

TURNING THE CORNER
From Shadows to Reality

Andrew C. Phiri

Copyright © 2021 Andrew C. Phiri

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. To duplicate this book without permission is a violation of international copyright laws.

Unless otherwise indicated all scripture quotations were taken from the Holy Bible - King James Version © Cambridge University Press.

ISBN 978-9982-9986-7-3

A publication of *Reflections on Faith*

www.andrewcphiri.com • voiceoftheword@live.com

Printed in USA

Contents

1. A world lost in sin.....	7
2. The giving of the law	18
3. Breaking the law.....	57
4. Why the sin	64
5. Promise of a new covenant.....	71
6. Till all be fulfilled	82
7. Turning the corner	94
Appendix.....	120
References.....	124

To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth, and not I only, but also all they that have known the truth (2 Joh.1:1).

1.

A WORLD LOST IN SIN

“They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one”

Psa.14:3

God's work of redeeming mankind has been a journey of different phases and turning points, a journey of a chosen people growing from ignorance to knowledge, and of turning from dark shadows of the night to the clear light of day, a journey from Law to Grace.

In the beginning, when God said, "*Let us make man in our image*" (Gen.1:26), that was the riskiest 'project' ever done on this planet. The almighty creator took a piece out of himself and threw it before him telling it, "I love you!" and out of its choice it could answer back, "I love you too!" No one can accomplish such a feat, of creating a self-conscious being. However, that is where the risk lay: if you create something with the power to think and make its own choices without your intervention, then that creature is also at liberty to either love or hate you. It is important to note that true love can only exist where there is a choice to hate.

God, being almighty and all-knowing, is by definition the only source of true peace, love, and joy. But here is a paradox: the creatures God made could only continue in peace if they lived by every Word he provided for guidance. But, how could such a state of affairs be possible without violating the principle of free will? Think about this story: there lived an old man in a dangerous wild forest. The forest had lions, leopards, snakes, and all such dangerous animals. One day a tourist arrived. Upon entering the forest, he was solemnly warned, "Only follow and do what the old

man tells you; he has lived in this forest all his life and he knows all safe paths in these woods and he also knows all those that lead to death; if you stay with him and listen to whatever he instructs you, you will be alright. But, if you take things in your own hands, be informed that no unguided person has ever come out of this forest alive". Now, what would you make of a tourist who retorts with the words, "No, before I came here I studied about this forest and I trust my knowledge!"? Well, such a one is most certainly a dead man the moment he enters that forest.

It goes without saying that when the fount of all knowledge and wisdom in the beginning said to man, "Walk in this way", man was simply supposed to trust and rely on those Words; he was supposed to "only believe" and any deviation from the Word of his maker would lead to death. Like the scripture says, "*By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live*" (Deu.8:3, Mat.4:4).

We all know the story of the beginning and the events which transpired to cause the trouble we are experiencing today. God's counsel was despised. Mankind chose his way over God's, and God simply let him experience the fruit of that choice - "*For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices*" (Pro.1:29-31).

Some people have asked, “But if God is all-knowing, why didn’t he stop mankind from making a wrong choice?” Well, that would have been possible if God had created programmed creatures whose *will* or choices could be intercepted and controlled. But such beings wouldn’t have been in his image; such beings would not have had a choice and such a world wouldn’t be different from Walt Disney’s world of cartoons. Here is what the famous Christian philosopher, Clive Staples Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, said about this:

¶ Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free but had no possibility of going wrong; I cannot. If a thing is free to be good it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why, then, did God give them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automata - of creatures that worked like machines - would hardly be worth creating (Lewis, 1944, p.48).

So, God chose to create a real world characterized with *choice*, *actions*, and *implications*. The right question to ask should be this: looking at all the trouble the world has been through and is still going through, from the time of Adam to this day, was ‘free will’ a price worth paying for to have a real world? C.S. Lewis

again:

¶ If God thinks this state of war in the universe a price worth paying for free will - that is, for making a live world in which creatures can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen, instead of a toy world which only moves when He pulls the strings - then we may take it it is worth paying (*ibid*).

Notice these words in the quote above - “*and something of real importance can happen.*” Think about it, what is that “something” which had so great a value that God was willing to pay for? And notice that God gave free will to *finite minds*. Being finite the human mind could not know everything and could not accurately predict the future; it was thus inevitable for man to make mistakes, and not mere mistakes but *mis-steps* that could throw the whole work of creation out of balance! So, was it a vain exercise for God, despite knowing that man would fail, to go ahead and entrust the delicate future in his hands?

Subjected to “*vanity*” but in hope

God knew that it was only when mankind heeded to the counsel of his Word that a true world of love and joy could exist. But again, he could not create creatures of free will on whom he would enforce his will; as earlier stated that would be a contradiction. Well, the

all-wise God had a way to eliminate such a contradiction; he went ahead to create beings endowed with free will but which were equipped with the ability to *learn* through *experience*. The learning experience would provide a way for man to entrust his will back to his maker's hands and so enable him to pray, "Lord, your will towards me is full of love, truth, and joy; thy will be done in my life!" Thus, through a person's own yielding to the will of the creator, God's perfect would reign within a person's heart but yet without violating his free will.

God provided "experience" to let mankind make an informed choice. Man would fall as a result of wrong choice, and then experience the pain of the choice. Out of the experience man would either repent or become defiant and continue in disobedience.

From the beginning to this day the fruit of man's way (Pro. 1:29-31) has been so destructive and filled with deceit, hate, and selfishness, throwing everything that God created out of balance. To this day, mother Earth groans with quakes and tears of floods. Our bodies get sick and weary from time to time because they and the environment they live in are not in their original state. The pain and groan is a cry for restoration. All creation is in pain waiting for that time when children of obedience (sons and daughters of God) will be restored and given back this Earth to govern it in the perfect way of its creator. "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to*

be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”, Paul wrote. “For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom.8:18-23).

Wickedness before and after the Flood

Following the fall of man in Eden, man’s morality grew from bad to worse. In Genesis 6:5 we read that “*God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*”. This evil continued to happen despite the warning messages of God’s servants in that antediluvian age. One such a servant of God was Enoch.

Enoch’s message to that sinful generation centred on the coming judgment of God that would strike the world (Jud.1:14-15). When Enoch began prophesying and warning the people, he didn’t know when the judgment would strike (obviously there were scoffers

who mocked him, asking when the judgment would strike). But when Enoch had his first-born son he received a special message from God concerning how near the judgment was. The revelation can be seen in the name he gave to his son and also in the way he lived a more consecrated life after his son was born.

Enoch named his son “*Methuselah*” (Gen.5:21). Methuselah means “his death will bring”. Methuselah lived the longest, for 969 years, and it was when he died that the flood started. Clearly, Methuselah was a timepiece of the judgment that God would send on that antediluvian world

The important lesson in all this is that God never brings judgment on the world without first sending his message of warning. Methuselah lived for 969 years; this long timepiece tells us about God’s patience for that generation. Sadly, man despised God’s patience and only Noah’s family survived through a revelation he had received to build the ark.

Noah had three sons - Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Out of Ham came Canaanite tribes and nations that were sinful and reprobate - the Jebusites, Amorites, Gergashites, Hivites, and others (Gen.10:15-18).

Evil ways of Canaanites

The Canaanites were mighty and strong. They occupied much of that Mesopotamian region of the world. Their influence and evil ways permeated that old world. Historians have written about terrible immorality

which characterized Canaanite society: from pornographic religious rites, to sex with animals and sacrificing children into burning flames:

¶ Canaanite worship was socially destructive. Its religious acts were pornographic and sick, seriously damaging to children, creating early impressions of deities with no interest in moral behaviour. It tried to dignify, by the use of religious labels, depraved acts of bestiality and corruption. It had a low estimate of human life. It suggested that anything was permissible, promiscuity, murder or anything else, in order to guarantee a good crop at harvest. It ignored the highest values both in the family and in the wider community - love, loyalty, purity, peace and security - and encouraged the view that all these things were inferior to material prosperity, physical satisfaction and human pleasure (Brown, 1993).

Little children in these immoral societies grew up to fill the ranks of corruption. In the world before the flood God had described humanity as being no different from animal life (Gen.6:3) but clearly the world after the flood degraded itself much lower than animals. God was determined to destroy the evil and vain societies. But like he always does, there first had to be a prophetic voice to warn the people. God raised Abraham and Lot.

“The people of Canaan were wicked in Abraham’s day” writes archaeologist Alfred Hoerth, “but God showed mercy. The Canaanites had the witness of Abraham and his altars, and they recognised the power

of the patriarch's god, but they did not forsake their own imitations" (cited in Padfield, 2009).

Promise of a righteous nation

Unlike Enoch, Methuselah or Noah, Abraham was not just to be a prophet but a father through whom a righteous nation was to be born. But how was God going to raise righteous people from amongst a wicked society? By giving them laws which would strictly ensure that the people never interacted with the wicked neighboring nations. Thus, the call of Abraham had to begin with separation from his family and land where he had been raised: God said to Abraham, "*Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing*" (Gen.12:1-2). That was a call to separation; separation from the pagan culture and norms of his people.

Notice that God's choosing of Abraham was not haphazard; he picked a man he knew would be careful to teach his children the way of truth and righteousness; God did not pick an unstable man; he picked a man that would ensure there was an unbroken sequence of the work of redemption that God was rolling out in the world - "*And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do; Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him,*

that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment" (Gen.18:17-19). In this we should see that the calling of Abraham was about restoring *the way of the Lord* which had been despised in the beginning (Gen.3:24, Pro.1:29-31, Rev.22:1-2).

Out of Abraham came Isaac and out of Isaac came Jacob and out of Jacob came the twelve tribes which became the nation of Israel, a nation through which God would redeem the world.

In his plan of redemption God decided to first bring Israelites to the place where righteousness, peace and joy had first begun on earth - the Garden of Eden. Yes, the Garden of Eden used to be in that region of the world which now became known as the land of Canaan.¹ Although it was "*a land flowing with milk and honey*", such a wonderful fertile region (Exo.3:17), the true beauty of God's presence which had once characterized it was no longer there. Instead, as was earlier explained, evil flourished in the land. It was now time for God to rid the land of 'weeds' that had sprung up. God, the owner of the land, was now ready to bring a people he would use to begin the plan of redeeming the whole world, to the land. At that time the chosen people were living as slaves in Egypt and so God would have to take them from there to the promised land.

¹ About the location of the Garden of Eden read *The Holy City New Jerusalem* by Richard Gan

2. THE GIVING OF THE LAW

“...the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons...”

1 Tim.1:9-10

After living as slaves in Egypt for over 400 years, Israelites were finally set free by God through the ministry of Moses. Three months after leaving Egypt they came to a desert called Sinai. The desert was far away from the beautiful, populated and busy cities of Egypt and it was in that quiet place that God was to make his covenant with the Israelites. The covenant would be in form of laws.

But, why did God want his relationship with Israelites characterized by various laws and regulations? Why would he not let them live ‘freely’ without law? It is important to know that when Israelites left Egypt, they were like Abraham who had also been called out of a land of idolatry. Israelites had for a long time lived in Egypt, an environment characterized by pagan practices. Although they endeavored to keep the religion of their forefathers - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - the Egyptian environment had strongly influenced them. That can be clearly seen in the terrible incident that happened merely 40 days after Israelites had received the Ten Commandments; they made a golden calf and worshipped it!

The sinful condition of the hearts of Israelites required their behaviour to be regulated by law. That is what the law is for; *“the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane”* (1 Tim.1:9). Furthermore, because Israelites were to start a new life in a region of the world that was so terribly

infested with paganism, God instituted laws that prohibited them from interacting with the pagan societies. He inculcated this prohibition in Israelites through various ubiquitous laws which emphasized the concept of *separation*: Dietary laws distinguished between clean and unclean meats (Lev.11:1-47); agricultural regulations prohibited the planting of different kinds of crops in one field, and a person could not wear clothing that was woven of two kinds of material (Lev.19:19). Paul Copan, a Christian philosopher and theologian, used a simple illustration of parenting to explain the purpose of these seperative laws:

¶ Attentive parents will regularly tell their kids to avoid getting mixed up with the wrong crowd. Bad company corrupts good character (1 Cor.15:33; cf. Psa.1:1-2). Likewise, God gave the Israelites certain actions to carry out as a way of symbolically telling them not to get mixed in with the false ways of the nations ... These antimixing commands attempted to portray a sense of wholeness, completeness, and integrity (Copan, 2011).

It is interesting to note that the various seperative laws were attached to routine activities of daily life. The clear reason was to give Israelites a constant reminder of their call as “*a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth*” (Deu.14:2). The purpose of the constant reminder was to change the people’s mindset, culture and attitudes.

So, what were the laws? First, when Israelites would enter the promised land they were to worship only at the place God would choose for them there. Then there were Ten Commandments which were given to regulate man's social behaviour. The Sabbath statute, the fourth of the Ten Commandments, carried a greater emphasis as a sign between God and his chosen people. Dietary laws stipulated what type of meats could or could not be eaten, and more importantly there were special feasts called the Feasts of Yahweh which were to be observed on specified dates every year.

To the Israelites the Lord said, *“If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.”* (Exo.19:5-6). When Moses told these words to the people, they consented to the covenant by saying *“All that the LORD hath spoken we will do”* (Exo.19:8). God went further to prescribe various terrible things that would happen to Israelites if they became unfaithful to their marriage covenant with Yahweh: *“But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee... The LORD shall cause thee to be smitten before thine enemies: thou shalt go out one way against them, and flee seven ways before them: and shalt be removed into all the*

kingdoms of the earth... The LORD shall bring thee, and thy king which thou shalt set over thee, unto a nation which neither thou nor thy fathers have known; and there shalt thou serve other gods, wood and stone. And thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a byword, among all nations whither the LORD shall lead thee” (Deu.28:15, 25, 36-37).

The one place of worship

God was determined to separate Israel from all pagan religious influences; he forbade Israelites from mingling with people of other nations. Now, such a command seems too harsh when looked at through lens of modern society. But when one is aware of the abhorrent social and religious practices of the time, they would soon realize that God was working on raising a new society that would revere the sanctity of human life and uphold noble virtues of love, kindness, and chastity. And the first step towards such a restoration was for man to know his true identity, that is, his origin.

Man came from God; he was created by the Word of God to be in his image and likeness (Gen.1:26). By being in God’s image man was to manifest the life and character of God. However, after the fall, man took his own way and reduced his life to that of mere animal flesh (Gen.6:3). Having lost the knowledge of his true identity mankind began to worship gods made after his carnal imaginations. Man began to worship images of animals. Has this not recurred in our time? Man now

confidently traces his origin to primates and no longer believes in a divine creator? The belief in *macro-evolution* and *materialism* has led many to believe that spiritual and noble virtues of chastity are mere social constructs of sentient beings, deliberately designed to manage the orderly functioning of society. Well, this tells us one thing: when people *believe* wrong they *live* wrong.

In his mercy, God reached out to restore man to true worship. The profound knowledge man needed to learn during this restoration was that God is one and he is the creator of heaven and earth; idolatry only serves to alienate mankind from the true knowledge of who mankind truly is, i.e., his identity. Like the Lord Jesus had once prayed, “*this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God*” (Joh.17:3, Deu.6:4).

To guard against vain and strange ideas of worship, God specified the place where people were supposed to worship. In Deuteronomy 12:2-13 he said, “*Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree: And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place*” (v.2-3). Notice how the Canaanites could worship in any place: on the hills, on the mountains and under every tree. With such carnal liberalness of worship it is most

certainly that individuals imagined, speculated, taught and worshipped after their vain imaginations. Such a system of worship caused pagan ideas of worship to flourish. This was not to be so among Israelites; God established a religious order which required the Jews to have only one place of worship, and religious rites were to be performed by specially chosen people: *“Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God. But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come”* (v.4-5).

The place that God was going to choose would be where worship, in form of giving sacrifices, was to occur: *“Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee”* (v.13-14). What was that place God chose? He *“chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved”* (Psa.78:68); *“I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there”* (2 Chr.6:6); *“In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion”* (Psa.76:2).

May I bring to your attention a controversial dispute that later arose among believers concerning “the one place of worship”. It is important to be aware that an Old Testament believer had a sacred duty to carefully observe the statutes that God gave the nation of Israel. There was a particular way to do everything – where to

pray and even where to curse and where to bless. Here is what is recorded about this in Deuteronomy 11:29-32: “*And it shall come to pass, when the LORD thy God hath brought thee in unto the land whither thou goest to possess it, that thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerizim, and the curse upon mount Ebal ... ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day*”.

Now, one problem with *observation* (of practices, of words, or of rules) is that it is subject to people’s different perceptions. Two people may look at one thing but yet have different perceptions of it. Because of this, over time there were varying interpretations about the law in Israel. The different interpretations led to different factions. There were Pharisees, who believed in the Torah *plus* the psalms and the writings of the prophets, and there were Sadducees, who only believed in the Torah. And then there were Samaritans who believed that according to Deuteronomy 11:29-32 the one place of worship, the temple, was supposed to be on Mount Gerizim and not where the Jewish temple got built. Here is a note on this by historians:

¶ The Samaritans, a small group claiming to represent the pre-Babylonian Exile Israelite religion, built a shrine there [i.e. on Mt. Gerizim] during the early Second Temple period (4th century BCE) and directed their prayers there instead of to Jerusalem. Members of this sect, which exists in very small numbers, interpret their scripture, consisting of a particular version of the Torah ... to refer

to Mount Gerizim rather than to Zion. The members of the group, who live chiefly on the mountain slopes and in adjacent Nāblus, still perform the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb on Passover according to literal biblical injunction; this ceremony attracts many tourists. Although the original Samaritan sanctuary was on the mountain's summit, the ceremony is now performed lower down on the slopes, because of the location of an ancient Muslim cemetery at the peak (Britannica, 2014).

The Ten Commandments

God gave ten important commandments to Israelites which were supposed to regulate their religious and social life. The following were the Ten Commandments:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Honor thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Thou shalt not covet.

A detailed description of the commandments is

found in Exodus 20:2-17 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

After a fearful and magnificent manifestation of his presence on Mount Sinai, God called up Moses to receive the commandments on tables of stone. Notice that the stones, just like the writing on them, were prepared by God – *“the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables”* (Exo.32:16). Moses stayed on the mountain in the presence of God for about 40 days. On coming down, the worst happened: he found the people had committed a terrible sin of idol worship. This was merely forty days after the people had witnessed the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai. Moses could not stand the sight; so angry was he that he broke the stones which he had received from God. But the Lord was patient. He called up the prophet to receive a new set of stones. However, there was a new requirement to receiving the second tables: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest”* (Exo.34:1).

There are three important things to note about the second tables of stone in this verse. First, the second tables of stone were prepared by man, Moses. This was unlike the first ones which *“were the work of God”* (Exo.32:16). Second, God did not change the writing on the second tables; he said, *“I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables.”* Third, the stones were placed in a wooden box called the Ark of

Covenant (Deu.10:5). This wooden box was overlaid with gold within and outside (Exo.25:10-11). These were “*for ensamples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*” (1 Cor.10:11). We shall come back to this matter later in the message. But at this juncture it is important to note that out of the Ten Commandments, the fourth one, concerning the keeping of the Sabbath, carried a greater emphasis; the Sabbath was declared as a sign between God and his people: “*Verily my Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you*” (Exo.31:13-17, cf. Eze.20:20). Looking at the great contentions surrounding this subject among Christians, as to whether God still requires us to observe it or not, a considerable amount of time will now be given to the topic.

The Sabbath

After six days of work Israelites were required to keep the seventh one holy. In other societies, people were lost in endless vain pursuits of life but Israelites practiced a regular repose to remember God as the creator: “*Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work ... For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD*

blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exo. 20:8-11). Elsewhere in scripture, the purpose of the Sabbath was further explained to be a Jewish memorial of rest from living and working as slaves in Egypt: “But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work... And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day” (Deu.5:14-15). It was because of this that the promised land, the land of Canaan, was referred to as the land of rest – “The LORD your God hath given you rest, and hath given you this land” (Josh.1:11-15).

At this point let us look at two important questions about the Sabbath: First, how were Israelites supposed to keep the Sabbath day holy? Second, which day of the week did Israelites observe for the Sabbath; was it Saturday or Sunday?

“How were Israelites supposed to keep the Sabbath day holy?”

Israelites did not keep the Sabbath holy by going to the temple for worship but by simply refraining from doing any work. Different places in scripture show that whenever the Sabbath was violated, it was not because a person abstained from attending a religious gathering but because he or she worked or lifted a burden (see Neh.13:15-22, Jer.17:19-27). On the Sabbath day

people could utilize the time to reflect and meditate on God's Word wherever they were, in their dwelling places - *“Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the LORD in all your dwellings”* (Lev.23:3).

Although they did not gather in a temple building, the very act of refraining from work to reverence, meditate, or reflect on God's Word was worship. The Sabbath was therefore a holy “convocation” wherein sons and daughters of God, wherever they were, presented themselves before the creator. However, there were stipulated dates on the calendar which required people to travel to Jerusalem to gather and worship God through the observance of feasts. Please note that unlike Gentiles who worshipped their gods in different places - on mountains, hills and under trees - the Jews were forbidden to do that; they could only formally worship in the place God had commanded and that place was Jerusalem, and like earlier stated, only specially chosen people from the tribe of Levi were to perform temple worship rites (Deu.12:1-5).

Ofcourse the question that could be asked is about the many New Testament scriptures which mention about weekly gatherings in synagogues on sabbath days. It is important to know that about 500 years before Jesus was born a terrible event had happened in Israel. Israel had continuously sinned. The nation broke its marriage covenant with Yahweh and therefore the

judgments he had stipulated in Deuteronomy (28:15, 25, 36-37), of taking them into captivity, fulfilled when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon attacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Jews lost their chosen place of worship. It was in those places of captivity that historians suggest an initiative to start assembling for worship in houses and or other available buildings began. *Britannica Encyclopedia* notes:

¶ The oldest dated evidence of a synagogue is from the 3rd century BCE...Some scholars think that the destruction of Solomon's Temple of Jerusalem in 586 BCE gave rise to synagogues after private homes were temporarily used for public worship and religious instruction (*Britannica Encyclopedia*, 2019).

It is possible that such an idea and practice may have started even way before the destruction of the temple as a better way to observe Yahweh's feasts when not everyone could go to Jerusalem to be part of the worship:

¶ Other scholars trace the origin of synagogues to the Jewish custom of having representatives of communities outside Jerusalem pray together during the two-week period when priestly representatives of their community attended ritual sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem (*ibid*).

One thing is certain about the synagogue gatherings during sabbath days: they were never a result of God's

command but an initiative of the people. Was the initiative wrong? Not at all, synagogues were beneficial: it was good practice to pray and meditate on words of Scripture in the synagogue as a way of worshipping the creator on the day he had commanded them to rest. It is important to note that God often acknowledges noble acts of his people. In Philippians 4:8 we are admonished, *“brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Phi.4:8).

Israelites had many other customs which began out of initiative. For example during the time of Esther, when the enemies of Israel were exposed and God gave the Jews victory, they chose a date to observe a feast to celebrate what God had done (Est.9:14-22). The error of many elders of Israel, however, was the tendency to exalt traditions of man to the same level of, or even above, God’s Word. In Mark chapter 7 we read about an incidence of Pharisees questioning Jesus over the conduct of his disciples eating with “defiled” hands. In responding Jesus brought to their attention their behaviour of honoring traditions of man more than commands of God: *“Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands,*

they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do” (Mar.7:1-8).

“Which day did God command the Jews to keep the Sabbath - Saturday or Sunday?”

There are two great errors among Christian denominations: one supposes Saturday to be the Sabbath day on which God had rested in the beginning. This error goes further to establish that the Sabbath is “the seal” of God upon a believer. The other error teaches that the new Sabbath which Christians are obligated to observe is Sunday. A majority of Christian denominations believe in this and that is expectedly so because it was put into law and enforced through the

political-religious forces of Constantine the Great through the Catholic Church system. At that time there were no Christian denominations. However, the different denominations which sprung up after the Reformation carried on with the Sunday Sabbath belief system. However, it should be pointed out here that Christian gatherings on the first day of the week did not begin with Constantine or the Catholic institution; they started as a noble act - not as a religious law or God's commandment - to honour the resurrection of the Lord. There is good *scriptural* (Act.20:7, 1 Cor.16:2) and *historical* (writings of Justin Martyr, 100 - 165AD) evidence for this:

¶ The practice of Christians gathering together for worship on Sunday dates back to apostolic times, but details of the actual development of the custom are not clear. Verse 10 of the first chapter of the Revelation to John (mid-1st century AD) mentions the "Lord's Day"; this was subsequently interpreted by most commentators as a reference to Sunday. St. Justin Martyr (c.100 - c.165), philosopher and defender of the Christian faith, in his writings described the Christians gathered together for worship on the Lord's Day: the Gospels or the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) was read, the presiding minister preached a sermon, and the group prayed together and celebrated the Lord's Supper. The Roman emperor Constantine I (died 337), a convert to Christianity, introduced the first civil legislation

concerning Sunday in 321, when he decreed that all work should cease on that day, except that farmers could work if necessary. That law, aimed at providing time for worship, was followed later in the same century and in subsequent centuries by further restrictions on Sunday activities.

A simple answer to the above question is that neither Saturday nor Sunday was given to the Jews for Sabbath observance. Today many Christians read the words “*keep the seventh day holy*” and begin counting from Sunday, arriving at Saturday as the seventh day. They thus regard Saturday as the day on which God rested after creation, and had commanded people to observe it as the Sabbath day. That cannot be. The calendar in use today is a product of many revisions which have occurred over a long period of time. The calendar used by many countries around the world is a very recent work. It was introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in October 1582 and that is only about 400 years ago. This Gregorian calendar was also only a revision of an earlier calendar known as the Julian calendar. The Julian calendar was significantly different from the earlier types used by ancient Jews, Babylonians, and Sumerians. The Julian and Gregorian calendars are solar calendars.

The solar calendar is based on the position of the Earth as it revolves around the Sun. The calendar used by ancient societies was based on the cycles of the

moon around the earth. Note that the lunar calendar² is still widely used around the world today especially for religious or traditional purposes. Examples of nationalities still using the lunar calendar include the Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese and the Jews.

To understand the day on which the Sabbath was observed let us start by explaining the biblical meaning of *day*. For Israelites a new day started in the evening. To this day they still observe their holy days from evening to evening. It is God who commanded for the Sabbath to be observed from evening when a new day started: “*From even unto even, shall ye celebrate your Sabbath*” (Lev.23:32). This reckoning of a day from evening was initiated in the beginning when God said, “*Let there be light*”. Clearly, day-light had been preceded by darkness, and the transition from darkness (‘evening’) to light (‘day’) defined a day, and thus “*the evening and the morning were the first day*” (Gen.1:3-5).

Sun and Moon: Instruments for measuring time

Different cultures have used different instruments or objects to measure time. Any object that has a regular and predictable behaviour or pattern can be used to

² Often the lunar calendar is used in sync with solar cycles in order to take into consideration the seasons of the year. Thus, the *lunar* calendar gets distinguished from the *lunisolar* calendar. However, like in this book, the term lunar calendar is often generally used to refer to lunisolar (See **Appendix I**).

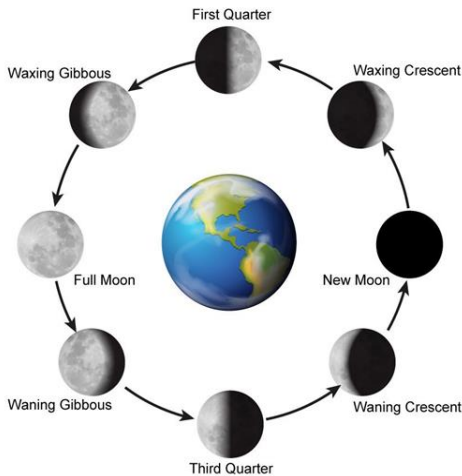
reckon time. Some instruments are more reliable than others. The sundial used by Egyptians was an interesting innovation but it could not work at night or during cloudy times when the sun was not there to produce shadows (see **Appendix II**). In African villages, the sound of roosters used to help the people know what time of the day it was. However, *rooster-time* can only be used by people who live near the sound of the rooster's cry; people who live far away cannot hear the sound. Now, even if each household were to have its own rooster, the time it provides is unreliable.

A time-machine which can be reliably used by the whole world needs to be an object or instrument that can be accessed by everyone regardless of where they are. What better instruments qualify for this than the sun and the moon? These celestial bodies are visible to everyone on earth. The movements of the sun and the moon are regular and predictable and it is for this simple reason that God, in Genesis 1:14, directed man to use them for measuring time: "*And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years ... And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also*". In Psalm 104:19 we also read this: "*He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down*" (See **Appendix III**). Let us now see how

the lunar calendar works.

How the lunar calendar works

As the moon moves around the earth, the part facing the sun gets visible to our eyes as its other side gets hidden in darkness. The movement of the moon around the earth thus makes it appear with different shapes at different positions. The different shapes of the moon have been given different names. For example there is the full moon, waning crescent moon and waxing crescent moon (see image below).



Different phases of the moon as it revolves around the earth.

The new moon is the first phase in the moon's journey around the earth. With this phase the moon is covered in darkness. The new moon is taken to mark

the beginning of the first day of a month. It takes 29.5 days for the moon to revolve around the earth. When it makes a complete rotation we call that a month.³

The new moon was always a special day in Israel. It marked the beginning of a new month. Watchmen were set to observe the sky and announce to the priests the appearing of the new moon.

Trumpets had to be blown to alert everyone: *“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God”* (Num.10:10); *“Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day”* (Psa.81:3); *“For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God”* (Jer.31:6).

That the new moon was considered the first day of the month, and how it was revered as a special day is well illustrated in the story of David fleeing King Saul, found in 1 Samuel 20:5, 24-25, 27. David wanted to flee on the day of the new moon. The scripture specifies

³ The word month comes from *moon*. It is interesting to note that a woman’s ovulation follows the same duration it takes the moon to revolve around the earth and it’s for that reason it’s called *menstruation*. The word “menstruation” comes from the word *menses*, a Latin word for *moon*.

that the day following the new moon was the second day: *“And David said unto Jonathan, Behold, to morrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat: but let me go, that I may hide myself in the field unto the third day at even...So David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And the king sat upon his seat, as at other times, even upon a seat by the wall: and Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty... And it came to pass on the morrow, which was the second day of the month, that David's place was empty: and Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day?”* This passage reveals that the “second day” followed (or was determined by) the day when the new moon had appeared.

But why was the beginning of a month so important that Jewish society always had to be alerted of it by the blowing of trumpets? It was for the simple reason that the first day of a month marked the beginning of counting to determine which dates of the month were to be reserved for business activity and which ones were for observing sabbath days. The proclamation of the first day of the month through the blowing of trumpets enabled Israelites to plan and schedule their economic, social and religious activities by identifying seventh days which were supposed to be reserved for the Sabbath. So, sabbath days were not weekly Saturdays

but were determined by the lunar cycle - “*And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD*” (Isa. 66:23).

Now, the purpose of bringing out all this information is for us to be aware that the weekly cycle of Saturday-Sabbaths on the Gregorian solar calendar (which are observed by many modern Jews and various Sabbath-keeping Christians such as Adventists) is incompatible with lunar Sabbaths. For example, if the new moon appears on a *Wednesday* of a Gregorian calendar, the first Sabbath of that month wouldn't be on Saturday but on Wednesday the following week. Simply put, appearances of new moons interrupt the week days of the Gregorian calendar and that means the true Sabbath of Israelites could not have been fixed on a day of a week like Saturday.

The image below shows that Sabbath days were on fixed days.

Sabbath was always on 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

When you look at the image below you will notice that the New Moon signaled the start of a month. It being a day of rest, the counting of six days of work started with the second day. That means “Day 2” on a calendar was actually the first work-day. That sequence made the eighth day of a month as the first Sabbath, the fifteenth day as the second Sabbath, the twenty-second day as the third, and twenty-ninth as the fourth Sabbath.

The giving of the law

Thus, sabbath days were fixed on 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th days of a month. There is good scriptural and historical evidence for this.

Lunar Sabbath Calendar							New Moon Day
2 Work Day 1	3 Work Day 2	4 Work Day 3	5 Work Day 4	6 Work Day 5	7 Work Day 6	8 1st Quarter Moon SABBATH DAY	
9 Work Day 1	10 Work Day 2	11 Work Day 3	12 Work Day 4	13 Work Day 5	14 Work Day 6	15 Full Moon SABBATH DAY	
16 Work Day 1	17 Work Day 2	18 Work Day 3	19 Work Day 4	20 Work Day 5	21 Work Day 6	22 Third Quarter Moon SABBATH DAY	
23 Work Day 1	24 Work Day 2	25 Work Day 3	26 Work Day 4	27 Work Day 5	28 Work Day 6	29 Last Silver Moon SABBATH DAY	

Lunar Sabbath Calendar

Remember that in Deuteronomy 5:12-15 God gave the Exodus of Israelites from Egypt as the reason for the Sabbath law; that day of deliverance from Egypt marked the beginning of rest from working as slaves. On which day did this Exodus ('deliverance from work') occur? It was on the fifteenth day of Abib - "*And they departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians*" (Num.33:3). The month of Abib was thus considered a special month (Deu.16:1) and God decreed for it to be considered the beginning of months in a year. Furthermore, on the 14th

day of this month, there was to be the Feast of Passover and the following day, on the 15th, there was to be a Sabbath of unleavened bread: *“In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's Passover. And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the feast of unleavened bread unto the LORD: seven days ye must eat unleavened bread. In the first day [i.e. the 15th day which was first of the seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread] ye shall have an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein”* (Lev.23:5-7).

The Feast of Tabernacles was another feast that occurred on a Sabbath day. Again the day mentioned for the feast was the 15th day of the seventh month and the scripture further states that the next Sabbath after the feast would be on 22nd: *“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day [i.e. the 15th day] shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day [i.e. on 22nd of the month] shall be a sabbath”* (Lev.23:39, cf.2 Chr.7:8-10⁴).

Note that when a Sabbath day coincided with that of a holy feast – such as the Feast of Unleavened Bread or the Feast of Tabernacles – it was known as a *“High Sabbath”*. This leads us to another scriptural evidence found in the Gospel of John. It is an account of the crucifixion of the Lord. Jesus, the Lamb of God, was

⁴ In 2 Chro.7:10 King Solomon sent people away on 23rd of the seventh month, after the Sabbath day on 22nd.

killed on the Passover day, that is on 14th Abib. The evening of that day was the beginning of the 15th day, which was a High Sabbath that marked the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread – “*The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away*” (Joh.19:31).

Evolution of the Jewish calendar

Over time the Hebrew calendar changed from one form to another. Today Jews keep the weekly Saturday Sabbath and only use the lunar calendar for their holy feasts outlined in Leviticus chapter 23. The Jewish Encyclopedia notes the different forms of change the Hebrew calendar has undergone:

¶ The history of the Jewish calendar may be divided into three periods - the Biblical, the Talmudic, and the post-Talmudic. The first rested purely on the observation of the sun and the moon, the second on observation and reckoning, the third entirely on reckoning (Jacobs and Adler, 1906).

“Biblical period” refers to the time when Israel used the lunar calendar. Jews continued using that calendar until the time of the Babylonian captivity. The captivity started a period of time historians call the Talmudic

period. Before the Babylonian exile Israelites had only relied on the written record of Scripture for their religion; teachings, doctrines and traditions of rabbis were conveyed orally. All this changed when Israel was captured and destroyed by Babylonians. Many Jews were taken into captivity and that is when the religious leaders saw the importance of documenting Jewish scholarship. The religious leaders of Israel began to document teachings and commentaries on the Torah and this body of literature became known as the *Talmuds*.⁵ Thus, the Talmudic period refers to the years that followed when Israel went into the Babylonian captivity. The period before the Babylonian exile is known as the *pre-exilic* period, and the one after the exile is called the *post-exilic* period. Although the Talmud had started being recorded in Jerusalem, it was completed in Babylon. However, often when the word Talmud is mentioned, it is the Babylonian version which is being referred to.

The calendar of pre-exilic Israel was purely based on the observation of the moon and the sun (i.e. it was a lunar calendar, or lunisolar to be more precise) but later on, during the Talmudic period, changes began to occur. From having months which were only identified by numbers (for example, first month, second or seventh month) to named months. How or why did these changes occur? Sacha Stern, professor of Judaism

⁵ The word Talmud is derived from a Hebrew verb which means "to teach" or "to learn".

and head of the Department of Hebrew and Jewish Studies at University College London, notes:

¶ When ancient Israel fell under the dominion of great empires, its calendar was radically altered. This is because in ancient societies, time and calendars were mainly controlled by political rulers. So we find that in most of the Hebrew Bible, the months of the year are only numbered and hardly ever named; but after the Babylonian exile, in the books of Zechariah, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, Babylonian month names suddenly appear and become quite frequent. The Babylonian months of Nisan, Sivan, Elul, Kislev, Tevet, Shevat, and Adar are used either on their own or alongside numbered months. Nisan, in the spring, is consistently equated in these books with the 'first month' of Exodus (Exo. 12:2); Nisan, indeed, was the first month of the Babylonian calendar...The Babylonian calendar originated in Babylonia (southern Iraq) in the early second millennium B.C.E., spread to the rest of Mesopotamia in the late second millennium B.C.E., and then became, in the first millennium B.C.E., the official calendar of the great empires of Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia, in use across the whole Near East. The Jews under Persian rule adopted it as their own calendar, as did many other peoples in the Persian Empire (Stern, 2020).

Ancient Israel had fallen under the dominion of great

empires because of sin. Moving from the land of work as slaves Israelites had been promised to enter the land of rest. After the death of the prophet Moses, Joshua led the Israelites into the land of Canaan. God was with them as long as they walked in his ways. However, when they fell into sin powerful pagan nations like Babylon came to subdue them. The worst such experience was when Babylonians besieged Israel, destroyed their temple and took a number of them into captivity. They lived in captivity for 70 long years. The pagan society Israelites found themselves in also used a lunar calendar but one which was structured according to various superstitious ideas of worshipping planets, stars, the sun and the moon. Even so, the leaders of Israel made efforts to observe the new moons for purposes of observing holy days, but this did not happen without problems.

Sabbath-keeping during Talmudic period

Here is how the new moon was observed. On the 30th day of a month, the testimony of two witnesses who had seen the new moon would be brought before the Sanhedrin⁶. The Sanhedrin scrutinized the testimony of two witnesses who claimed to have seen the new moon. If their testimony proved consistent then

⁶ The word Sanhedrin means "sitting together", "assembly", or "council"; it was a body consisting of about 70 elders. This council of 70 elders included high priests, scribes and tribal or family heads of people.

that day was declared to be the first day of the new month. The previous month would then be re-stated to have ended with 29 days. If the testimonies were not approved then the following day would be the first day and the previous month was declared to have had 30 days. It is because of this that months of the Jewish calendar alternate between 29 and 30 days.

After approving the witness of the new moon people had to be notified by means of lighting fires on mountain tops. This method of announcing was used during the second temple period and was meant to notify Jews who still lived in Babylonian exile and Palestine about the beginning of a new month. However, as recorded in the book of Ezra, post-exilic Israel was always troubled by Samaritans (read Ezr.4:4-24). The Samaritans crafted a plan to produce false fire announcements about the new moon and Israelites had to abandon that method. Here is what the Jewish Encyclopedia records about this:

¶ The Samaritans, in order to confuse the Jews, set up fire-signals at improper times, and thus caused the Jews to fall into error with regard to the day of the new moon. Rabbi Judah accordingly abolished the fire-signals and employed messengers (Jacobs and Adler, 1906).

So, the Israelites living in Palestine and Babylon now had to depend on messengers but this also proved a challenge as certain communities of Jews could not be

reached. With the time the method also had to be abandoned and attention was now given to a method based on astronomical calculations, not on observations of the moon:

¶ The inhabitants of countries who could not be reached by messengers before the feast were accordingly in doubt, and used to celebrate two days of the holidays. By this time the fixing of the new moon according to the testimony of witnesses seems to have lost its importance, and astronomical calculations were in the main relied upon (*ibid*).

Post-Talmudic period

Years passed as one empire fell and another rose in power and supremacy. The mighty Babylonian empire fell to the Medo-Persians, and over the years the Medo-Persian Empire fell to Alexander's Greece. Later, during the era of the Roman empire, Israelites suffered terrible persecutions. During the 4th century AD, Rome converted to Christianity and turned its persecutions on 'those who killed Jesus', the Jews. It was during the reign of Constantius the Great (337-361) when persecutions of the Jews so heightened that computations of the Jewish calendar were forbidden under pain of severe punishment and the Sanhedrin got disbanded.

The last leader of the Sanhedrin was Hillel (330-361 AD). This man had anticipated the terrible persecution

and so, before the Sanhedrin got disbanded, he planned ahead by establishing a fixed calendar which stated all future months, leap years and fixed the celebration of the feasts on the same day wherever the Jews were.

It is beyond the scope of this book to detail all aspects of changes that occurred to the Jewish calendar but suffice to say that what we see in all this history are factors that affected Israel's Biblical calendar. To this day many Jews in Israel keep the weekly Sabbath based on the Gregorian calendar and only use the lunar calendar for their holy feasts listed in Leviticus chapter 23. Furthermore, there are many who argued that Israel has never used the lunar calendar to observe weekly Sabbaths but that was until profound archaeological evidence of lunar Sabbaths was found in the Dead Sea scrolls.

The Dead Sea Scrolls evidence

The Dead Sea scrolls, notes archaeologist Dr. Frederick Owen, represent the most important and most sensational archaeological discovery of our age. The scrolls were discovered in 1947 in the Judean Wilderness, west of the Dead Sea. The scrolls have been dated to have been created from around 408 BC to 318 AD.

A detailed list of dates for the weekly Sabbaths was found on scrolls. Here is what was found on one of the fragments concerning Sabbath observance in the fifth month of the calendar the Jews were using:

¶ [On the ninth] [of the month is a Sabbath.] On the sixteenth of the month is a Sabbath. On the twenty-third of the month is a Sabbath. [On the th]irtieth [of the month is a Sabbath]



Qumran Caves where Dead Sea scrolls were discovered

This is just one of the many specifications found in the scrolls; there are Sabbath dates specified for the second month, third month, fourth month, etc. That is deeply profound. The texts reveal one simple truth: the Jews were looking at the Julian solar calendar and were spotting dates on which the Sabbath would fall according to their Biblical lunar calendar. If theirs was a weekly Sabbath that occurred on a repetitious seven-day cycle, as observed by Adventists and many other modern Sabbatarians, the scribes would not have produced a detailed list of different dates on which the Sabbaths fell, because they would already be on every seventh day! This discovery has ofcourse caused

confusion among those who observe the Sabbath based on the Gregorian calendar.⁷

Clean and Unclean Meats

Leviticus chapter 11 lists the meats Israelites could eat and those they could not eat. Some animals, termed as “unclean”, could not be eaten. *“Nevertheless these shall ye not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof: as the camel, because he cheweth the cud, but divideth not the hoof; he is unclean unto you”* (Lev.11:4).

There are Christians who follow these dietary laws but their perception of “unclean” seems to refer to the disgusting eating habits or general behaviour of the animals. For example pigs are perceived to like eating filth and wallowing in the mud. However, that is clearly not true for other “unclean” animals like a camel or an eagle. It is important to note that the animals listed in Leviticus chapter 11 were unclean not because they ate dirt or their flesh was literally filth but because God’s Word had declared them to be unclean. God classified

⁷ You may wish to read an article about how the lunar Sabbath affected Adventists available on this link:
http://www.4angelspublications.com/articles/Lunar_Sabbath_SDA_Church.php

Counter arguments by an Adventist scholar can be accessed on this link:

https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Weekly%20Sabbath%20or%20Lunar%20Sabbath_0.pdf

them unclean by the mere description of “*them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the hoof*” (Lev.11:4). Notice these important words God repeatedly used when giving the dietary laws: “*he is unclean unto you*”.

We shall speak more on this later. For now, let us move on and look at the “holy days” God had prescribed for Israel.

The seven Feasts of Yahweh

There were specific days on the Jewish calendar to be regarded as sacred and dedicated to God as “Feasts of Yahweh”. These holy days were to be observed by performing prescribed rituals. Apart from usual animal sacrifices there were certain special activities God commanded to be performed. The following were the seven feasts and the special activities God had prescribed to be performed as recorded in Leviticus 23:4-44. The first four feasts occurred during spring season and the latter ones during the fall season:

Spring Feasts

1. *Feast of Passover* (in Hebrew it is called *Pesach*): This was observed beginning on the evening of the 14th day of the first month on the Jewish calendar. The first month is called Abib or Nissan (See **Appendix IV** for names of months of the Hebrew calendar). The first month on the Jewish calendar, corresponds to the time

around March or April on our Gregorian calendar. The Feast of Passover is a memorial of the deliverance of Jews from Egypt. On the night of their deliverance the Jews were instructed to kill lambs and shed the blood on the doorposts. When the angel of death passed through the land of Egypt, he killed Egyptian firstborns but *passed over* every house where blood had been shed.

2. *Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag Hamotzi)*: This feast was observed from 15th to 22nd Nisan, a period of seven days. During these days no leaven was to be found in the dwelling places of Jews; the feast involved eating unleavened bread for seven days.

3. *Feast of First Fruits (Yom habikkurim)*: This feast was celebrated on the second day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, i.e. on 16th Nisan. On this feast a sheaf (bundle) of first crops of grain to ripen from the fields was waved before the Lord. The day on which this was done marked the beginning of counting of days for the next feast, the Feast of Pentecost.

4. *Feast of Pentecost (Shavu'ot)*: The day for this feast was arrived at by counting seven sabbaths from the last day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Lev.23:15). During this feast two loaves of bread, made from the wheat harvest, were waved before the Lord. Note here that the bread waved during Pentecost was baked with leaven; this was quite a contrast to the bread made for the Passover which was unleavened! However, as we shall later see, all these practices were

mysteries pointing to the work that God would one day perform among his people.

The Fall Feasts

5. *Feast of Trumpets (Yom Teru'ah)*: This feast was observed on the first day of the seventh month, on 1st Tishri. Notice the gap of months between the first four feasts and this feast. This feast was characterised by a ritual of blowing trumpets. Ten days after this feast was a ceremony that Jews consider the most important and sacred on their calendar - the Day of Atonement.

6. *Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur)*: On this day, 10th Tishri, the people were to afflict their souls by fasting in penitence and humility. This was a very important feast. It was the climax of the ten days of prayers of repentance that had begun with the Feast of Trumpets. A very important activity that occurred on this day involved the high priest entering the Holy of Holies to sprinkle blood on the Mercy Seat. The Holy of Holies could only be entered once in a year during this ritual. The blood that the high priest sprinkled on the Mercy Seat was to atone (i.e. to cover) his sins, the sins of his family and the sins of the nation. The high priest was to carefully prepare for this ritual by bathing and wearing holy garments.

7. *Feast of Booths (Sukkot)*: This feast, also called the Feast of Tabernacles, occurred on 15th Tishri. This feast was celebrated by dwelling in booths for seven days and it was meant to remind the children of Israel

about the times when they dwelt in booths when God had taken them out of Egypt.

Yahweh's covenant with Israel required faithful observance of all these laws - true worship in the chosen place of worship, keeping of the Ten Commandments, abstaining from work on the Sabbath day, and observing of the seven Feasts of Yahweh. But, would Israel be faithful to her marriage covenant with Yahweh?

3.

BREAKING THE LAW

“...the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD ”

Jer.31:32

After the glorious event at Mount Sinai when God had given the Ten Commandments to the people, Moses was called to go up into the mountain. There he communed with God and received the commandments on tables of stone. Moses was on the mount for forty days (Exo.24:12-18). It was during that time that the Jews presumed Moses to be no more and they committed a great sin. “*Up, make us gods*”, they said to Aaron, “*which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him*” (Exo.32:1).

Made “naked” by sin of idolatry

The people broke their marriage covenant to God in only 40 days after making their vow at Mount Sinai. When Moses looked at the people, he perceived that “*the people were naked (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies)*” (Exo.32:25). That is what happens when one falls in sin; he or she becomes naked and vulnerable to evil. Divine protection is found in the Word of God. A person that keeps the instruction of the Word lives in safety. The Word is the presence and power of God and it is holy and righteous.

Blessed are those who abide in the Word for it is a fortress which shields God’s children from powers of darkness. However, when one lives in iniquity, he or she has walked away from the fortress and is going down the pathway of death. Let us therefore always

give heed to these words: “*the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity*” (2 Tim, 2:19).

Fornication and death of 24,000

It so happened at another time that an enemy of Israel, King Balak of Moab, sought for the destruction of the nation of Israel. Balak hired Balaam (an enchanter) to curse Israel but when the Spirit of God came upon him he pronounced blessings upon Israelites. “[God] *hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel: the LORD his God is with him*” Balaam said (Num.23:21). Balaam tried his enchantments thrice but each time failed to pronounce a curse. The narration of the account in Numbers chapter 24 ends with the words, “*And Balaam rose up, and went and returned to his place, and Balaam also went his way*”. These words seem to suggest an end of attempts by Balaam to curse Israel but it was not so.

Balaam taught Balak to embark on a long term strategy that would tempt Israelites into sin and through that make the nation open to curses (judgments) of the law. Revelation 2:14 states that Balaam had taught Balak how to cast a stumbling block before Israelites to ensnare them into fornication and idol worship. So, Balaam and Balak had not given up on their pursuit to curse Israel. Balaam’s counsel enabled Balak to work

on a slow paced strategy that would create a social-glue between Israelites and Moabites, and through that entice men of Israel with women of Moab.

Fornications ensued: *“the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods, and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor, and the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel”* (Num.25:1-2). The plan worked and that was *“the doctrine of Balaam”*; it stripped the garments of righteousness off Israel and made her naked again. A plague fell on Israel killing 24,000 people!

Some people gathered to pray and weep over Israel’s sins but others indulged further in acts of iniquity without shame. It so happened one day that a young man walked with a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses and other believers who had gathered to pray and weep before the Lord. The young man, unmoved at the sight of prayers, went on to his tent to have sex with the woman. One man, Phinehas, saw the terrible irreverence and picked a javelin. He followed the couple to their tent and found the man on top of the woman having the pleasure of intercourse. Phinehas *“thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly”* (Num.25:7-8). It was that act that ended the plague. To Moses the Lord said, *“Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the LORD against the sun, that the fierce anger of the*

LORD may be turned away from Israel” (Num.25:4).

In the years that followed people lived in fear of sin and death. This continued even after the death of Moses and during the years of Joshua. However, after the generation of Joshua *“there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim” (Jud.2:10).*

After the generation of Joshua, Israel began to be ruled by judges and later by kings. Throughout those times much of the nation’s history was sinful. God would raise prophets to call people to repentance but many did not hear the Word of the Lord.

Warnings by prophets

Sometime during the 8th century BC there was a prophet called Isaiah who spoke by the Holy Spirit calling Israel by the name Sodom and Gomorrah to indicate the extent of its backslidden condition. The prophecy stated that God no longer took pleasure in Israel’s observance of the new moons and the holy feasts because they lost meaning: *“Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. When ye come to appear before*

me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood” (Isa.1:10-16).

Later, sometime around the 6th century BC, another prophet by the name of Jeremiah arose and foretold about the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylonians. He indicted the nation for refusing to turn to God despite all the repeated calls to repentance by God’s prophets: “*And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear...Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations...And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years” (Jer.25:4-11).*

Jeremiah's prophecy got fulfilled when King Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and took Jews as captives. The Ark of Covenant was no more. This was the greatest tragedy in Jewish history.

An important question to ask at this moment is, why did man fail to keep the good laws God had given? This is a simple question but one whose answer is profound in understanding God's plan of redemption.

4.

WHY THE SIN

*“...that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become
guilty before God ”*

Rom.3:19

Although all prescriptions of the law were given out of the good intention to prevent man from *evil* and encourage him to be *good*, it is the opposite that was happening among the people. Even when some people desired to do good, the temptation to do evil overcame them. But, just how did man find himself in such a terrible condition? Let us go to the beginning.

Adam was a holy man, not as a result of obeying a list of '*Thou shalt nots*' but because he was a son of God, having been made of the same holy substance that God is. In Luke 3:38 the genealogy of Adam is stated thus: "*the son of Enos, which was the son of Seth, which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God*". As a son of God Adam had the attributes of God in him.

It is important to know that although Adam was equipped with free will and although he was aware of a possible evil world that could become a reality as a result of disobedience, God did not expose his mind to detailed rules of "*thou shalt not steal*", "*thou shalt not commit adultery*", or "*thou shalt not covet*". There was no need of such laws for a perfect and holy man. Consider this simple example: if you have a school-going son or daughter who is always back home on or before 5 PM, would it be reasonable to bring them under a law of "Thou shalt always be home at 5 PM"? In his letter to Timothy, Paul wrote that "*the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane*" (1 Tim.1:9).

There is another reason why laws of ‘*thou shalt not*’ were not necessary for a good man. By stating the *good* to be done and the *evil* to avoid, the law arouses an awareness of the evil it seeks to prevent. Even when the intention of the law is to inform a person about a wrong thing to avoid, the desire or curiosity to partake and experience a forbidden thing may over-power a person’s will to do good. In Romans Chapter 7 apostle Paul illustrates the predicament of a man caught up in such a situation: “*for the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do...For I delight in the law of God after the inward man but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin in my members*” (Rom.7:19, 22-23). Apostle Paul explained that it is the knowledge of forbidden things that tempts man to commit sin: “*What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet*” (Rom. 7:7).

God’s way despised

In the beginning God’s counsel to Adam and Eve was for them to simply walk in his provided way. That way was filled with God’s perfect will. God’s wisdom (i.e. his word and will) is a Tree of Life; “*Happy is the man that findeth wisdom ... She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her and happy is every one that retaineth her*” (Pro.3:13, 18). Although everything

around mankind was a testimony of God's love and care, his mind chose to venture into its own way and thus doubted and despised the counsel of God. God did not strive with man; he simply closed the despised way and left man to taste the fruit of the way he had chosen: "*They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices*" (Pro.1:30-31).

After the fall in Eden, the perfect will of God which had ruled and guided man's free will was withdrawn and mankind now had to live by what he perceived through seeing, hearing, feeling, tasting, and smelling. That was free will veering from its orbit around the light of Life into a dark abyss of ignorance (blindness). It was as if God was saying, "Here is the knowledge you want; see if you will be able to do *good* and avoid *evil* on your own". However, just like planet earth can only continue thriving with life and peace whilst being confined to its orbit and within the Sun's pull of gravity, free will was meant to revolve around the *light* (i.e. knowledge or guidance) of the creator, the Word of Life, for "*In the beginning was the Word ... In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind*" (Joh.1:1,4, NASB).

Strangely, like we earlier saw in Paul's words, the knowledge about 'the evil to avoid', and 'the good to do', has never enabled man to do the right thing; the passion of sin overcomes his will to do right.

When giving the law to Israelites God said, “*See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it*” (Deu. 30:15-18). It was only about a month after the Ten Commandments had been given that people sinned by creating the golden calf idol. With time more people got killed for committing adultery and breaking the sabbath, and that was despite all the good things God would do for the nation of Israel.

With time sin so much increased in Israel that the law and observance of holy feasts became vain. The Spirit of God cried out in Isaiah condemning this terrible condition: “*Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood*” (Isa.1:13-15).

Born and shapen in iniquity

King David pointed to something beyond conflicts in the human mind as the cause of the sinful condition of

man; he pointed to the conception of man as the underlying cause of man's iniquitous behaviour.

David was a devout and great worshipper but yet committed the terrible sin of adultery. After being convicted of the sin, he cried out saying, "*Behold I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me*" (Psalm.51:5). Surely, the fallen flesh of man is corrupt and embroiled in iniquity; there is no good thing that can come out of it!

By now we should be able to see that the law of God, written on tables of stone, was good but its righteous requirements could not be fulfilled by the iniquitous flesh of mankind. Like apostle Paul illustrated, "*the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just, and good... but I am carnal, sold under sin*" (Rom.7:12,14). And so, although one could desire to live right the written law was contrary to the sinful appetites of the flesh. In another place Paul described the law as the "*handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us*" (Col.2:16). Yes, the spirituality demanded by the law could not be achieved by sinful flesh because the cravings of the flesh are contrary to those of the Spirit; "*For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other*" (Gal.5:17).

Now, a question could be asked: if God knows all things, why did he go ahead to prescribe something, i.e. the law, that he knew people would fail to keep? Well,

God gave the law, the ‘Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil’, to Adam’s fallen race, to demonstrate that even when one knows the good, his or her free will would still be incapable of choosing and doing the good thing. The law was thus given to make everyone guilty and make us become aware of our insufficiency. Like the scripture says, *“what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”* (Rom.3:19).

But here is the good news: When a person accepts his or her guilt and realizes that they can never be truly good in themselves, God makes a new covenant of Grace with them wherein his power can live through them to enable them overcome sin. The story of redemption is thus a drama of God taking a piece out of himself and throwing it out before him as it becomes self-conscious. Having endowed it with free will he tells it “I love you” and it can answer back “I love you too” whilst having a choice to despise and reject his love. Being equipped with choice, the living soul veers from God’s provided way of peace and joy. However, it soon realizes its ignorance, heartaches and the futility of unguided choice. The penitent man then decides to surrender his free will back into the hands of its maker, for only there can it make right and truly informed decisions. “Not my will but thine” the contrite soul prays as it dies to vain ambitions and chooses to live by every Word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

5.

PROMISE OF A NEW COVENANT

“...I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt”

Jer.31:31-33

The letter of the law, written on tablets of stone, had been demanding righteousness to come from sinful hearts. Sinful hearts could not produce the righteous requirements of the law and so the various stipulated judgments condemned many people to death. Surely, *“the letter killeth”* (2 Cor.3:6).

When the law had run its course, and Israel was in sin and great danger of being wiped out by Gentile nations, God was ready to make a new covenant wherein his Spirit would write the letter of the law into the heart of man. Jeremiah prophesied about this good news of the new covenant that God was preparing to make with his people: *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people”* (Jer.31:31-33).

So, under the new covenant the law would be written in the heart of man. But how would God achieve this? Here is a much clearer prophecy that was given by Ezekiel: *“I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments,*

and do them” (Eze.36:26-27). We should be able to see that the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel was about the coming of the Holy Spirit into the heart of man to enable him fulfill the righteous requirements of the law.

Grace

Christians often use the word “grace” to describe the new covenant and rightly so because when the Holy Spirit fills a person it enables them to live holy. Thus, under the new covenant, a person manifests holiness not as a result of performing works of the law but as a result of the Holy Spirit manifesting its holiness through them. For that to occur a person’s soul has to be surrendered to God. When one has such a life, he or she can no longer be subject to prescriptions of the law because the Spirit of God living in them produces the righteousness that the law required. Like was earlier explained, the law is for the disobedient and so, such a righteous person would not need its prescriptions. To this agrees the words of scripture in Romans 8:4-5 that *“the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Rom.8:4). And for this reason, when Gentiles received the Holy Spirit apostle Paul taught that there was no need to burden them with laws of Moses because their righteous lives were testimony of the law that had been written in their hearts by the Spirit – *“For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the*

things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another” (Rom.2:14-15).

Walking in the Spirit

When a person receives the spirit of the Word, he becomes free from the *letter* of the law. Such a person is born again, the Spirit lives in him and liberates him from carnal desires of the flesh.

“O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Paul asked, and answered saying, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom.7:24-8:4).

“Ye are not under the law”

The Ten Commandments were given to address

“*works of the flesh*”. In Galatians 5:19 the works of the flesh have been listed as adultery, fornication, idolatry, hatred, murders, emulations, drunkenness, wrath, etcetera. When someone receives the Spirit of God, they cease to walk *after* (i.e. to be led by) the flesh. The Spirit of God in their hearts leads them and gives them power over sin. For this reason “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*”(Rom.8:1). So, as a believer, “*walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh*” (Gal.5:16). It follows that when you don’t fulfil the lust of the flesh (for example, adultery) there is no need to give you a law against the work of the flesh (for example, “*Thou shalt not commit adultery*”). To this agrees the words of Scripture when it says that “*if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law*” (Gal.5:18).

When the Spirit of God comes into the heart of a believer it fills them with true love. The Spirit-filled person will love God and will also love people. And if someone truly loves God, he or she can never use the name of the Lord in vain, he or she can never worship idols, and he or she will never wait for a particular day of the week to worship God. The love of God also enables a Spirit-filled person to love his neighbour as himself and in doing that he fulfills the commandments - “*For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other*

commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom.13:9-10, cf. Mat.22:37-40).

No boasting of “works” in Grace

The victory a child of God has when he or she walks in the Spirit is not of *works*. His holiness does not proceed from what he tries to do in order to avoid punishment from God. What he does flows from the life of the Word that abides in him. A believer is dead to the flesh and it is the Spirit of Christ living and manifesting the life of the Word. This means that all good works that may proceed from the life of that person are resulting from the working of the Spirit that dwells in him; all that the person does is walking through the work of the Holy Spirit - *“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them”* (Eph.2:10).

The fruit of righteousness in a believer is like wool that grows out of sheep; the wool comes from the life (or nature) of a sheep. A sheep does not make wool *inorder to be* a sheep but wool grows out of it *because it is* a sheep. So, no sheep ever has to work to manufacture wool. When you see a sheep trying to work hard to show wool, that is not a sheep but a wolf! Let it be known that no true holiness can manifest in a

person until the ‘wolf’ (carnal flesh) in them dies and they get born again into a new creation. *“Therefore”,* the scripture tells us, *“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Cor.5:17).

After becoming a new person as a result of the born again experience, our righteousness can only come by resting in faith in the power that begins to work in us. When we thus become born again God does not invite us to start trying to do some works in order to earn his favour. One day some people asked this to the Lord Jesus: *“What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?”*, and the Lord answered, *“This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent”* (Joh.6:28). They were obsessed with *“we might work”* but the Lord in answering emphasised that it had to be *“the work of God”*, and all they needed to do was believe in what God had sent to them.

There can therefore be no boasting of works of righteousness. The good works that may manifest in us are not a result of our carnal efforts. We have faith in the God that saved us from our sins and we live surrendered lives to his will, and hence he works and lives in us both to will and to do good things. For *“it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Phi.2:13). It goes without saying that because we are merely the handiwork of God, there is no place of boasting! *“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law*

of faith” (Rom.3:27).

The Ark of Covenant, a shadow of the new covenant of Grace

The mystery of the new covenant of Grace was shrouded in various visuals and worship rites of the Judeo faith. The Ark of Covenant was one such visual that foretold the coming work of grace that God would do among his people. Inside that ark were tables of stone which contained the Ten Commandments. But before the stones were put in this ark certain important events happened that were a foreshadow of things to come.

God had called Moses to go up on Mount Sinai and there receive the commandments on tables of stone. The stones were prepared by God and the writing on them was also the work of God – *“the tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God, graven upon the tables”* (Exo.32:16). However, on coming down the mountain Moses found the people had committed a terrible sin of idolatry. Moses could not stand the sight; he was so angry that he broke the tables of stone containing the commandments. But the Lord was patient. He called up the prophet to receive a new set of stones. However, there was a new requirement to receiving the second tables: *“And the LORD said unto Moses, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest”* (Exo.34:1).

There are three important things to note about the second tables of stone in this verse: First, the second tables of stone were prepared by man, Moses. This was unlike the first ones which “*were the work of God*” (Exo.32:16). Second, God did not change the writing on the second tables; he said, “*I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables.*” Third, the stones were placed in a wooden box called the Ark of Covenant (Deu.10:5). This wooden box was overlaid with gold within and outside (Exo.25:10-11). Now, “*all these things happened unto them for ensamples and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come*” (1 Cor.10:11).

Prepared by man

God created man in his image and likeness (Gen.1:26-27, 5:1). But man fell in sin and the image and likeness of God in him was ‘marred’. Thus, the children that were born of Adam and Eve were not in the pure *image* of God but in the marred one of Adam (cf. Gen.5:2). Adam and Eve having been made by the hand of God were like the first tables of stone on which God wrote his Word; they were “*the work of God*”, made in his image and likeness. They were ‘born’ in the perfect will of God. However, from the time of the Fall mankind is born of the will of the flesh. “*I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me*” said the psalmist (Psa.51:5).

The Word written in our hearts

In due course, God sent his son, born of pure blood to redeem us back to him. Although ‘hewed’ (born and shapen) through the will of the flesh, God touched and transformed us when he put his Word in our hearts – “*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people*” (Jer.31:33). The second tables of stone on which God wrote the Word were placed in the gold-arrayed wooden ark.

Wooden box overlaid with gold

Although transformed and born again, the heart of a believer still dwells in a ‘wooden ark’ of the mortal body. Wood is a substance that easily decays, but a valuable property of gold is that it does not rust. Gold does not rust because it does not react with oxygen. Gold thus represents divinity or godliness. Now, the mortal body of a human being can be likened to wood which easily decays. The decay is caused by the corrupt (sinful) conception through the “*will of the flesh*” (cf. Psa.51:5, Job 14:1). However, the transforming power of God inside the heart enables a son of God to manifest ‘goldliness’. The power of God that fills a believer in turn makes them to live holy even when they are living in the sinful world. Thus, although a child of God is in the world, he or she does not ‘react’ (i.e. get affected) by the filth of the world (Joh.16:33, 1

Joh.5:4). To this agrees the words of Scripture – *“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born [again], not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”* (Joh.1:12-13).

So, man who was once fallen in iniquity is now given the Grace to be born again. It’s a new covenant of Grace. Through the new birth we become *“sons of God”* and hence the image of God gets restored in us.

The one important thing we see in all this is that God’s work of giving mankind Grace was never about destroying the law of Moses but fulfilling it. Concerning this the Lord spoke plainly, *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled”* (Mat.5:17-18).

6.

TILL ALL BE FULFILLED

“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ ”

Col.2:16-17

Apostle Paul taught that “*the law was to be our teacher until Christ came*” (Gal.3:24, CEV). A teacher of children often relies on objects and different types of visuals to help a young mind grasp concepts. Similarly, before people were mature to grasp the truth, the Lord God subjected his people to various visual ordinances of “taste not”, “touch not”, and “gather here”. However, all those rituals were shadows that illustrated the real thing that was yet to come. Just like a little child begins the lesson of counting with sticks but later throws them away, not because they were not important but because they have served their purpose of inculcating counting in his mind, so the law was a tutor to bring us to Christ (Col.2:16-17). The advent of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ began with proclaiming the truth about what the Mosaic ordinances had been pointing to. However, for a people that had for millennia held to visuals of the law, it became difficult to let go of ‘objects’ or ‘shadows’ and get into true worship in spirit and truth.

The one place of worship

It so happened one day that a Samaritan woman raised that age-old issue about the one right place to worship – was it to be on Mount Gerizim or in Jerusalem? “*Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship*”, she asked the Lord (Joh.4:20). In answering her the Lord revealed a profound truth that

would soon over-turn a tradition that Jewish people had held for hundreds of years. “*Woman*”, the Lord answered, “*believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father...the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*” (Joh.4:21). Notice the words “*the father seeketh such to worship him*”; if Old Testament worship (which was characterised by various dramatic performances and visuals) was perfect, God would not seek for another kind of worship. Here the Lord Jesus revealed that the new covenant will not be about visuals, drama or objects but the spirit (essence) of truth.

Old Testament worship was full of *forms*: something that could be visually demonstrated, held, touched or felt, and obedience that could be seen and approved by people. In this lay the weakness of the law for a person could be seen to be righteous or obedient by outward works but yet his heart could be void of sincere love for God. “*Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me*”, the Lord said through Isaiah, “*but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men*” (Isa.29:13).

A person could appear pure outwardly but inside him was a heart that harboured filthy lustful thoughts.

Sinful as this was, worship rituals could still go on as long as everyone seemed right in the eyes of people. But Jesus came to restore man back to the Spirit of Truth. In his teachings he declared that looking lustfully upon a woman was already an act of adultery and hating a person was murder in itself (Mat.5:21-22, 27-28, 1 Joh.3:15). These are principles of the new covenant which were foretold in Ezekiel 36:26-27 and Jeremiah 31:33, wherein people would worship God in the spirit of his truth.

“God is a Spirit” the Lord Jesus said (Joh.4:21); he is not limited to *time*, a *place* or *form*, and thus his true dwelling place can never be a man-made thing. Through Isaiah the Spirit proclaimed saying. *“The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD”* (Isa.66:1). One day a young man filled with the Spirit of God tried to expound this truth to the Jews, in an effort to show them that what they revered as the temple of God was only a shadow of the real thing. He went further to explain how various customs of the Mosaic Law were fading to give way to the manifestation of the reality they pointed to. These teachings of Stephen can be detected in the words spoken by his accusers when they arrested him: *“This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law. For we have heard him*

say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us” (Act.6:13-14). Yes, to the Jews the temple was the holy place where God dwelt, but with boldness and without mincing his words Stephen answered them, “[David] found favour before God, and desired to find a tabernacle for the God of Jacob. But Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things? Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Act.7:45-51).

The “stiff-necked” people Stephen spoke to were traditional and could not see the truth of the new covenant. They had rejected and killed Jesus who was the very fulfillment of the law and prophets they claimed to believe.

Christ our Passover lamb

Old Testament scriptures had pointed to the coming of Christ the redeemer. However, when he appeared in Israel only a few spiritual people recognised him as the one whom the scripture foretold. One such spiritual man was John the Baptist.

One day John looked at Jesus and exclaimed, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the*

world” (Joh.1:29). Those were strange words; at no time in the history of the Judeo faith was anyone referred to as a sacrificial lamb. Throughout the hundreds of years of performing rituals of the law, priests only slaughtered animals and it was the blood of animals that was known to cover the sins of people (Lev.16:14-16). But here John pointed to a human being who was not just to be another sacrifice but the real sacrifice; this sacrifice would not merely “cover” sins but take them away! Furthermore, it was not only the sin of Israel to be taken away but “*the sin of the world*”. Now, for the people who were present when John proclaimed Jesus to be the lamb of God, how many understood the depth and implication of his words? How many realized that John was referring to Isaiah’s prophecy which stated, “*He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth...thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin*” (Isa.53:7,10)?

The year was 30 AD and it had now been three years of Jesus confounding the established religious systems of the day. The powerful Word he preached and the signs and wonders which vindicated his ministry were to some a confirmation that he truly was the promised messiah of Israel, but to others, especially the influential religious men, Jesus was against Moses and was creating a cult that taught people to disregard the law. The latter were more powerful and politically inclined and they worked their way to kill Jesus.

The day was 14th Nissan when the Lord was nailed on the cross. That was the same day of preparing for the Passover when lambs were being killed - *“And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. Pilate saith unto them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore unto them to be crucified. And they took Jesus, and led him away. And he bearing his cross went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha: Where they crucified him, and two others with him, on either side one, and Jesus in the midst”* (Joh.19:14-18).

Unknown to the eyes of many that day, the bleeding lamb on Calvary’s cross was the fulfillment of the real Passover; all those whose hearts would believe and be washed by Christ’s precious blood would be saved from death and receive eternal life. In the gospel of John we read these wonderful words: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Joh.3:16).

Apostle Paul in the book of Hebrews explained in detail the meaning of the death of Jesus: *“And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the*

heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb.9:22-28).

**Like unleavened bread, his body never saw
corruption**

On the evening of 14th Nissan and through the day and night of 15th Nissan, which was a Saturday on the Julian calendar, Christ’s body lay in the tomb. That day was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Remember that for this feast the Jews were never to make or eat bread with leaven. Leaven is that substance that decomposes (‘corrupts’) the dough for making bread. The Lord, before his death, picked and broke unleavened bread which he said represented his body (Mat.26:26, 1 Cor.11:24). And just like unleavened bread, the body of the Lord was to never experience

corruption (decomposition) in the grave, for it had been foretold, *“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption”* (Psa.16:10). It is important to note that when life leaves the body, there are different stages of decay that occur to the body; it takes about 24 to 72 hours for internal organs to decompose after which the body bloats and decays quickly. However, God did not allow that sinless pure body and blood of Christ to experience corruption; he died late on Friday and arose at dawn on Sunday.

First fruits of the resurrection

At the break of the day on 16th Nisan 30 AD, Jesus rose from the dead! But he was not the only one to come out of the grave; there were also Old Testament saints he had raised from death. This group became the first to experience God’s power of redemption. Note that this event happened on the same day the Jews were celebrating the waving of the sheaf of first fruits. And just like the natural first fruits had to be waved before people, the resurrected saints also *“presented themselves to living people”* (Mat.27:53) for a testimony of the power of the New Covenant. In all this we see the truthfulness of the Lord’s word when he said *“one jot”* or *“one tittle”* of the law shall not pass away till all be fulfilled (Mat.5:18).

On the day he resurrected, Jews (as per tradition following the Feast of First Fruits) had started the

counting of days and sabbaths towards the Feast of Pentecost. Around that time hearts of Jews were all focussed on going to Jerusalem to participate in this important annual festival. The Lord had also instructed his disciples to go and wait in Jerusalem for the promise of the Holy Spirit. Notice that he fulfilled the first three feasts on their exact dates and Pentecost was now next.

Pentecost

During the ritual of the Feast of Pentecost a priest was required to wave two loaves made of leaven (Lev.23:17, 20). “*Two*” is a number of witness (2 Cor.13:1). Leavened bread represented fallen man who would receive grace to be filled with the Holy Spirit. That Holy Spirit would be a seal of the hope to one day get redeemed from the corruption of sin (Eph.1:13, 4:30, 1 Cor.15:53-55).

When it was about time for the promise of the Holy Spirit to be fulfilled, the Lord said to the disciples, “*ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me*” (Act.1:8). Like Jeremiah and Ezekiel had indicated in their prophecies, it is only when the Spirit of God fills a person that he or she can become a witness. When a person dies to the flesh and gets filled with the Spirit his life begins to manifest the nature of God. God begins to live through that person and he thus becomes a testimony of the living presence of God. Before this Spirit came on the disciples they had pride (think about

when some of them wanted to know who was the greatest among them), fear (think about the time when they ran away from the Lord at the time of his arrest) and they were short of understanding of many spiritual things. But it became a different story when they received the Spirit. It is only when God's Spirit lives and abides in us that we can become true witnesses of his power.

Sadly, however, many Jews had no understanding of these precious things that were soon to manifest among them. "*When the day of Pentecost was fully come*" many Israelites were busy with ovens and dough to make bread, for the law stipulated that on this day, "*Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of fine flour; they shall be baken with leaven; they are the firstfruits unto the LORD*" (Lev.23:17). However, there was a small number of people that had gathered in an upper room to witness the reality of what that age-old ritual had always pointed to. "*When the day of Pentecost was fully come*" that small group received the Holy Spirit and spoke in different tongues. That was the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy when he had proclaimed saying, "*it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions*" (Act.2:28).

Now, wonderful and great as these fulfillments were, the full depth of the new work God was doing could not

Till all be fulfilled

be fully comprehended by many people including some apostles. It simply was not easy to turn the corner from Law to Grace.

7.

TURNING THE CORNER

“ We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts ”

2 Pet.1:19

Jews lived in the traditions of the law for hundreds of years and so, turning the corner to leave behind their millennia-old rituals and embrace the real thing to which the rituals had pointed, could never be a simple decision. Among those who believed in the ministry of Christ were many people who initially lacked a complete understanding of what constituted the new covenant of Grace and that included some prominent apostles.

It is important to note that although the disciples had received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, it took a period of time for them to grow into the knowledge of the new work God was doing. The difficulties the early church experienced in trying to yield to the leading of the Holy Spirit “*into all truth*” can be seen in historical accounts written in the book of Acts. Epistles of apostles also contain portions of narrations that indicate that the understanding of the message of grace by the early church was gradual. Let us first look at the difficulty Jewish believers experienced in trying to accept the fact that Gentiles were now part of the faith.

At one time the Lord Jesus sent his disciples to go and preach and he strictly warned them to only minister to Israelites: “*These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of*

heaven is at hand" (Mat.10:5-7). At another time again when a Gentile woman pleaded for prayer he said, "*I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel*", and when the woman pleaded more for help, the Lord responded with a very offensive description by calling Gentiles "dogs", unworthy to partake of blessings which were a preserve of Israelites; "*It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs*", the Lord said (Mat.15:22-26). The lives of Gentiles were filled with filth, vanity and paganism. In the eyes of the Jews they were unclean animals. Now, having all this in their minds, and having heard the Lord Jesus refer to Gentiles as dogs, how did the disciples interpret the Lord's instruction for them to go into different nations to preach the Word? Well, they went about in different places but only preaching to Jewish communities. But a wonderful testimony occurred in Acts chapter 10 that began to enlighten all those who had ears to hear what the Spirit was speaking to believers.

Concerning clean and unclean animals

It so happened one day that while Peter was praying a strange vision appeared to him in which various unclean animals were offered for him to eat. "*Rise, Peter, kill and eat*" the voice of the Lord said (Act.10:13). The confusion in the mind of Peter over the words can be clearly seen in his response: "*Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten any thing that is common*

or unclean” (v.14). To that the voice answered, “*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*” (v.15).

Peter doubted the words given to him in the vision. Any of us, having been raised by a strict God-given dietary law which forbade the eating of unclean meats, would have also questioned the spiritual experience. However, a closer look at the law God had given in Leviticus shows that the animals were not naturally unclean in themselves but were declared thus by God’s Word. “*He is unclean unto you*” are words God repeatedly emphasized as he prescribed the dietary law (Lev.11:4-8). In the story of Noah, the man from whom all races of the world sprung (Gen.9:19), we read about God letting clean and unclean animals enter into one ark of safety (Gen.7:1-2). That was a prophetic omen: out of Noah would come “unclean” and “clean” nations but which would later all enter into one ark of salvation.

Out of Shem, one of the sons of Noah, came the nation of Israel. Whilst the whole world got corrupted in sin, God set Israel apart as a holy nation. The nation was to walk in his ways and never to follow the evil ways of other nations.

God gave Israel laws that regulated almost every aspect of their lives. A prominent characteristic of the laws was the concept of separation: There was to be no planting of different seeds in one field, no cross breeding of animals, and no wearing of a garment made of different materials (Lev.19:19)! These laws were a constant reminder for Jews to live holy, separated from

ways of darkness. The Jews were never to even eat with Gentiles. But note that it was in the plan of God right from the beginning to only use Israel as a beginning point for the deliverance of the entire human race. This intention was revealed in his words to Abraham when he said, *“my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations”* (Gen.17:4). God was to accomplish his Word through the seed that was promised to Abraham (Gen.22:18). That promised seed was Christ (Gal.3:16).

When the promised seed and redeemer came, his mission started with Israel (Mat.10:5-6). It was not yet time for the Gospel to go to the Gentiles. But the time was so much at hand that the Lord revealed to the disciples that no food was unclean of itself. His words confused the disciples and when they pressed him to explain more, he told them the plain truth: *“Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, ‘Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them’. After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ‘Are you so dull?’ he asked. ‘Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.’ (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)”* (Mar.7:14 -19, NIV). Notice the last words saint Mark added - *“In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean”*.

These were the same words the Spirit spoke to Peter when he said, “*What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common*” (Act.10:15).

While Peter was still pondering over the words of the vision, some Gentiles arrived at the gate looking for him. They had been sent by Cornelius, a commander in the Roman army. Cornelius was a Gentile but a God-fearing person. He experienced a vision in which he was told to look for a man called Simon Peter who would preach the Word to him and his people. Had Peter not experienced the same vision he would not have listened to those men. But he went with them and upon arrival he found a gathering of Gentiles to which he said: “*Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean*” (Act.10:28). Peter understood the meaning of his vision and he was following the leading of the Spirit into the truth God was revealing. As he preached to the gathering, something happened to the hearers of the Word that he and the other apostles had experienced on the day of Pentecost; he heard the people speak in tongues. God used the same sign of tongues to convince Peter that these people had received the same spirit he had received (Act.10:44-46).

What is important to learn in all this is that when the shadow-descriptor of “clean and unclean”, which was *tied* in animals, could no longer point to anything,

seeing that there was now “*neither Jew nor Greek*” (Gal.3:28), then the animals were also free of the labels.

Now, how did the Jews perceive the idea that God had cleansed all meats? Clearly many people saw that as a clear disregard for the dietary law God had given in Leviticus 11. Peter may not have plainly told his followers that they could now eat anything they wished. However, there was one, Paul, who also had a revelation over this matter and he never minced his words concerning the truth of the subject: “*I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean*” (Rom.14:14). However, Paul discouraged his disciples from engaging in futile debates over the matter; he advised his followers to receive those believers who still regarded dietary laws. However, he considered them to be weaker in faith as they had not fully comprehended the work God was doing: “*Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him*” (Rom.14:1-3). But to those who caused trouble over the subject Paul was firm and dismissed their teaching as a devilish doctrine: “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*

Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim.4:1-5).

An important question that may come up at this point is this: Did God change his mind over the Word when he started allowing the eating of meats which he had once forbidden? Not so. The Old Testament law was a shadow pointing to the real thing. We know that when light shines upon a shadow of an object it fades and disappears. However, the disappearance of a shadow is never a contradiction of (or a subtraction from) the substance of the object it represented. On the contrary the light makes the object appear more clearly. When something appears clearly we understand it better. Now, our growing and understanding of the Word is like that of a child.

At kindergarten a teacher may teach young children how to count using sticks. He or she may pick the first *green* stick and tell the child, “This is one”, and another *brown* stick, “This is two”. To the young mind, those sticks are actual numbers and it may confuse him if you started counting them the other way round, calling the brown stick *one* and the green stick *two*. But when a person grows older, he or she understands that *one* is

one and two is two; the number one may refer to one table, one book or one cup. So, a mature mind throws away the sticks and can perform complex computations in the heart. But note that in throwing away the sticks, one isn't throwing away arithmetic, and neither is the teacher changing his mind over what he earlier taught. Grown up people throw away the sticks because the 'spirit' of numbers and counting now abides in their heart! Likewise, "the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal.3:24-26).

Controversy over the law

It is interesting to note that after the death and resurrection of Jesus there were many Jews, including priests and Pharisees, who began to accept and believe the Gospel. In Acts 6:7 we read that "*the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith*". Wonderful as this may have seemed, it was the beginning of troubles for the early church. Were the converted Levitical priests, whose vocation had always been to serve in the temple, ready to see and accept the truth about animal sacrifices they offered, that they were now obsolete and had only served to point to the reality in Christ? Would the Pharisees throw away the traditions of their religion to

accept the deeper revelation of Christ? Well, as more priests, Pharisees and Jews became part of the Christian church, arguments and divisive contentions started occurring over these matters.

While it may have been easy for Christian Jews to believe in Jesus whilst holding on to teachings of the law, a greater confusion manifested when Gentiles (who were strangers to the law) believed the message of Christ. Remember that the law forbade mixing with Gentiles and a number of Jews could not accept the idea that Gentiles were now part of God's promises to Abraham. The Jews at Jerusalem even contended with Peter concerning his visit to Gentiles when he had gone to minister at the house of Cornelius. Peter had to do much explaining concerning how God led him to do what he did (Act.11:1-18).

One important thing to note here is that although God had dealt with Peter over the issue of God's grace to the Gentiles, he wasn't courageous enough to declare the full depth of the truth over the matter. On the other hand other apostles like James were still more inclined to the law. God needed a man who could completely surrender to the revelation of the truth of grace and be bold enough to declare the full counsel of God on the subject. God found that man in Paul, a scholar who prior to his conversion was completely devoted to the law - "*Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning*

zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (Phi.3:5-6). All that changed the day Paul encountered that bright shining light on the way to Damascus.

Paul, a fully yielded vessel

After his supernatural encounter Paul’s life took a sudden turn. He could no longer trust knowledge that was a mere product of human reasoning; he had been intelligent, much learned, and zealous towards the law but yet under the shining light of God’s light he found himself a blind ignorant man! He at this point never wanted to lean on his own understanding; he now desired to isolate himself and hear more truth from the same supernatural voice he encountered. So, Paul conferred to not even go and consult those who had been with the Lord before him. In his letter to the Galatians he recounted: “*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus*” (Gal.1:15-17).

The apostles were glad to learn of Paul’s conversion and they gave him the right hand of fellowship. Paul began to minister and go about places with Barnabas. He taught on the grace and salvation found in Christ.

However, it wasn't long before he started causing trouble among Jews who believed that a Christian still needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. It so happened one day that Paul heard some Jews teaching this doctrine and he engaged in very heated arguments with them. When no agreement could be reached the people decided to refer the matter to the apostles and elders at Jerusalem: *“And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question”* (Act.15:1-2).

At the Jerusalem Council

After much disputing over the question of whether Gentiles should be circumcised, at the meeting in Jerusalem, two men spoke. The first man to speak was Peter, a man God had dealt with through a vision regarding the issue of Gentiles. The second man to speak was James. Let us observe the difference between words of Peter and those of James: *“Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost,*

even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Act.15:7-11). Peter’s words were similar to those of Paul in the epistle to the Romans when he said, “For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness” (Rom.2:14). [Paul was clearly referring to the promise of God in Jeremiah 31:31 wherein he said the law would be written in the hearts of people and there would be thus no need to prescribe a list of “dos” and “don’ts” for them: “After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ... And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me” (Jer.31:33-34)].

After Peter spoke, the multitude kept silent. Paul and Barnabas then took the opportunity to testify of the great works God wrought through them among the Gentiles. Next James spoke: *“Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name...Wherefore my sentence is, that we*

trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day” (v.13).

Note that although James said the Gentiles were not to be troubled by the law, he still felt it necessary to emphasize laws forbidding idolatry, fornication and the eating of blood. The gathering of apostles and elders at Jerusalem agreed with him and a letter was sent to the Gentiles to that effect – *“It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things”* (v.28).

Paul and Barnabas continued with their ministry of preaching among Gentiles.

Bad reputation about Paul’s ministry spreads

Many miracles were wrought through Paul’s ministry and many Gentiles received salvation. Sadly, however, among Jewish believers, there was bad talk about Paul’s ministry.

Paul was accused of teaching Gentiles to forsake the teachings of Moses and to disregard the importance or sacredness of the temple in Jerusalem. But Paul and

Barnabas were determined to establish people in the teachings of the new covenant of Grace. Among the places where they spent a considerable amount of time doing this was Antioch.

In Antioch many Gentiles received the gospel and the Word of God flourished. There in Antioch Christian Jews and Gentiles lived as one family of Christ. They fellowshiped and ate together without any segregation between Jews and Gentiles. The fellowship was filled with spiritual liberty. The people of Antioch witnessed the Spirit of Christ in believers and it was there that believers were first called Christians. It was thus in Antioch that Christians first came to known as Christians (Act.11:27). Testimonies of what was going on in Antioch spread and Peter decided to visit the believers there.

Peter enjoyed the fellowship in Antioch and there he experienced the liberty and oneness between Christian Jews and Gentiles that was not in Jerusalem. In Antioch he saw the full expression of what God had spoken to him about Gentiles being part of God's blessings. He also joined in to freely eat and fellowship with the Gentiles. However, as is always the case when God is doing a work, negative news spread about the happenings in Antioch. There were some Christian Jews who believed Paul was in error with his doctrine of grace. It wasn't long before some Jewish believers began to visit Antioch, not to fellowship but to spy out the going-ons in the church there. Paul became aware of

their mission and he was determined to give them no place in impressing them or giving them an opportunity to spread their influence (Gal.2:4-5). However, a sad incident occurred when followers of apostle James visited and Peter became afraid of what they would make of the fellowship at Antioch. The fear made Peter to withdraw from eating with and freely fellowshiping with the Gentile believers. This hypocritical behavior influenced Barnabas and the Jewish believers in the church.

Paul rebukes Peter at Antioch

The hypocrisy exhibited by Peter, Barnabas, and the Jewish believers made Paul angry. He decided to openly rebuke Peter. Here is what he recounted about this event in his letter to the Galatians:

“When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray. When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in front of them all, You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs? We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles know that a person is not justified by the

works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified” (Gal.2:11-16, NIV).

How did Peter react to what Paul said? What rumours spread about the rebuke? We may not know the details of the incident but we are certain of this: there were carnal believers who began to twist words of Paul to start living lawless lives in abusing the liberty of grace. But we are comforted to know that there were also those who perceived the inspiration of the Spirit in Paul’s teachings. One such a person who perceived Christ’s ministry through was none other than Peter himself. In one of his letters this is what he said about Paul and those who were twisting his words to live lawless lives: *“the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness”* (2 Pet.3:15-16).

Falsehoods always spread faster than truth and so it wasn’t long before various misunderstandings,

misinterpretations, and lies about Paul's teachings began to spread. On one hand were Jews who believed Paul taught Gentiles to desecrate the law and on the other hand were some Gentiles who abused grace into disgrace (cf. 1 Cor.5:1-2, Gal.5:13). Unfortunately, it is the negative reputation that always preceded Paul among Jewish believers.

To Jerusalem

It so happened a certain year that Paul desired to go to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, to meet and fellowship with the apostles, elders and different believers in Jerusalem (Act.20:16). It was a long journey he had had, travelling from Ephesus through Corinth, Macedonia, Miletus, Tyre, Caesarea, and finally to Jerusalem. He was stopping by these different places to fellowship with believers.



Paul's journey from Corinth to Jerusalem

Whilst Paul was glad to meet believers in these different places, they were sorrowful because in every place a prophecy would be given about his impending arrest in Jerusalem. When he was at Miletus, Paul called for a meeting with elders of the church at Ephesus where he had spent three years establishing the believers in the Word. He called to bid them farewell. He said to them, *“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house, Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”* (Act.20:20-24).

At Tyre, the ship Paul boarded was to unload for some days and so he used the free time to fellowship with some believers. These believers also prophesied about the impending trouble at Jerusalem (Act.21:2-4). At Caesarea Paul stayed at the home of Philip the evangelist. It was during his stay there that another prophecy was given by Agabus. The prophet took Paul’s girdle, tied his own hands and feet and prophesied saying, *“Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall*

the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (v.11). The brethren tried to persuade him not to proceed with the journey but he was determined to go and he told them he was not afraid to experience the worst in Jerusalem: *“What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus”* (v.13). When the brethren saw that they could not convince him to change his mind they left the matter in the hands of the Lord saying, *“The will of the Lord be done”* (v.14).

Paul arrives in Jerusalem, James and the elders express their concern

When Paul finally arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received him gladly and on the following day he went to meet James and the elders. After he testified about the great works God wrought among the Gentiles, the elders first praised God and then proceeded to express their concern about the negative reputation of his ministry among the Jews: *“And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the*

multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come” (Act.21:20-22). The last words (in verse 22) shows that Paul’s visit to Jerusalem was quite an inconvenience to the *status quo* among believers in Jerusalem and the apostles and elders were quite uncomfortable about the news which would quickly spread about Paul’s visit.

Notice what manner of believers were at the church in Jerusalem: they believed in the message of Christ but were also zealous for the law of Moses. Furthermore, James and the elders at Jerusalem actually leaned towards the law. This is evident in the advice they gave Paul: *“Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law”* (Act.21:24). In this we also see that it was the fear for people why the other apostles could not fully surrender and yield to the leading of the Spirit about the subject of grace. But Paul was as surrendered as a glove is to a hand that fills it.

The elders at Jerusalem feared for Paul but he was not afraid; God had already spoken to him concerning what awaited him. He complied with the advice they gave him and it was while he sat in the temple that someone recognised him and screamed out to the crowd, *“This is the man, that teacheth all men every*

where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place” (Act.21:28). Pandemonium broke out and the whole city was stirred with rage against Paul, ready to kill him. The Roman soldiers moved in quickly to quell the uproar and they arrested Paul.

Paul declares the whole counsel of God

The sufferings Paul passed through made him bolder in declaring the whole counsel of God concerning the new covenant of Grace. Instead of attenuating his voice over the teaching of grace he went on to shed more light on the law and reduced all its pertinent matters to mere shadows.

In his first letter to Corinthian believers, written about three years after the Jerusalem Council which had admonished Gentiles not to eat foods offered to idols, Paul told them to eat whatever was sold or placed before them explaining that an idol could never own anything because everything that is in the earth belongs to God - *“Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no question for conscience sake: For the earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that showed it, and for conscience sake: for the*

earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (1 Cor. 10:25-28).

To Galatian believers Paul touched on the most revered rituals of the law, the Feasts of Yahweh and sabbath days, explaining that they were shadows which pointed to the reality in Christ: "*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days. Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ*" (Gal.2:16-17). And to those believers who still felt it was important to observe certain days to be holy he admonished, "*But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain*" (Gal.4:9-11).

It was a gradual transition

It should be clear by now that the transition from Law to Grace among Christians of the early church was a gradual process. As revealed by words of James and elders at Jerusalem when Paul visited them, most Christian Jews had continued to observe circumcision, dietary laws, holy feasts, and the keeping of the weekly sabbath - "*Thou seest, brother*", James and the elders told Paul, "*how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law*" (Act.21:20).

Paul would at times and through patience try to identify with the customary practices of the law in order to avoid causing offence. This is evident in the incident that occurred when the elders at Jerusalem told him to perform a purification rite to identify with the law of Moses (Act.21:23-24). We also read in Romans (an epistle he wrote between 54 and 57 AD) his instruction to those who understood the message of Grace, concerning the eating of meats; he told them not to get into arguments and to accept those who were still inclined to dietary laws. *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him”* (Rom.14:1-2). However, as the tension between those of the law and those of Grace continued to grow, and as persecution increased on him, but above all, as the presence of the Lord kept appearing to him to give him strength (cf. Act.23:11, 2 Cor.12:8-9), Paul could no longer mince his words over the New Covenant teaching. In latter epistles we see him using stronger language to dismiss beliefs of believers who were still inclined to practices of the law. For example when addressing the issue of clean and unclean meats this is what he wrote in a letter to Timothy in 65 AD: *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to*

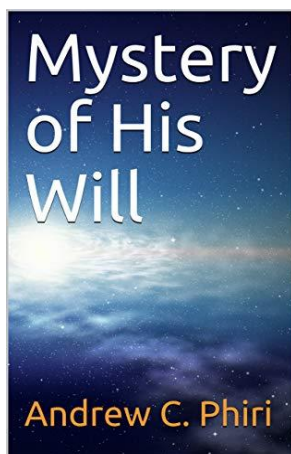
seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim.4:1).

It is interesting to note that the last epistle of Paul was addressed to Jews and it was a detailed letter explaining the complete message of the new testament of Grace⁸. In the epistle to the Hebrews he gave a full explanation about how the various rituals of the Old Testament all pointed to Christ. He went further to touch on three most revered institutions of the Jewish Law – the sabbath, the temple and Levitical priesthood.

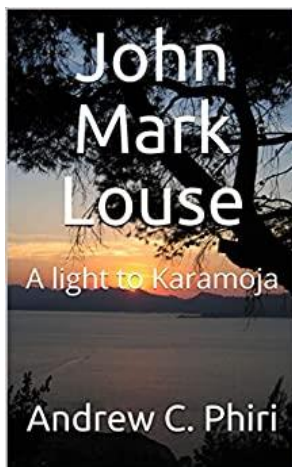
Continued in Part 2.

⁸ It was written at a much later date, most likely around 67AD.

OTHER BOOKS



Mystery of His Will



John Mark Louse: a light to Karamoja

APPENDIX

I. Intercalation of Sunilunar Calendar

Israel's calendar was not just *lunar* but *lunisolar*. The lunar cycles were tied to the solar year. Here is what that means: a lunar month is about 29.5 days. 12 months of a lunar year would thus equal 29.5×12 which equals about 354 days. But a solar year consists of 365 days. That is the length of time it takes for the earth to revolve around the sun. This means that a lunar calendar is short of 11 days to make a solar year.

Now, what would happen if Israel were only to use the lunar calendar without considering the solar year? There would be problems in observing some of the holy feasts. For example the Feast of First Fruits has to occur in spring. Although the lunar calendar is good at establishing months, it is the sun that determines when spring or summer occurs.

If the 11 days gap between the lunar calendar and solar calendar goes unchecked and unreconciled, the Feast of Fruits will always be celebrated 11 days earlier each year and that will gradually make it drift to winter then to fall and summer and so on. So, to synchronize the lunar year with the solar year authorities used to add an additional month after a certain period of time. The year when this was done was called *shana me'uberet*, a leap year. In this way the lunar calendar was locked to the solar calendar of 365 days.

II. Sundial

Sundials were used to measure time (see image of a sundial below).



Since at 12:00, during the day, the sun is at its highest point and the shadow appears straight on top of the dial, that indicated midday, *noon*. In moving past the noon, the shadow moved downward until it disappeared in the evening. If the highest point of a day was noon, then the lowest would be at midnight and the counting had to start again. Thus, a new day started at midnight. That is what ancient Egyptians did and to this day the world still counts a new day from midnight.

III. Worshiping of celestial bodies

It has been argued that Israel was forbidden to engage in pagan practices of observing celestial bodies and therefore could not have used them to reckon time. However, a look

at Deuteronomy 17:2-5, Job 31:26-28, and 2 Kings 23:5 indicates that the worshipping of celestial bodies is what God forbade.

Genesis 1:14 and many other passages of scripture show that the sun, moon and stars were given to man by God for time-reckoning. The language of Job in describing “*Acturus*”, “*Orion*”, “*Plaides*” and “*Mazzaroth*” (Job 9:9, 38:1-2) shows that he had much knowledge about constellations of stars but yet in all this he was careful never to revere them as gods (Job 31:26-28). Pagan nations had days dedicated to worshipping the moon (moon day or what we call *Monday* today), another for the planet Saturn (*Saturday*), and there was a day for worshipping the sun (*Sunday*). It is these pagan practices that God forbade Israel to do. This is similar to what we read in Exodus 20:4 when God had commanded Israelites saying, “*Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath*”, but he is the same God who instructed Moses to make images of Cherubims on a lid that covered the Ark of Covenant (Exo. 37:7-9). Heathen nations made the graven images to be worshipped but that was clearly not the case with Israelites.

IV. Hebrew calendar month names

The names of months on the Hebrew calendar are not the same as those on the Gregorian calendar. The table below shows the months of the Hebrew calendar and their equivalents on the Gregorian calendar.

Appendix

Sequence (Biblical)	Sequence (Civil)	Name	Gregorian equivalent
1	7	Nisan	Mar/Apr
2	8	Iyar	Apr/May
3	9	Sivan	May/Jun
4	10	Tammuz	Jun/Jul
5	11	Av	Jul /Aug
6	12	Elul	Aug/Sep
7	1	Tishri	Sep/Oct
8	2	Cheshvan	Oct/Nov
9	3	Kislev	Nov/Dec
10	4	Tevet	Dec/Jan
11	5	Shevat	Jan/Feb
12	6	Adar	Feb/Mar

REFERENCES

- Benner, J.A.(2020). *Methuselah*. Ancient Hebrew Research Center [Online] Available from <https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/names/Methuselah.htm> [Accessed August 21,2020].
- Brown, R. (1993). The Message of Deuteronomy. *The Bible Speaks Today*. InterVarsity Press: Illinois.
- Britannica (2014). Mount Gerizim. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [Online] Available from <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-Gerizim> [Accessed August 26, 2020].
- Britannica (2019). Synagogue. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. [Online] Available from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/synagogue> [Accessed August 26, 2020].
- Copan, P. (2011). *Is God a Moral Monster: Making Sense of the Old Testament God*. BakerBooks: Michigan.
- Jacobs, J. and Adler, C. (1906). History of Calendar. *Jewish Encyclopedia* [Online] Available from <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3920-calendar-history-of> [Accessed October 3, 2020].
- Padfield, D. (2009). *The Abominations of the Canaanites*. [Online] Available from <https://www.padfield.com/acrobat/history/canaanite-abominations.pdf> [Accessed August 22, 2020].
- Pfandl, G. (n.d). *Weekly Sabbath or Lunar Sabbath?*

References

- [Online] Available from https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Weekly%20Sabbath%20or%20Lunar%20Sabbath_0.pdf [Accessed August 15, 2020].
- Rodriguez, A. M. (n.d.). *What about a Lunar Sabbath?* [Online] Available from <https://adventistbiblicalresearch.org/materials/theology-Sabbath/what-about-lunar-Sabbath> [Accessed August 15, 2020].
- Stern, S. (2020). *Babylonian Calendar and the Bible*. [Online] Available from <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/places/related-articles/babylonian-calendar-and-the-bible> [Accessed October 3, 2020].
- Uclhibu (2015). The origins of the seven-day week. *Calendars in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Standardization and Fixation* [Online] Available from <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/calendars-ancient-medieval-project/2015/07/08/the-origins-of-the-seven-day-week/#:~:text=Despite%20the%20great%20antiquity%20of,day%20week%20in%20priestly%20literature> [Accessed September 16, 2020].

