This has nothing to do with a descending 'authority' of Moses passed down to generations. In addition, ever since the yoke of Babylon had been placed on the world, God's instructions given to all Israelites (and Christians) in Jeremiah 29 are valid.

He also told His disciples to beware of the doctrines of both the Pharisees and Sadducees, as they were all corrupt and full of sin.

When His disciples told Him that the Pharisees were offended by His words, Christ told them to: *"Leave them alone. They are blind. When the blind follow (or lead) the blind, they will both fall in a ditch."*

He also told these religious leaders that they were the sons of the devil. In no way did He ever sanction anyone following any of the teachings of the Jewish leaders of His day, or what would later come from their teachings. Of course, they were reasonable teachers of the law, but had corrupted all His ways by their interpretations and traditions.

As stated, Moses' seat was an actual seat of judgment. In this diminished state, where the nation had ended up, this was the seat of civil authority to the Jews. Christ never taught rebellion. He would, however, remove this insufficient system.

Government for the future Church

In His instructions to the disciples He told them that they were never to be authoritarian rulers (Mark 10:42-44). He established many of the principles of freedom and personal responsibility that are reflected in the '**parable of Jotham**' during the days of the Judges (Judges 9). They were to bring the message of Christ to those who cried out in repentance, and to never try to stand between another and God, as Cain and Nimrod had done. The people had

also sinfully demanded that Moses take this role at the foot of Mt. Sinai. Instead, the apostles were to lead the people to Him in a close and personal relationship. Their authority, or official leadership, extended only to their correct responsibilities; not to the role that only our High Priest can perform as our Lord and Judge.

The structure and limitations of the Sinai covenant, which were created when the Israelites refused a face to face relationship with God, have no place in the New Covenant which is based on personal responsibility and freedom. However, within this new and better system, there is still proper order.

All the instructions that He gave them concerning how to lead as true ‘servants’ can never be compromised as the government of the New Testament Church develops.

New Testament scripture shows that the Apostles had the authority to establish the New Testament structure and show how Christ’s brethren were to relate to Him and each other. They had the official leadership honored by God in this area. Isaiah 8:16-17 had prophesied this. The Greek word ‘rule’ is properly translated in the New Testament context as ‘official leadership’. This is not establishing an authoritarian leadership, as that would have violated Christ’s clear instruction.

The other official overseers were the elders (Acts 20:28); who have always been the family and community leaders of God’s way, due to the fifth commandment. In Scripture and throughout its history, the ‘elders’ are the heads of the families and tribal linked groups, or societies. A synonym for that word would be ‘grandparent’ in our society today. Any group of ‘elders’ was made up of individual elders sent from each family or tribe which was represented within that group. This would have held true as it applied to local churches, and how they were represented in a larger group.

The apostles and elders are the only two groups of men present at the conference in Acts 15 when important matters were resolved, as they were the only groups of men who had any true Godly authority within this legal timeframe. The apostles had the authority to establish the ‘*new and living way*’, and the elders had authority within their families and family groups.

Individuals with other gifts, such as preachers, teachers, pastors, evangelists, etc., carried out various functions with their gifts but never interfered with the true long established order of a free people obeying God in liberty (Gal. 5:1) and personal freedom within

their individual faith. The functions of the men with these various ‘gifts’ often enabled them to assist the Apostles in their proper role given them in Isaiah 8. Men such as Timothy and Titus were sent out to deliver the Apostles instructions and advice, as well as aiding the Gentile churches to organize in this manner. Though it is clear that roles such as ‘pastors’ would have been men closely advising the elders of each community, they were admonished to never interfere with the true order of the authority of the family within a free people obeying God (I Timothy 5:1). That would be something beyond their, or any man’s, capability and counterproductive to God’s purpose of directly governing and judging His people, Himself. Only He can do such a thing within the Covenant of the Spirit.

A church elder who served the collective assembly was one of the family elders within any specific area, and had to meet certain requirements respected by that assembly, in order to carry out that function (I Timothy 3:1-7). The term ‘overseer’ is interpreted as ‘bishop’ in this text.

It is quite likely that the roles we see designated as ‘pastors’ were primarily made up of elders, themselves. This is supported by the text of I Peter 5:1-4: *“The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away”*.

The order of authority, or proper leadership, within the church, or family, is listed in I Corinthians 11:3.

“But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.

Furthermore, children are to obey and honor their parents, as stated by the fifth commandment. This is the true structure of a Godly society, throughout. This Godly structure should always be obeyed, even as the society evolves and children grow older and take on a mature, independent role. Honor should still be given to the ‘elders’, both men and women, who reflect Godly behavior in their lives as leaders.

The role of a church elder had its honor to those who accepted it in humility, but if one did not take that responsibility seriously, and began to sin openly, the church collective was admonished to rebuke them openly, in order that the standard required in this role would be upheld before all (I Timothy 5:17-20).

The practice of covering up sin because of position has no place in the churches of God. Showing partiality in the law plagued leaders in the days of Malachi and Eli. It is condemned by God. Those who hold greater responsibility for the lives of their church and families should be more accountable, not less accountable.

By contrast, the Sinai covenant had been conducted with an authoritative order of administration, due to the evil hearts of the people, and their continual refusal to obey God. This is the only way that such a society could be managed in order to keep them together, so that the promises God made to Abraham in Genesis 15 and 22 could be fulfilled during that time, until the better thing could come (Gal.3). This system, along with its legalistic application is referred to as 'bondage'. This does not mean 'oppression', but 'control'. This type of control created the greatest environment possible for those evil hearted people. Though that was not the situation God had intended from the beginning, it still gave them a much better life than the lawless situation of those *far off* during that time period. Any who are *far off*, in any time, have neither God's Spirit nor His laws, and are the victims of human nature, lawlessness, and the control and influence of Satan.

The apostles did give the church communities guidance on how to govern and relate to each other as a voluntary collective body. This manner of relating to God in voluntary freedom and love was prophesied by David (Psalm 110:3).

The authority of the apostles in establishing the truth of the Scriptures concerning the Way of the Redeemer is given by Scripture in Isaiah 8:16-21. It belonged exclusively to them, and we have their record of what the Spirit decreed to them passed down today in the gospels and their letters. **This is not a descending role of 'authority' that can be passed down to anyone. Even the apostles' role was not authoritarian. Likewise, this does not establish a role of 'lawgivers' which can bear rule from that time forth, imposing their own faith on others.**

This authority did not give them the right to put God's approval on just anything they decreed. Paul plainly stated that believers should follow him only as he followed Christ (I Cor.11:1). Of course, this would require everyone to study the Scriptures in order to evaluate that.

Anytime there were those who opposed the apostles' correct instructions, the church was reminded of their position as those who had been given this authority by

Christ, Himself. Furthermore, they were not bashful about standing on this authority when it was questioned (III John 9-10 & I Cor. 4:18-21). This 'authority' of the apostles gave them the right, under direction of Christ and the Holy Spirit, to establish the new order of the New Covenant, **which was not authoritarianism**. God has made sure that the words of those trained directly by Christ have been passed down to us to this day.

In Judges 9, Jotham gave the timeless parable, showing that any fruitful tree (man) who is correctly fulfilling his proper role in obeying God and respecting his fellow man has no need to have someone reign over him. Only a sinful man would ask for someone to do such, and only a sinful man (thorn) would seek to take that role. Such sinful purposes will eventually become at odds with one another, and each will be destroyed by the insufficient hearts and the system they devise.

This is exactly what happened to his half brother, Abimelech, and the people who allowed him to take the role of a king. This should have been a lesson to the people of God for all time, but somehow it seems we never learn.

This sinful relationship was originally designed by Cain and his typical successor, Nimrod, along with the people who sought and allowed it. The 'rulers' are lifted up in their own hearts to deceive themselves that they can fulfill a role which only God is equipped to manage, and the people look for someone to 'fight their battles for them'. This dual combination brings on this destructive order.

Due to the evil hearts of both the people and leaders, this had continually been ignored throughout time, as it is today. Jeremiah 5:26-31 is a timeless statement.

The 'church' is actually an assembly of people. It is not an institution.

Any group, or council, of 'elders' which represent any church assemblies should be made up of the church 'fathers' of the families of each area. They are the only ones having intimate connection with the spiritual and physical needs of their own congregations. They are also the only ones who have any authority within the assemblies by the legality of the fifth commandment. They should be appointed by the agreement of the assemblies they represent.

In later times, as the Word of the Lord began to be perverted, the false leaders centered mainly in Rome adopted the Babylonian and pagan concept of a 'church' being a 'secret' or higher institution of holiness, which the people had to pay homage to. Thus, there evolved the idea of a 'ministry' as being knowledgeable overlords instead of servants. The 'laity' was the uneducated, who had to place their lives under submission to the inner circle. By this

arrangement, they became enslaved by it. Their duty was to pray and pay. This entire arrangement is perverted and counterproductive to the growth and development of each member in the church.

The 'church' then became the building, ministry, and inner circle who 'represented God' over others. The role of the people was to finance this so called 'church,' and submit their lives to its self determined direction and goals. This idea of a religious order finds its true origin back in the occult worship and ancient Babylonian society. It was first concocted by men to control the lives of others for their own advantage. It is presented to the people (laity) as being a kind of imprisonment (bondage) for their "own good".

Within this false system, the different 'gifts' and roles of the so-called 'church' were morphed into 'corporate' positions which were sent out to control the 'flock' and inflict the will of the central 'church' among them. Meanwhile those in the inner circle live above and profit from the believers they are able to control. Paul exposed this sinful approach in II Corinthians 10, I Corinthians 9, and II Corinthians 11:16-33). This false system continues in almost every religious system until this day.

This false shepherd/sheep relationship keeps the sheep spiritually imprisoned and impedes their development. They become meat for the shepherds and their self appointed agenda, instead of the shepherds serving them for their growth and development. By this arrangement, the 'shepherds' become wolves in sheep's clothing (Zech.11:15-17).

Though it is true that a laborer is worthy of his hire, and those who truly labor in the gospel should be fed and clothed by those for whom they labor; those who are in it for the money, position, or any other motive of their 'own will' - will truly have their reward (I Corinthians 9:17). In other words, they may truly spread the gospel, but their only reward will be the money, or the living they seek. This is an ominous thought that any 'career minister' should take seriously, while examining his heart concerning the labor he is involved in. It would be better to get out of it or make his living with his own hands, as Paul did in the area of Corinth, rather than lose his salvation (I Cor.9:25-27).

Concerning the Church's association with the national governments of the world around them, they are given clear instructions which show that the Yoke of Babylon is still on the world and God's chosen people. All God's instructions concerning this legal condition are to still be obeyed (Romans 13:1-7). Christians are always admonished to be lights to the

world, recognizing from the words of the prophet Daniel that the spirits which guide leaders of this world have been sent by God and are allowed to do their work until the kingdoms of this world are put under the dominion of Christ at His coming.

These spirits are under the command of the 'god of this world' and working contrary to God, but everything that is done is eventually working toward His higher purpose. Eventually, mankind will be forced to acknowledge that without the presence of, and obedience to the Creator, we are all eventually doomed.

While in this scattered state, those who have entered the New Covenant through faith in Christ are the '**temples' of the Holy Spirit** (Ezekiel 11:16 & I Cor.6:19).

This legal state, which was promised to the scattered of Israel, who are denied by those of Judah and all aligned with their beliefs, do not attain this until they are 'remarried' to Christ, as prophesied in Jeremiah 3. Upon acceptance of Christ as their Savior, they make take their proper role in the New Covenant. Only then can the Holy Spirit dwell within them, making them a temple of God in the truest sense of the word. Prior to this event, they were still *far off* from God. Peter, who was an apostle sent to these Israelites, made note of this legal distinction in I Peter; a letter which was addressed primarily to these people (I Peter 2:9-10). Peter's letter is unquestionably sent to Israelites (Peter 1:1), and that particular group is the only ones who would have fit this description. They had been *far off* from God for over 500 years and had now been brought back. Judah, and all aligned with him, was just then being cut off. It is interesting to also note that Peter's letter was written while he was living in Babylon, and preaching the gospel to these people in the lands where they had been scattered (I Peter 5:13). Peter's role in the gospel was not directed toward the Gentiles (Gal: 2:7). There is no legitimate historical, or scriptural, evidence that Peter ever went to, or lived in Rome.

When Christ completed His initial purpose of beginning the redemption of mankind, the physical temple was cut off (made desolate), and His presence will not return to Zion until after His final return (Zech.8:3), when the house of David and the house of Judah accept Him for who He truly is (Zech. 12:10). There is no holiness in Jerusalem during this time.

We are to pray for the peace and safety of those nations and communities where we reside, while in this legal state (Jeremiah 29). WE ARE NEVER TO REBEL AGAINST THEM!! We are to obey their laws, as long as they do not directly conflict with God's. To compromise in this important area would be taking the mark of this 'beast' system in our minds and actions. God's presence, along

with the peace it brings, is our only means of protection and safety. No matter what form of governance exists or how deficient or convoluted it is compared to the collective state God once offered Israel; had they been willing to obey – we have to make the best of the situation. That opportunity to exist as a physical collective nation, completely protected by God, as ‘priests’, or representatives to the world, showing how great His law actually works, is now gone, for the time being.

By the examples of Joseph, Daniel, and Mordecai, we are shown that we may take part in influencing the nations, in order to benefit from the laws and ways of God in any way that is lawful for us and acceptable to them. Regardless of this, they will eventually descend into chaos until they will all be totally and completely destroyed at the second coming of Christ (Daniel 2).

Beginning of the New Testament Church

On the Day of Pentecost immediately following Christ’s death and resurrection, the New Testament church officially began, by the conversion of those who saw the miracles and believed.

The miracle of ‘tongues’ was the initial miracle that was given to show the presence of the Holy Spirit. The text in Acts, as well as I Corinthians 14, show that this was a gift that enabled certain believers to speak in a foreign language they had not previously known. It also says that others heard in their own language, regardless of the tongue that was being spoken. The apparent reason for this was that the gospel could be preached by those few to the wide variety of Jews and Israelites that were assembled from different nations, who were present on that Day of Pentecost. It was also a miracle which served to show the proof of the apostles as God’s instrument at that particular moment. This was prophesied in Isaiah 8.

The assembly (church) began to grow from that point; and as Jesus had warned, received persecution from the Jews.

Soon afterward, the calling of the Gentiles began.

Gospel to the Gentiles

The notable event that is associated with the calling of the Gentiles is the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. He was a chief Pharisee who had persecuted and overseen the deaths of some of the early Christians. He was later named Paul.

As the Gentiles began to be called to the Messiah by

their faith in him as their Savior, there was much confusion between those of Israelite heritage concerning how to properly relate to them as brethren. This confusion was due to the past separation, or enmity, between them. This condition had been created by the restrictions of the former covenant, which allowed the Gentiles in, only in a diminished manner. This confusion required the Apostle Paul, the primary apostle sent to the Gentiles, to properly explain the issues of Law and Grace (which is really the issue of the Two Trees in the Garden), in order to establish a correct foundation and show how all would fit together as one people in the correct order within the New Covenant.

In order to get an oversight as to what the complications were, we must go back in history and summarize the path that each (Jew and Gentile) had taken in now coming to the Redeemer.

The Gentiles had been *far off* from God, outside of any covenant, and having no knowledge or hope concerning Him in the world (Ephesians 2:12). The physical Israelites had known God by the Sinai Covenant, which gave them the advantage of knowing His law in this particular application. Though it was designed to control evil people in a legalistic authoritarian order (Paul called it bondage), due to their evil hearts; it was the only way God had provided to pass the knowledge of His higher principles and commandments down through human history. Therefore, it was ‘lawful if you use it lawfully’ (I Timothy 1:8). Because of this, the Israelites, now known as Jews, had an advantage in already knowing at least that application of the law of God (Romans 3:1).

Regardless of whether anyone had **previously** known or obeyed any of God’s commandments; **they were all initially brought into the New Covenant through faith in Christ as their Redeemer.** No human obedience to the law could earn salvation for anyone. Having said this, it is clear throughout scripture, especially in the instructions of Christ, that God’s commandments were then the proper structure of spiritual knowledge that a Christian must obey and adhere to in all their lives, in order to be faithful in the New and Living Way. In fact, David, who was one of those former saints who found eternal life through faith in the Messiah, has left us a witness as to a truly converted believer’s approach to God’s law, in his beautiful psalm that we know as Psalm 119.

Abraham came to God through this same initial faith. His knowledge and obedience **came later as a result of that faith.** The Apostle James makes this correct order clear in his epistle. Without proper righteous lawful works laid on our faith, it is vain and meaningless. God’s law establishes the proper order of ‘good’ (Romans 7:15-17). Paul is simply making the point that when we consent to any standard as ‘correct behavior’ that we must follow, we

are consenting that it is good! It is therefore not oppressive; or something that is in opposition to our well being. Any law which God has given at any time adds good to the life of the individuals involved. The laws involved at any particular time, depend on the state of the people and the situation, as we have seen.

The New Covenant is a personal relationship whereby each individual comes to Christ in his own personal faith, knowledge, and circumstance. All of us are sold under sin, unlike Adam and Eve when they had the original choice. They had been in a neutral legal condition. When each individual is called to Christ, some have a longer road of education and growth than others, depending on their spiritual condition and their previous knowledge. Only God judges each individual, depending on what He has revealed to him/her at that moment. Only God knows the strengths or weaknesses of that individual. Only God knows what He expects from that individual, with all this and other things taken into consideration.

This Way involves the total change of each individual in their inner character. It is not about forming a legalistic set of rules for evil hearted people to obey in order to be in right standing, as under the Sinai Covenant. Within the New Covenant, the blending of the Spirit and the Law within the heart of each individual is a unique thing for each of God's children. We are joined by the unity of this mutual faith in the Messiah, along with the Spirit which that faith brings to us (Ephesians 4:1-3).

So it should be easy to see the confusion that would result if one begins to give the glory to the Law rather than the Tree of Life, or Bread of Life, as the foundation of eternal life. This was the original sin of Adam and Eve. Under these circumstances, it would only create chaos and confusion. No one has ever been offered eternal life through the 'works of the law' (Knowledge of Good and Evil), but through faith in the Messiah (Tree of Life). In the person of Christ, this Tree has now been brought back into the world.

This issue is addressed in the conference of Acts 15, due to the fact that some 'converted' Pharisees had gone out of the church, trying to claim that a prerequisite for salvation was total adherence to the Law of Moses. Anyone who has studied the true history of God's covenants with man should instantly see how faulty that notion is. Though that particular application of God's law was used to control the hard hearted Israelites until the better thing should come, it is insufficient for the Covenant that is established by our Savior. Paul makes this very clear in I Timothy 1:5-11. However, this document is the way that God

has managed to preserve the Laws of God, and their timeless precepts among mankind throughout time.

Paul's letters to the Gentiles address this correct order of approaching God through faith in Christ, and not from any previous works or knowledge of the law. He has to examine this issue in order to lay the foundation correctly (I Cor. 3:10). He makes it clear within this very text that others are building on what he has laid, but they need to be careful as to what they build upon it. Christ had already made it clear that there were those who would teach men to violate or alter some of God's Commandments, which is unlawful in any relationship with the Creator (Matt.5:19).

This correct order is necessary in order to have a group of people who relate to each other in Godly love, instead of glorying in the law, whereby their differences in this state would lead to nothing but self righteous division. It is very seldom that two people are at the same inner state of character development, along with individual growth and understanding.

As was previously stated, this was not a covenant whereby God would herd believers up into a system of bondage, as in Sinai, to adhere to a code of law. This was a covenant whereby God is bringing everyone to Him as an individual, in his own time. The inner conversion, which the Spirit and Law brings, occurs as each individual learns and internalizes God's ways, according to God's time and will. This way was prophesied as being 'voluntary', or 'willing' in Psalm 110:3.

Romans

Paul's letter to the Romans is the most thorough document concerning this issue. The overall theme is given in Romans 1:17-18. In it he states that *the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith. The wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who **HOLD** the truth in unrighteousness.* The proper rendering of the Greek word translated as 'hold' in the Authorized King James translation **is correct**, according to a comparison of the common use of this word in scripture, primarily by the Apostle Paul.

Paul is not addressing men who suppress truth, but rather possess, or hold fast to truth, and use it with an unrighteous spirit. This perfectly mirrors the original condition of Adam and Eve when they became armed with the knowledge of good and evil, but with their human nature being the only spiritual motivation then available.

He then goes on in the first two chapters to explain what he means by this. They know God but give the 'glory' to the wrong thing, just as Adam and Eve had done.

They then use the law to commend themselves and condemn others, which is a spirit of hatred. This is frustrating God's Spirit of love and the true purpose of the law. Chapter 2 of Romans covers this in depth. In Chapter 3, Paul goes on to show the superiority of God over the law. He does not answer to it. If He did, how could he judge the world? It was Satan, in the Garden of Eden, who inferred to Eve that God's eternity and goodness originated from the Law. In truth, any goodness in the law originates from God, and is a reflection of His perfect nature.

Paul then points out how his former 'unrighteousness' has served to glorify God, as it has served to witness the forgiveness provided through faith in Christ. If God has then used this witness to further His glory, we have no right to now judge him as a sinner. Paul, who had been 'chief among sinners' - as he called himself - due to his former involvement in the persecution and death of Christians, was now the chief proponent of what he formerly persecuted. According to the law as a tool of judgment, he was only worthy of death for this sin.

Paul then makes a clear statement that when he explains this principle, there are those who say he is claiming that it is acceptable to sin in the name of 'goodness', or in other words, the spirit negates the law. **He states that those who claim this are liars and their damnation is just.**

Peter also witnesses that there are those who twist Paul's words to their own destruction (II Peter 3:15-16).

Beginning in Romans 4, Paul begins to explain that Abraham came to Christ just as the Gentiles did -- without yet having the law. He further states however, that this correct foundation of faith does not abolish the law, but establishes it in a way that the former insufficient state never could. In other words, it is not just a codified set of legalistic rules written on stone for the evil hearted to have 'righteousness' forced upon them. This spirit and application of God's Commandments will 'write them in their hearts and minds', as all the prophecies predicted.

Chapters 4 through 7 show the legalities of law and grace, with the objectives of showing how they each fit together in their proper order as an instrument of eternal life.

Chapter 8 discusses the state we live in when we are no longer under the law (Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil), but under the Tree of Life as God had originally intended. As long as we remain faithful to our commitment, death cannot touch us regardless of

our imperfections. The law is a standard of ideal behavior which lights our path, not something which has dominion over us; unless we choose to willfully discard it; thus disobeying Christ and returning to the lawless state we had formerly left.

Beginning in Chapter 9, and extending through chapter 11, Paul goes back to the prophecies of Moses to show why and how Israel is now cut off from God for the sake of mankind. In Chapter 11, he states that the purpose of the cutting off is to allow the Gentiles to come to God. However, in verse 31 of chapter 11, he shows that there are believers in Christ who will also be disobedient, as well. This is the group which the recipients of the Romans letter were condemning, originally. **God has committed both them and the Jews to disobedience in order to fulfill His plan for all.**

Beginning in chapter 12 through the end of the letter, Paul gives instructions as to how all these people should relate to each other, God, and the world around them, while in these circumstances.

Chapter 14 and 15 are particularly significant, as Paul, in principle, uses certain examples to sum up the points around which all the letter was formed. As we should clearly see from all scripture: no one is 'in Christ' without a commitment to keep His commandments and honor the principles of His laws in structuring our lives in faithfulness. However, as Paul had shown, we are established by the foundation of faith in Christ, not in the law itself. Some have an advantage over others when they originally come to that faith (Romans 3:1-2). However, they should not use that to commend themselves or condemn others, thus causing self-righteous division, or sectarianism. Those who are still weak in the faith have a longer way to go in learning, but we should never use what we may know to offend or divide. We should strive for peace and humility in the faith, as we communicate and learn. The process of education is sometimes slow, but we should never let it turn into a matter of strife (Galatians 5).

Only God is able to judge each man's faith and knowledge at any point in time. We are not the judges of the servants of God (one another). Each has been given gifts for the edification of all, to be used in humility, and not self exaltation.

In no way does this negate the necessity of the proper use of God's law in structuring our lives, as this letter affirms throughout.

Likewise, as noted by the Apostle John, in giving his instructions to Christians: I John 3:4 "*whosoever sins, transgresses also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law*".

So those who are aware of God's law and willingly

reject its lasting value with mankind are being unfaithful to Christ. However, God only holds us responsible for what we know (Leviticus 4&5), and He reveals His truth to each individual in His own time.

[To any who note my reference to Leviticus and disagree, stating that the ‘law is abolished’, please note the use of God’s law by the author of the letter to the Romans, as he calls on it to shape the principles of Christian behavior in I Corinthians 9:9: “Do not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn”. Here he uses this simple principle to develop understanding of our Christian walk. It is highly hypocritical to say that Paul is proclaiming the law’s abolition, and at the same time, using it to direct the New Testament Church.]

Our challenge is to use it as an instrument of His Love, and not let it turn into an instrument of judgment and self-righteous hatred and division. When we grow to this maturity, we may then attain the status of ‘the salt of the earth’, as God’s witness to all. Salt has no value when it is heaped together in a self-righteous pile, only glorifying its potential worth. That is a good example of one who buries his talent and becomes of no value to God. It must be sprinkled through the nations and communities of man in order to achieve its intended value.

Sadly some have bought into the ‘anti law’ error, and twisted God’s Word (notably Paul’s letters), to try to prove that faith negates the law, **and those who value it are ‘weak in the faith’!!** Satan’s deceptions and those who continue to suffer for them will endure until Christ finally restores all things. As Romans 11:31 states, there are also believers who are committed to disobedience, just as the Jews have been. God will eventually use this situation for the good of all.

Heresies

The term “*heresy*” is thrown about today with such frequency that it is hard to actually define what would have been labeled as such in the first century church. Indeed today, most use this term to describe any doctrine which doesn’t agree with them. That is not the true definition of *heresy*. The most accurate definition of the word, as it was meant by the Apostles, is given in II Peter 2:1-3:

But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who brought them, and bring on

themselves swift destruction.

Here it is clear that the extreme term, ‘*heresy*’, is defined as something that actually denies Christ and the legitimate Way He proclaims. In other words, it alters, or changes the truth about this issue, thus setting a believer onto a path which is contrary to His will.

Disagreement over the law or differences of application, in faith, among different individuals, is not defined as heresy.

These issues discussed above address **two notable heresies** that are discussed at length in the New Testament, though there are others which have arisen since then. Both these heresies appear as instruments of ‘the Lamb’, but actually contain the words of the Dragon (Revelation 13:11).

The first, and perhaps the most insidious, was begun by a group of Pharisees who had been ‘converted’, then disagreed as to the path to eternal life, thus separating from the church and teaching blasphemous doctrines arising from Jewish philosophy, traditions, and fables (II Peter 1:16-21). This is first addressed in Acts 15. They were trying to tell people who were interested in eternal life that it was a reward for keeping the Sinai covenant (Law of Moses), and what that legal order had historically become while under their care. This is witnessed by the fact that these Pharisees would have to honor the ‘additions’ of the Jews in order to claim that they had any authority, whatsoever. They were not Levites, but of an illegitimate order which traced back to the illegitimate ‘sages’. They falsely claim that their role precedes Moses. All this is Jewish/Edomite fable, but has become the basis for much of the major Jewish religious order still existing today.

While it was by the Sinai covenant that God managed to preserve the knowledge of His Commandments, precepts, and laws; this particular application was not a code of law, which if obeyed, would result in eternal life (Gal. 3:15-18). Also, by the evil of these Pharisees and their fathers, it had grown to something that neither the apostles, nor their fathers, could bear. Though it had begun as a righteous system of bondage (control, **not** oppression), to control the ancient evil hearted Israelites, it had now grown exponentially by what the Jews had added to it, falsely claiming they had the right to do so. (All this is what these so-called “Christian Pharisees” would have called the ‘Law of Moses’). The Letter to the Galatians addresses this issue. In it, Paul states that these men were ‘perverting the Gospel’ and states, **“Let them be accursed”**. He then repeats the same curse for emphasis. They are not brethren and should not be accepted as such while in this grievous error.

Paul’s letters to the Colossians and the Ephesians also

address the 'bondage' of the former authoritarian covenant and its legalist purpose at the time. It was the best God could do with those sinful people but was not designed for a righteous son (I Timothy 1:5-11). The entire letter to the Galatians also addresses this issue further.

A righteous son, as repeatedly prophesied in the Old Testament, would have the Spirit of God within him, **thus writing those commandments in his heart**. His motivations and mind would always be consistent with God's laws, never having a desire to dishonor, abolish, or negate them in his walk with God. As we have seen, Abraham, our spiritual father, honored them (Genesis 5:26), as did David (Psalm 119). They were notable forerunners who found eternal life prior to the actual sacrifice of our Lord, through their vision of Him in their future (Hebrews 11&12). At the time these witnesses were noted, there would have been no question of what God's law is, was, or should be.

In no **honest** way could faith in Christ be construed as negating any need for them. God's Spirit, which is received through faith in Christ, is never at odds with His eternal Commandments (Revelation 14:12). Instead, that Spirit will lead us to properly understand God's laws, the correct value and flow of each aspect of them; as well as their proper historical and eternal use in the life of man. This is witnessed by the Scriptures from the first verse of Genesis to the end of Revelation. It is true that there were laws added because of transgression, but even the true value of those laws remains for their proper use, **when it is necessary**.

The issues involved here are contained in Paul's statement concerning the transition that a Christian makes from the former diminished relationship to the greater one.

Romans 7:6: *But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.*

If one has simply read the Scriptures from the beginning of Genesis to this point, the legal meaning of Paul's statement should be clear. Before Christ's sacrifice, which delivered us from sin and the former diminished legal condition, we were only **upheld** by God's law in the eyes of God. Since the initial sin of mankind, the law, in some form, was the only spiritual vessel **of good** which existed within the human condition. Without this we would only be evil continually, having no connection with God. There would then be no avenue for Him to maintain any kind

of presence with man. The word 'held' in this passage denotes a good and positive state, not a bad and oppressive one, as some seek to claim. In fact, that incorrect view has led some to improperly define this word in some commentaries. This comes from the fact that some with misguided hearts claim that the law was an oppressive thing holding back good from mankind.

Before Christ came to restore the Tree of Life (Holy Spirit), the law upheld us and provided us with some sort of relationship with God, **for our good!** The Sinai system was 'bondage', which denotes a system of 'control', NOT OPPRESSION!! However, this diminished form of control is restrictive and counterproductive to one who comes to know God in freedom with a love for Him and His laws as a part of his/her character and spiritual makeup. Christ's sacrifice freed us from this former diminished condition, as well as the Sinai system, which was further diminished at the foot of Mt. Sinai.

So then, the Sinai covenant was glorious, being the best that could have possibly been for those people. The New Covenant is more glorious because it is a more mature relationship designed for those who truly love God with their whole hearts, and see the eternal value of His laws in their walk with Him (II Cor. 3, and Psalm 119).

Christ now gives us the opportunity to share in the covenant of the Spirit, which is founded by the Spirit of God converting the natural spirit of man from the 'inner man' **as we love Him and faithfully follow His commandments**. This is a covenant of the Spirit and not limited to the 'letter', which was the only legal condition available **FOR OUR GOOD** while in the former condition. However, it is insufficient for what God is now doing through Christ.

The Holy Spirit writes God's laws in our minds and consciousness as it bonds with our own, thus providing a love and respect for them in all phases of our lives. **Any other spiritual reality comes from a spirit which is in opposition to God.**

This issue leads to the next heresy that takes up New Testament discussion. It is the claim that **God's grace abolishes or replaces His law**. This is the evil that was prophesied to come from the 'lawless one'. This is known as "antinomianism" and began early in the church, according to Paul, Jude, Peter, and John. Paul labels this as the spirit of lawlessness, the evil one, or Antichrist, and says that it was expected. Peter implied that many were twisting the writings of Paul to create this heresy (II Peter 3:15).

The beginning of this heresy is quite notable. In the Garden of Eden, Satan had convinced Adam and Eve to glorify the law above its Creator, thus removing the Tree of

Life from the equation and subverting the true purpose of the law. Now that Christ has come and corrected this confusion, for all who believe in Him, Satan now tries to abolish that essential element which he once glorified. If he cannot deceive man in one way, he will try the opposite, or any other way he can deceive.

Two of the most notable passages used to promote this heresy are Colossians 2:11-18 and Ephesians 2:11-22. Without belaboring the detailed examination of these passages, the true meaning of them both becomes very clear when you consider that they were written by the same man about the same subject. If one's eyes are open, you just need to read the passage in Ephesians and then go immediately to the Colossians passage and they become clear. The subject is the 'enmity' between the Jews and Gentiles which was created by the conditions of the Sinai covenant. This covenant excluded the Gentiles from the fellowship of Israel, only allowing them close to God in a diminished manner. Furthermore, their standing in the congregation was continually examined in judgment by the governmental system in place. They were considered 'second class citizens'. There were statutes, commandments, or handwriting of ordinances, in this covenant which established this division, because the Sinai covenant was under the legal auspice of the *blessings*, and concerned the physical aspect of the promises at this time. These applied, in a direct sense, only to the physical people of Israel, unlike the *birthright* promise. Anyone else could only take part in the covenant within a diminished capacity.

[Of course, some who obeyed it were allowed to see a better vision of the New Covenant, which involved a heavenly reward, at that time. However, the Sinai covenant did not address this issue directly, as we have seen]

The text in Ephesians shows that in the New Covenant, these statutes, or laws concerning this enmity between the two (Jew and Gentile), has no place in a covenant where **all Adam and Eve's children** may become spiritual 'Israelites' and are made one people through faith in Christ. These former ordinances created a wall, or partition (a type of racism), between them. Christ has now broken down all this separation in the New Covenant, which is for all mankind. Physical origin has no meaning in a covenant which will take us beyond the limitations of the physical realm, forever.

[Christ's sacrifice also abolished the enmity between God and man, created by our sins and the penalty for them. However, this is not the direct subject of the text, and is a separate discussion,

within itself.]

Now quickly turning to the text of Colossians, it is perfectly clear that Paul is addressing exactly the same subject. The 'handwriting of ordinances which was against **us**' (the Colossian Gentiles), have now been abolished in this better relationship with God. When the Sinai covenant ended, the New Covenant could now officially begin, which had no such limitations. Furthermore, the Gentiles are not to allow these self-righteous leaders, who Christ made a 'show of publicly', to judge them concerning their personal faith and their respect for God's laws. The Gentiles are no longer 'second class' citizens, and are not to allow themselves to be treated as such.

[Paul's reference to 'us' in the previous text was his habitual way of including himself as a complete brother with the Gentile converts he was talking to.

Also, in this text, the 'principalities and powers' are clearly denoting human leaders who Christ confronted, and publicly put in their place. This includes the Pharisees, Sadducees, and any who would seek to take their place as 'God's policemen' within the Church.]

Both these texts are directly addressing the 'enmity' between Jew and Gentile that was intrinsic within the former diminished covenant because of its limitations. There are no such limitations within the better covenant, which addresses the *birthright* promise. It is for all of Adam and Eve's children, by the legality of the greater covenant originating in Genesis 3:15, and passed to man through Abraham.

Those who claim to love God, as David once did, and are not willing to hear his words in Psalm 119, have tried to twist these passages to claim that God's Holy Commandments and laws are 'enmity' against us and oppressive bondage. They attempt to use these passages, along with a twisted version of Romans to create a 'cheap' grace, which only leads one back to the sin from which Christ delivered them. In truth, the writings of all the apostles clearly reveal that God's grace leads one to love and respect God's law as the only code of truth in guiding one's life in faithfulness to Christ. Just because we are not 'under the law', or that legal condition that was created by Adam's sin, as well as our own (Romans 3:19 & 5:12), does not mean that we discard the only knowledge God has given us to light our paths. Though each individual's faith and understanding of the moment may internalize and apply the law a bit differently, the liberty to discard or alter it is not given to man.

Christ, Himself, was born into a world in that legal condition (under the law) to deliver us from that state (Galatians 4:4). While living in this world, all His actions and teachings reflected the utmost respect for His laws.

Having said this; in Paul's letter to the Galatians, he explains that the diminished application of law (Law of Moses) that came from Sinai because of the evil hearts of the people is insufficient for one who must now go beyond that state in honoring a God who died for us. We should not be entangled with those who proclaim that it is a code of eternal life; and they 'as God' over us, take the place of a mediator whom we must obey. The Law of Moses is filled with things that were there only because of the diminished condition of the hearts of the people. However, as I Timothy 1:5-11 shows, it is the only code of law preserved for us to 'lawfully' use to understand the extrapolation of God's eternal commandments into the lives of those who love Him.

Anyone who has God's Holy Spirit, thus loving God and His ways, will continually be growing in understanding of the different aspects of God's laws and how they impact his/her life. Once again, Psalm 119, written by King David, who was a man after God's own heart, is an eternal indictment against those who seek to 'abolish' the laws of God. The Scriptures show that David's eternal future is already sealed by that relationship with the Creator, and he will one day reign in Christ's Kingdom, as ruler of all Israel.

This antinomian deception comes about because there are believers who truly do not love God's laws and find them oppressive. God had stated in Ezekiel 14 that when a prophet, or teacher, would stand up for them and that way, God had sent him to deal with those who truly wanted to represent themselves as His children, but in their hearts did not want to obey Him. (I Thes. 2:5-12, Deuteronomy 29:14-29). He would then bring punishment on both their leader and those people, as well.

The apostles had realized, apparently from the prophecy of Daniel 9, that this evil spirit and the men it controlled would come; and God had a purpose for it. Jude states that it was 'ordained of old'. However, he also says that the men responsible would be condemned for doing it.

Paul also acknowledged that these men would come along and build 'straw' on the foundation of faith in Christ that he had laid by his teachings. However, he stated that the straw they built would be tried by fire and burned up, but those who built it and believed it may be saved by this trial (I Cor.3:12-15). The motivations behind these false leaders involve the need for power, lawlessness, and greed (Zech.11-16, and Jude 11). Like Cain, Balaam, and Korah, they will attempt to place themselves where only our High Priest belongs and 'rule as God' over others. They take inequitably from the people they profess to serve and

rule over them with harshness (Ezekiel 34). This evil will become so bad that God will have to scatter His people so that they may not remain as 'meat' for these false leaders who pose as their shepherds (verse 9). The evil lax hearts of the natural man has perversely been pulled to this type of servitude throughout history, because somehow they have always felt that turning the rule of their lives over to others, regardless of the cost, will relieve them of their own responsibilities (Jeremiah 5:26-31). This had been strictly forbidden by Christ. Just as this insufficient form of government had arisen in the former Sinai covenant, there have always been people who have gravitated to this tragic condition of bondage, ever since the days of Cain and Nimrod. Paul admonishes true Christian believers to have no part in this (Galatians 5:1), no matter how it may be applied.

Gabriel had told Daniel that this cloak of abomination would remain until the 'consummation which is determined is poured out on the (formerly) desolate'. In other words, until the consummation (*Heb.*: completeness) of a bringing to God of the Gentiles by the Holy Spirit is finished.

This time also coincides with the period of time that the physical sanctuary of God will be 'trodden under foot'.

Following this, the blindness will be pulled off the eyes of Judah, as Christ begins the second of half of His ministry.

This antinomian movement, while it is devised by men in organizations driven by wrong motives, does provide an atmosphere for true believers that worship Christ, but are blinded to the truth of how to properly honor Him. It is the system and its proponents who represent the antichrist, not necessarily the people who are often unknowingly entangled in it. Ezekiel 44 and Revelation 7 describe where this 'innumerable' multitude will end up, once the blinders are pulled off their eyes in God's time. They will serve God in His future temple, but not in His direct presence. This antinomian movement provides the atmosphere for this group to develop.

This group will have faith in Christ (palm branches symbolizing the Tree of Life, Rev.7:9), but lack the true Knowledge of Good and Evil, which physical Israel still possesses. In Christ's time, the acceptance of this group into eternal life, with that faith, will correct the evil of Judah and bring her to repentance when the time comes. Judah had the Knowledge of Good and Evil (the Law), but glorified it more than its Creator and His Love, which only comes through faith in Christ (Romans 9:30-32). Thus, the 'table that was laid before them' for their good, became their stumbling stone. The 'Rock of offense', which revealed their error, was Christ. (This matter was

prophesied by David and Isaiah). The innumerable multitude is the people who ‘will stir Israel to jealousy’, as predicted by God through Moses and Isaiah, and repeated by Paul in his instructions in Romans 9 through 11.

When Judah repents, they will take their intended role to become a praise to their brothers, and an instrument of education to all mankind (Zechariah 8:23). Until then, the ‘antinomian’ deception will remain on the people of God whose hearts are susceptible to it, according to the pronouncement of Deuteronomy 29:14-29. It is necessary for this condition to endure until God’s appointed time to correct it.

Concerning the Bride, however, they are cautioned to not become deceived by any of these heresies. Ezekiel 44 reveals that this will lead to compromising with pagan practices, just as Jeroboam did of old. The Israelites were also guilty of this on the Plains of Moab at Acacia Grove. Those who have a **zeal for the Lord** and do not compromise will become that ‘Zadok’ priesthood in the spiritual kingdom, by the legality of their father, Phinehas, because he resisted the evil back then.

After the Apostles

This antinomian movement eventually takes over the church and those who are faithful are scattered. The great Roman Church replaces the true body of Christ and seeks to change the times and laws of God, adopting paganism as Christian practices, in a similar manner as those at Acacia Grove. Their leader claims to be the embodiment of Christ on earth, thereby falsely exalting himself above God.

One notable commandment which they seek to change is God’s Sabbath, which had been holy from Creation. In fact, the Roman church simply places the name of Christ on the Roman pagan religion, searching for words, scriptures, and verses taken out of historical and literary context in order to justify what they have no right to do in the first place. Furthermore, the Pope makes the claim of being ‘Christ’ on earth and claims the right to change God’s word. Thus, according to this faith, he is above God.

Those who originally replaced God’s Sabbath with the day of worship they had previously used to honor the sun god (Sunday), falsely claim that they had the right to do it in order to get rid of anything they call ‘Jewish’. They do not claim that it comes from the Scriptures, but that their leader is superior to the Word

of God, and does not need such approval. In fact, many Catholic writers label other Christians as ‘Biblicals’, deriding the fact that they actually try to obtain the basis of their religion from the Scriptures, alone.

The Jewish elders and spiritual leaders had also done this, since the days of the Babylonian captivity, in order to make their sin ‘right in their own eyes’ by either negating or altering the true ways of God. Christ had condemned the scribes (those who supposedly were preserving the law) for their sins (Luke 11:52)

After centuries, the Protestant movement makes a commendable effort to throw off this deception, but remains floundering in much of it. Instead of openly acknowledging the authority of the Pope **in his doctrines which they keep**; they seek to find ‘out of context’ or vague passages in the Bible, and read their theology into it – thus keeping the Pope’s doctrines they wish to retain. The most notable practice they keep is Sunday worship, thus fulfilling Christ’s words in Matthew 5:9, as they seek to twist the Scriptures to abolish the fourth commandment and replace it with something born out of human reasoning. As God has decreed, this will continue until He pulls the blinders off their eyes when the fullness of the Gentiles is brought in.

Moreover, a study of Protestant history shows that in recent times, they have gone back to some of the pagan/Catholic doctrines they originally rejected.

They have adopted such pagan holidays such as Christmas and Easter, which have their origins in ancient pantheism.

Many ‘antinomian’ Christians who are sincere at heart are referred to as ‘Egypt’ in prophecy. Though the nation of Egypt will eventually worship God after Christ’s return, the expression of ‘Egypt’ in scripture is a ‘typical’ expression of sin, or a people of sin. God foretold that He would ‘set up an altar in Egypt’ among unknowingly lawless people, as a witness to His glory.

Isaiah 19 can be read and understood with this principle in mind.

Though some may take offense at such a notion, let us remember that God has always had an association with lawless people (‘set up an altar in Egypt’) since the original sin in the Garden. Otherwise there would be no human race left. This altar pictures their coming redemption, or education. His presence is there, though restoration has not completely occurred.

Paul admonished the Romans in the second chapter of that letter, that their use of God’s law to commend themselves and condemn others was actually despising the goodness of God who had shown His forgiveness to them.

God has historically related to evil people, even before they came to Him, in order that this may come about. In fact, this is the sequence by which we all come to Him. Otherwise there would have never been any hope for mankind. We have all sinned, and are still in need of growth, regardless of our legal position in God's eyes. There are none righteous. No, not one!

Notwithstanding, Peter, who was the chief apostle to the Bride, admonishes those of the firstfruits, as the **'elect'**, to not be deceived or caught up in these heretical movements, lest they 'lose their crown'. They could end up in the outer court (Ezek. 44), or lose their eternal life completely.

Those who are true and faithful will be resurrected at the time of His coming and will reign with Him forever, as kings and priests in His kingdom.

The day will come when both of the sticks of Israel -- Ephraim and Judah-- will be brought together as one and become Christ's instrument for bringing eternal life to the entire world. The whole earth will be redeemed from any curse.

At this final time period, the 'stick of Ephraim' is the Bride of Christ, and those aligned with her. The 'stick of Judah' is that particular tribe and all the remainder of physical Israel (Ezekiel 37).

Destiny of Mankind

All scripture reveals that the destiny of those being called to God in this age is to be resurrected, or changed; depending on whether they are dead or alive, at the general time period of Christ's second coming (I Corinthians 15). Those saints who have preceded us await that event, as we do. Even David has not yet ascended to heaven (Acts 2:25-39). But will the dead ever go there?

Jesus told His disciples that He had gone to prepare a place for them in His Father's house, which is the heavenly temple (John 14:2). In that text, Christ further states that He will gather His followers to Him "when I come again", or the time period of His second coming. When He 'gathers' them, they will then be with Him wherever He is. This is the true nature of a marriage. The Bride is ever present and ever working with her Husband, whether on earth or in heaven. Furthermore the scriptures also witness that our citizenship is in heaven, where He is preparing that place (Philippians 3:20). The Jerusalem above is where the Bride shall be centered (Galatians 4:26-31 and Revelation 21:9-21). The text of Revelation 21 clearly shows that the Bride will not descend

permanently to the earth until there is a new heaven and a new earth. So where are they now, and what will they be doing in the mean time?

It should be noted that the clear words of the Scriptures show that this gathering to the Messiah does not occur until the time of His second coming. At no place does it say that such occurs at the moment of one's death, as far as the moment of time is concerned.

We are clearly told in Colossians 1:13-18 that Christ has delivered us from sin by His death and is the resurrected firstborn of all who will be raised from the dead so that He may have preeminence. He is the firstborn of the *firstfruits* by this resurrection. None preceded Him! So then, each must wait until his/her proper time of regeneration. This included Abraham and all the saints that had gone before (Hebrews 11:39-40). They were not perfected before us though their reward is sealed and promised. Where are they in the meantime?

The writings of Job testify that the dead know nothing until that time. They decay in the grave (Heb: *Hades* -- grave, pit, or hole in the ground). The spirit in man (Job 32:8) goes back to God, who gave it (Ecc.3-21 &12:7), to wait the appointed time. In the English translation of the Scriptures, the word properly translated as '*spirit*' is sometimes translated as '*soul*', according to the understanding of those who translated it.

There is no knowledge during that time (Ecc. 9:5, 10). However, due to this, the death/regeneration experience is instantaneous to one who experiences it. The dead are not aware of any passage of time. To all, it is instantaneous.

The complete being (soul) then is regenerated with a glorious, eternal body at the resurrection of the dead, which occurs at the time of the second coming of Christ. (I Cor. 15:42-56).

[The word 'soul' literally means 'creature', or physical body, in the Hebrew language, in which the scriptures were written. However, the word's varied usage throughout both Testaments shows that it has a broader application. God has the capacity to destroy both body and soul, if we completely reject Him (Matt. 10:28). This shows that there is no such thing as an 'immortal soul'. Such could not be destroyed. 'The soul that sins, it shall die' (Ezekiel 18:4). In most references, this word refers to the physical body. The immortal soul doctrine originates in paganism. Matthew 10:28 is referring to the complete being, comprised of everything we are, both spiritually and physically. Indeed, especially in the New Testament, translators noted the words denoting 'spirit' as 'soul', because of the incorrect philosophy of the day

concerning the issue.]

Jesus Christ is coming to reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords. He will be a priest/king over all the earth. This has been prophesied since Daniel 2. Those who are completely reborn by the resurrection will reign with Him ON THE EARTH (Revelation 5:8-10). This is their destiny. They will aid Him in the restoration of all things. Their presence and main focus will be here.

Though the scriptures do not give a great amount of details as to the sequence of events surrounding the time of Christ's second coming, there are enough to piece together the sequential order or the First Resurrection. It happens in a correct and just sequence.

This Resurrection is the culmination of the 'mystery' of God, continually mentioned by Paul. The *mystery* includes the Way of God offered by faith in the Messiah, along with our willingness to walk in His ways and keep His commandments (Colossians 2:24-27). 'Christ in us' culminates in our **hope of glory**, which is the goal and final fulfillment of this Way. This hope of glory is speaking specifically of the glorious change or regeneration of our bodies into that of a complete spirit being, as clearly revealed in I Corinthians 15.

Ephesians, chapters 1 and 3, also speak of this *mystery*.

We are told that those who are dead in Christ will rise first. Afterward, those who are still alive and remain will be regenerated at the exact moment He comes.

I Corinthians 15:50: *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God' nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a **mystery**: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."*

This is a passage in which Paul gives a brief summary of some general information. To develop our understanding of this matter further, let us go to another passage, in which he expands it further.

I Thessalonians 4:13: *But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen*

*asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God **will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.***

[Note: At this point, Paul clearly says that those who have died in Christ are in a state of sleep and unawareness at the time he wrote this. He also states that they will come with Christ when He returns.]

*For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means **precede** those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.*

Once again, we see a general description of an event and the general time frame it covers. Some have tried to limit the events by beginning with this general description, making an ironclad chronological sequence of events out of it, alone, and then trying to fit all the resurrection events within that limited sequence. The trouble with that model is that there are passages in scripture that will not fit into it.

In other words, they say that the only trumpet being described is the one which sounds when Christ is revealed in the clouds at His coming. Then, as He comes, the dead in Christ will instantly be regenerated and rise to meet Him. Then, as they come with Him, perhaps seconds later, those who are alive and remain will meet Him, as well. This scenario is created by making the text of I Corinthians 15 and I Thessalonians 4 into an unyielding chronological sequence of events that happen at that particular moment and which all concerning the issue must fit into.

In understanding prophecy, we must remember that the initial prophecy gives us the general substance of 'what' will happen, and the details of how and when must then be sorted out by the progression of the events, as later developed.

For example, the parable of the sheep and the goats given in Matthew 25:31-46 is given by Christ to show how He will separate the righteous from the unrighteous. It ends with verse 46 which states: "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal*". This simple verse seems to state that all this happens at once.

However, the text of Revelation shows that the righteous are raised, or regenerated, at the coming of Christ, and there is a great period of time between then and the judgment of the other. In Revelation 20:5, it clearly states that the righteous are raised in the first resurrection at

His coming and the remainder are not raised until the thousand year Millennium is finished.

Likewise I submit to you that this scenario of everything concerning the first Resurrection contained in I Corinthians 15 happening at the precise moment He appears in the clouds is incorrect. In fact, this would mean that all are resurrected at the same time, perhaps seconds apart, and in sequence rise to meet him. However, the Thessalonians text actually says that the dead will come with Him when He comes, because they will rise first. When taken together, all scriptural account of this event shows that Paul is just generally recounting the basic elements involved at this general time period, within the I Corinthian text, and not making an attempt to specifically place each event in an exact limited time sequence which is dictated by the order of his specific comment. However, all scriptural reference to the Resurrection/Regeneration shows that it all happens at the general time period of the return of Christ, and commences at the sound of a trumpet. In order to construct the exact sequence, and when each event will happen, all the texts surrounding it must be laid out and examined together. That way each piece of the puzzle will find its proper placement in the overall picture.

In the text of I Thessalonians 4, there is a similar gap of time between verse 16 and 17. This gap of time also exists in I Corinthians 15:52 between the time of the dead being raised and the changing of those who remain.

The word *precede*, which I have underlined in the I Thessalonians text above, is translated in the Interlinear Englishman's Greek New Testament as: '*anticipate*', which I believe the scriptures show to be correct. In other words, those who are alive and remain will not be anticipating the dead to rise, because they rise first in the resurrection sequence, and those living at that moment will be fully aware of that fact. However, the dead in Christ will begin to be regenerated/resurrected at the time period of Christ's coming, at the time of the 'last trumpet'.

Furthermore, the fact that the dead in Christ are coming with Him when He comes can only accurately be construed to mean that they were at the same place He was when this event begins to transpire. It does not say they rise to meet Him a split second before the others; rather it says that they come with Him. So they must be in heaven prior to this moment. All further scriptural reference to this event shows this to be the case.

To prove this, let us look at the series of events

surrounding these individuals and this event in the Book of Revelation. This is a book wherein John records what he saw in vision in the future Day of the Lord (Lord's Day, Rev.1:10), which all scripture shows to be the time of tumultuous events surrounding the end of the age and the return of our Messiah. In this book, John sees, in vision, things happening on the earth, and at the same time, things happening in heaven in the presence of God's throne. The chronological flow of events is interrupted, from time to time, by inset chapters, which go back in history to gather information about entities or issues involved, in order to fit them into the sequence of information.

This is no attempt to try to explain all of Revelation, as at this time, I believe there are possibly things which no one knows, as of yet. However, let us track the flow of the events of the resurrection, as they flow through the timeline.

Revelation 6:9 begins to tell us that John sees the spirits of those slain for the word of God and testimony they held under the altar in heaven. 'Slain' can be either literal or a symbolic concept. Paul said, "I die daily", for the service of Christ (I Cor. 15:31). It involves putting to death the old man and sacrificing our lives on this earth for one another and for Him, regardless of how that conflicts with our own human nature and convenience, and puts us at odds with the world around us. However, there are those who set the supreme example by actually being killed for their faith.

At this point, these *spirits* are still at rest under the altar and 'crying out' for vengeance on the evil of the earth, which they had to confront, waiting its removal. The Greek work translated as 'souls' in the text is properly rendered 'spirit' and literally denotes 'breath', or 'life force', etc. From all previous Biblical texts, already discussed, we know that these 'spirits' are those who have gone back to God, and still await their regeneration. Therefore, their 'crying out' is symbolic, just as the scriptures say that the entire creation 'groans' in travail, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. White robes are symbolically given to them (their reward is already sealed), and they are told to remain at rest until a number of their *fellow servants and their brethren* are killed as they were. There are two groups of people involved here.

Revelation 7 describes these two groups of people. As we have seen, the Scriptures have developed the knowledge of who they are, throughout. The first group represents the spiritual inheritance of Joseph, passed through Ephraim. The firstfruits of God equal 144,000, from the time of Abel until that point. They are dressed in fine linen, symbolizing the fact that they did not pollute their worship of the Almighty. We have discussed the fact that they originate from Genesis 48, verses 6, 19 and 20,

along with Genesis 49:24-26. They will comprise the Zadok priesthood (priest/kings) by reason of their zeal for the Lord, and will serve God in the inner court of His future temple on earth, as well as the Temple in heaven, where their service will originate. Ezekiel 44 gives the pattern of the future temple at Jerusalem where Levites (servants) will serve. These physical men will have their spiritual counterparts in the temple in heaven (the Father's house), ruling the earth, once the present 'god of this world' and his spirits who dominate all the world's leaders (Daniel 10:12-13) are removed by Christ. The rulership of the earth, as kings and priests, is the destiny of the firstfruits of God (Rev.5:10). The 144,000 are the spiritual children of Israel, the firstfruits, and the inheritance of Ephraim; who was promised to be a company of nations called by the names of his brothers. This is the Bride of Christ, whose calling initially began with Christ's ministry to the northern kingdom; which He had previously promised in Jeremiah 3. Many would be called to this role, few chosen, and even fewer would remain faithful to the end.

Once the initial calling began among the scattered northern tribes, only one from a city and two from a family accepted (Jer.3:14). The Gentiles were then allowed to take the place of those who refused (Matt.22). A remnant of Judah, including Christ's disciples, is there, as well (Ezekiel 16:53). Their future destiny will be to set up boundaries for the return of Abraham's chosen children to the Promised Land, serving as servants and heads of all twelve tribes (Isaiah 11). This will begin the fulfillment of the promises of Genesis 13 and the second of the two immutable things. Today, the majority of 'traditional' Christianity denies this will happen. This is the final fulfillment of Joseph's dream, as all his family will 'bow down to him' as his inheritance sits as second in command in the Kingdom of God, under Christ. In typical fashion, Joseph once sat as second in command under Pharaoh, to be a deliverer to the family of Israel, as well as Egypt.

The second group of Revelation 7 is a larger group of Christians that have compromised with idolatry, paganism, and lawlessness, and will be lesser in God's kingdom. They will serve in the temple of God, as Revelation 7 and Ezekiel 44 show, but in a lesser capacity. However, their white robes (in contrast to fine linen) are still dirty, and will be washed by tribulation, so that this may be. Through ignorance, or negligence, they have not obeyed God's *covenant of purity*.

These people represent those in both groups who

have lived throughout history, but there are representatives of both still alive at that time.

Notice that the four winds (representing war) from the corners of the earth are about to be loosed on the earth. However, this will not happen until the Bride is sealed.

[This does not mean that they are all alive at that moment. Rather, it means that the trouble will not occur until this group is finalized, as we shall shortly see.]

As we continue in the chronological flow of this issue in Revelation, we next come to chapter 10.

John sees an angel coming down with a book. He hears the seven thunders utter their voices, and he is told to not write what they uttered. **Then the angel issues a proclamation which is of utmost importance, as it concerns the mystery of God, which is from the foundation of the world!** We have already discussed this *mystery*, from the text of I Corinthians 15, Colossians 1, and Ephesians 1 and 3.

Revelation 10:5: *The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer, **but in the days of the sounding of the seventh angel, when he is about to sound, the mystery of God would be finished, as He declared to His servants the prophets.***

The Regeneration/Resurrection will commence just before the seventh angel sounds his trumpet. This is the 'last trump' which will usher in this monumental event, and the first sequence of it happens just before it sounds. This event then triggers the trumpet and the other event that comes immediately after.

Now let us look at Revelation 11 which addresses the details surrounding the moment of the monumental event for which the creation awaits. The events in chapter 11 are the detailed fulfillment of what was predicted in chapter 7.

John was given a measuring rod and told to measure the temple of God, the altar and those who worship there. If you have read Ezekiel 44, you will immediately recognize this as the inner court where the

Bride of Christ/Zadok priesthood will dwell. However John is seeing the actual temple in heaven, which the earthly temple will be patterned after. He is to measure only the inner court by the altar, as the outer court is still not finished. These places in the temple correspond to the two groups which God is calling at this time, as we have seen. The first group is about to be finalized at this moment of Revelation 11. This is symbolized by the

‘measuring’. By this measuring, the Bride will be sealed, or finalized. They are all accounted for except for two.

This event had its dual counterpart in the camp of ancient Israel, when God called 70 of the elders of the mediator system to the tabernacle to receive part of the Spirit which was given to Moses. At the same time, two of those elders remained behind in the camp to prophesy (Numbers 11).

In the Revelation account there are two still ‘in the camp’ of men, prophesying. These are commonly known as the ‘**two witnesses**’.

Revelation 11 gives the account of the two witnesses who will be killed. After three and a half days, they **will be resurrected and ascend to heaven, just as Christ did,** in the sight of the people of the earth. With our communications systems of today, no doubt all will see this event.

Immediately, the seventh angel sounds the last trumpet, and the Kingdoms of this world are proclaimed the Kingdoms of our Lord!!

Following the strict word of the scriptures, we must come to the conclusion that the Regeneration/Resurrection of the dead just began to occur!! The ‘last trump’ which signals the resurrection is the seventh and last trumpet of Revelation 11. The only visible sign of this on earth will be the resurrection of these two individuals who just went to heaven in the sight of all men.

Furthermore, immediately following this trumpet and the proclamation of Christ’s reign, the importance of this event is described:

Revelation 11:17...*”We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come”.* *Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. **The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come, that they should be judged, and that You should reward Your servants the prophets and the saints, small and great, and should destroy those who destroy the earth.**”*

A quick comparison of the passage above with Revelation 7 shows that this refers to the same events mentioned there. The time of the judgment (sealing) of the 144,000 has come, along with the winds of war, which were being held back, being loosed on mankind and the evil we have become.

Except for the two witnesses, all the other spirits are in heaven, and this is where they are regenerated at this moment. **This means that all the 144,000 are now dead or have been killed! The resurrection of the**

witnesses is the only sign that those on earth may be aware that this event just happened!

Why am I sure that the first sequence of the first resurrection has just commenced? Because the next chronological sequence in Revelation shows the entirety of the resurrected ‘firstfruits’ standing at the throne of God in heaven!!

We will get to that in just a moment, but first let us consider something. If you are alive and are watching this event, you could be in big trouble. This suggests that all those who went into the wedding supper with Christ are now determined. These two witnesses were numbers 143,999 and 144,000. Those who sit in the inner court are now ‘measured’ and this calling is closed, as Revelation 11 plainly tells us. Only those who sit in the outer court and must still be tried by the tribulation are still left to be determined, or ‘measured’. This event most seriously connects with Christ’s parable of the foolish virgins who let their lamps get low on oil and were left out when the door was shut (Matt. 25). Jesus clearly implied that those who had let their oil (Holy Spirit) get low would be aware of what had just happened to them and its future implications. This is the ‘love of many which would wax cold’.

Also, many Christians who have ‘dirty robes’ and have compromised with pagan philosophy, or idolatry (Ezekiel 44), will think they are seeing a ‘rapture’ and believe they have just been left out.

At any rate, I expect there will be a large number of folks going to their knees with the utmost concern for their future, as well they should. They will also be examining the beliefs and principles these two witnesses stood for and comparing them with their own, **as well as those of the false teachers who have misled them!**

The 144,000 are sealed, and the winds (wars), of the earth may now commence. This brings the Beast of Babylon to its final peak of power, **which commences the beginning of its fall.** All the **dead** in Christ are now resurrected, and with Christ in heaven, awaiting the final events which will lead to the establishment of Christ’s kingdom on earth, and their reign with Him.

Chapters 12 and 13 are inset chapters. Chapter 12 traces the historical development of the woman/church, and Satan’s historical battle with her. Chapter 13 traces the two beasts/demons which have been the catalyst of the secular and religious systems of Satan during the same time.

The next chapter in the historical end time sequence of events which John is witnessing is Chapter 14, and should be seen in the sequence as immediately following the text of Revelation 11, which begins the Resurrection.

Here we see the 144,000 **now regenerated and having**

the Father's name in their foreheads. These are the firstfruits, of which Christ was the first, and they now sing a song known only to them - before the throne of God in heaven – at the heavenly Mt. Zion. They have been regenerated at this point. They follow the Lamb wherever He goes, as He promised them in Matthew 14:2. Wherever He goes, in heaven or on earth, His bride will be with Him as He reigns.

Now there is no reason to hold back the events on the earth, as all those of the true 'elect' are gone. God's judgment will descend on mankind and those spirits who control or influence them (Ezekiel 22:30-31).

Immediately we see the future of those still left alive, and the struggle they will have with the system of the Beast from this day forth. Those who accept his image or mark will lose their reward.

Those who resist that entity, and instead confess their faith in Christ and keep the Commandments of God; will come into a conflict which may cause their lives to be diminished, or even death. They must stand fast in the Lord, and not compromise with this system's spirit, mind, or ways, in order that their white robes may be washed or their love may be regenerated.

Revelation 14:13 gives us the next sequence of the resurrection events: *"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on:"*.

"Yes," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them."

The Greek word translated 'blessed' actually implies, 'sanctified' in the ultimate sense. In other words, as they die, they will regenerate and be taken to heaven with the rest of the dead. This is the fulfillment of the statement in I Corinthians 15:54,

"Death is swallowed up in victory". "O Death, where is your sting?" "O Hades (grave), where is your victory?"

Remember, the I Corinthian text prophesies that this event will bring this triumph about at the moment the first resurrection commences. There will no longer be a need for anyone who dies 'in Christ' to know death or the grave. He will automatically be regenerated at the moment of the cessation of his physical life. This is what happens to those in this period of time between the seventh and last trumpet and the actual appearance of Christ. They die, are instantly transformed, and are taken to heaven in order to be in the presence of Christ.

Why can I be sure? Because in the next sequence of events, that is exactly where they are! This death/regeneration experience will continue throughout

the tribulation and afterward.

Revelation 15:2: *And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire (Rev. 4:6), and those who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God.* Those who went through the tribulation and stood firm in their conviction are now in heaven at God's throne, singing the song of Moses! This is a different song than that of the 'firstfruits'. This would also include all those who have had to face their personal tribulation in order to clean up their 'dirty robes' throughout history. This group would be the innumerable multitude, who will serve God in the outer court of the temple, which was once designated for the Gentiles (Ezekiel 44).

[The fact that all those who are resurrected to eternal life at the time period of Christ's coming are not generated at the same moment does not mean that this is more than one resurrection. Remember that the distinction in Revelation concerning a first and second resurrection revolves around the difference between those who find eternal life at His coming and those who will wait for another thousand years. So the 'first resurrection' includes all who find that eternal reward during this time period. As these scriptures show, it does not all happen at the same instant.]

Before we leave Revelation 15, there is one more notable event. John saw the temple of the tabernacle of testimony in heaven and out of it came seven angels bearing the wrath of God in the form of the seven last plagues. At this point no one is allowed into the temple until the plagues are finished. Remember, to be seated in this temple is the destiny of those who are, at that time, with the Lord. By this, we know that this has not occurred, and will not until after the last plagues.

Next, we read of the finality of men's systems and the 'god of this world's' reign over man, which commenced in the Garden of Eden.

Finally, in chapter 19, we read of the Wedding Supper of the Bride, which binds her to her Husband, as prophesied in Hosea 2:14-23.

Revelation 19:7: *Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, "Write" "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"*

This coronation, or ordination, occurs in heaven, at the Father's house. Christ had told His disciples that He had

gone to prepare positions, or offices, in this temple (His Father's house) for His bride; and when He began to gather that bride, she would be in His presence, wherever He is, whether in heaven when the wedding occurs, or on earth when He comes to reign. From that time forth, we may locate the Bride of Christ by using scripture to understand what He is doing and where He is doing it.

The next event is the immediate opening of the heavens and the return of our Lord to this earth, along with those who have so far been resurrected: Rev. 19:14: *And the **armies of heaven**, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

Revelation 17, which is an inset chapter in the historical sequence, also gives additional proof of the identity of this 'army': verse 14: *These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."*

So then, this is all firm evidence that all these are already in heaven when this event occurs.

Yes, the dead in Christ rise first, and He will bring them with Him, as Paul told the Thessalonians. Those who are alive and remain will be changed at the moment of His coming. They will not precede the dead nor 'anticipate' them to arise at that time, as they will be aware that this has already happened.

At this moment, those who are alive and still struggling to survive in this world will be changed to a glorious body and rise to meet Him. Christ described this event in the text of Matthew 24.

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming.

The sequential events of the first resurrection are spread out over the entirety of the Day of the Lord in order to fulfill God's purpose for each group involved, in a just manner.

Christ will reign on this earth, replacing men's governments, and showing men how to live in harmony with God and each other. All who have then been regenerated into their heavenly reward will reign with Him, restoring all things that have been convoluted ever since the Garden of Eden. **Their work will be on this earth, as all Scripture confirms.**

The inheritance of Joseph and the inheritance of Judah will come together to finally fulfill their originally appointed purpose to be a nation of 'priests'

to the entire world (Ezekiel 37).

The repentance of Judah recounted in Zechariah 12 will initiate this event. The house of Judah and the house of David will look on Him whom they pierced. This occurs because God will open their eyes to see. He has kept them blinded until this point (Rom.11). They will then accept the true Messiah for who He is, along with the Bride of Christ and those who have been resurrected and sit in the court of the Gentiles. (Ezekiel 16:61). In this verse, these two groups are depicted as *Samaria* and *Sodom and her daughters*.

All the events of Isaiah 11 will commence, as the 'nations' of Ephraim (the Bride) will set up banners for the return of all remaining Israel to the promised land.

Satan and all his minions will be bound, and his rule and influence on this earth will end. Christ will destroy the evil and begin to restore all things, just as the ancient 'peacemakers' (judges) of old did. He is the Prince of Peace (restoration).

The return of all the physical children of Israel to the Promised Land will commence. This is the second of the *two immutable things*, which many in traditional Christianity try to deny. Isaiah 11, along with many other scriptures, gives various accounts of this earth changing event. That land, as well as their future role in 'blessing' all the nations of the earth, was promised to them in the *immutable oath* to Abraham. It will be theirs when they repent. Those who curse them will be cursed, and those who bless them will be blessed. The world's envy of the true children of Joseph and the hatred of the children of Judah will cease. Judah (children of Leah) will no longer vex and deny Joseph as true children of Abraham, falsely claiming that they alone are 'Israelites', due to the legal edict of Jeremiah 24. Joseph (Rachel's children) will no longer envy Judah, because the true birthright of that people will be restored. It has been in constant flux ever since Laban replaced Rachel with her sister on Rachel's promised wedding night. In fact, most of the world today has no clue concerning the identity of the people of Joseph. Likewise, ever since the blending of the Jews with the children of Esau and other nations during the time between the covenants; the true identity of the Jews is very blurred, as well.

The children of Esau have never ceased trying to take back the birthright and blessings from Jacob.

There are numerous passages in scripture describing the return of all Israel to that Promised Land. Ezekiel, chapters 40 through 48, give details, both physical and spiritual, concerning the restoration of the children of Abraham. Throughout the scriptures, God's servants have witnessed that these things would occur, **and nothing that has been**

done throughout history can deny it!!

The oath which God swore upon Himself in Genesis 22, because He could not swear by anything greater, cannot be denied.

The construction of most of traditional Christianity, and its adoption of paganism, along with denial of the literal implications of these passages in Ezekiel, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, concerning these events, has come from Satan's influence over them. Satan's hatred for the true birthright people of Abraham, both physically and spiritually, has been the catalyst of his work throughout history. This vendetta of the evil 'god of this world' is the subject of Revelation 12. Now, his hatred for them will be cleared away, as he and his deceptions will be removed from this earth and its people. Their traditional sins will cease, as well.

There is a wide difference of views on the future of a Christian after he/she dies. The traditional view, which has its origin in pagan theology, is that when we die, we immediately go to heaven. This began long ago when the ancients believed that the heavenly bodies and stars were gods and our ancestors who had died and gone there. Once the early Christian church went into apostasy, they took scriptures mentioning our heavenly reward as an excuse to blend Christianity with that pagan view. This served their purpose within their hatred of the Jews and many things concerning the true respect for God's laws and promises, all of which they labeled "Jewish".

Therefore, all the prophecies of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets concerning the second of the immutable things are either denied by this 'traditional' view, or else they are 'spiritualized away' in their explanations of these passages.

On the other hand, there are those who know that the destiny of a Christian in this time is to reign as kings and priests on the earth, once He smashes the kingdoms of this world, and reigns as King of kings. This is not just a 'spiritual' concept that is accomplished in heaven.

While it is true that whenever one accepts Christ, he has citizenship in God's kingdom; while in that infant state of spiritual development, he can only serve as an ambassador for that future kingdom while in this world. He does not fully inherit that kingdom until his literal change by regeneration to a spirit body; actually being born in the likeness of God, at the coming of Christ (I Cor. 15).

Though there is abundant scriptural evidence that no one except Christ has, as yet, fully inherited the Kingdom of God in heaven, there is no factual basis to

claim that we will never be there. The scriptures show that no one will go to heaven until the appropriate time; in the sense that they have not yet been regenerated. So it becomes a matter of rebirth and awareness. If you follow the scriptural timeline accurately we see that.

Once again, just because the future work of the children of Christ is to be kings and priests on the earth does not mean that they will not ever go to heaven, or have access to it. Somehow, some have made this error in understanding.

Let us remember that Jesus went to heaven to prepare a place for us in His Father's house, and is there today. This is the temple of God in heaven. At the time of the 'last trumpet' the Resurrection will commence and the regeneration will occur, though to those being reborn, it will seem instantaneous to their physical death. The passage of time is only realized by those who are alive. All the dead in Christ will receive their reward, which is prepared in the temple in heaven; where they will initially be taken. The Wedding Supper of the Lamb will occur in His Father's house. They will return with Christ to replace Satan and his evil spirits who have ruled this world ever since Adam and Eve. Their work will be on this earth, along with a physical temple, which is occupied by human priests who are a 'typical' reflection of the spirit born sons of God who guide them. The physical rulers will do their will (Ezekiel 44, Isaiah 30:20-21). At the present time, Satan, who is currently the god of this world, has minions who influence today's world rulers in a similar manner.

However, the headquarters of the firstfruits will still be the temple of God in heaven. The Jerusalem above is the headquarters of Christ's bride, and represents the Bride for eternity (Galatians 4:26-31 & Revelation 21:9-27). In these passages, it is clear that the New Jerusalem, now being formed in heaven is the habitation of the Bride of Christ, and is associated with her because it is her continual dwelling place, once the union with her Husband is consummated at the marriage ceremony. There is no scriptural justification which states that all those who serve there cannot go to the presence of the Father and Christ, who clearly operate from heaven, just because their initial work is on this earth.

It is Satan's minions who have been restricted from access to heaven and the throne of the Father, not God's children (Revelation 12). Christ's servants will be where He is, including heaven and earth. The New Jerusalem (the Bride) does not come to this earth in its entirety until after the millennium.

At the time Christ returns, the 'stick of Judah' is that tribe and all physical Israelites and strangers who follow their religion or belief system. The 'stick of Ephraim' is the Bride of Christ and all aligned with her.

Ezekiel 37:15 through 28 describes the events which will occur when they are once again united to fulfill God's plan for mankind. This unity will be accomplished by the repentance of the 'stick of Judah', just as Judah once bowed to Joseph in repentance, in order for him to serve as a 'praise' to his brothers in ancient times (Gen. 44:18-34). This enabled Judah to then be used by Jacob to lead all his brother's tribes to safety under the care and protection of Joseph (Gen. 46:28).

Once this is done, all Israel will bow to the Bride of Christ (the *firstfruit* inheritance of Joseph), just as he once dreamed in that ancient time.

Living waters (Holy Spirit) will flow from Jerusalem (from His Bride), because Christ will have restored His presence there. It will be poured out on all flesh. This will change the nature of man. The Law will come forth from Zion, to reeducate the rest of the world; showing how it is properly designed to set boundaries and give knowledge and instruction to the 'Way' of love. His Holy Spirit will be poured out on all flesh. The King of kings will reign as Lord of all the earth for one thousand years. Satan will no longer be the 'god of this world'. He and his influence will be removed from the kingdoms and people of this earth.

After the end of this millennium, Satan will once more be loosed for a short time to bring chaos, which will result in the destruction of the evil which is simply incorrigible, regardless of what God can do for man. This was prophesied in Isaiah 57:14-21, as God reflects on His approach to be patient, correcting, and loving with man, regardless of his sins. However, as the passage ends, He shows that regardless of what He does, there will be some who cannot be saved.

The Second Resurrection

At some point in this time period, there will be another resurrection, for judgment to those who have lived and never had the opportunity to know our Savior (Revelation 20:5). The entire nation of Israel who never knew Christ, and the rest of mankind in that predicament will live again to have their first chance at that honor (Ezekiel 37: 1-14). This is a physical resurrection. The Scriptures infer that all who have lived will eventually have a chance to know and worship our Savior.

[Ezekiel 37 should be separated into two separate and distinct prophecies between verses 14 and 15. Remember, chapter arrangement and punctuation

came in a modern time.]

Following all this, the earth will eventually be destroyed in fire. All of the wicked will be consumed (Revelation 21:8). This is the lake of fire which will consume all evil. It shall not be quenched, but will completely consume all these things which will no longer have a place or part in this creation. The punishment (not punishing) which it brings is eternal or lasting forever. This is eternal death, just as all the prophecies foretold.

When all of this time is fulfilled, there will be a complete restoration of the heavens and the earth, and the Father will dwell with us as well.

The time when the heavenly temple, housing the Bride of Christ, will descend to earth is discussed in Revelation 21. Though the work of Christ and those who have been faithful to Him is centered on earth after His return, their headquarters is still in the Jerusalem temple above until their work with mankind on earth is complete. The New Jerusalem will then come down to earth from heaven. There will be no more people (sea). The Father will dwell with His children. It is quite possible that the newly glorified earth will then be the center of God's work throughout the universe. There are chapters still to be written.

Author: Richard Davis

Email: Huntster13@aol.com

Address: 7536 Duncan Rd.

Texarkana, Ark. 71854

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