

Eden To Eden

by

Lonnie Woodruff

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Introduction

Do Christians really need another book about the church? Many hours of studying, preaching, teaching, and writing have been dedicated to this subject. The Lord built one church, but through the years, man has formulated many ideas concerning the meaning of this great institution. Out of man's thinking has grown hundreds of different organizations, all claiming to be the Lord's church. Therefore, considering all the different ideas about the church, we realize that more study on this subject is greatly needed. Is it possible to sort out the truth? A method of arriving at a common understanding of Biblical teachings concerning the church must surely exist.

Possible ways of studying the church are many, but we feel one way has long been overlooked and may possibly be the most effective way of all to understand the spiritual institution that Christ gave us. Old Testament prophecies, which foretell of the first coming of Christ and describe the church that he would establish at that time, give us beautiful descriptions of the church before it was established. We know that Jesus established the church exactly as he planned to do. Therefore, if we study these Old Testament descriptions, we will learn more about the church that exists today. Actually, the main problem in this type of study is selecting which prophecies to discuss. Because of the number of prophecies concerning the church, it is impossible to study them all. In this book we will attempt to deal with some of the most familiar people, places and events of the Old Testament and determine how they relate to the church today.

Now that we have stated how we plan to study the church, the obvious problem is understanding the meaning of these Old Testament prophecies. To many people, the study of Bible prophecy is fascinating, and many of the proposed interpretations do not coincide with the teachings

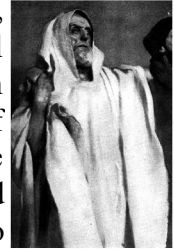
we know to be true about scripture. We have all heard of the dooms day prophets who prey on people by claiming they can predict the date of the end of the world by using the Bible. Many of those dates have come and gone, so we must not be fooled into believing such predictions. Others attempt to predict the end of time by identifying certain nations as symbols of Bible prophecy. The Soviet Union was once a favorite subject of these types of interpretations, but it is no longer a nation. Once again those types of prophecies have failed. Still others predict the coming of an "anti-christ" whom they say will rule the world and gather the nations to battle against Christ and his followers. 1John 2:18 tells us that many anti-Christ's were already in the world during the first century. An anti-christ is not coming; many of them are already here and have been for two thousand years. These predictions too fail when tested by the scriptures.

With all these false predictions being made by using Bible prophecies, is it possible to understand them correctly? The answer is - yes! The method that must be used is to let the Bible supply its own interpretations. If we use this approach, we have a foundation for interpretation that everyone could use to reach the same conclusion as to the meanings of these Old Testament prophecies. The purpose of this book is, therefore, to build a foundation for interpreting prophecy and then use that foundation to learn more about the church today.

This study will not be the last that needs to be written about the church, but hopefully it will increase our understanding and appreciation for the greatest institution on this earth established by God himself - the church of Jesus Christ.

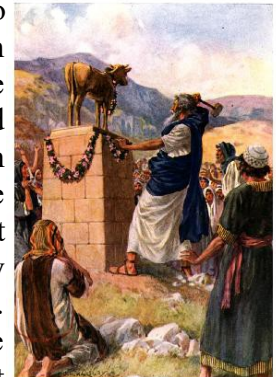
The Purpose of Prophecy

As we begin this journey through scripture to study more about the church of our Lord, it is very important that we understand the purpose of prophecy, especially Old Testament prophecy. So much confusion concerning Old Testament prophecy exists today that many lose sight of the reasons for those prophecies. The Old Testament prophets did basically three things. First, they were God's spokesmen to the people (Isa 6.9). God dealt directly with Israel through the mouths of the prophets as they spoke to the people and instructed them in the ways of God. Along with these instructions were warnings of the consequences of disobeying God's commands. The prophets seemed to spend much of their time



warning Israel to turn back to the ways of God because Israel fell away so frequently. They also prophesied of the destruction and captivity of the nation of Israel if they did not follow God's instructions (Micah 1:1-6). Prophets such as Isaiah and Micah prophesied many times concerning the destruction of Israel and their eventual captivity in Assyria and Babylon. Because Israel failed to heed the warnings of the prophets, they were eventually taken captive. Therefore, one of the purposes of prophecy was to relay God's instructions to the people of Israel and foretell of events to come if they failed to follow God.

Secondly, the prophets demonstrated the power of God in order to convince the people that God is the one and only true and living God. Through the prophets, God showed them many signs and wonders which should have convinced the people that he was truly God. But as we all know, Israel turned to other gods on many occasions, and God punished them because of it. Even as Moses was on mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, the people made an image of a golden calf to worship. Israel seemingly ignored the great miracles performed by God. They fell away many times and eventually became an idolatrous nation. Because of that, God sent them into captivity. We should point out the fact that this is also how Christ convinced man that he was the Son of God when he was on this earth. He did many miracles that could have only been performed by God. Because of these actions, some believed but others still refused to accept him as the Messiah. These miracles were also recorded in order to convince mankind throughout the ages that Christ was the Son of God. Heb. 2:4 says,



God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God performed many miracles through the prophets in order to convince Israel that he was the one true God, and Christ performed many miracles while he was on earth to convince all mankind that he was the Son of God. Since the beginning of time, man has been difficult to convince of the existence and power of God, even while witnessing events that could have only been performed by a higher power.

Finally, the prophets prophesied of the coming of the Messiah. They foretold of better times to come when Jesus would come to this earth to redeem all mankind from their sins. They foretold of the circumstances surrounding Christ's coming to this earth and the spiritual kingdom that he would establish for man to dwell in as they sought to follow him. It is very important to understand that the prophets in Old Testament time prophesied of the first coming of Christ and the

establishment of the church. Many people in the religious world today believe there are some Old Testament prophecies yet to be fulfilled. They place these prophecies in the same time frame as those in the book of Revelation. They assume these Old Testament prophecies will be fulfilled with the second coming of Christ. This assumption causes many problems in interpretation and much misunderstanding of scripture. All who read the Old Testament understand that many of the prophecies foretold of a kingdom to be established by Jesus Christ. The problem then arises as to when the kingdom would be established. Those who believe the Old Testament prophecies are to be fulfilled with the second coming of Christ believe this kingdom will be established at that time. From this type of reasoning is born all types of premillennial and postmillennial theories of the second coming of Jesus Christ and his establishment of the kingdom. These beliefs concerning Old Testament prophecy, combined with a misunderstanding of Revelation chapter 20, cause many to believe that Christ will set up a literal kingdom on this earth and reign for 1000 years when he comes again. The Bible says in Heb. 9:27, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Also in John 5:28-29 we read,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.

These passages prove that judgment will immediately follow the resurrection of the dead. Speaking of Christ, 1Pet 1:20 tells us that he was manifest for us in these "last times." Since Christ has already made himself known to man, we must therefore be in the "last times" upon this earth. There will be no future "time" of 1000 years for mankind in this present world. Neither is Christ coming back to this earth to establish a literal kingdom in Jerusalem and reign for one thousand years. These theories can be discarded by simply understanding that the prophets of the Old Testament prophesied of the first coming of Christ and the establishment of a glorious spiritual kingdom known as the church.

The people who believe that Christ is coming again to establish an earthly kingdom for one thousand years are making the same identical mistake the Apostles made in Acts 1:6. As Jesus spoke with his disciples shortly before his ascension to heaven, they asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Evidently they were expecting Christ to establish an earthly, physical kingdom and physically reign on the throne of David in Jerusalem. They must have anticipated him to reign as king of the Jewish nation and cause it to become the most powerful nation on earth. They must have also expected a time of peace and comfort as the Son of God himself led them. All these people had ever known or understood was an earthly kingdom. They were a part of the nation of Israel which began with Abraham, and they did not understand that Christ was going to give them something different - a spiritual kingdom that would stand forever. Jesus answered them in Acts 1:7-8 by explaining,



It is not for you to know the time or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

Jesus answered their question about the kingdom by explaining that when they received power by the Holy Ghost's coming upon them, then they would be witnesses for Christ. The Holy Ghost came upon them on the day of Pentecost as described in Acts 2:1-4 which states,

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them

cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.

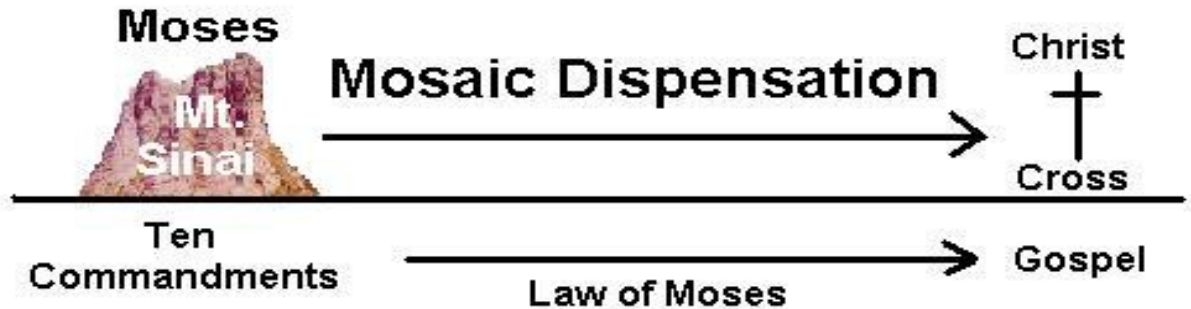
This event occurred when Christ established his kingdom and answered the apostles' question concerning when the kingdom of Israel would be restored. It came in the form of a spiritual kingdom instead of a physical, earthly kingdom. This was also the fulfillment of many prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the kingdom that Christ would establish. Let us not continue to look for an earthly kingdom with Christ reigning on the throne; but instead, let us understand that he has already established the kingdom he intended to establish. It is a spiritual, heavenly kingdom instead of a physical, earthly kingdom. The people of Israel had already experienced an earthly kingdom, and they had fallen away and suffered for many years because of it. Christ gave us something much better. He gave us a spiritual kingdom that will last forever. Heb. 12:28a says, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved." The old earthly kingdom of Israel was taken out of the way so the spiritual kingdom of God, the church, could be established. The church is a kingdom that will never be moved. It is a major step backward to believe that Christ will come back to this earth and do away with the spiritual kingdom to reestablish an earthly kingdom. Since we can now be members of a spiritual, heavenly kingdom, why could we possibly again want an earthly kingdom?

It is also important to understand that all the prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Christ and the church were fulfilled at the first coming of Christ. They were all fulfilled, not just a few or even most, but all. To pick and choose which prophecies we believe were fulfilled and which were not is no better than believing all are yet to be fulfilled. It would be very difficult to convince someone that certain prophecies in the Old Testament refer to the first coming of Christ if we believe there are other prophecies that refer to his second coming. We have no foundation for our position if we agree that there are prophecies in the Old Testament that deal with the second coming of Christ. We must stand on the premise that all Old Testament prophecy has been fulfilled. Scriptures substantiate this fact. Speaking of the time of the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church, Acts 3:24 states, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that followed after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." "These days" is a reference to the first coming of Christ. The prophets, all of them ("as many as have spoken") foretold of the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church. They described the spiritual kingdom of the Christian dispensation and the relationship that God's people who dwell in this kingdom have with him.

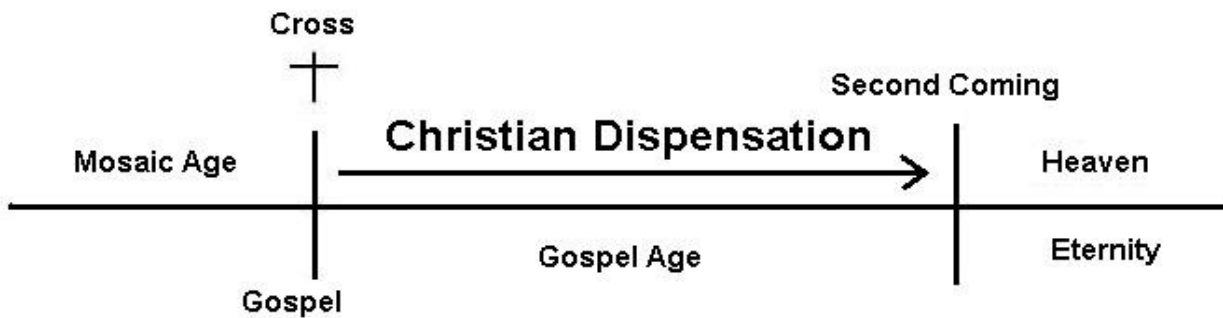
Granted, some prophecies at first seem to read as though they could only be speaking of the second coming of Christ. But, as we continue through this study, we believe it will become evident that every prophecy made by the prophets was fulfilled during the first coming of Christ and his establishment of the church. The prophetic language used by God through the mouth of the prophets applies to the church that Christ established at his first coming. Because we believe this, it now becomes our task to examine the prophecies of the Old Testament and determine their meanings concerning the spiritual, heavenly kingdom, which Christ established at his first coming. We must use these prophecies to understand the church. Some of the greatest lessons possible concerning the church can be learned by studying these prophecies and seeing how God describes the church that we dwell in today. We will begin to see and understand the church as God described it. Our appreciation for the church should be greatly increased as we begin to view the church as described by God.

Prophecies in Revelation

In contrast to the prophecies of the Old Testament, which foretold of events to take place during the Mosaic dispensation and the first coming of Christ, prophecies of the Revelation speak concerning events of this Christian dispensation and the second coming of Christ. The Old



Testament prophets prophesied of events to take place in the lives of the Israelite people. They also gave Israel hope by prophesying of a better time when the Messiah would come to this earth. As John recorded the visions given to him by God in the book of Revelation, he was making prophecies concerning the Christian dispensation and the second coming of Christ. He told of many events that would occur during this dispensation and would affect the lives of Christians. He also gave us hope through the promise of Christ coming a second time and taking his people home to live with him



forever. The same pattern and purpose of prophecy is used in Revelation as in the Old Testament, but the times of the fulfillment of these prophecies are completely different. The Old Testament prophecies dealt with Israel and the first coming of Christ. The Revelation deals with the church and the second coming of Christ. Hopefully, as we read the prophecies of Revelation today, they will help all Christians to remain faithful and trust in God just as the prophecies of the Old Testament were meant to keep Israel faithful. We must keep the times of the prophecies of the Old Testament and the Revelation separated.

In addition to this, Revelation shows that prophecies made in the Old Testament have been fulfilled. When Jesus came to earth, he fulfilled all the prophecies made in the Old Testament concerning himself, as well as all the prophecies concerning the church which he would establish. Revelation gives us beautiful descriptions of the church after its establishment, and each and every one of these descriptions can be traced back to an Old Testament prophecy. Much of the prophetic language used in the Old Testament to describe the church that Jesus established is used in John's Revelation to describe the church after it was established. Revelation shows us that the prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled.

In this study it is of utmost importance to understand that the last two chapters of Revelation describe the church. The same prophetic symbols used in the Old Testament to describe the church before it was established are used again in Revelation to describe the church after it was established. Revelation 21:10 defines the subject of John's vision recorded in chapters 21 and 22 as "the bride, the Lamb's wife" which is the church. This is explained in detail in our commentary on Revelation titled *Revelation for Christians Today*. Some of the same symbols used in Revelation to describe the church today are used in the Old Testament to describe the church before it was established. A simple example of this can be seen by comparing Isaiah 60:11 to some of the statements made concerning the church in the last two chapters of Revelation. As Isaiah writes this prophecy concerning the church to come, he states,

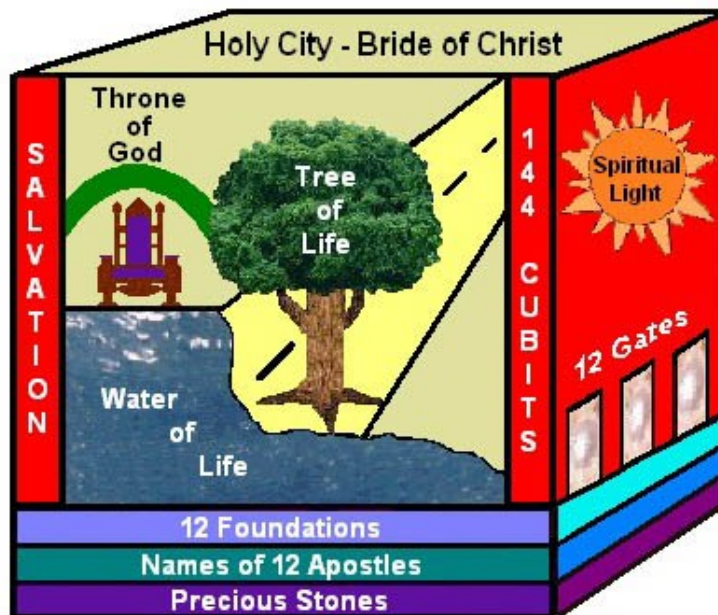
Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought.

Then, John writes in Rev. 21:25, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day." Also Rev. 21:24 states,

And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.

In these passages we see the same, almost identical, language used to describe the church both before and after its establishment. The visions of Revelation describe the church in the same terms that Isaiah used to prophesy of its coming. The description of the church in Revelation is a fulfillment of the prophecy of the church in Isaiah. We must understand that God explained what the church would be like through the mouths of the prophets, and he instituted it exactly as he said he would. God then proceeded to give us a beautiful description of that glorious spiritual kingdom which Christians dwell in today through the pen of John in the book of Revelation.

Throughout this study, the graphic on the following page will be used to represent the church. It is drawn from the symbols used in Revelation chapters 21 and 22.



Types and Patterns

In addition to the symbolic language by the spoken word of the Old Testament prophets, there are many prophecies that use types or patterns. These prophecies in the Old Testament use actual people, objects and events to foreshadow people, objects and events to come in the Christian dispensation. Heb 10:1a states, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things." The old Law of Moses was a shadow of the new law given by Jesus Christ, but not the very image of it. The old law was a pattern that we can study to learn more about the gospel of Christ. Many objects and events in the Old Testament were shadows or patterns of things to come in the New Testament. Speaking of events that took place in the lives of the people of Israel during the time of Moses, 1Cor. 10:11a states, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition." Events, which took place in the lives of the people of Israel, were examples for us to study and learn more about the better things we now have during the Christian dispensation. By studying people, circumstances and events in the Old Testament, we can learn much about people, circumstances and events in this present Christian dispensation. Because of the importance of understanding this type of prophecy, some examples will be given at this point in order to illustrate what is meant by types and patterns. A common pattern with which most are familiar is that Moses was a type of Christ. Many of the actual events that took place in the life of Moses were pictures of things to take place in the life of Christ. The table on the following page illustrates some parallels between the lives of Moses and Christ.

Moses

1. Pharoah declared that all male children would be killed at the time of Moses' birth.
2. Moses led his people out of physical bondage in Egypt.
3. God gave the Ten Commandments, old law, through Moses
4. Israel followed the words spoken by Moses.
5. Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai.
6. Moses built the Tabernacle.

Christ

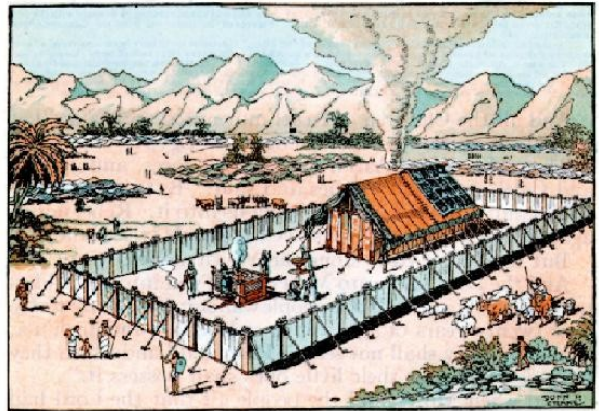
1. Herod declared that all male children would be killed at the time of Christ's birth.
2. Christ led his people out of the spiritual bondage of sin.
3. God gave the gospel, new law, through Jesus Christ.
4. Christians follow the words spoken by Christ.
5. Christ gave the gospel on spiritual Mount Zion.
6. Christ built the True Tabernacle.

Many other comparisons could be made between the lives of Moses and Christ, but these should be sufficient to show that Moses was an Old Testament likeness of Jesus Christ. Several of these types will be discussed in future sections of this study. These types and patterns were understood and used by the writers in the New Testament. For example, Peter used the fourth illustration given above as he quoted from Deuteronomy 18:15 in Acts 3:22. He stated,

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

Peter recognized that Moses was a likeness of Christ and used this pattern to explain that Christians today should listen to the words of Christ, just as Israel of old listened to Moses.

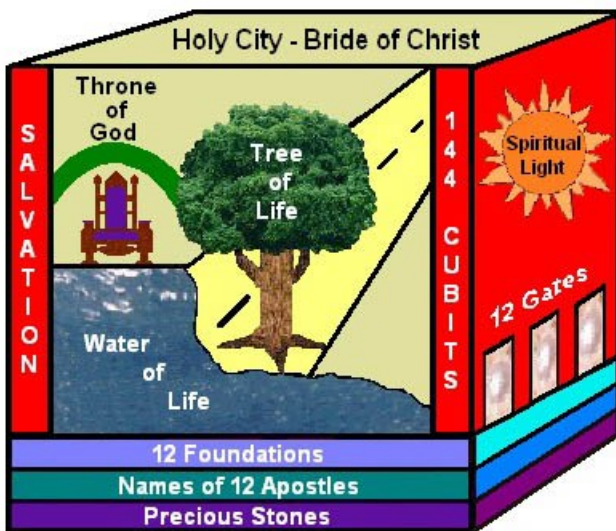
Example number six given above is that Moses was instructed to build the tabernacle, which was a likeness of Christ building the true tabernacle. Moses was responsible to build the physical tabernacle that the Israelites carried with them in the wilderness. Christ built a spiritual tabernacle, the church, which Christians dwell in today. Speaking of our high priest, Jesus Christ, Hebrews 8:1-2 states, Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.



Moses was the man who pitched or built the first tabernacle. Man did not pitch the second or true tabernacle, the church. It was built by Jesus Christ himself.

This Old Testament tabernacle also contained items that were patterns of worship in the church today. Some of these will also be discussed later. It is only when we see these relationships that we truly understand the meaning of the tabernacle. The point is that the physical tabernacle in the time of Moses was a pattern of the spiritual tabernacle to be built by Jesus Christ, which is the church.

This brings us to another important concept to understand about Old Testament prophecy: the use of literal, physical events in the Old Testament as patterns of spiritual events



in the New Testament. As discussed above, the church is a spiritual institution, and we can learn much about it by studying the physical Old Testament pattern, the tabernacle. These spiritual concepts are items that cannot be seen or touched. Speaking to Christians, the writer in Heb. 12:18 says, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched." This is referring to mount Sinai where Moses received the Ten Commandments. Mount Sinai was a physical mountain that the Israelites could see and touch. Then, Heb. 12:22 explains, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Verse 23 then calls mount Sion the "general assembly and church of the firstborn." The church is a "heavenly" institution that cannot be seen or touched. It is a spiritual institution. Spiritual entities are described in the Bible by using physical objects that we can see and feel. The only way man can understand the spiritual things of the Christian dispensation is to have them explained in physical terms. This compares to the parables Jesus used to teach his disciples. As Jesus spoke in parables, he taught valuable lessons

about the church and how Christians should live on this earth by using common examples of everyday life situations. Physical situations and events were used to teach spiritual lessons. One main difference in the parables and the patterns of the Old Testament is that the parables were not necessarily actual events. As stated before, most of them were commonly known and understood everyday situations. In contrast the Old Testament types and patterns used actual people and events to teach lessons about spiritual matters which were to come in the Christian dispensation.

Man has 2 parts to his total being



Physical Body & **Spiritual Soul**

In order to understand how these prophecies work by using physical events to describe spiritual events, we must keep in mind that man has two parts to his total being. He has the flesh, which is the physical part of his being, and he has a spirit, which is his soul or the spiritual part of his being. As discussed above the Law of Moses was a shadow of the law of Christ. The Law of Moses was a law of the flesh (Rom. 7:5-7), which dealt with the physical lives of man. It proved that man was weak in the flesh and could not live righteously under a law directed at the physical part of his being. In other words, he could not gain spiritual life for his soul because he was weak in the flesh. In order to gain salvation for his soul, man needed a Savior and a law that provided forgiveness of the sins he committed in the flesh. The gospel of Christ provides that forgiveness and allows us to have spiritual life for our souls (Rom. 8:2). The gospel is a law that deals with the spiritual part of man. The events that took place in the lives of the

people in Old Testament times were physical. They dealt with the fleshly part of man. They were physical types or patterns of the law of Christ that deals with the spiritual part of man and allows us to have salvation for our souls

When we obey the gospel of Christ, we obtain spiritual life. An illustration of this is given in Rom. 8:1 which states,

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Notice the terms "flesh" and "spirit". This is a contrast between the physical part of man and his spiritual part. Those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned. They are walking in the ways of the spirit and not the flesh. This is also a contrast between the Law of Moses and Christ. The Law of Moses is called a law of the "flesh," but the law of Christ is a law of the "spirit." This flesh will pass away but our soul will live on forever if we walk after the spiritual ways of the Lord. Rom 8:13 says, "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." In this world in which we live, it is only natural to think in terms of material or physical things. We have a physical body with certain needs that must be met. But, we also have a spiritual soul. This spiritual part of our being also has spiritual needs that must be met.

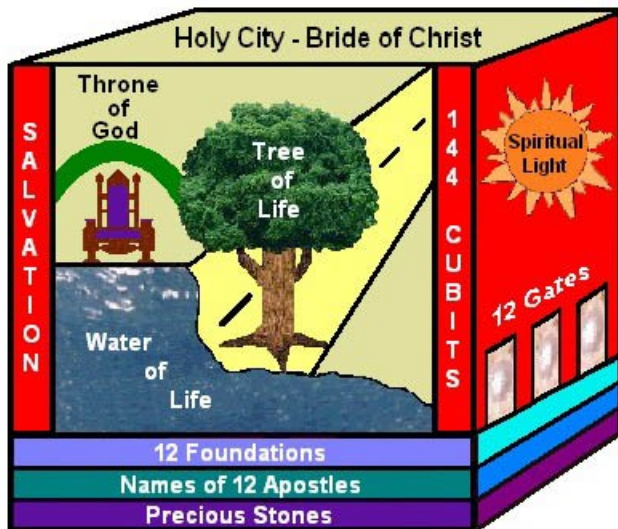
Jesus gave us a spiritual institution, the church, and Christians dwell spiritually in this institution today. Christians have a spiritual life today in addition to our physical life (John 5:24). We must understand that many things in prophecy deal with this spiritual life which Christians live.

As we proceed through this study, we hope to show many examples of Old Testament events that were patterns of things to come in the Christian age. They were written for our learning that we might better understand the spiritual kingdom of God in which we dwell today. This is the main

thrust of this study. We want to look at happenings recorded in the Old Testament and relate them to events of a spiritual nature in the church today. As we study these patterns for the church, we should be able to learn more about God's plan for his people. This should help us to better understand the true nature of the church.

The Garden of Eden

As we begin our study of some of the events in the Old Testament which were symbolic of the church, we must start with the first dwelling place God created for man on this earth - the beautiful Garden of Eden. The garden must have been a place of such magnificent beauty that it would be difficult for us to even imagine. If we could think of the most beautiful place we have ever seen on this earth and realize that this would represent only part of the beauty of Eden, we might have some idea of what Eden looked like. It was paradise on earth. Everything man could possibly need in order to sustain his physical life was readily available in this garden. God supplied all his needs.



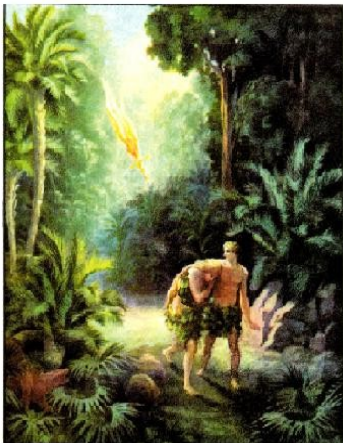
This beautiful garden was God's first hint of the spiritual paradise he would make in order to supply all the spiritual needs of mankind. It may be difficult for us to realize that the church is a spiritual Garden of Eden, but this is exactly what God calls it in Isaiah 51:3. Speaking of the dwelling place God would make for his people after the first coming of Christ, the passage says,

For the Lord shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Isaiah prophesied that at the first coming of Christ, God would make Zion (Israel) a place of beauty just like the Garden of Eden. The fact is he did exactly that. He gave us a spiritual Eden that is priceless with beauty beyond compare. It is the place where we dwell spiritually with God today. As was mentioned before in the section "Prophecies in Revelation," it is extremely important to understand that the last two chapters of Revelation describe the church. They give us a picture of our spiritual Eden in physical terms that we can understand. Once we understand that the subject of Revelation is the church, we can then understand and appreciate many passages in Revelation that describe the church. For example, in Rev. 2:7 the church is called the "paradise of God." This is a direct comparison between the Garden of Eden, which was a physical paradise, and the church, which is a spiritual paradise. The church bears many of the same characteristics as the Garden of Eden, but our Eden is for our spiritual souls, rather than our physical bodies. The church is the beautiful, magnificent, spiritual dwelling place of God's people. It is the place God has prepared which will meet all the spiritual needs of man today.

By closely examining the characteristics of the Garden of Eden and applying that symbolism to the church, we can learn much about how God views the church in which Christians spiritually dwell today. First let us examine the relationship between God and man in the garden. It was an extremely close relationship. God walked and talked with Adam and Eve. Gen. 3:8 says,

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.



This verse indicates that Adam and Eve were not surprised to hear the voice of God. Instead they knew exactly who he was, and they were afraid because they had done wrong. They expected God to be walking with them in the garden. If Adam and Eve had not sinned, they could have remained in this close relationship with God forever. However, when they chose to disobey God and eat of the forbidden fruit, they were expelled from the garden. The close relationship between God and man was broken. From this point on, man proved over and over that he was not capable of keeping himself from sin and walking with God in this close relationship. Man needed a Savior to take away his sins so the close relationship with God could be reestablished. Jesus was the answer, and the church would be the spiritual paradise he would prepare in which Christians would live and walk with God while on this earth.

As Christians dwelling in the spiritual paradise of God, the church, we are in that close relationship with God. 2Cor. 6:16 states,

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Just as Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the Garden of Eden, Christians now walk and talk with God in spiritual Eden, the church of the living God. Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Jesus dwells in the midst of his people today. We walk and talk with God in spiritual Eden today. We are in a close spiritual relationship with God. We walk with God today as we follow his teachings. 1John 1:7 reads,

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Because of the blood of Christ, we walk with God today. As we walk in the light of his word, we have fellowship with one another in spiritual Eden.

Adam and Eve had a choice in Eden of whether to follow God or listen to the serpent. In the church today, man still has a choice of whether to continue to follow God or to turn from him and follow the devil. Two trees stood in the midst of the first garden. One was the tree of life that would have given Adam and Eve eternal physical life; the other was the tree of knowledge of good and evil that was forbidden. Adam and Eve had a choice of obeying God and not eating of the forbidden fruit or following the devil and eating it. This tree of knowledge of good and evil was a temptation to



Tree of Life

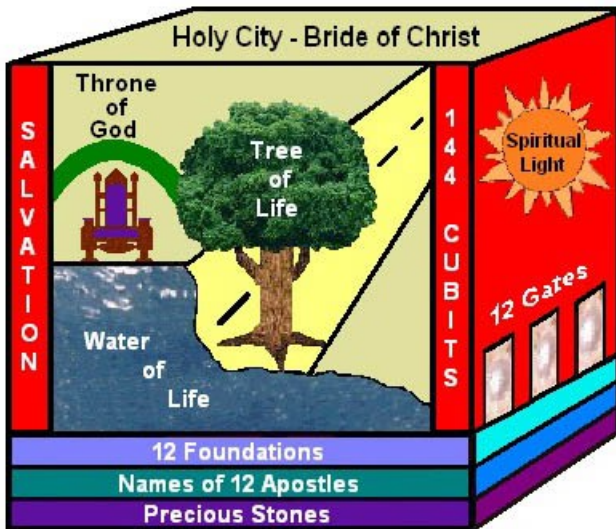


Tree of Knowledge
of
Good & Evil

Adam and Eve. It looked desirable to eat (Gen. 3:6). The same is true in the church today. Christians should also avoid many worldly activities that look desirable. We too have a choice. Do we eat of the tree of life and live forever, or do we eat of the forbidden fruit and lose our spiritual life? If we choose to eat of the forbidden fruit, we can be expelled from our spiritual Eden just as Adam and Eve were expelled from their Garden of Eden.

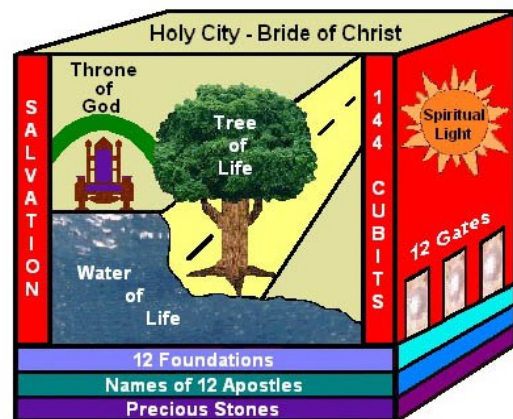
The Garden of Eden also contained items of great value. Gen. 2:11-12 explains that gold and precious stones could be found in Eden. These stones are used symbolically in Rev. 21:18-29 to describe the tremendous value of the church.

The wall of the church, as pictured in Revelation, is made of jasper; the city is made of pure gold; the foundations are garnished with precious stones; and the gates are made of pearl. These valuable physical materials are used to illustrate the great value of the church. No place or organization on this earth is more valuable than the Lord's church. Throughout the ages, Christians have suffered many persecutions and hardships, but we have something far more valuable than all the kingdoms of this world combined. We have a spiritual dwelling place that is described in physical terms as being made of pure gold and precious stones. We must begin to recognize the value of the church. It is our Garden of Eden.



We may sometimes wonder why Adam and Eve disobeyed God with all the beauty of Eden around them, but many do the same thing today. As Christians we live in a spiritual paradise made by God that is far greater than the original Eden; yet, many cast it all aside for the pleasures of this world.

God has given us a spiritual paradise in which to live today. Its beauty is even greater than the physical beauty of the original Garden of Eden. It is the place where we live in a close relationship with God as we walk and talk with him. If we remain faithful to God and do his commands, we can live in this beautiful spiritual paradise forever. God has, however, given us a choice. We can follow him and live forever in the paradise of God, or we can follow the devil and be lost. Let us not be like Adam and Eve and give it all up for one bite of the forbidden fruit.

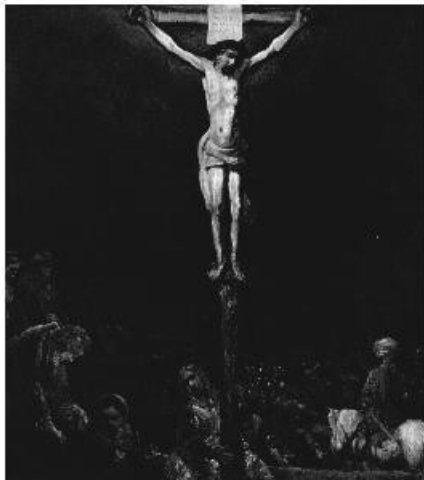


Tree of Life

Let us now examine some of the features of the garden that compare to our spiritual situation in the church today. First, let us look at the tree of life, which was located in the center of the garden. God planted this marvelous tree in the midst of the garden to enable Adam and Eve to live forever. It was capable of sustaining the physical lives of Adam and Eve for all eternity; therefore God had provided a way for man to live forever in his presence. Because of the power of this tree to provide eternal life, when Adam and Eve sinned they were expelled from the garden. God will not allow anyone to live eternally in a state of sin. God is sinless, and in order for man to live with him eternally, we must be in a sinless state. When God expelled Adam and Eve from the garden, he placed an angel at the gate to block their way back to the tree of life. Man was then in a state of sin and doomed to death. In order for man to return to that close relationship with God, he had to have a tree of life. Since we can no longer return to the original Eden to eat of that physical tree of life, we must have another tree, and it has been provided



**Jesus was
crucified
on a tree.**



for us. Jesus is our tree of life. He is standing today in the midst of spiritual Eden, the church. This description is used in Rev. 22:2 as it states,

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Just as a tree of life stood in the midst of the original Garden of Eden, a spiritual tree of life is located in the midst of spiritual Eden today. It is for the healing of the nations. This is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Ezekiel 47:12 which says,

And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine.

Anyone in any nation on this earth may be healed spiritually by eating of this tree of life. We do this by obeying the words that Jesus has spoken.

Another passage in Revelation that illustrates this same point of Christ being in the midst of spiritual Eden, the church, is Rev. 1:13. It states, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man." According to Rev. 1:20, the candlesticks represent the seven churches of Asia and that in turn must represent the entire church throughout the ages. We know that Christ

would not dwell exclusively among those seven literal churches, so they must represent all true churches that exist throughout the Christian dispensation. Christ is therefore pictured as standing in the midst of all his people. He is the tree of life, and he is standing in the midst of the church today, healing anyone of their spiritual illness who is willing to come unto him. Just as the purpose of the tree of life was to provide eternal physical life for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Jesus provides eternal spiritual life for all who walk with him in spiritual Eden.

It should be noted that we must be in the church to eat of this tree of life because that is where the tree is located. Just as Adam and Eve could not eat of the tree of life and live physically forever outside the Garden of Eden, man today cannot eat of the tree of life outside the church. Revelation 22:14 says, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." The only way we can enter into this beautiful garden to eat of the tree of life is to do the commandments of God. When we obey God, we enter through the gates of our spiritual Eden and eat of the spiritual tree of life, which enables us to live spiritually forever. All others will be outside that garden (Rev. 22:15). Spiritual life is attained by eating of the tree of life located in the church and that spiritual life will continue forever if we keep ourselves in that close relationship with God. The old question as to whether one must be a member of the church to be saved should be answered once and for all. The church is the only place one may eat of the spiritual tree of life.

It should also be pointed out that we must continually eat of this tree of life. We must keep ourselves in that close relationship with God. As long as Adam and Eve were in the original garden, they could continually eat of the physical tree of life. Once they sinned, God stopped them from eating of this tree and they were doomed to die. Today if we keep ourselves in a proper relationship with God, we can continually eat of our spiritual tree of life. We are human however, and we will commit sin; but when we sin we have an advocate with the father who will plead our cause for us. (See 1Jno. 2:1.) Because of the sacrifice Jesus made for us on the cross, God will forgive our sins and we can continue to eat of the tree of life. But, Heb. 10:25 says, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." We too can be expelled from Eden. If we sin willfully, we no longer have that advocate to plead our cause before God. Then, just as Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, we will be expelled from spiritual Eden. We will no longer be able to eat of the tree of life and live forever. This corresponds to Revelation 22:19 which states,

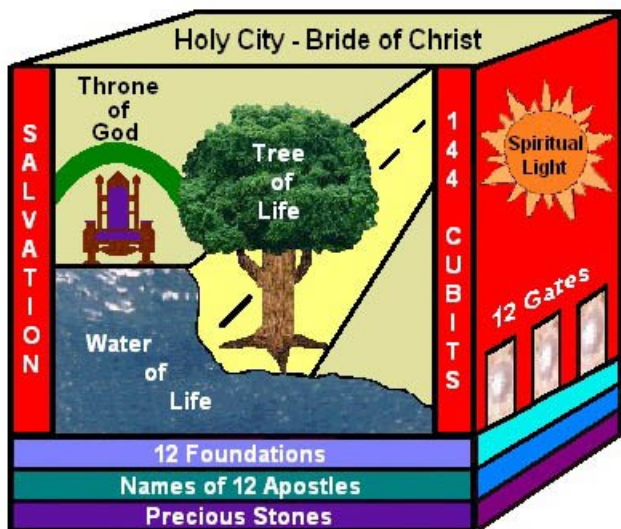
And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

In this passage the "holy city" is another symbol describing the church. It is the same as spiritual Eden. The church is simply being described by another term. This idea will be discussed later; but for now the point is, we can be removed from spiritual Eden. This may be the most definite statement in the entire Bible concerning man's capability of falling from grace. If we sin willfully, we will be removed from the spiritual Eden just as Adam and Eve were removed from the physical Garden of Eden. We will not be able to eat of the tree of life, which means we will die spiritually.



The world in which we live today has a great desire to extend physical life. Imagine what a physical tree of life would be worth in monetary terms. People would give anything they possessed in order to eat of a physical tree of life that would extend their lives even for a short period of time. Everyone in the world would do everything within their power to eat of the fruit of this tree. Yet,

the fact is, we have a spiritual tree of life of far greater value today. It will give us eternal spiritual life in a heavenly home far beyond anything imaginable on this earth. But, people offer all types of excuses and would seemingly do almost anything to avoid eating of this tree of life. We must recognize what a valuable institution the church is. It has value beyond compare since that is where the spiritual tree of life is located. As members of the church, we can constantly eat of this spiritual tree of life which will enable us to live forever in a perfect spiritual home.



Water of Life

Another feature of the Garden of Eden, which is described in detail in Gen. 2:10-14, is a river of water that divided into four parts. This passage reads,

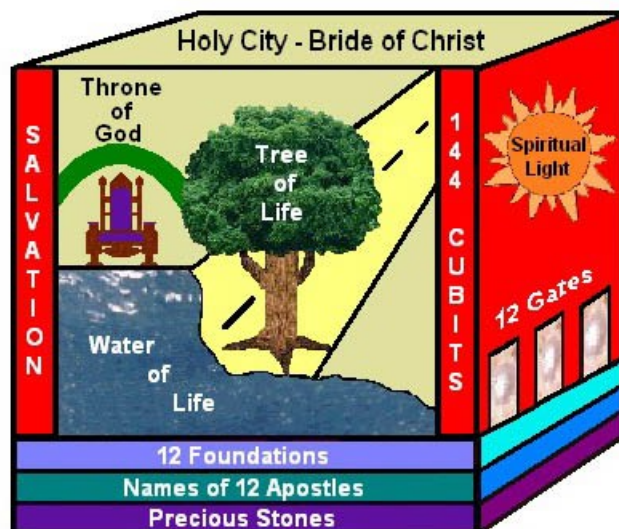
And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.



The purpose of this river was to water the garden (Gen. 2:10). Since water is essential for all plant and animal life on this earth, obviously this water was necessary to sustain all physical life in the garden. A situation identical to this exists in the church today in spiritual terms. Those who live in the spiritual Garden of Eden, the church, must drink spiritual water in order to live. Let us be thankful that God has provided that water for us. In the description of the church in Rev. 22:1, this illustration is given: "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb." Since we live in a spiritual garden, this water must be spiritual water. We have a river of spiritual waters flowing in the church today, and it comes from the throne of God and Christ. What are these spiritual waters? In Jer.

2:13, God calls himself the "fountain of living waters." God is the source of all our spiritual waters. In John 4:13-14, as Jesus spoke to the woman at the well who was drawing water, he said,

Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.





The literal water that the woman drew from the well would quench the thirst of the physical body, but she would soon become thirsty again and require more water. Jesus told her that the water he could give her would quench her thirst forever. This must have been a reference to spiritual water. The spiritual water supplied by Jesus will sustain our spiritual lives forever. In Matt. 5:6, the passage we commonly call the Beatitudes, we read this statement made by Jesus, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." In the Christian dispensation, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness can be filled by drinking the spiritual water of life.

The waters of the Garden of Eden were always present for Adam and Eve to drink. They never had to be thirsty as long as they remained in the garden. Today we can partake of the spiritual water of life because we live in spiritual Eden, the church. This spiritual water of life provides salvation for our souls. This is prophesied

in Isa. 12:3 which says, "Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." Today we can draw spiritual waters out of the well of salvation as we become obedient to the teaching of the Word of God. The water being supplied by God and Christ that is flowing out from their throne is spiritual water, and it will sustain our spiritual lives forever. It is located in the church, our spiritual Eden. Just as the river which flowed through the Garden of Eden sustained life in the garden, the spiritual water of life flowing from the throne of God in the church will sustain our spiritual lives forever. Those waters that flow out from the throne of God today are the words that God gave mankind through Christ and the Apostles. Revelation chapter 1 is a symbolic description of Jesus Christ and his relationship to the church. In verse 15 of that chapter, the voice of Jesus is described as the "sound of many waters." Our spiritual waters of life today are the words of Jesus Christ as we have them recorded in the Holy Scriptures.

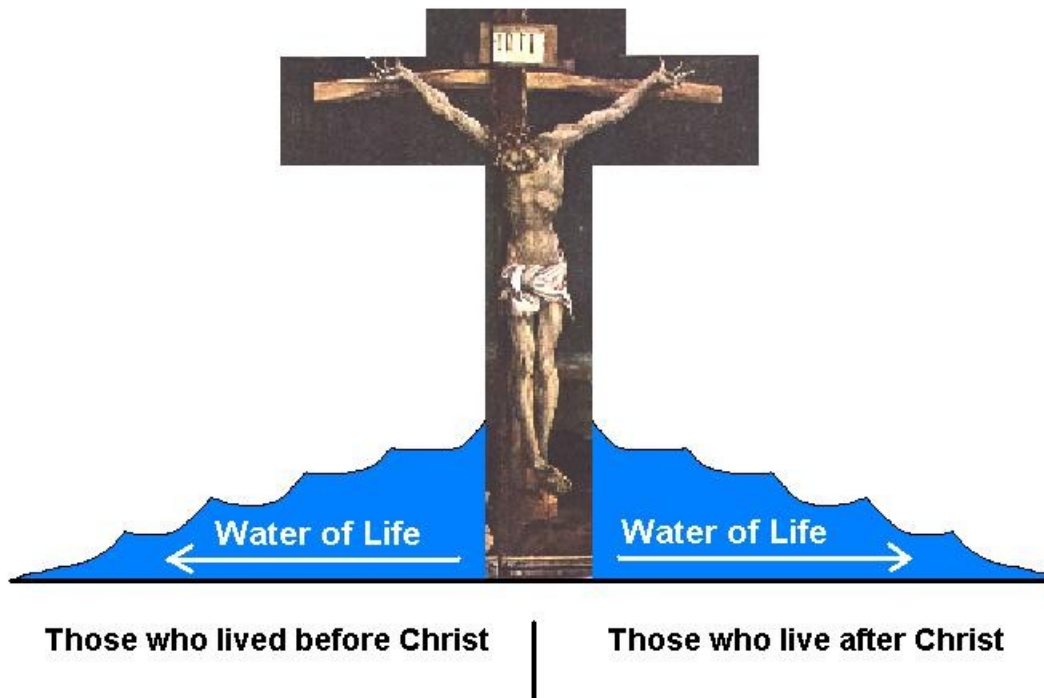
This situation of the spiritual water of life becoming available to all mankind when Christ came to earth the first time was prophesied many times in the Old Testament. Zech. 14:8-9 states, And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be. And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

In the day that the Lord should be King over all the earth there would be a great flowing out of spiritual waters. Half of the waters would go to the former sea and half to the hinder sea. This is a prophecy that the living waters of salvation would flow in both directions from the cross. It would forgive the sins of those who lived and served God before Christ came, and it also provides forgiveness to all those who live after Christ and follow him. This is confirmed in Heb. 9:15 which states,

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

Also, speaking of Christ, Rom. 3:25 says,

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.



Salvation came at the cross to those who lived before Christ. Micah 4:2b says, "For the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Zechariah said that "living waters" would flow out from Jerusalem, and Micah said that the word of the Lord would go out from Jerusalem. From these two passages we see that the word of the Lord and the living waters are one in the same. They are also the same as the law of Christ. When the living waters became available to mankind, the Lord was also King over all the earth. Today, he is King of kings and Lord of lords (1Tim. 6:15).

The water of life flowing out of the throne of God is available to the world today in the church. If the world wants to partake of the spiritual water of life and live forever, they must be obedient to the truth of the gospel and enter into the church where the water is located. This is the great invitation offered in Rev. 22:17. It states,

And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

As discussed before, Rev. 22:1 pictures the water of life flowing out from the throne of God into the church, and anyone who wants to partake of that water must come into the church to do so. Notice the invitation is offered by the Spirit and the bride. The Spirit of God gave the Word of God to mankind. John 16:26 says,

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The Holy Spirit through the written word bids men to come into the church. The "bride" is the church, therefore all Christians as members of the church are bidding those outside to come in and take the water of life freely.

Once someone drinks of the water of life by obeying the word of God, it is then his/her duty to teach others the message of the gospel. This is illustrated in John 7:37-38 which states,

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

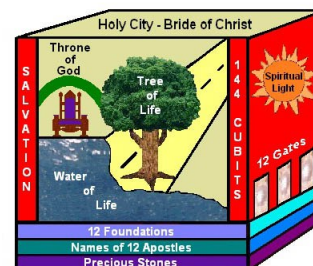
After someone has filled himself with the living waters of life, it should freely flow out of him as he teaches others the great message of the gospel of Christ.



Just as the river of water which flowed through the garden of Eden would have sustained physical life in the garden for all eternity if man had not fallen, the spiritual water of life in the church will sustain the spiritual life of man forever if he remains in a covenant relationship with God. The church is the spiritual Garden of Eden, and the water that waters our garden is the Word of God. Those who drink of those spiritual waters will live spiritually forever.

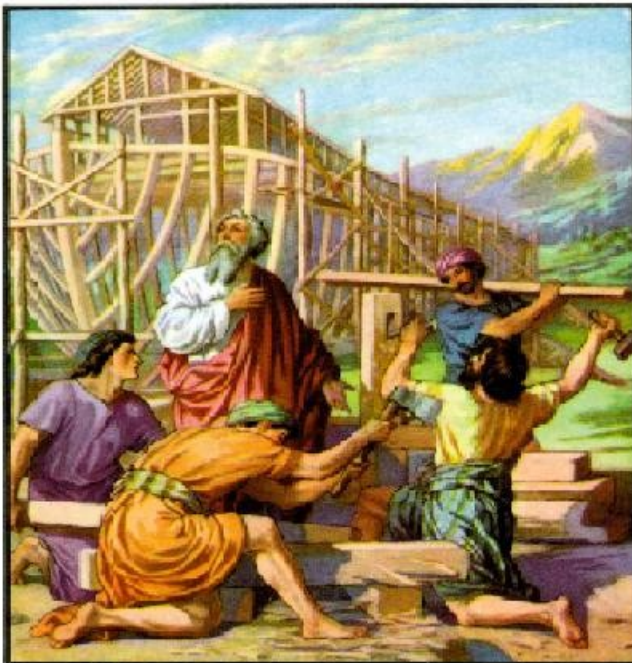
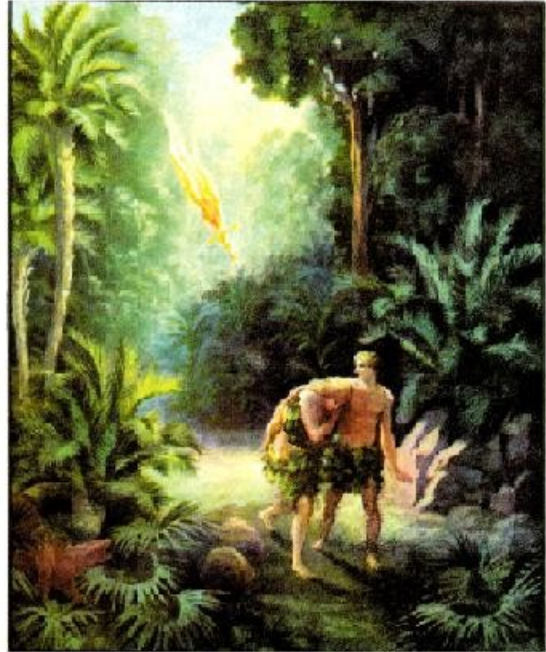
To address one particular point at this time appears necessary. An ongoing discussion exists among some as to which is most important, following Jesus or being a member of the church. Some would say that our salvation is in Jesus, not the church. They would point out that the church cannot save anyone; Jesus does that. This is true, but the fact is that being a member of the church and following Jesus are one in the same. They cannot be separated. If you went to visit someone, it goes without saying that you would have to go where that person is in order to be with him. If I were at my home, you would have to visit me in my home. Jesus dwells in the church, and to be with him you must be in the church. You cannot have a relationship with him in any other place. The church is the spiritual Eden that God gave man to dwell in while on this earth. In order to walk and talk with God, we must be in that place. Salvation is in Jesus Christ, and he dwells with his people in spiritual Eden. The saved are in the church.

The Garden of Eden was a glorious place, and it supplied all the physical needs of man. The church is also a glorious place, and it supplies all the spiritual needs of man. We need to treasure that which God has given us. It is like an oasis in the desert to one who is lost. The world is a barren, spiritual desert with no food or water. The church in contrast to the world is a spiritual oasis like the Garden of Eden. The contrast is so great it is hard to fathom. Can you imagine how someone might feel who was wandering in a desert, starving for food and water, and found the Garden of Eden? That is exactly what the church offers today. It is the spiritual Garden of Eden in the midst of the spiritual desert of this world. To be a member of the Lord's church and be able to walk with God in spiritual Eden is the greatest blessing in this world.



Noah

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast from the Garden of Eden and forbidden to return. God punished man by cursing the ground and making him earn his food by the sweat of his face, and he punished woman by multiplying her pain in childbearing (Gen 3:16-19). Adam and Eve thus went forth from the garden and became the parents of all living human beings (Gen. 3:20). Man however continued to be disobedient to God. Cain offered unacceptable sacrifices to God and eventually killed his brother Abel (Gen. 4:3-8). As time passed man became more and more corrupt. By the time of Noah, the world had become an extremely sinful place, and man eventually became so very corrupt that God grieved that he had made man (Gen. 6:6). Only one faithful family remained on the earth and that was Noah's. God determined to purge the world of sin before it became totally corrupt by destroying it with water. In order to save those who were obedient to him, God instructed

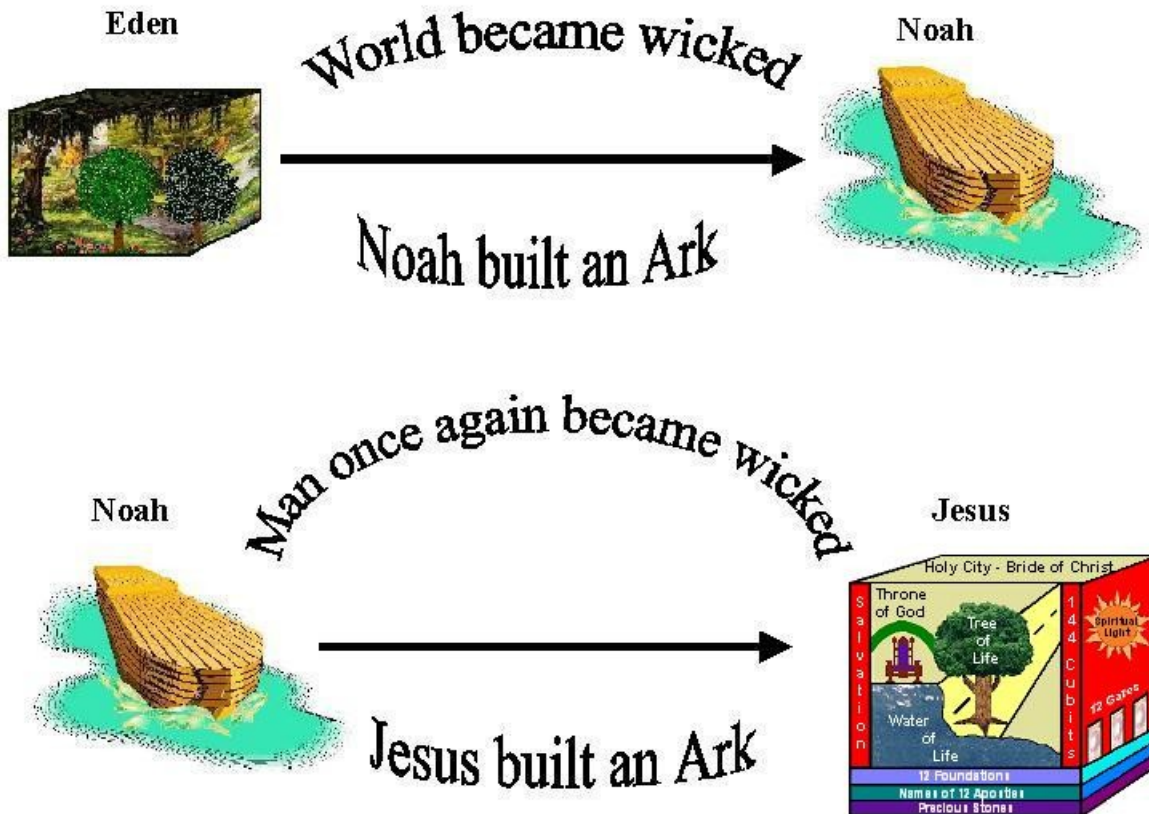


faithful Noah to build an ark. As Noah constructed the ark, he preached to the people of the world. He implored them to give up their sinful ways, but they refused. This continued until the ark was completed. Still, no one but Noah and his family believed in God or thought that he would destroy the world with water. At God's appointed time, Noah and his family entered the ark; God shut the door, and they were saved from the great flood that destroyed the world.

The period of time from the fall of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden until the destruction of the world by water in the days of Noah can be compared to the time of the Christian dispensation. After the fall from Eden, man was in a state of sin, having left that close relationship with God. Since God hates sin and will not tolerate those who continue in it, the world faced destruction. God, however, prepared a way for those who would turn back to him to avoid the impending destruction by instructing Noah to build an ark. The only way anyone could avoid this destruction was to turn from his or her sins and follow the teachings of God. Anyone who turned back to God could have boarded the ark and been saved from the flood, but no one except Noah's family chose to follow God. Because of sin, the world today also faces destruction, not with water but by fire. Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 states,

And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

God saved those who were faithful from the flood, and he will also save those who are faithful from the fire. Just as Noah needed an ark to escape the destruction by water, the faithful of God today need a way to avoid the destruction by fire. Jesus has prepared an ark for us today. He built it on the day of Pentecost. It is a spiritual ark that will save man from the fiery destruction of hell at the end of time. It is the church. Just as Noah preached the word of God to a world in sin during his lifetime, the gospel is being preached to a world in sin today. Those who listen to those teachings and obey them can enter into this ark. Just as the days of Noah's preaching came to an end, these days of the Christian age will not last forever. A time will come when people will refuse to hear the preaching of the gospel, and the door of the ark will be closed. Those outside the ark will be destroyed in a fiery hell. Those who are inside the ark will pass safely through this destruction to a place prepared by God for his people to live with him for all eternity.



The ark was the vehicle that saved Noah and his family from the destruction God placed on a world of sin. The church is the spiritual ark built by the Lord that will save Christians from the fiery destruction to come upon this world of sin. Those inside the church will be delivered from the final destruction of this sinful world that will take place when Christ comes again. It is of utmost importance that we are inside the church. The door of the ark is open today, as it was when Noah was preaching and collecting animals of every kind. At the appointed time, the door of the ark was closed and no further entrance could be gained. At the end of time the door of the church will be closed and the destruction of this world will take place. This is the time spoken of in Rev. 10:6b-7 as John states,

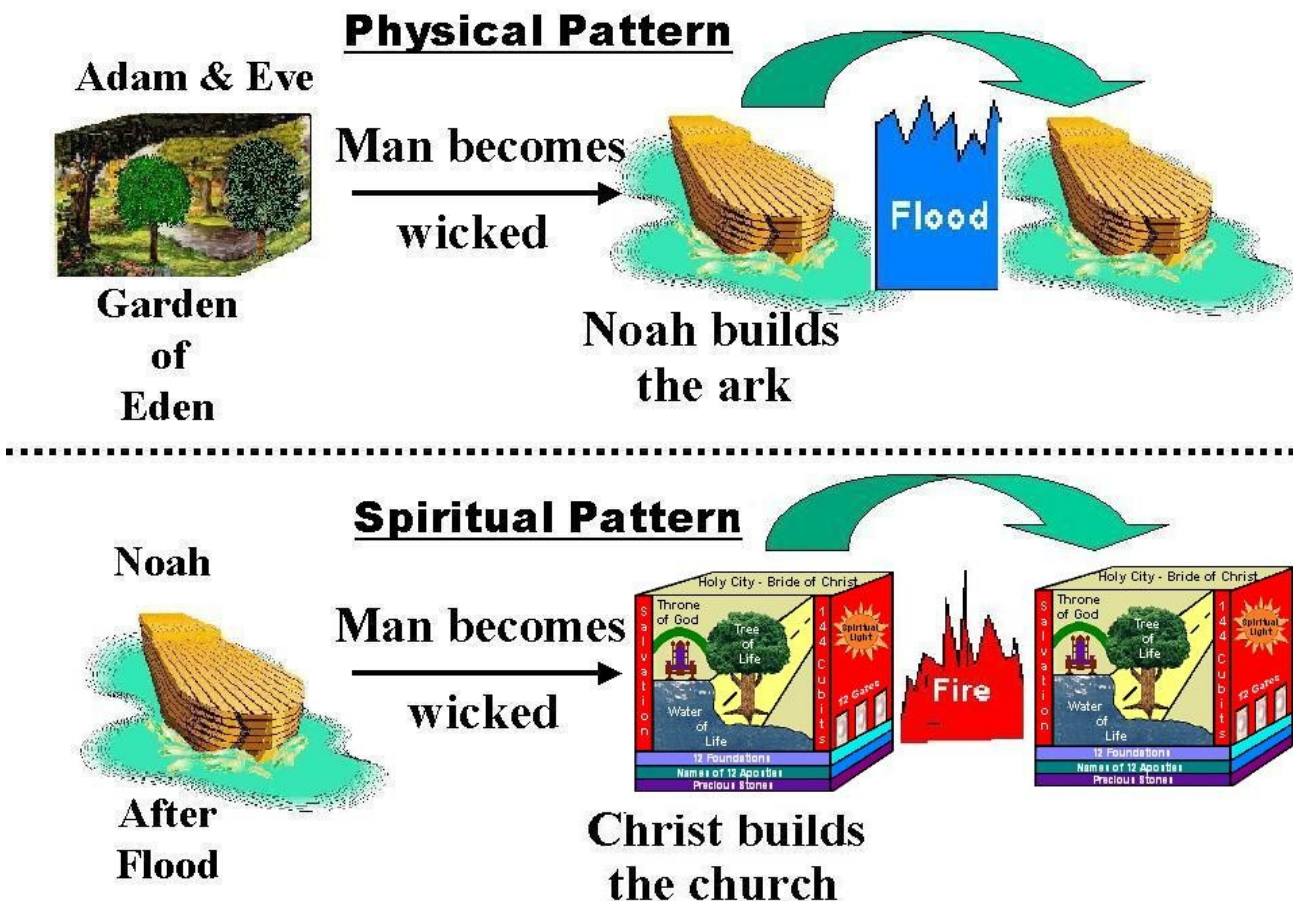
That there should be time no longer: But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The angel blows his trumpet in verse 15 of chapter 11. Then 11:18 states,

And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

Those who have destroyed the earth by corrupting it with sin will be destroyed. Only those inside the church will be saved, and once the door is closed, no one else will be allowed to enter the church.

The preaching of the gospel today compares to the preaching of Noah before the flood. Noah preached to those around him and warned them that all who disobeyed God would be destroyed.



The gospel is being preached today to a world in sin. The people are being warned that God will destroy all those who disobey him in the fires of hell. Man still has time to hear the gospel, obey it and gain entrance into the ark. We can never be sure how long this time will last; thus it is imperative that we not delay. Only God knows the time he has appointed for Christ to return for his people (Matt. 24:36-37).

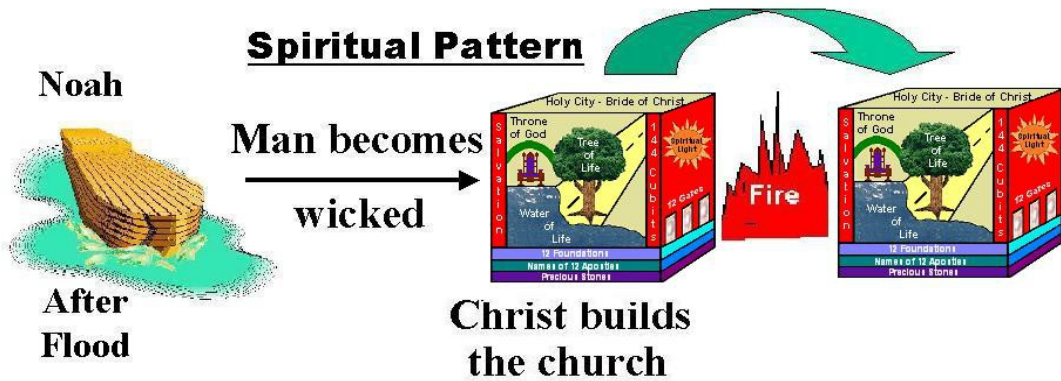
The only way man can avoid the destruction to come at the end of time is to be aboard the ark (church). There is no other way, for there is only one ark, not many. Some people in the world today are trying to build their own ships to take them across the destruction of hell. None of these ships will make it. The only ship capable of making it across the final destruction is the one prepared by Christ. Just as Noah prepared the ark with the exact materials and in the exact dimensions as given by God, Jesus prepared the church exactly according to God's instructions (John 6:38). No one else can build an ark like this one. Jesus said he would build his church (Matt. 16:18), and that is the ark which we must enter in order to be saved.

Paul used an analogy similar to this in Acts chapter 27. The ship in which he was riding was wrecked by a storm. In verse 31, he told those in the ship, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." This is true concerning the ark of the church. Except we remain in the ship, that is the church, we cannot be saved, for salvation is found only inside the church. Those who seek to find it in other places will someday meet a fate similar to those people outside the ark in the time of Noah. The pattern of Noah and the ark is used in 1Pet. 3:21 as a figure of baptism:



The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The ark is the church and baptism is our means of entrance. The people in the time of Noah needed to repent from their sins and walk in the ways of God. Today, if we obey the commands of God, we will repent of our sins and be baptized for their forgiveness (Acts 2:38). We then enter the ark of the Lord where he will keep us from all harm. We will avoid the final destruction in the spiritual ark of God.

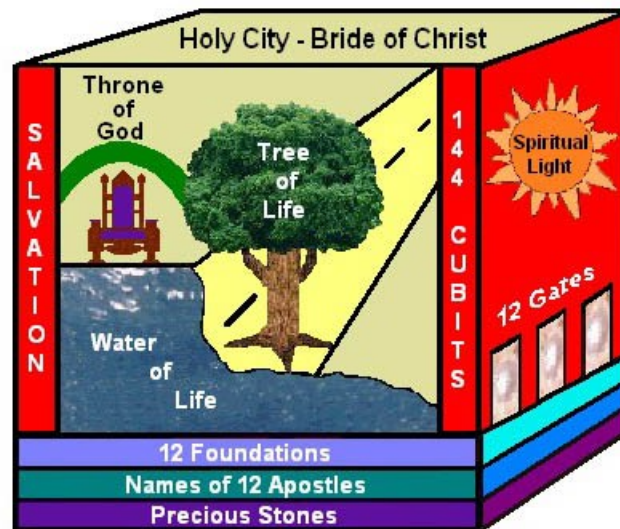


There are some interesting concepts to think about concerning the time of Noah and its application to the world today. Matt. 24:37-39 says,

But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of man be.

These verses explain that the end of time will be similar to those of the days of Noah. The world will be in a corrupt and sinful state. Man will reject the teachings of God and people will laugh at the teachings of the Bible. They will have no interest in listening to spiritual matters and will be far more interested in the things of the world than in the things of God. At this time the door of the church will be closed and all that are outside will be destroyed. Those who have boarded the ark will avoid the destruction and live with God eternally.

The spiritual ark, which is the church, has been built in the world today. Jesus built it on the day of Pentecost. The message of the gospel is being preached and the door is open. Yet, most of the world seemingly has failed to heed the pattern of Noah. They are in the same spiritual situation as those who laughed at Noah as he built the ark. God gave us this pattern for a reason. He wanted mankind to understand how important it is to be inside the church. If people were drowning, they would not even consider refusing to get on board a boat attempting to rescue them. But, many in the world today are refusing to board the spiritual ark. As Christians we have boarded the ark, and it is now our responsibility to proclaim to the world the importance of getting on board before the door is closed.



The Nation of Israel

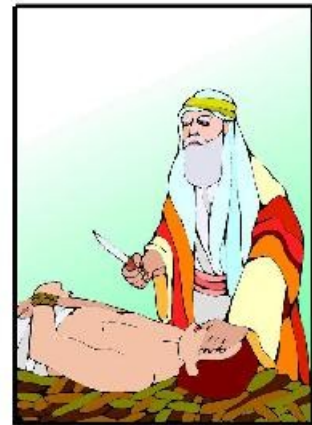
The Old Testament is filled with examples of people who experienced the power of God but soon thereafter disobeyed him, and Noah was no exception. Almost immediately after he experienced God's salvation from the great flood, he sinned. See Gen. 9:20-26. The world again became a sinful place and mankind was headed for destruction. Once again man had proven that it is impossible for him to live a sinless life and enjoy a holy relationship with God on his own merits. God must have known this from the beginning since he had always had a plan to send Jesus to this world to save mankind (Eph. 1:3-4). In order to bring Christ into the world, God formed the nation of Israel and gave them a law to follow. The law was designed to prepare the world for the greatest event ever to take place on this earth. It prepared man for the coming of the Messiah (Gal. 3:24).

It is interesting to notice that the birth of the nation of Israel came in exactly the same manner as the establishment of the church. Once again we have a physical event in the Old Testament which is a type or pattern of a much greater spiritual event to take place when Jesus came to this earth. The nation of Israel began with God's promise to Abraham. God is speaking to Abraham in Gen. 12:2-3 as he says,

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: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

God promised to bless and multiply the seed of Abraham and make him the father of a great nation. The nation of Israel was eventually formed through his descendants. Abraham, as the father of the nation of Israel, is a likeness of God who is the father of the church. As the Israelites were the children of Abraham, Christians are the children of God. The nation of Israel was made up of the children of Abraham; the church is made up of the children of God. Abraham therefore was the beginning of the Old Testament pattern that God would use to establish the church.

In order to fulfill his promise to Abraham to make him the father of a great nation, God told Abraham that he would give him and his wife Sarah a son. At the time of the promise, Sarah was many years past the age of childbearing. Through the power of God the promise was fulfilled, and Isaac was born to Abraham and Sarah in their old age. Just as the birth of Christ was a miraculous birth, the birth of Isaac was also miraculous. Since Abraham is a likeness of God the Father, then Isaac is a likeness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The familiar Bible story of Abraham's willingness to offer Isaac as a sacrifice further illustrates this point. Isaac was the son of promise and it was through him that God was



going to fulfill his promise to multiply the seed of Abraham (Gen. 17:19). However, God told faithful Abraham to take Isaac and offer him upon an altar as a burnt offering. Abraham was willing to do this because he loved and trusted God. He was willing to give the only son which he and Sarah had. Abraham thus took Isaac, placed him upon an altar and stretched forth his hand to slay his son (Gen. 22:9-10), but an angel stopped him. Abraham had proven his faithfulness to God. He took Isaac off the altar and then used a ram caught in the thicket by his horns as a sacrifice instead of Isaac. In Gen 22:7-8, Isaac asked Abraham, "Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham



replied, "God will provide himself a lamb." God did provide a lamb; he provided Jesus as the sacrificial lamb for the sins of the world. Isaac therefore was a type of Christ, and this example of Abraham offering Isaac was a type or pattern of God giving his only son, Jesus, to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Christ is the only begotten Son of God and it was through him that God formed the church. Abraham removed Isaac from the altar, and he lived to fulfill God's promise to Abraham to make him the physical father of a great nation. This was a likeness of God raising Jesus from the dead in order that the church might be established, and God would become the spiritual Father of a great nation. The descendants of Isaac became the nation of Israel and the followers of Christ became the church.

God's promise to Abraham was also to be fulfilled through Isaac's son, Jacob. Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, fathered twelve children. The nation of Israel was born from these twelve sons of Israel (Jacob). Therefore, Israel was the person who fathered and instructed those twelve men from whom the twelve tribes of Israel descended. This can easily be compared to the Holy Spirit teaching and directing the twelve apostles as they gave the gospel to all mankind. When Christ ascended back to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to guide the twelve apostles into all truth (John 16:12-13). As a father directs and instructs his children, the Holy Spirit directed and instructed the twelve apostles in the things they were to teach. The church grew and became a strong spiritual kingdom through the teachings of the twelve apostles. Although there are no direct references to Jacob as representing the Holy Spirit, it does precisely fit the pattern. Jesus said in Matt. 8:11, "And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven." Jesus himself used the illustration of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as a pattern of the kingdom he would establish. The descendants of the twelve children of Israel made up the nation of Israel. Those who follow the teachings of the twelve apostles make up the church. The Israelites were God's chosen people in Old Testament times, and Christians are the chosen people of God today (2Thes. 2:13-14).

The twelve children of Israel were an obvious pattern of the twelve apostles. The use of the number twelve makes this a logical comparison. The twelve sons of Israel were fathers of the twelve tribes that bore their names. They made up the entire nation of Israel. Every Israelite descended from the twelve sons of Israel and wore the name of that tribe throughout their lives. The twelve apostles taught all mankind about Christ as they proclaimed the message of the gospel throughout the world. They also recorded the message of God as they wrote the letters to the churches of their time. Those letters continue to teach the world about Jesus Christ today. They also continue to instruct us on how to live a Christian life. We are Christians today because of the teachings of the twelve apostles.

The twelve tribes of Israel were the descendants of their father Abraham. They were the chosen people of God. They were led and directed by God, who cared for them and protected them. They were a nation or a collection of God's people organized as a physical nation with laws and a governmental structure. They were a type of the church to come, which was to be a spiritual nation with a law to follow, and a governmental structure designed by God. Christ is the head of the church; the gospel is the law, and local congregations are instructed to appoint men to the offices of elders and deacons. In Gal. 6:16, the church is called the Israel of God. James also recognized that Israel was a type of the church as he addressed his letter to the "twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (James 1:1). He was definitely writing to Christians. The nation of Israel was a pattern of the church that Christ established for the Christian dispensation.

The nation of Israel was composed of individual Israelites who were each responsible for his or her own actions. The same is true in the church today. The church is composed of many individual Christians, all of whom are responsible for their own relationships to God. The church is a spiritual nation made up of those who have chosen to follow God.

From the above information, we can see the following comparisons between the birth of the nation of Israel and the establishment of the church.

<u>ISRAEL</u>	<u>CHURCH</u>
ABRAHAM	GOD
ISAAC	CHRIST
JACOB	HOLY SPIRIT
12 SONS	12 APOSTLES
NATION OF ISRAEL	CHURCH
ISRAELITES	CHRISTIANS

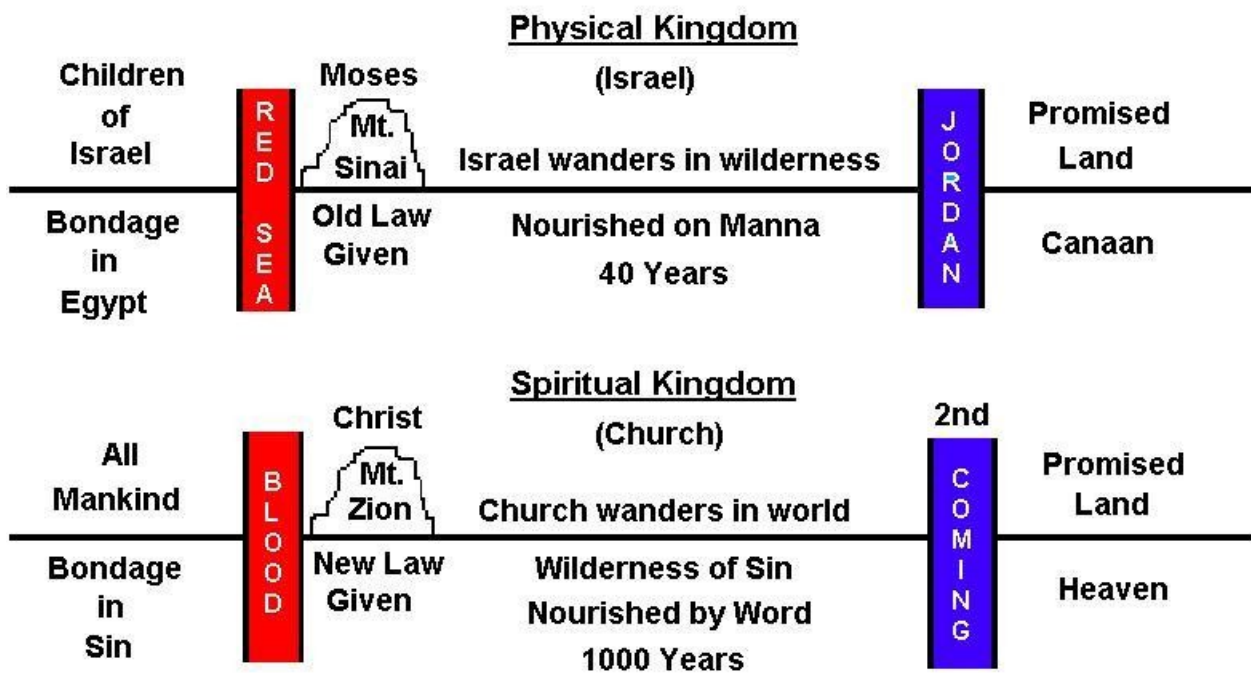
The nation of Israel was truly an amazing picture of the church to come. They were all the descendants of Abraham their father who was a likeness of God. Isaac was a type of Jesus Christ. His birth was miraculous and he illustrated the sacrifice Jesus made for the sins of all mankind. As Jacob instructed his twelve sons who became the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, the Holy Spirit guided the twelve apostles as they taught the world about the gospel of Christ. The descendants of these twelve sons became the nation of Israel. All those who obey the gospel as taught by the twelve apostles are Christians. The nation of Israel was brought into existence as a pattern for the establishment of the church. As Christians, we are the true Israel of God today. Only God could have possibly accomplished such a feat.

The comparisons that can be made between Israel and the church are astounding. Even many events in the lives of the Israelites were types of spiritual events to take place in the church today. We will now proceed to study some of these specific events which took place in the lives of the Israelite people and relate them to the lives of Christians today. These comparisons should give us a much better understanding of the church as it exists in the world today.

Physical Israel / Spiritual Church

At this point in our study of comparisons between Israel and the church, it should be helpful to look at the big picture. This will enable us to have a clearer understanding of how the nation of Israel was a pattern of the church. This pattern can be illustrated with a simple timeline drawing. This timeline is used extensively in our commentary on Revelation, *Revelation for Christians Today*, to explain the symbols in Revelation. It will be used here to better facilitate our understanding of Old Testament symbolism concerning the church. Please study the following diagrams and make comparisons between physical Israel and the spiritual church.

A Parallel Comparison of Israel and the Church

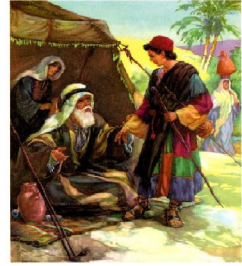


A brief explanation of these diagrams will be given here. A more complete study of the various parts of the drawings will follow as we proceed through this book. It is our hope that these drawings will make the comparisons between Israel and the church more vivid in our minds. It should be helpful to refer to these drawings from time to time as you continue through this study. The drawings begin with a comparison of the physical bondage of the children of Israel in Egypt to the spiritual bondage of all those who are in sin. Next, Moses led Israel across the Red Sea to escape physical bondage which compares to Christ giving his blood to lead mankind out of the spiritual bondage of sin. After crossing the Red Sea, Moses gave his law, which he received from God, unto the people on mount Sinai. After Christ shed his blood on the cross, he gave his law, the gospel, on spiritual mount Zion (Micah 4:1-7). Before entering the Promised Land of Canaan, Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Christ established the church in Zion, and it now wanders in the wilderness of this world during the figurative "one thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). When the forty years of the wilderness wanderings were completed, Israel crossed over the Jordan River to their Promised Land of Canaan. Eventually, the church will cross over its Jordan River at the second

coming of Christ to enter our Promised Land of heaven. These comparisons should make it clear that from the time the children of Israel were in Egyptian bondage until they crossed over Jordan into the Promised Land, Israel was truly a pattern of spiritual events to take place during the Christian dispensation. This is the big picture we need to keep clearly in mind as we study in more detail the events which took place during this period of Israelite history.

Bondage in Egypt

Let us now resume our study of the history of the nation of Israel during the time of Jacob. He had twelve sons of which Joseph was his favorite. Joseph's brothers were very resentful and hated him because of their father's favoritism. They devised a plan to get rid of Joseph by convincing their father that he was dead. They accomplished this by soaking Joseph's coat of many colors in blood and letting their father believe that a wild animal had killed him (Gen. 37:31-33). Instead of killing him, the brothers sold him into slavery to a company of Ishmaelites who were traveling by on their way to Egypt. Joseph was then sold to Potiphar who was an officer of Pharaoh and a captain of the guard (Gen. 37:31). Joseph was a great man who followed God even in times of trials and temptations. Because of his faithfulness, God blessed him and showed him the meaning of Pharaoh's dream. Pharaoh recognized that God was with Joseph and made him second ruler in the land of Egypt. Because of a famine, Israel (Jacob) sent his sons to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognized his brothers, and they eventually brought their entire family to Egypt and settled in the land of Goshen. From that time, the twelve



children of Israel grew to a great number in Egypt. After Joseph's death, a Pharaoh arose who did not remember the good deeds of Joseph. The Hebrew people were increasing greatly in number, and Pharaoh feared that they would become stronger than his people, so he made slaves of them. He sought to oppress them and keep their numbers under control, but they continued to increase, so Pharaoh oppressed them even harder. He even decreed that all male Hebrew children should be killed at birth (Exod. 1:22). The Israelites now found themselves in bondage as slaves in Egypt. They were in a horrible situation and needed someone to lead them out of Egypt and away from this oppressive slavery. God appeared to Moses in a burning bush and informed him that he would be the one to lead Israel out of bondage.

This period of time that Israel spent in physical bondage in Egypt is a likeness of the spiritual bondage of mankind before Christ came to earth. It is also the spiritual situation of anyone living today who has not obeyed the gospel of Christ. It is extremely important to understand that the term "bondage" is used many times in scripture to refer to the bondage of sin. An example of this usage is found in Heb. 2:14-15 which states,

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

These verses explain that through his blood, Jesus delivered those who were subject to bondage throughout their lifetimes. We know this cannot mean physical bondage because in John 8:33 the Jews said, "We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." The Jews living at the time of Christ had never been in physical bondage, but they were in spiritual bondage because Christ had not died for their sins. In this same context, John 8:32 says, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." The truth or gospel was going to make them free from the bondage of

sin. The time Israel spent in bondage in Egypt was a physical likeness of this spiritual bondage of mankind. The Israelites were in slavery in Egypt and needed someone to deliver them from that bondage. Before Christ came, the world was in spiritual bondage and needed someone to deliver them from the bondage of sin. Moses came to deliver Israel from Egypt, and Christ came to deliver mankind from sin. For this reason Moses was a likeness of the Christ to come. He was a part of the pattern of the Christian age.

The truth freed mankind from the bondage of sin. The "truth" is the gospel and when one obeys the gospel, he is made free from the bondage of sin. This is prophesied in Isa. 61:1. Speaking of the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah says,

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.

Christ would proclaim liberty to the captive and release those from prison who were bound spiritually. Christ did not liberate those who were literally bound in prison. He liberated mankind from the bondage of sin by coming to this earth and shedding his blood. The old Law of Moses could not free man from his sins. Under the Law of Moses, the people made animal sacrifices for their sins, but such sacrifices could not take away the guilt of sin. Their sins were thus remembered again every year. Concerning these sacrifices and their ability to forgive sins, Heb. 10:3-4 says,

But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

Speaking of Christ, Heb. 10:12 says, "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." Christ offered one sacrifice for the sins of mankind forever. Unlike the animal sacrifices which had to be offered again and again, Christ's sacrifice never had to be repeated. When Christ offered himself as that great sacrifice, he made a new covenant with the people in which God would no longer remember their sins. Speaking of this covenant, Heb. 10:16-17 states,

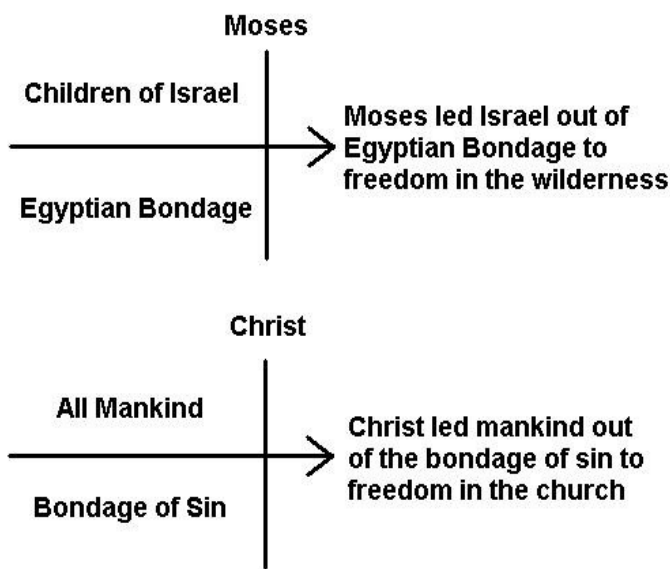
This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

The great blood sacrifice of Jesus on the cross freed mankind from the bondage of sin.

The gospel is the perfect law of liberty. James 1:25 says,

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

This law of liberty also judges us. James 2:12 states, "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." The Law of Moses was a law that kept the people bound in their sins because it did not provide a means for complete and everlasting forgiveness. There had to be a new law to accomplish that. The gospel is a law of liberty which sets mankind free from sin. We must



always keep in mind that the gospel is not a law of liberty that gives us the freedom to do as we please. Rather, it is a law that liberates us from the guilt of sin. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from sin. This is conditional on our part. 1John 1:7 says,

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

The condition is walking in the light. If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus will cleanse us from our sins. To walk in the light is to follow the perfect law of liberty. If we do that, we are then freed from the bondage of sin. Christ will lead us from spiritual bondage into the church where we are free from sin.

This exact scenario of bondage in sin is used in Gal. 4:3-5. It states, Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

Verse 3 points out that the children (Israel) were in spiritual bondage "under the elements of the world" (sin). God then sent his Son to redeem those under the law (Moses' law). Because of that, anyone can now become a child of God. We are then admonished to remain faithful in Gal. 4:9 as it states,

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?

This verse warns us not to return to the bondage of sin after we have become children of God. The Galatians were returning to the ordinances of the Law of Moses, which placed them back in the bondage of sin. If we leave the teachings of the gospel today and turn back to the ways of the world, we are returning to the bondage of sin.

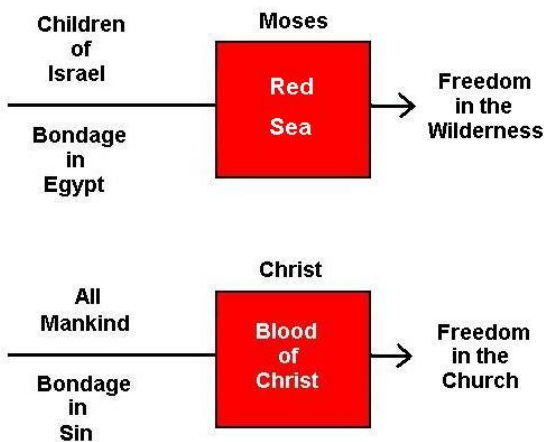
In the United States, we have abolished the practice of slavery. We recognize the physical and mental hardships this places upon a fellow human being. We do not want to be slaves ourselves, and we do not want to see other people in that situation. We recognize the horrors of physical slavery; yet, many people today seem to desire to be in a spiritual situation that compares to physical slavery. No more fearful spiritual situation exists than being in the bondage of sin. The world needs to recognize this situation, and we in the church need to show them how they can be delivered. The Israelites followed Moses, but the world today must follow Jesus Christ.

Crossing the Red Sea

As we begin the discussion of the symbolism concerning the Red Sea, it is very important to remember that the nation of Israel was symbolic of the true church to come. This was discussed in the prior section titled, "The Nation of Israel." The Israelite people were symbolic of Christians today. They were God's chosen people and the chosen people of God today are Christians. As we study the great event of the crossing of the Red Sea by the Israelites, let us keep in mind that these people literally participated in a marvelous event, which symbolized a much greater spiritual event to take place during the Christian dispensation. It symbolized an event in which each and every Christian will participate in a spiritual sense.

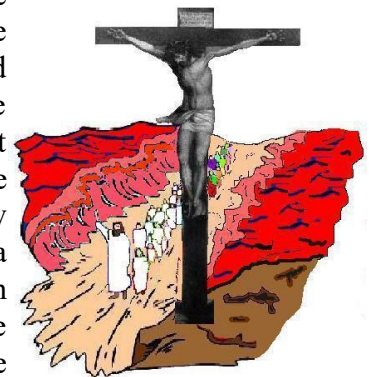


The crossing of the Red Sea by the Hebrew people is one of the most interesting and important patterns in the Bible. As discussed in the previous section, the Israelites needed to be delivered from the bondage of slavery in Egypt, and God



chose Moses to lead them out of that bondage. He was therefore a type of Jesus Christ who led mankind out of the spiritual bondage of sin. God could have delivered the Israelites out of Egypt in many ways, but he chose to have them pass through the waters of the Red Sea. Why he choose this route? The Red Sea was a literal, physical body of water that represented something of far greater importance. The Red Sea symbolizes the blood of Christ. Even the name "Red Sea" coincides with this type of symbolism. Red is the color of blood and is commonly used to symbolize bloodshed. So the Red Sea is symbolic of the blood of Christ. Just as the Red Sea was the dividing line between bondage in

Egypt and freedom in the wilderness, the blood of Christ is the boundary between the bondage of sin and spiritual freedom in the church. The Red Sea could be crossed only with the help of God and only by those who trusted in God and were willing to follow him. The blood of Jesus is the Christian's Red Sea today. It is the route we must take to escape the spiritual death of this world and receive spiritual life in the church. Only those who believe in God and are willing to follow his commandments can cross this Red Sea. Crossing the literal Red Sea was the path of deliverance of the Hebrew people from Egyptian bondage. Crossing the spiritual Red Sea of the blood of Christ is the path of deliverance from the bondage of sin for all mankind during the Christian dispensation. When we cross the Red Sea of the blood of Christ, we are leaving a place of spiritual bondage and entering a spiritual place on this earth where God nourishes and protects his people. We enter the church.



Jesus used this symbolism as he explained to his disciples that he came to deliver mankind from the bondage of sin. In Luke 4:18, Jesus, speaking of himself, quotes from the prophet Isaiah as he states,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.

Notice the statements he made, "to preach deliverance to the captive," and "to set at liberty them that are bruised." We know Jesus fulfilled this prophecy because he says in verse 21, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." Jesus came to deliver the captives or set them at liberty. In John 8:32, Jesus tells us how he will set mankind at liberty. He says, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Jesus spoke the word of God, which is the truth. John 12:49-50 says,

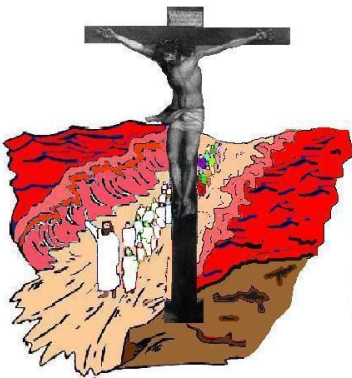
For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.

Jesus spoke the commandments given him by his Father in heaven. These commandments are "life everlasting." They deliver us from the bondage of spiritual sin and death.

This exact symbolism is used in Rev. 7:13-14 as it states,

And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

The great spiritual tribulation of mankind today is the bondage of sin. When one is outside the will of God, he is in bondage to the devil. To be a slave of the devil is the most horrible spiritual



situation in which one can find himself because he is destined to spend all eternity in hell. Christ gave mankind an opportunity to be released from this great tribulation by creating a spiritual Red Sea for us to cross. When we become obedient to the will of God and do his commandments, we are crossing the spiritual Red Sea of the blood of Christ and moving from the great tribulation of spiritual bondage to spiritual freedom. To be released from the bondage of sin or come out of spiritual tribulation is to cleanse our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. Washing our robes and making them white in the blood of the Lamb is symbolic of cleansing our soul from sin. In describing the sinful state of the children of Israel, Isaiah likened them

to wearing filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). The same is true with us today. If we are living a life in sin, our souls are clothed with filthy rags. In order to obtain forgiveness, we must wash these filthy rags and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. After we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, we stand before the throne of God and serve him day and night in his temple. The temple is also symbolic of the church. (This concept will be discussed later.) Therefore crossing the Red Sea is symbolic of moving from the bondage of sin to the pure and sinless state of dwelling among God's people in the church. This is a sinless situation because the blood of Christ atones for our sins. God forgives us because Christ made the necessary sacrifice when he gave his blood for us.

When the Egyptians, who were not believers in God, attempted to cross the Red Sea, they were destroyed. This is also true today. God will not allow those who oppose him to cross the Red Sea of the blood of Christ. In the Christian dispensation, the Red Sea of the blood of Christ can only be crossed by those who are seeking to follow God.

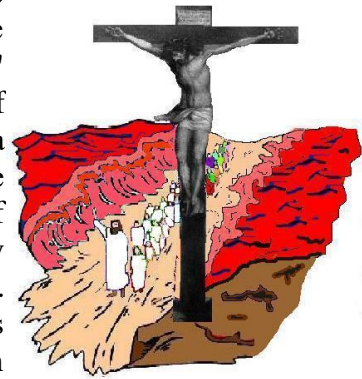


God determines who will enter the church. Acts 2:47b says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The only people who can enter the church are those who have had their sins forgiven by the blood of Christ. Again, speaking of the church, Rev. 22:14-15 says,

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

Only those who do the commands of God can enter into the church. All who are living a life of sin will remain outside the church.

It is impossible for anything unclean to enter the church. We must be cleansed of our sins in order to enter the church. We accomplish this by following Christ across the Red Sea of his blood and having our sins washed away. We do this by submitting to the waters of baptism. In Acts 22:16, Ananias told Saul to "arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This is how we contact the blood of Christ -- through the waters of baptism. The Israelites passed through the Red Sea in order to reach a place of physical freedom. Today, mankind must pass through the waters of baptism to reach a place of spiritual freedom. The crossing of the Red Sea represents our baptism, which is a cleansing of sin. Only those who are baptized and cleansed of their sins can enter the church. It is impossible for anyone to enter in any other way. The Israelites went "down into the water." God could have just as easily let them walk on top of the water, but he did not do that. The people went down

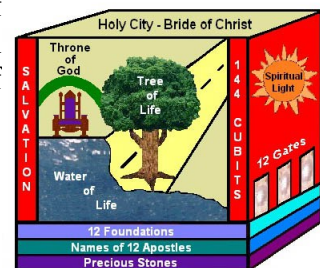


into the water, which symbolizes our immersion in the waters of baptism. 1Cor. 10:2 says that they were "all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." A cloud is also made up of water, so the people were completely surrounded by water. Nothing less than a total immersion in water will meet the requirement God has set forth for man to pass out of the bondage of sin and into the liberty of Christ.

God also provides protection for his people. Just as the Egyptian army was destroyed when they attempted to cross the Red Sea, those who attempt to destroy the church today will themselves be destroyed. This is not to say that it is impossible for individuals or even congregations to fall away and become unfaithful. It means that the church will stand forever. Heb. 12:27-28 states,

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

The church is the one organization in this world that will last forever. Nothing on this earth is capable of destroying it. The children of Israel passed from the physical bondage in Egypt to freedom as God's people by being baptized in the sea. Today, everyone can pass from the spiritual bondage of sin to spiritual freedom by passing through the waters of baptism where they contact the blood of Christ. God will then add them to the greatest organization known to man. They will become members of the church of our Lord.



Song of Salvation

Immediately after crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel sang a song of praise to God for their deliverance from slavery (Exod. 15:1-19). This song expressed their thanks to God and the joy they felt because he had delivered them from a period of great oppression. They had just witnessed, and actually participated in, a great miracle performed by God as he parted the waters of the Red Sea. They had gained their freedom and observed the destruction of those who oppressed them. God had saved them from Egypt and they praised him in song because of their joy. Crossing the Red Sea is referred to in many places in Old Testament scripture as salvation from Egypt. In recounting the story of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, Psalms 106:9-10 states,

He rebuked the Red Sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.



God saved the people from the hand of Pharaoh who hated them. All of these events were cause for great joy among the people, and they lifted their hearts together in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord. Also, Micah 6:4a says, "for I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants." God had redeemed or saved Israel from the bondage of slavery and because of this great physical salvation, they praised God in song. This song continued to be sung throughout the ages to remind Israel of their redemption from Egypt.

This song of salvation from slavery was also used by the prophets to foretell of another time when there would be great joy in Israel and throughout the world. It was symbolic of the new song of salvation that would be sung when Christ came to this earth to lead mankind from the slavery of sin. This situation is prophesied in Isaiah 26:1 which states, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." When Christ came to earth to redeem man from sin, the old song of deliverance from Egyptian bondage was forgotten. Those whom Christ delivered now sing a new song of much greater value. It is a song of praise to God for salvation from sin. The greatest event in the life of any person is when they are freed from sin. In the accounts of conversion in the New Testament, the converts experienced a time of great joy and happiness. For example, when the eunuch was baptized by Philip in Acts 8:39, the eunuch "went on his way rejoicing." Also, in the account of the conversion of the jailer and his household in Acts chapter 16, verse 34 says, "And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." When one obeys the gospel of Christ, there is great cause for rejoicing. We sing the new song of salvation. We no longer sing the song of deliverance from Egyptian bondage that Israel sang. We sing a much greater song today. Jeremiah 23:7-8 says,



Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt: But, the Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the

north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

Those who are gathered out of all countries into the church no longer remember and sing the old song of salvation from Egypt. We sing a new song of salvation from sin; a song which was first sung when Jesus delivered mankind from the bondage of sin through his death, burial and resurrection. It is the greatest song ever sung by man, and we sing it because of the joy of having our souls cleansed from sin. Singing has always been an expression of joy and during this Christian dispensation, we sing a new song of salvation. We sing praises and rejoice before the throne of God because of our salvation from sin. We no longer remember and praise God for deliverance for Egyptian bondage. As the true Israel of God, we praise God for deliverance from sin.

Two passages in Revelation refer to a new song. As the world moved from a time of condemnation under the Law of Moses to a period of forgiveness under the law of Christ, the people are described as singing a new song. This new song is a song of salvation from sin rather than the old song of salvation from bondage in Egypt. Revelation 14:3 says,

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

In this passage the 144,000 are pictured as standing before the throne of God (Rev 14:5). Verses 4-5 also explain who these people are that sing the new song. They are the "redeemed from among men." They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They are the firstfruits to God. All of these symbols describe Christians as we dwell in the church today. We are before the throne of God; we are followers of the Lamb; we are the firstfruits of God; we are the redeemed of the earth; and we are singing the new song of salvation. We are expressing our tremendous thanksgiving and joy to God as we sing the new song of deliverance from sin. Since the church is the spiritual dwelling place of the redeemed, it is a place of great joy and gladness because of our deliverance from sin. As members of this spiritual kingdom, we are God's chosen people, and we therefore continually sing the new song of salvation.

Isaiah chapter 12 is a marvelous example of how this symbolism of the new song of salvation is used in prophecy. We will include it for your reading. It is a prophecy concerning the joy that came to the people of this earth when Christ came the first time to bring salvation. Please notice especially verse 2. Before reading this scripture, it should be pointed out that the phrase "in that day" is used many times in Old Testament prophecy to refer to the time of the first coming of Jesus to this earth. This phrase is used in verses 1 and 4 of the passage and pinpoints the time of this prophecy as the first coming of Christ.

1 And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me.

2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation.

3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.

4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted.

5 Sing unto the Lord; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth.

6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.

Please consider the following brief explanation of Isaiah chapter 12.

V:1 "In that day" refers to the first coming of Christ and more specifically, his death, burial and resurrection. At that time the people of the world would praise him even though he had been

angry with them (Jer. 32:37). He is no longer angry with his people, but instead gives them great spiritual comfort.

V:2 When Jesus was resurrected from the dead, he became the salvation of all mankind. We trust in him because he is our strength. We sing a song of great joy because he has brought us salvation from sin.

V:3 Because Jesus died for our sins, we now have salvation.

V:4 In the day that Christ gave the ultimate sacrifice for our sins and mankind would praise him and call upon his name. This will continue through the "days" of the Christian dispensation. We will tell the world what he has done for us and we will exalt his name above all others.

V:5 Out of joy, we sing praises to the Lord for bringing us salvation.

V:6 Christians are the inhabitants of Zion, and we should shout the praises of God so all could hear for God now dwells among us.

We have received the greatest gift ever given --- the gift of salvation, and this should give us joy beyond compare. We should desire to praise God and thank him for the greatest gift of all. Christians are the only ones who can sing this new song of salvation; yet sometimes we wonder if we "have to go to church." Meeting together with the saints and enjoying the fellowship of those who can sing this new song of salvation is a great blessing which all Christians should desire. Israel praised God for delivering them from Egypt. How much more should we praise him for delivering us from sin? Let us glorify God because he gave us the church and praise him because we can be a part of it. We should be thankful as we worship God with our songs of praise and express our great appreciation to him for redeeming us from sin. We must realize that the church is the greatest institution on this earth. We need to hold it in the highest esteem because it is made up of God's people. It is the place where the saved dwell. We must view the church as God views it --- the dwelling place of his chosen people. When the church therefore comes together, let us do so with joy and gladness. We should respect each other and love each other as God would have us do as members of his family. Let us be willing and dedicated to continually spread the teachings of the Word that others may come in and sing the new song of salvation.

Bitter Waters of Marah

By the hand of God and under the leadership of Moses, Israel was able to escape from their physical bondage in Egypt. As they entered into the wilderness, they gained their freedom, but this did not mean they left all their trials and hardships behind. They had to face many problems on their journey through the wilderness, but God was with them to help them through these trials. The same is true today for those who escape the bondage of sin by crossing the spiritual Red Sea of the blood of Christ. Christians are free from the bondage of sin, but there are many temptations or trials to face as we follow God through the wilderness of this world. God helped Israel along their journey, and he will help Christians today. Many lessons can be learned concerning the church today by studying the problems Israel faced in the wilderness and understanding how God helped them to overcome those trials. The physical trials of Israel in the wilderness were analogous to the spiritual trials of the church in the world today.

We will begin by examining the first problem Israel encountered, which was the lack of drinking water. A great amount of water was needed for the vast number of Israelites who had left Egypt, but there was none to be found. After three days they came to a place called Marah and found water, but it was bitter. This meant that the waters were poisonous and unfit to drink. The Israelites began to murmur against Moses because they had no water, so Moses cried unto the Lord for help. The account of Israel being thirsty and having nothing to drink except the bitter waters of Marah is given in Exodus 15:22-25 which reads,



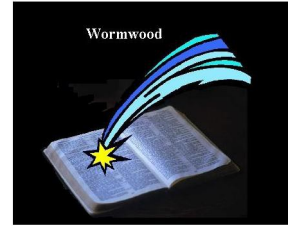
So Moses brought Israel from the Red sea, and they went out into the wilderness of Shur; and they went three days in the wilderness, and found no water, And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord shewed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet: there he made for them a statute and an ordinance, and there he proved them.

God once again used a literal situation with Israel of old to teach a wonderful lesson concerning the church in the Christian dispensation. The nation of Israel represented spiritual Israel to come, which is the church. Israel needed literal water in order to sustain their physical lives. The church today also needs water in order to survive. The difference is the church is a spiritual institution, therefore the water that it needs must be spiritual water. These spiritual waters are the same as those represented by the water in the Garden of Eden. Spiritual water is the word of life that God gave through Jesus and the Apostles. The church today needs the spiritual water of Jesus Christ in order to sustain our spiritual lives.



The water at Marah was bitter or polluted, no doubt with some type of physical impurities. It would not sustain life. In fact, it would take life. The waters of Marah can be compared to the spiritual water of the world today. There are many places in the world today where the spiritual water has become bitter. It is polluted with all manner of false teachings. Just as the physical waters at Marah were bitter and could not be used by the physical body, the polluted spiritual waters of the world cannot be used by our spiritual souls. The church must have the pure water of life that is supplied by Jesus Christ. Christians must have pure spiritual water in order to live spiritually just as Israel needed pure physical water in order to live physically.

This exact symbolism is used in Revelation chapter 8. In that passage a star named "Wormwood" falls into the spiritual waters of the world. According to Lam. 3:15, Wormwood is a bitter substance. When the wormwood fell into the spiritual waters of the world, the water became bitter. This shows that the true spiritual teachings of God can become polluted with the false teachings of man. The passage goes on to say that when the waters became bitter, many men died. Since we are dealing with spiritual waters that sustain spiritual life, the death here must be spiritual death. Today, if men drink of spiritual waters that have been polluted with false teachings, they will die spiritually. Only the true spiritual water of life provided by Jesus Christ will sustain our spiritual souls. For more information on other symbols in this passage in Revelation, see our commentary *Revelation for Christians Today*.



At Marah, God told Moses to make the waters sweet or pure so they might drink and live by cutting a tree and casting it into the waters. As we have discussed before, our spiritual tree of life is Jesus. When we encounter the bitter spiritual waters of this world, we can make them sweet by putting Jesus Christ into them. If we believe and follow the true teaching of the Bible, we are drinking of the true spiritual water of life.

We might also note that this tree was "cut down" in order to make the waters pure. This is exactly how the spiritual waters of this world were made pure in the first place. Jesus was "cut down" in order to provide the pure spiritual water of life. He allowed himself to be killed in order to bring the saving gospel to the world. He was then resurrected from the grave by God and supplied us with the pure spiritual water of life.

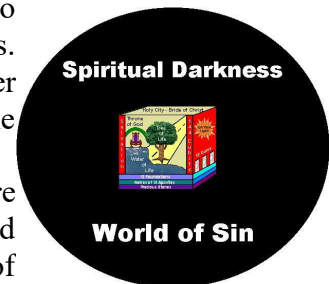
The church today is surrounded by a world of sin. It is also surrounded by a world of false religious teachings or bitter spiritual waters. It is our responsibility to provide the pure water of life to this world in order that those who are drinking bitter waters may turn to the sweet waters of the gospel and live.

It is also important that we keep the spiritual water that we are drinking in the church pure. We must not let the false teaching of the world pollute the pure water of life. If they do become polluted and we drink of them, we will die also. The way we keep them pure is by precisely following the teachings of Jesus Christ. We must always have the tree of life in our spiritual waters. This is exactly where our tree of life is pictured as standing in Rev. 22:2. It says,

In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

Jesus is our tree of life and only he can make the spiritual waters of this world pure.

Today, in this world we go to great lengths to insure that the physical water we drink is not polluted. We pass laws to keep people and industry from adding pollutants to our water. We are also attempting to clean up water that has previously become polluted. We understand the necessity of having pure water to drink. We realize that drinking polluted water will cause great discomfort to our bodies and can also cause serious illness or even death. We will thus avoid drinking polluted water at all cost. Though we know the importance of drinking pure physical water, many in the world today do not ever think about examining the spiritual water they drink. They accept the spiritual water offered by some man or religious organization without question. For this reason, many in the world are spiritually sick or even dead. We must examine the spiritual water we drink. If we do not want to become sick spiritually, we must make sure that we are drinking the sweet spiritual water of life provided by God through his Word.

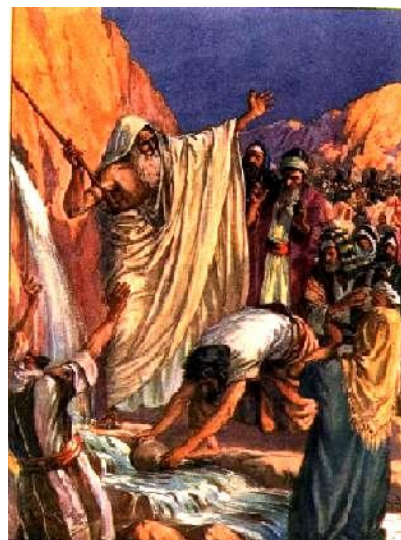


Water from a Rock

Many of the actual events in the lives of the Israelites had great symbolic meaning for the church during the Christian dispensation. Another of these events is recorded in Exodus chapter 17. The children of Israel had traveled from the wilderness of Sin and were camped at Rephidim. Since there was again no water for them to drink, they began to murmur against Moses and accuse him of killing them and their children with thirst. Moses cried unto the Lord and asked what he should do. In verse 6, God said to Moses,

Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel.

As has been discussed before, water is a substance necessary for all life to exist. The Israelites were thirsty and needed water or they would die. Since God is the fountain of waters (Jer. 2:13), Moses spoke to God and asked him to give them water (Exodus. 17:4). When God told Moses to smite the rock, he did so and water flowed freely from it. This event is symbolic of spiritual events taking place in the Christian dispensation. The rock represents Jesus who is our spiritual rock. In 1Cor. 10:4 we read, "And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ." Jesus is the spiritual rock of the church (Matt. 16:16-18). He is the source of our spiritual water today. In John 4:14, Jesus told the woman at the well that she would never thirst again if she drank of the waters that he would give her. Many people in the world today



are crying out because they are thirsty for the pure spiritual water of life.

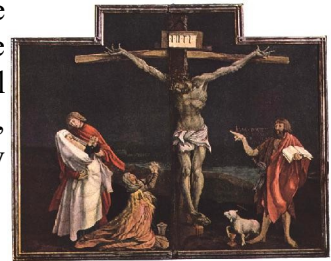
Those who are outside the church should be, and many are, thirsty for the spiritual water of salvation. They are living in a world of sin (wilderness) where there is no spiritual water to drink. They are thirsty for spiritual water just as the Israelites were thirsty for physical water. If they do not receive this spiritual water, they will die spiritually and their souls will be lost eternally. This spiritual water can be found in the same symbolic place as Moses found the literal water for Israel. It can be found in the spiritual Rock, which is Jesus. Those spiritual waters are the words that he spoke (John 12:48-50). When one obeys the gospel, he is drinking of the spiritual water that flows from Christ, our spiritual Rock.

Another important comparison to be made between this event in the lives of the children of Israel and the church today is the fact that Moses smote the rock to bring forth water. Our spiritual Rock, Jesus, was also smitten in order to bring forth the spiritual water of life to the world today. He was beaten and scourged, then he was nailed to a cross to shed his blood for us. He died the most cruel death imaginable. He was truly smitten for us and died in order that we might have salvation. Therefore, he became the author of our eternal salvation (Heb. 5:8-9). He gave us the words whereby we might be saved. It is every person's responsibility to drink of the spiritual water by following the commands given by Jesus Christ. The words that he spoke will enable us to attain eternal spiritual life.

On another occasion, the children of Israel were camped at Kadesh. Once again, there was no water for the people to drink and they became thirsty. This time God told Moses to speak to the rock so that it would bring forth water (Num 20:7-12). Moses disobeyed God and smote this rock as he had done at Horeb. Because Moses did this, God refused to let him enter the Promised Land. Obviously, God was not pleased with Moses because he disobeyed him, but there may have been other reasons also. Moses smote this rock again as he had done at Horeb instead of speaking to it as God had commanded. However, Jesus was smitten only once. He died once for our sins and that was the perfect sacrifice, which never had to be repeated (Heb. 9:25-26). Unlike the situation under the Law of Moses where blood sacrifices had to be offered each year, the blood of Christ was offered once for all time. After the rock was smitten once by Moses at Horeb, he was then told to speak to the rock at Kadesh. Today, God's people have had their sins forgiven because the Rock was smitten, and we now speak to the Rock. If Christians fall away or commit sin, we speak to the Rock to obtain forgiveness. Christ does not have to die again for our sins. Once we have been cleansed by his blood and then fall because of sin, we speak to the Rock, which once again enables us to drink of the spiritual water that flows from that Rock.

Jesus was smitten once for us, but for us to smite the rock again would be to treat Jesus in a manner completely unacceptable to God. The analogy of smiting (crucifying) him again is used in Heb. 6:6b, to describe those who turn from the things he has taught and return to a habit of sin. It states, "seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." If we smite the Rock again, we are crucifying him again. If we crucify him again, we are rejecting the blessings of his actual crucifixion. If we reject Christ, there is no sacrifice for our sins.

Our spiritual Rock, Jesus, has been smitten once for us and we are not to smite him again. We are rather to speak to the Rock; but if we smite him again, we will suffer the same consequences as Moses did. We will not be allowed to enter our Promised Land of heaven. Let us, therefore, continually speak to the Rock that was smitten for us in order that we may continually drink of the spiritual water of life that flows freely from him.



Manna

When the children of Israel left the land of Egypt, their numbers were tremendous. There are estimates of as many as two or three million. We may not know exactly how many Israelites there were, but there may have been nearly as many Israelites as there were Egyptians. We do know that Pharaoh made the Israelites slaves because he was concerned that they might become stronger than the people of Egypt. (Exod. 1:9-11). Therefore, we can conclude that there were vast numbers of Israelites at this time. The logistics of moving and caring for literally thousands, or possibly millions, of people must have been tremendous. They had to have large quantities of food and water in order to live. On the fifteenth day of the second month after they departed from Egypt, they came into the Wilderness of Sin (Exod. 16:1). Here they began to complain to God and Moses that they were going to die in the wilderness because of hunger (Exod. 16:3). Moses needed a way to feed this multitude of Israelites, so God told Moses that he would send them bread from heaven in the morning and quail at evening (Exod. 16:12-13). The people called the bread that God sent from heaven "Manna," because they did not know what it was (Exod. 16:15). This bread sustained the physical lives of the Israelites during their time in the wilderness. For this reason, "manna" was remembered throughout the ages as the way God fed Israel in the wilderness.



The children of Israel were God's chosen people, and they were a type of Christians who are God's chosen people today. God fed the Israelites on literal manna, but he feeds his children today on spiritual manna. Our spiritual manna was also sent from heaven by God. In John 6:31-35, Jesus



likens himself to this manna. He said he was the bread of life that came down from heaven. Just as manna sustained the physical lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, Jesus sustains our spiritual lives today. Jesus came to save us from our sins, therefore he is our spiritual bread of life. We are fed and nurtured by God through the words that Jesus spoke. As we obey his words and continue to follow

his teachings, we are eating the spiritual bread of life.

Other characteristics of manna may have symbolic meanings also. First, Exod. 16:31 says it was white. It may just be coincidence that the bread was white, but we doubt it. White has always been the color of purity. This manna represented the sinless Son of God. Jesus is pure and holy in every respect. The words he gave us are also pure. In the description of Jesus in Rev. 1:12-14, his head and hair are pictured as being totally white. Jesus is our bread of life and is therefore represented by the physical bread of life of the Israelites --- manna.

Second, Exod. 16:14-21 explains that the Israelites were to gather this bread daily. They were to gather the exact portion they would use that day, with the exception of the day before Sabbath when they were to gather a double portion. The word of God is our daily bread, and we should study and digest it daily. John 6:50-51 says,

This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

The children of Israel needed to eat manna daily in order to sustain their physical bodies. We need spiritual manna daily in order to sustain our spiritual lives. Without manna, the children of Israel would have perished in the wilderness. If we do not gather up our spiritual bread by studying God's Word, we will perish spiritually.

Third, this manna was only available to the children of Israel. God did not supply the bread of life to any nation except Israel. The children of Israel were a type of Christians today, and we are the only ones who are eating of the spiritual bread of life. It is available inside the church to anyone who wants to eat it, but Christians are the only people who have accepted this bread from God. The bread of life can only be eaten in the church. Those who desire to eat of it must submit to the will of God and come into the church where it is located.

Christians today are wandering in a wilderness or world of sin. We are nourishing our spiritual souls in the same manner as the Israelites nourished their physical bodies. We are eating of the spiritual manna sent down from heaven by God the Father. It is our daily bread, and it will sustain our souls. This situation of God feeding the Israelites manna in the wilderness is used in Rev. 12:6 to explain the spiritual situation of the church in the world today. It states,

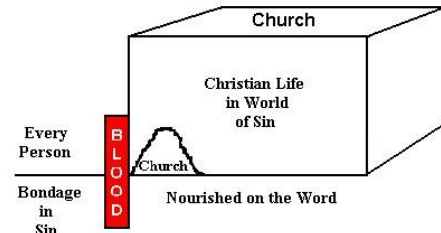
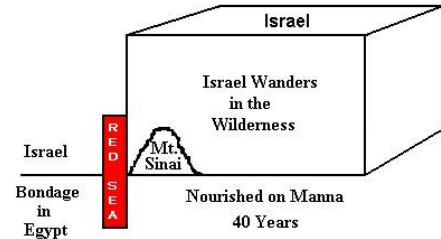
And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

The woman represents the church that is in the wilderness of this world today and is being fed by God.

Another passage in the Revelation uses this same symbolism of Israel eating manna in the wilderness to teach us lessons concerning the church. Revelation 2:17 says that those who overcome will "eat of the hidden manna." In order to understand this statement, we must first define "overcome." 1John 5:3-5 says,

For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous. For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

We "overcome" this world of sin through our faith in Jesus Christ. The Israelites "overcame" Egyptian bondage by crossing the Red Sea. We overcome spiritual bondage by crossing the Red Sea of the blood of Christ. When Israel was in the wilderness, they ate manna supplied by God. Revelation 2:17 says that those who overcome eat of the "hidden manna." The gospel of Christ was "hidden" until Christ came to this world. The people under the Law of Moses could only look forward to the coming of Jesus and the gospel. In Col. 1:25-27, the gospel is called a mystery. It remained a mystery until the day of Pentecost when the apostle Peter preached the first gospel sermon. It was then revealed to the entire world. We now eat of that "hidden manna," which is the gospel of Christ, in order to sustain our spiritual souls. When we cross the Red Sea of the blood of Christ through our baptism, we overcome this world of sin. We escape spiritual bondage, and our souls are nourished on the spiritual manna of God. The gospel that was once hidden is now available to all who are in need of spiritual nourishment. Today, God will feed and nourish our souls on spiritual manna just as he nourished the Israelites on literal manna.



Mount Sinai

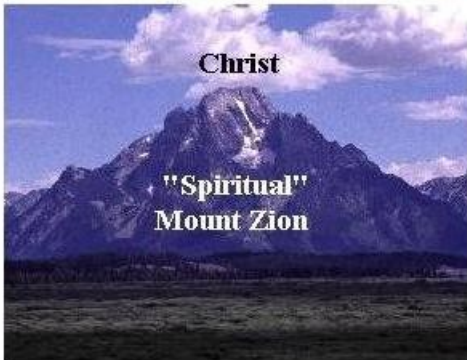
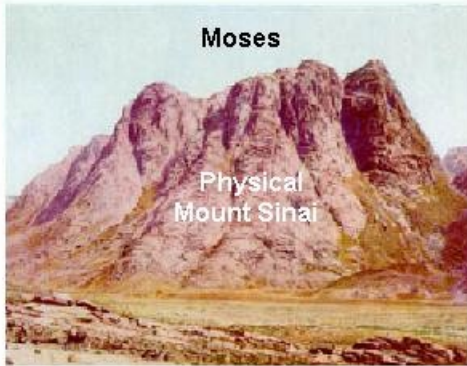
In the third month after the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea, they camped at mount Sinai. God chose this place to speak the words of his law unto Moses. Moses then spoke God's commandments unto the people and this was known as the Law of Moses. The giving of the Law of Moses was an event of major importance in the history of the Israelite nation. It was God's covenant with the children of Israel. If they would keep this covenant, they would be to God a "peculiar treasure above all people" (Exod. 19:5), and they would be a "kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). What a magnificent promise this must have been to a people who only three months before had been slaves in Egyptian bondage. They were now to be blessed above all peoples of the earth.

As we think about Israel and the things they had witnessed in the past three months, they should have been fully convinced that God was the one and only living God and that he would keep his promise to bless them. They had watched as God sent the ten plagues against Egypt. They had also witnessed the parting of the Red Sea and had crossed over on dry ground. They then observed the destruction of the Egyptian army as God closed the waters of the Red Sea upon them. Exod. 19:4 says, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself." Therefore, the people should have understood that God was capable of taking care of them in every situation. Miracles were performed which should have convinced the people to put their complete trust in God. Now, if the people of Israel would keep the covenant God was going to make with them, they would be a very special treasure unto God, far above other peoples of the earth.

When they came to mount Sinai, Moses went up into the mountain to meet with God. He was told to go back down to the people and have them wash their clothes and be ready for in three days he would "come down in the sight of all the people upon mount Sinai" (Exod. 19:11). God warned Moses to keep the people from touching the mountain while he was upon it. In order to accomplish this, God instructed Moses to set a boundary around the mountain that the people were not to cross. They were not to go up into the mountain nor even touch it. If they did so, they were to be put to death by being stoned or shot (Exod. 19:12-13).



Moses did as he was instructed. The people washed their clothes and a boundary was set around the mountain. On the morning of the third day, thunder, lightning and a thick cloud came upon the mountain. A trumpet sounded so loud that all the people trembled (Exod. 19:16). The smoke was great upon the mountain because God had descended upon it in a fire and the mountain shook tremendously (Exod. 19:18). The Lord then called Moses to come to the top of Sinai, so Moses went up (Exod. 19:20). In this setting God gave Moses the law and ordinances for the nation of Israel to keep.



This great event in the lives of the Israelite people was a parallel of a much greater event to come in the Christian age. This physical event represented a spiritual event that would take place when Christ came to this earth the first time. It is virtually impossible to over emphasize the importance of this symbol. Once it is understood, many of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the church become very understandable. Moses gave the old law on physical mount Sinai, which foreshadowed Christ giving the new law on spiritual mount Zion. The parallel between Moses giving the law on mount Sinai and Christ giving the gospel on mount Zion may be the least understood of the Old Testament parallels; yet it is one of the most vital in understanding how the prophets prophesied of the coming of Jesus and the church. We will now examine some Old Testament scriptures that use "Zion" as a symbol of the church. In Micah 4:1-2 we read,

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people

shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

An almost identical reading of these verses can be found in Isaiah 2:2-3. Verse 1 of Micah 4 says that all these things will come to pass in the "last days." These last days refer to the Christian dispensation. We know this is true because 1Jno. 2:18 explains that we are living in the "last times" which must be the "last days," or the Christian age. The mountain of the house of the Lord was to be established in the "last days," the Christian dispensation. Now, we must determine the meaning of this "mountain" which was to be established in the last days. Verse 2 calls it the "house of the God of Jacob." In Eph. 2:19, Christians are called the "household" of God. If Christians are the household of God, then the church must be the house of God. Thus the "mountain of the house of the Lord" is the church. It was established in the "last days" on the day of Pentecost as Peter preached the first gospel sermon. Micah 4:2b says, "for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Zion was another name for Jerusalem. Zion represents much more than just a reference to Jerusalem. It was the place where the gospel would be made known to all mankind. It symbolizes the spiritual mountain of the Lord. In Micah 4:7b, this mountain which was to be established is called "mount Zion." It states, "and the Lord shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever." This is a prophecy of Christ reigning over the church (spiritual mount Zion) during the last days (Christian dispensation). Mount Sinai was the physical mountain on which Moses received the first law. It was symbolic of the spiritual mountain to come on which Christ would give his law, the gospel. It is tremendously important to understand how these two events parallel each other. Heb. 12:18-29 uses the parallel events of mount Sinai and mount Zion to explain the difference between the laws of Moses and Christ. Although this is a lengthy passage, it will be included in our reading for easy reference to the symbols being discussed. As the writer of Hebrews speaks to Christians, he states,

18 For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest,

19 And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more:

20 (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart:

21 And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)

22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels,

23 To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,

24 And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

25 See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven:

26 Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

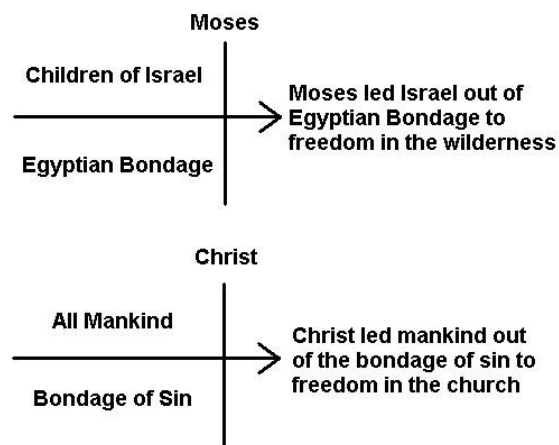
27 And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

28 Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear:

29 For our God is a consuming fire.

This is a magnificent passage for Christians to study and understand. It is based precisely on the parallel of the giving of the Law of Moses on physical mount Sinai and the giving of the gospel on spiritual mount Zion. The spelling of "Zion" and "Sion" is simply a difference in the Hebrew and Greek translations. The book of Hebrews was obviously written to Christians since it was written after the church was established. Keeping this in mind, notice verses 18-21. These verses are referring to mount Sinai, which is described as a mount that could not be touched and that burned with fire. Verse 20 repeats the fact that if anything touched the mountain it would be killed. Then verse 21 says that the sight was so frightening that even Moses was afraid and shook. All these things are definite references to mount Sinai at the time of the giving of the Law of Moses. Now, notice verse 18. It says that "ye" (Christians) are not come unto mount Sinai. In other words, Christians are not subject to the law given on Sinai. So, what law are Christians subject to? This is answered in verse 22. It says that "ye" (Christians) are come unto mount Sion. Christians are not come unto mount Sinai, but we are come unto mount Zion. We are come unto the gospel of Christ that he gave on spiritual mount Zion. The giving of the old law by Moses on mount Sinai was a pattern of Christ giving his law on spiritual mount Zion. In a manner similar to the Israelites gathering themselves around mount Sinai as Moses received the Ten Commandments, Christians today are gathered around spiritual mount Zion.

We must recognize that mount Zion is a figurative description of the church. Once this is understood, many Old Testament prophecies concerning the church are easy to understand. With this in mind, let us now examine some of the statements in verses 22-24, which positively show that mount Zion is a symbolic description of the church. Beginning in verse 22 of this passage, several statements define the church and Christians today. First, mount Zion is called the "heavenly Jerusalem" (v.22). This symbolism will be discussed later in the section on "Jerusalem," but for our purposes here it does represent the church. Zion is also called the "general assembly." All those who have assembled themselves together by obeying the commands of the gospel are the "general assembly." Next, mount Zion is called the "church of the firstborn" (v.23). This specifically identifies mount Zion as a symbol of the church. Also, those who have come to mount Zion are said to have their names "written in heaven" (v.23). In Philippians 4:3, Paul salutes his fellowlabourers whose "names are in the book of life." When one becomes a member of the church, his/her name is written in heaven in the book of life. Those gathered around mount Zion are also come unto "God, the judge of all" (v.23). All of these terms demonstrate the close relationship that Christians now enjoy with God. As was discussed in the section on the "Garden of Eden," we now once again walk in a close relationship with God. He said he would walk with us and we would be his people, and that situation now exists in the church. Christians are also come unto the "spirits of just men made perfect" (v.23). Those people who lived a just life under the Law of Moses had their sins forgiven at the cross (Heb. 9:15). They now stand perfected in the sight of God. The difference is that we as Christians today can stand perfected in the sight of God as we live on this earth. The blood of Christ forgave the sins of all mankind who seek to follow him, both before and after the cross. Christians are also come unto "Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (v.24). Coming to mount Zion is the same as coming to Jesus. Jesus is the mediator of the "new covenant" (gospel), and when we obey the gospel we put on Christ (Gal. 3:27).



Many other types and patterns can be seen in this comparison of mount Sinai and mount Zion. Moses was a type of Christ. Moses led the Israelites out of physical bondage. Christ led mankind out of spiritual bondage. Moses received the law on physical mount Sinai. Christ gave the gospel on spiritual mount Zion. The children of Israel were the ones who came to mount Sinai. Christians are the ones today who come to mount Zion. The children of Israel washed their clothes as they came to mount Sinai. Christians today wash their spiritual garments and make them white in the blood of the Lamb as they come to mount Zion. Once again, in this symbolism we see the comparison of the children of Israel and Christians. Christians are the true Israel of God today. Placed in a concise form, we can see the following comparisons between the giving of the Law of Moses on mount Sinai and the giving of the gospel on mount Zion.

MOSAIC DISPENSATION

**MOSES
MOUNT SINAI
LAW OF MOSES
CHILDREN OF ISRAEL**

CHRISTIAN DISPENSATION

**CHRIST
MOUNT ZION
GOSPEL
CHRISTIANS**

One other comparison of the giving of the laws on mount Sinai and mount Zion is the time frame God used to give these laws. As God spoke to Moses the first time on mount Sinai, he told him to go back down to the people and prepare them for the receiving of the law. On the morning of the third day, God returned to mount Sinai to give Moses the law. On the morning of the third day, Jesus rose from the grave. This fulfilled the old law and brought the gospel of Christ to all mankind. Just as the Law of Moses was not read to the people until Moses came down out of the mountain some forty days later, the content of the gospel was not known until it was given to people of the Christian age on the day of Pentecost. Mount Zion is a definite symbol of the church. To come to mount Zion is to come into the church of our Lord.

Once we understand that Zion is a prophetic name for the church, we can then go back to the Old Testament and read the prophecies concerning Zion and learn much about the nature of the church today. Understanding these prophecies enables us to see the church as God sees it. If we understand what God prophesied the church would be like, we can then compare our understanding of the church today and determine if it meets the expectations set forth by God. One example of this with which most are familiar is Isa. 28:16. It states,

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Jesus is that tried and precious cornerstone, and he is the foundation of Zion, which is the church. Another example of how Zion is used as a prophetic description of the church is in Joel 2:32 which says,

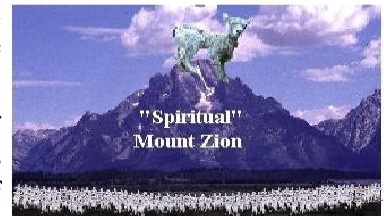
And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the LORD hath said, and in the remnant whom the LORD shall call.

This passage was used by Peter in Acts 2:16-21 as a direct reference to the church as he spoke on the day of Pentecost. He tells us in verse 16 that they are witnessing the fulfillment of this prophecy. Our deliverance today is spiritual deliverance from sin and it takes place in mount Zion, which is the church.

This symbolism of mount Zion representing the church can also be used to understand some of the visions of John in the book of Revelation. Rev. 14:1 says,

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

We easily recognize that the Lamb represents Christ. He is standing on mount Zion with the 144,000. By using this symbolism to interpret the passage in Revelation, we see that the 144,000 must represent Christians because Christians are the ones who stand on mount Zion with Jesus Christ. Figuratively speaking, we have the Father's name (God) written in our foreheads because we have chosen to follow him. We are his children. Verses 2-5 of Revelation chapter 14 give descriptions of Christians. They include such descriptions as: (1) harping with their harps; (2) singing a new song; (3) following the Lamb wheresoever he goes; (4) becoming the firstfruits of God; (5) being redeemed; and (6) standing before the throne of God.

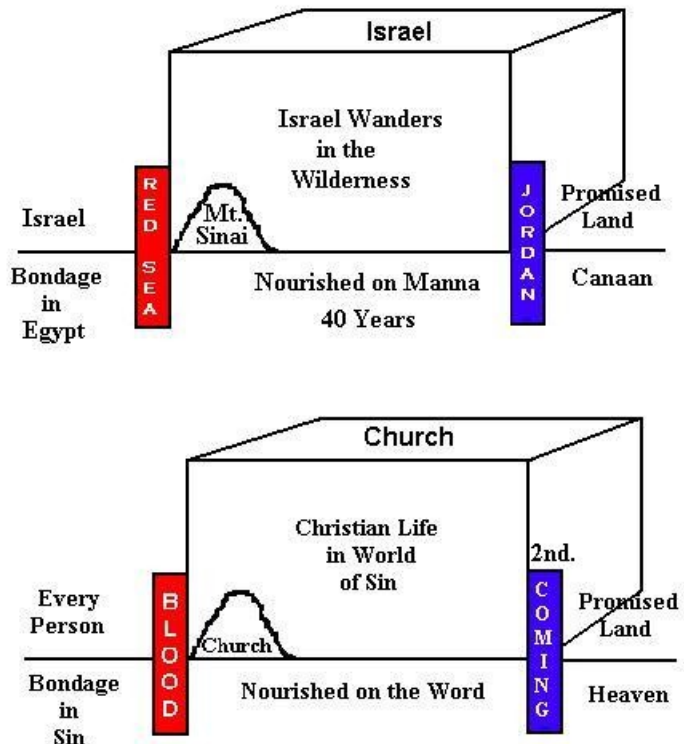


Zion was a term used in the Old Testament to refer to Israel or Jerusalem. It became symbolic of a much better place that Christ would make for his people at the time he restored the kingdom to Israel. He restored Israel in the form of a spiritual city, which is the church, and as king he now rules over his people in spiritual mount Zion. The church is "The city of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. 60:14). The Israelites served God around physical mount Sinai, but today Christians serve God around spiritual mount Zion.

Wilderness

Many great lessons concerning Christians and the church can be learned by examining the situations of Israel in the wilderness. Even the wilderness itself has symbolic meanings for the Christian dispensation. After the children of Israel received God's law and ordinances on mount Sinai, they headed for Canaan. This was the land which God had promised them, and it was described as flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8). Keep in mind that they had recently left the land of Egypt where they had suffered greatly as slaves. God promised them a new home of great value. They had to travel through the wilderness to this new land, and under the direction of God, take it from its present inhabitants. They would have gone straight from Sinai to Canaan if they had only trusted in God. However, when they reached Canaan, they found giants in the land and were afraid to make war against them. Because of their lack of faith in God, he punished them by making them wander in the wilderness for forty years. During this time, Israel suffered many hardships and trials. The time spent in the wilderness was far more to Israel than mere hardships. It was a time when God disciplined Israel. They learned to follow God and trust in him for their every need as he protected them and provided food and water. They followed God as the pillar of fire led them by night and the cloud by day. As God's chosen people, he nurtured them during their journey. They learned that they could trust in God and rely upon him alone. They were totally dependent on God for their every need.

As has been discussed earlier, Israel is a likeness of the church of this Christian age. Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years; but for our purpose, let us think of this time as beginning when they crossed the Red Sea and lasting until the time they crossed the Jordan River into the Promised Land. This is the period of time from Israel's physical salvation from bondage in Egypt until they reached their physical Promised Land of Canaan. This corresponds to the time the church spends in the world during the Christian dispensation. Jesus shed his blood on the cross and created a spiritual Red Sea for us to cross. This was the beginning of the Christian dispensation that will last until he comes again to lead us across our spiritual Jordan River to heaven. The church will thus dwell in the wilderness of this world from the time Christ delivered all mankind out of the bondage of sin by giving his blood on the cross until we enter our spiritual Promised Land at his second coming.



The wilderness was a likeness of the world of sin in which the church exists today. It is interesting to note that even part of the wilderness in which the Israelites wandered was named the "Wilderness of Sin" (Exod. 16:1). Just as the children of Israel had many physical trials and hardships in the wilderness, Christians have many spiritual trials and hardships in this world today. God provided for the physical needs of the Israelites, and he will supply our spiritual needs today. The church is wandering in the wilderness today as it is surrounded by a world of sin, but God will nourish and protect the spiritual souls of those who choose to follow him. As members of the Lord's church, we must recognize the situation of the church in the world today and understand it is made up of those who have overcome this world of sin (1John 5:4-5). Those who are not in the church are in this world of sin. The church was established on the first Pentecost following the crucifixion of Christ and began its journey to the Promised Land of heaven --- a journey that will continue until Christ comes the second time to take us across spiritual Jordan. We do not know how long that period of time will be. For the Israelites, it was forty years, but for Christians it is an indefinite time. For that reason, this period of time is symbolically referred to as one thousand years in the book of Revelation (Rev. 20:2-7). It is thus the duty of every Christian who lives during this symbolic 1000 year period of time to keep himself in the proper relationship with God. Many Israelites fell during their 40-year journey and were unable to enter the Promised Land. Their experience is a great lesson for us today. If we do not remain faithful to God, we too will fall in the wilderness, and God will refuse to let us enter the spiritual Promised Land of the soul.

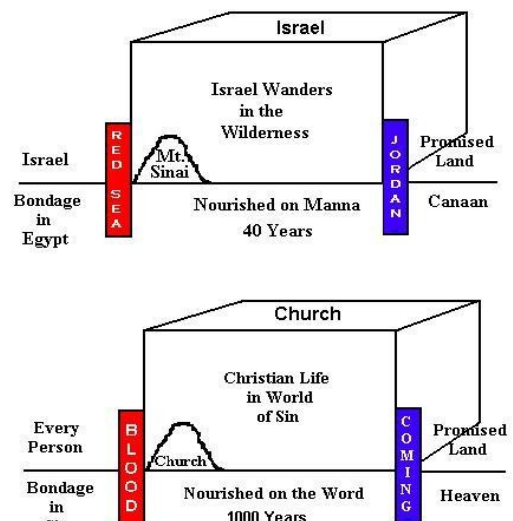
Let us now examine some of the symbolism in the book of Revelation that is drawn from this period of 40 years of wilderness wanderings. In Revelation chapter 20, this corresponding time in the Christian age is called "1000 years." Revelation 20:6 says,

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

To understand this passage we must first define the "second death." Revelation 21:8 says,

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

The second death is hell. Revelation 21:6 says that in order to avoid the second death or hell, we must have a part in the first resurrection. We know how to avoid hell, and that is by being obedient to the gospel. The first person to be resurrected from the dead never to die again was Jesus Christ. We have a part in that resurrection by being baptized, which is a likeness of his death, burial, and resurrection in that we are submerged under the water and then raised to walk a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). Notice it is also a likeness of the children of Israel crossing the Red Sea. They also went down into the water and came out on the other side as free people. By



being baptized, we avoid the second death or hell. When we do this, we become priests of God and reign with him during the "1000 years." The "1000 years" is a symbolic time, not literal, which parallels the 40 literal years Israel spent in the wilderness. We are in the spiritual wilderness of this world, and we are being fed and nurtured by God. The "1000 years" began when Christ led mankind out of the bondage of sin by giving his blood on the cross. He then gave us the gospel on mount Zion and established his church. When people obey the gospel, they become members of the church and take part in the symbolic 1000 years of wilderness wanderings. We are priests of God and reign with him during the figurative 1000 years just as Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

A prophecy in Ezekiel explains the church's situation in the world today. Ezekiel 34:25 says, And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

This prophetic statement shows that even though there are hardships, temptations, and trials in the world today, God will care for us and protect our spiritual souls just as he cared for Israel in the literal wilderness. Even though sin abounds in the world today, Christians can have peace of mind knowing that our sins are forgiven and that we are in the right relationship with God. We are therefore at peace with God knowing we have a close relationship with him. Our spiritual souls can "dwell safely in the wilderness" of sin which surrounds the church today if we continue to put our faith and trust in God. To "sleep in the woods" also illustrates the spiritual peace Christians have in the church. The devil may tempt us, but he can not harm our souls as long as we are faithful to God. We can have peace of mind knowing that God will protect our spiritual lives from the forces of the devil.

This type of symbolism is also used in Revelation 12:14. Speaking of the glorious woman that represents the church, Rev. 12:14 says,

And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

This passage shows that the church is in the wilderness today. Just as Israel followed Moses into the wilderness, the church today has followed Christ into the wilderness. Here, God nourishes us through his word. We are protected from the face of the serpent, which means that our sins are forgiven and the devil can no longer harm our spiritual souls. We are God's people and we are following him and depending on him to lead us through this world of sin. God will protect his church and care for his people as we make our way toward our Promised Land of heaven. It is our responsibility to remain faithful to him along this journey. If we are not faithful, we will fall in our wilderness just as many Israelites fell in their wilderness.

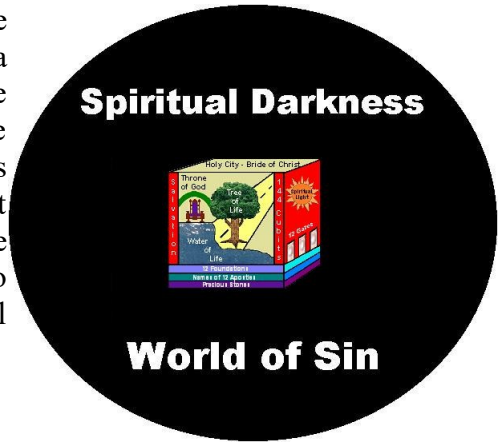
This exact symbolism is used in Heb. 3:16-19 to encourage us to remain faithful as we live in the wilderness of the world. The passage reads,

For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

Those who were unfaithful to God and sinned in the wilderness also died in the wilderness. They were not allowed to enter the Promised Land of Canaan. The same is true for Christians today. As we dwell in the wilderness of this world, we must remain faithful to God. If we sin or turn from God, we will also die spiritually in the wilderness. We will not be allowed into our Promised Land of heaven.

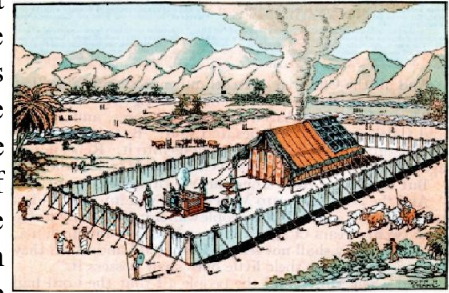
We must recognize the situation of the church in the world today. We are a spiritual kingdom surrounded by a world of sin. This has been the situation of the church since Christ was on earth the first time and it will remain the same until he comes again. Today, Christians must face many trials and hardships, but the most important thing in our lives is that we remain faithful to God. He will feed and nurture the spiritual lives of his people all along this journey. In order to reach our final destination, we must follow Christ like Israel followed Moses.

It is very important that we understand the difference in our physical and spiritual lives. God never promised Christians a comfortable or easy physical life while on this earth. In fact, he warned us that just the opposite would be true (Matt. 10:34). Christians have been persecuted and killed since the first century, and it is likely to continue to some degree until Christ returns. The times in which we live today may have caused us to forget that many Christians have had to suffer greatly, but there could come times of persecution again. What God did promise us was a wonderful spiritual life filled with joy and peace because our sins are forgiven. Christians live in a close relationship with God and have spiritual peace that will last for all eternity. As we live in the wilderness of this world, spiritual peace is to be desired above any earthly comfort or prosperity that we might achieve.



Tabernacle

After Moses received the Ten Commandments on mount Sinai, God instructed him to build a Tabernacle that was to be the dwelling place of God as Israel traveled through the wilderness (2Sam. 7:6). The priests performed their services to God in the Holy Place in this tabernacle, and the High Priest entered the most Holy Place once each year to make atonement for the sins of the people (Heb. 9:6-7). God instructed Moses to build the tabernacle exactly according to the measurements he had given him. Every object inside the tabernacle was also placed there according to God's instructions. A partial description of this tabernacle is given in Heb. 9:2-5. It states,



For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all; Which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; And over it the cherubims of glory shadowing the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

God specifically designed the tabernacle and the articles found in it. Moses thus built the first tabernacle according to God's pattern, and it was an example or shadow of a much greater tabernacle to come during the Christian age. Heb. 8:5 states,

Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

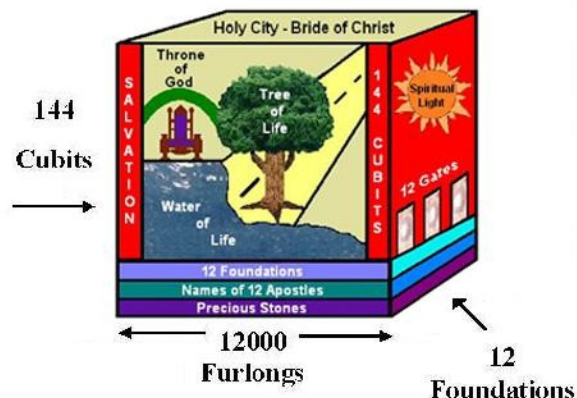
The first tabernacle was a physical, literal pattern of the true spiritual tabernacle that was to come in the Christian age. It was a pattern of the church. The church is therefore our spiritual tabernacle that was built by Jesus Christ. Heb. 8:1-2 says,

Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

Moses was a likeness of Christ. He built the literal tabernacle, but Christ built the true spiritual tabernacle, which is the church. Once again, we have a physical object which was a shadow or pattern of something spiritual to come at the first advent of Christ.

The spiritual tabernacle of the New Testament was also built according to the specifications given by God. These measurements can be found in Revelation chapters 21-22. The length, breadth, and height of the wall measures 12,000 furlongs square and it is 144 cubits thick. Of course, these measurements are not literal. Instead,

Measurements of the Church



they are symbolic measurements of a spiritual tabernacle. You may notice that the measurements given in Revelation are measurements of a city, not a tabernacle. The point is that both the city and the tabernacle represent the same spiritual structure, which is the church. Those numbers in Revelation are symbolic measurements of a spiritual building. This concept helps us understand a little more about how numbers are used symbolically in the book of Revelation. A physical structure can be measured by the literal measurements of man, but spiritual items can not be measured in physical quantities. They must be measured in symbolic spiritual terms.

The tabernacle was the center of worship for the nation of Israel. God dwelt in the tabernacle, so when the High Priest made atonement for the sins of the people, he had to enter the tabernacle to speak to God. By analogy, the church is the tabernacle of God today and God dwells in it. Matt. 18:20 states, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." We are priests of God today (1Pet. 2:5), and we commune with him through prayer as members of his church. People outside the church are not priests. They are the followers of the devil and God does not hear their prayers (1Pet. 3:12). To be able to communicate with God as a priest we must be part of the church. As priests could not make atonement for the sins of the people outside the tabernacle, neither can those outside the church today ask God to forgive them and expect him to do so. Forgiveness is only in the church. 1Cor. 6:16 says,

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Most are familiar with the tabernacle as a pattern of the church. For that reason, we will concentrate our study at this time on understanding how this tabernacle was used in prophecy to foretell of the time when Jesus would establish the church. In Ezekiel chapter 37, the Lord shows



Ezekiel a valley of dry bones. It may not be obvious at first what Ezekiel's vision of dry bones could have to do with the tabernacle, but it should become clear as we study the text. According to Eze. 37:11, those dry bones represented the children of Israel. They were dried up because the sins of the people had brought them spiritual death. The Lord says to Ezekiel in Ezekiel 33:14-15,

Again, which I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; If the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.

Israel was dead spiritually and their bones had dried up because of their sins. The purpose of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones was to show Ezekiel that the Lord could cause those bones to live again. Eze. 37:12-14 says,

Therefore prophesy and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel.

Notice that the Lord said he would be the one to cause the bones to live again. Jesus would do this by shedding his blood on the cross for the sins of the people. When Jesus died on the cross, he brought Israel out of their spiritual graves and gave them spiritual life.

Verses 15-19 of this chapter explain how God will take the house of Israel, which was divided into two parts, and restore them again into one nation. This "one nation" is the church. Galatians 3:28 says, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." The church is the "one nation" of God today. It is the spiritual "land" into which the people of the world are gathered who want to be with God. Ezekiel 37:21 says,

And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land.

Just as Canaan was the literal land that the physical nation of Israel inhabited, the church is the spiritual land in which Christians dwell today. This land is likened to the Garden of Eden. Eze. 36:35 says,

And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.

This physical land of Israel had become desolate because of the sins of the people. God punished Israel by allowing Assyria and Babylon to attack them and plunder their land. Their cities were in ruins and their land was made barren. The spiritual land, which God promised Israel through Ezekiel, was to be like the Garden of Eden. The contrast here is tremendous. God was going to take Israel from this place of ruin and desolation to a place like the Garden of Eden. It was to be a spiritual Eden where God would live with his people. Christ gave us that spiritual Eden when he came to earth the first time. Christians today are living in that spiritual Eden which is the church.

Ezekiel 37:24 explains that at the time Israel was to inherit this spiritual land, David would be King over them. This is an obvious reference to Christ. David had ruled as king over the literal nation of Israel in a likeness to Christ ruling as King over spiritual Israel, which is the church. This statement helps to pinpoint the exact time of the fulfillment of this prophecy. It was fulfilled when Christ came to earth and began his reign on the throne of David as King over his spiritual kingdom --- the church.

With all these teachings in mind about the prophecy of the valley of dry bones, the point we want to make concerning the tabernacle is found in verses 26-27. They read,

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

At the time of the first coming of Christ, an everlasting covenant of peace was made with the people. This is the gospel of Christ. This "covenant of peace" will be discussed in a later section in this book. God says that at the time this covenant of peace was to be made that his sanctuary and tabernacle would be in the midst of the people. The tabernacle was the dwelling place of God as he traveled with them during the wilderness wanderings. The literal tabernacle was a pattern of the true tabernacle that was to come during this Christian age. Christians today are dwelling in this true tabernacle --- the sanctuary of God. The sanctuary was the area of the tabernacle called the Holy Place which contained the candlestick, table and shewbread (Heb. 9:2). In the book of Revelation, the candlestick is used to symbolize the church (Rev. 1:20). The table and shewbread symbolize the Lord's Supper, which is a part of our worship unto the Lord today in the church. These symbols point to the fact that the tabernacle built by Moses was a pattern for the true tabernacle --- the church. We are God's people today. We dwell in the spiritual tabernacle and God dwells among us. This is the exact meaning of Revelation 21:3 which states,

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

The tabernacle or church is with men today, and God dwells with us in that spiritual tabernacle. He is our God and we are his people.

The children of Israel carried with them in the wilderness a physical pattern of the spiritual tabernacle of the Christian age. The acts of worship that the priests performed were shadows of our worship to God in the church today. The High Priest took the blood of sacrificial animals into the

Holiest of Holies once each year to atone for the sins of the people. Today, Christ is our High Priest and also our sacrificial lamb. He took his own blood into the Holy Place to redeem us. Consider the reading of Heb. 9:11-12 which states,

But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

The more perfect tabernacle not made with hands is the church. It is a spiritual building prepared by Jesus Christ (Heb. 8:2). When Christ built this true tabernacle, he brought the people of Israel out of their spiritual graves. He made the bones in the valley of dry bones to live again. He brought the people into a spiritual land of Eden. At the same time, he made a covenant of peace with mankind that allows us to dwell in that spiritual tabernacle today if we will only follow him. As Christians, we live in the true tabernacle with God, and our land is not desolate as was Israel's of old. The church is our Garden of Eden.

Canaan

The hope of the Hebrew people, even before they were delivered from Egyptian bondage, was to possess a land of their own. God began to fulfill this desire when he told Moses to lead his people out of Egypt to a land he would give them (Exod. 3:8). This land was known to the children of Israel as the "Promised Land." God delivered them from Egypt; he made a way for them to cross the Red Sea; and he gave them a law to follow on Mount Sinai. He cared for them in the wilderness and eventually brought them to the Jordan River. Many years and events transpired along this journey, but finally they were able to cross Jordan and enter the land that God had promised them.



This journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan was a pattern that Christians follow in this Christian dispensation. Israel was a likeness to the spiritual kingdom of God, the church. Jesus has delivered mankind from the slavery of sin. His blood is the Red Sea which man crosses in order to leave the bondage of sin and begin his journey to the Promised Land. The church received the law of Christ on spiritual mount Zion. We are dwelling in the wilderness of this world and headed to our Promised Land of heaven. We will face many trials and temptations along the way, but eventually if we remain faithful, we will also reach our Promised Land.



Canaan, Israel's Promised Land, was described as a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 13:5). This was a vast contrast to their situation in the land of Egypt that they had left some forty years before. God had delivered them from physical slavery and cared for them in the wilderness. Those who had remained faithful to him in the wilderness were allowed to enter the Promised Land. This is the pattern that Christians follow today. Christ has led mankind out of the bondage of sin, and all who remain faithful to him as we travel in the spiritual wilderness of this world will eventually enter a beautiful, spiritual Promised Land flowing with milk and honey.

Heaven is our Promised Land. Those who remain faithful to God will inherit the land that God has promised Christians. 1Pet 1:4 explains that because Jesus was raised from the dead, we have the hope of "an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you." This is also our place of eternal rest. Speaking of Israelites, Heb. 4:8 says, "For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." Then, speaking of Christians, the next verse says, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Heb. 3:17-19 speaks of those Israelites who fell in the wilderness because of their disobedience, as it states,

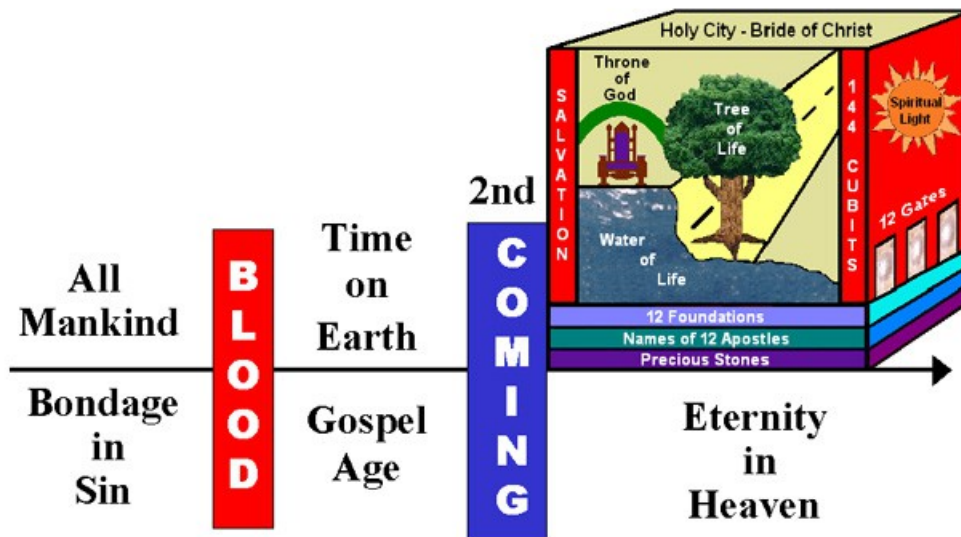
But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

For our purposes at this time, notice that these verses are definitely speaking of the nation of Israel as they traveled through the wilderness and that Canaan is referred to as a place of rest. Canaan was a physical land of rest for Israel, and it was a likeness to our spiritual land of rest, which is heaven.

Before the Israelites could enter their Promised Land they had to cross the Jordan River. This was the boundary line between the hardships and trials of the wilderness and the pleasures and

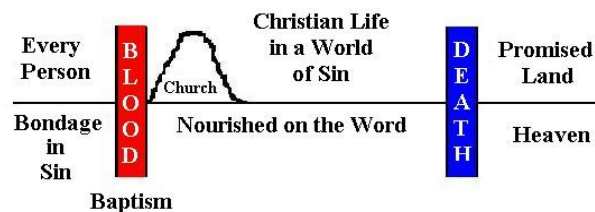
plenty of the Promised Land. This corresponds to the second coming of Christ for the church. Today, the church is dwelling in the wilderness of this world and dealing with all the problems of this life, and as Christians we are looking forward to reaching our spiritual land of rest (Heb. 4:9). The boundary between the church in this world and our Promised Land of rest is the second coming of Christ. When he comes again, he will lead his people safely across Jordan to our spiritual Promised Land.

As we apply this situation to the church today, some marvelous lessons can be learned. First, the makeup of the Israelite nation did not change as they crossed Jordan. No foreign nation joined in their crossing. Only the chosen people of the nation of Israel crossed Jordan. The church is the Israel of God today. It is the nation of people who will enter heaven. The church will simply change places. It will move from this earth to heaven. No other religious organizations founded by man will be allowed to join in this crossing. The church of our Lord will be the only spiritual nation to follow him across Jordan. Second, those Israelites who were disobedient fell in the wilderness instead of crossing Jordan. Only those who were faithful and followed God's commands crossed over into the Promised Land. It is possible to once be a part of the chosen people of God and return to a world of sin. Those who disobey God will not be allowed to cross Jordan (Heb. 3:17). Third, Israel crossed Jordan as a collection of God's people. There was no question as to who belonged to the Israelite nation and who would be involved in crossing Jordan. When Christ comes again, there will be no question concerning who is a member of the church and who will cross over into the Promised Land of heaven. Only Christians will participate in the crossing. It will be too late for those who have rejected God to decide they want to be a part of his chosen people.



It should also be pointed out that these major events in the lives of the Israelites parallel events in the lives of every individual Christian. Christ will lead anyone out of his sins who is willing to obey the commands of God. He can be freed from the bondage of sin by crossing the Red Sea of the blood of Christ through baptism. He then becomes a part of the church, or mount Zion, and keeps the law that Christ gave. He dwells in the wilderness of this world, facing many trials and temptations, but his spiritual soul is cared for and fed by God as he continues to study and learn

Christians Follow the Pattern



about God's word. At the end of his life, he crosses over the river of death to live with God for all eternity.

One fascinating situation in the Old Testament uses this same symbolism. In 2Kings 2:1, God told the great prophet Elijah that he would take him to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah performed one last miracle before he was taken up. In the company of the young prophet Elisha, he parted the waters of the Jordan River and walked across. No real reason for Elijah parting the waters of the Jordan River is apparent. Only Elisha and fifty sons of prophets who stood afar off witnessed the event (2Kings 2:7). This just seemed to be the last thing God wanted Elijah to do before he was taken to heaven. But it was, however, far more than that. Elijah was following the same pattern that all of God's people follow as he crossed the Jordan River before entering the spiritual Promised Land. Even though Elijah did not die physically, he died symbolically as he crossed over the Jordan River. All who follow God will eventually cross Jordan. We will be led out of the wilderness of this world to a magnificent spiritual Promised Land. We must all cross Jordan.

God gave Adam and Eve the Garden of Eden. They disobeyed him, so he cast them out. He gave Israel the land of Canaan. They turned to other gods and he drove them out of their land. He gave us the church, which is our spiritual dwelling place today. The church is traveling through the wilderness of this world toward the Promised Land of heaven. We must endure many trials and temptations along the way, but Jesus has made a way for us to overcome these trials. If we continue to follow the teachings of Jesus, God will forgive us when we sin. We will be able to cross Jordan into our Promised Land. However, if we turn from him, we will fall in the spiritual wilderness just as many Israelites fell in the literal wilderness. Let us continually strive to remain faithful so we can eventually cross spiritual Jordan into our Promised Land of plenty and rest.

Feasts of Israel

Now that we have completed our study of Israel as they traveled from Egypt to Canaan and have recognized that they established a pattern which Christians follow today, let us now examine how the feasts of Israel also correspond to God's plan for establishing the church. In addition to the Ten Commandments and the ordinances of the law which Israel received on mount Sinai, God assigned them seven special feasts to be observed on specific dates and for certain periods of time. A description of these feasts is given in Leviticus chapter 23. They were observed as follows:

<u>Feast</u>	<u>Time of observance</u>
(1) Passover	14th of first month
(2) Unleavened Bread	15th of first month - for one week
(3) Firstfruits	16th of first month
(4) Pentecost	50 days after feast of Unleavened Bread
(5) Trumpets	1st day of seventh month
(6) Atonement	10th day of seventh month
(7) Booths or Tabernacles	15th day of seventh month - for one week

Each of these feasts commemorated a special event or specific occasion in the history of the Israelite people, and they were observed in connection with the agricultural seasons of the land. In addition to the significant meanings for the children of Israel, they also have great symbolic meanings for Christians in this present dispensation. A brief section on these feasts is included in our book on Revelation titled *Revelation for Christians Today* in order to demonstrate how symbolism remains constant throughout the scriptures. We feel that a section on these feasts is also necessary in this study to understand more fully how events in the Old Testament were symbolic of spiritual events in the New Testament church. This part of our study should give us a clearer view of God's plan for the establishment of the church long before Christ came to this earth and should also help us understand more about God's expectations of the church as it exists in the world today.

A study of the feasts of Israel is extraordinary in the sense of how God designed them to have special meanings for the Israelites and also symbolic meanings for the church. The feasts tie together the physical events in the lives of the children of Israel and the spiritual events in the lives of Christians today, once again illustrating how God used Israel to foreshadow the church. In this section, we will present a brief description of each of these feasts and discuss its symbolic meaning for the Christian dispensation. By no means will this exhaust the study of these feasts, but we hope the information presented here will be sufficient to promote a desire for continued study.

Since these feasts were to be observed on specific dates, we must briefly discuss the Jewish calendar. The Hebrew people used a lunar calendar to calculate time. Since the moon travels around the earth approximately once every twenty-eight days, the lunar year does not exactly match the solar year. Therefore, adjustments had to be made in their calendar much the same way as we adjust our present calendar by adding one day to the month of February every fourth year. To complicate matters even more, they used a twelve-month calendar with approximately thirty days per month. This would make their year have a total of 360 days instead of 365. In some years, days were added to certain months to adjust to the solar seasons, and a thirteenth month was added in other years. The actual calculations used to determine their calendar were also kept secret by the priests who set the calendar dates and have, for the most part, been lost down through the centuries. In other words, since the Bible does not give us their method of calculating time, it is impossible to

go back and determine the exact calendar being used in the time of Moses when God instituted these feasts. Therefore, we may not be able to determine the exact time of each of these feasts in the calendar that we use today.

Passover

The first feast that Israel was to observe during the year was Passover. On the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month a lamb was killed and prepared for the Passover meal. This feast commemorated the time of the tenth plague God sent against Egypt when the Lord passed over the firstborn Hebrew children but took the lives of all firstborn Egyptians. At that time, each Hebrew household was responsible for killing a lamb and placing its blood on the door post in order to save the firstborn of that family. This lamb was the Passover lamb for the Israelites (Exod. 12:5-6). The church also has a Passover lamb today --- Jesus Christ. A prophecy concerning Jesus is given in Isa. 53:7, which states,



He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

Philip used this prophecy to teach the eunuch about Jesus in Acts 8:26-40. Jesus was symbolically described as a lamb, and he was crucified on the same day the Israelites killed the lamb to be eaten at the Passover meal (Matt. 26:2). Jesus is referred to as our Passover Lamb in 1Cor 5:7b which says, "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." The blood of the lamb placed on the door posts of the Israelites saved them from the final plague God sent against Egypt. The blood of Jesus will save us from the final destruction God will levy against all who disobey him. If we obey the commandments of Jesus, we are symbolically placing his blood on our door post today. Speaking to elders in Acts 20:28 Paul says,

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.

Jesus purchased the church with his blood. It is our spiritual house today (Eph. 2:19), and his blood is on our door post. All those who are inside this house will be passed over when the time of final destruction comes, but all those outside will face the wrath of God.

Also on the evening of Passover, the Israelites made preparation to leave Egypt (Exodus chapter 12). They were preparing to make their journey from physical bondage to freedom in the wilderness. On the same corresponding date, Jesus made preparation to deliver all mankind from the bondage of sin by his death on the cross. The Israelites journey from bondage under the leadership of Moses foreshadowed mankind's journey out of the bondage of sin through Jesus as he gave his life on the cross, was buried in the grave, and then resurrected by God. The Israelites proceeded to cross the Red Sea, which symbolized the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, as they went down into the sea and proceeded to come out on the other side a free people.

Every Christian follows this same pattern today as we leave the bondage of sin by crossing the Red Sea of the blood of Christ through baptism. We go down into the waters of the Red Sea of baptism where we symbolically contact the blood of Christ and come up out of those waters freed from our sins. Baptism represents the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ and is our means of crossing the Red Sea of the blood of Christ to escape the bondage of sin. When we are baptized, we are following the pattern established by God through the Israelite people.

The lamb whose blood was placed on the door post had to be a "firstborn" lamb (Exod. 12:5) and is a likeness of Jesus, our Passover Lamb, who was the firstborn of God (John 3:16). This lamb also had to be one without blemish (Exod. 12:5). This image once again symbolizes the purity of Jesus as he hung on the cross. Speaking of how Jesus redeemed us from our sins, 1Pet 1:19 says, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." This Passover lamb of the Israelites represented a far greater Passover Lamb of the Christian age. It symbolized Jesus Christ and the sacrifice he made in order that we might have forgiveness of our sins.

Passover was an important feast in the lives of the Israelites. Symbolically, it is also an important feast in the lives of Christians. Since Jesus was crucified as our Passover Lamb, we must have his blood on the door post of our spiritual house in order to escape the final destruction in hell. We accomplish this by following the pattern of his death, burial and resurrection through baptism, thereby becoming a part of the house of God (church), which has the blood of Christ on its door post.

Unleavened Bread

The second feast observed by the Israelites was the feast of Unleavened Bread. It began on the fifteenth day of the first month (Lev. 23:6), which would have been the Sabbath day, and lasted for one week. The Israelites were instructed to remove all leaven from their home on the preparation day and then eat the Passover meal with unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was made from unfermented dough which meant it had no yeast added to it; therefore, it would not rise because there was no life in it. The first day of this feast corresponds to the time when Jesus' lifeless body lay in the grave. The Israelites ate unleavened bread because of their need to leave Egypt quickly. They did not even have time to let their bread rise (Exod. 12:32-33). They participated in this feast yearly in order to remember their hasty departure from Egypt. In 1Cor 5:7-8, Christians are admonished to be like unleavened bread as it states,

Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The house which Christians dwell in today (church) should not contain leaven. This absence of leaven signifies the purity of the church. The church should contain only sincerity and truth. It is pure in the sight of God because the sins of those dwelling inside the church have been forgiven.

Jesus also commanded that we remember the sacrifice of his body on the cross each Lord's day by eating unleavened bread (Acts 20:7). In the same manner as the Israelites ate unleavened bread to remember their hasty departure from Egypt, Christians eat unleavened bread to remember how Christ died to deliver us from sin.

Firstfruits

The third feast of the year was the feast of Firstfruits. It was to be observed on the day after the feast of Unleavened Bread, which would be Sunday. This feast coincided with the first agricultural harvest of the year, which would have been the barley crop. On this day the priests were to take a sheaf of the first fruits of the crops and wave it before the Lord. The feast of Firstfruits observed by the Israelites was an offering of the first fruits of the fields, but it represented a far greater spiritual feast to come in the Christian dispensation. It represented the resurrection of Jesus

Christ as the firstfruits of the spiritual kingdom. Speaking of Jesus, 1 Cor. 15:20 says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept." The Israelites observed the feast of Firstfruits on Sunday after Passover, and Jesus rose from the dead on this same day as the firstfruit of God. Rom 8:29 says,

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

Jesus was the firstfruit from the grave, and all those who follow him in a spiritual resurrection from the grave of sin are his brethren. God illustrated the pattern Jesus would use to lead mankind out of the bondage of sin as he directed the children of Israel to cross the Red Sea. Jesus fulfilled this pattern by his death, burial and resurrection from the grave. Today, if man desires to be among the brethren of Christ, he must follow this same pattern through his symbolic death, burial and resurrection in the waters of baptism. When we follow this pattern, we are bearing fruit unto God.

Pentecost

Pentecost was the fourth feast and was observed on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:15-17). Jesus rose from the dead on the day after the feast of Unleavened Bread, which, of course, was Sunday. This was also the day of the feast of Firstfruits. Pentecost was to be observed on the seventh Sunday following the resurrection; it was also known as the feast of Harvest, which marked the beginning of the summer harvest of various crops that would mature before fall. The spiritual harvest of the world also began on the day of Pentecost as Peter preached the first gospel sermon. At least 3000 were saved on that day which was the first great spiritual harvest of mankind for God. Jesus was the firstfruit unto God since he was the first one resurrected from the dead, never to die again. Those who hear the words of the gospel and obey them are also resurrected from the grave of spiritual death and are harvested as the fruit of God.

On the day of Pentecost as Peter preached the first gospel sermon, the prophecies of Micah 4:1-2 and Isaiah 2:2-3 were fulfilled. Micah 4:1-2 says,

But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Jerusalem was also called Zion and on this day the law went forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. Moses foreshadowed this as he received his law on mount Sinai. This law of Christ is a spiritual law, and it was given on spiritual mount Zion. The purpose of the feast of Pentecost correlates perfectly with the previous lesson concerning the giving of the Law of Moses on mount Sinai, which corresponded to the giving of the gospel on mount Zion.

Trumpets

The fifth feast was that of Trumpets. It was observed on the first day of the seventh month and marked the end of the harvest season. When the trumpet sounded, the workers came in from the field and the harvest was finished for that year (Lev. 23:24). The observance of this feast represents a much greater event that is yet to take place in this world, for it represents the end of the spiritual harvest of this earth. The sounding of a trumpet announced the end of the Israelite's harvest season, and when the great trumpet shall sound at the end of time, the spiritual harvest of this earth will end.

The Lord's workers will come in from the fields and the harvest of souls will be completed. Those in the church will go with Jesus to heaven while all others will face eternal destruction. It should now be obvious that the church is in this period of time between Pentecost and Trumpets. We received the law of Christ on spiritual mount Zion on the day of Pentecost, and Christians are now working the spiritual fields of this world and bringing in the harvest of souls for the Lord. The next great spiritual feast for Christians will therefore be Trumpets. When the great trumpet sounds, our work will be finished. The Lord's workers will cease from their labors and enter into the Promised Land of rest.

Notice that the order of these feasts also agrees with the previous lessons concerning the time Israel spent in the wilderness. They received the Law of Moses on mount Sinai, which corresponds to the giving of the law of Christ on mount Zion on the day of Pentecost. Israel then traveled forty years in the wilderness, desiring the land that God had promised them. When they came to Jordan, their wandering was over and they entered into their Promised Land.

Atonement

The sixth feast was the feast of Atonement. Atonement is defined in Nelson's Bible dictionary as "the act by which God restores a relationship of harmony and unity between himself and human beings." This feast was celebrated shortly after the feast of trumpets on the tenth day of the seventh month. On this day the High Priest took the blood of animals as a sacrifice and entered the Holy of Holies to make atonement for the sins the people had committed during the year. This animal sacrifice by the High Priest was the pattern of a much greater spiritual event to be performed by Jesus Christ. He is our High Priest (Heb. 3:1) and also our Passover Lamb, and as our High Priest, he will present his own blood to God to atone for our sins. This yearly atonement for the sins of the people corresponds to the time of final judgment when Jesus will deliver the kingdom to God and present it to him holy and without blemish. Heb 9:27 says, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." The blood of Christ will atone for the sins we commit during our lifetime. On the day of Atonement the Israelites were forbidden to do any work. The same is true for Christians. At Judgment our work will be over, and we will enter into the Holy of Holies to live with God eternally (Heb. 9:24).

Tabernacles

The seventh and final feast was the feast of Booths, or Tabernacles. Israel observed this feast on the fifteenth day of the seventh month by building shelters or booths to live in for seven days. This was to cause the people to remember the time when God made them dwell in booths as they traveled through the wilderness (Lev. 23:43). The church is wandering in the wilderness of this world today which compares to the time Israel wandered in the wilderness. We are facing the many trials and hardships which accompany this physical life, but as Christians we have spiritual life which will enable us to live in a far greater place in the world to come. John 14:2 says, "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." We are dwelling in temporary booths today, but in heaven we will dwell in mansions. The booths that the Israelites lived in are symbolic of a much greater dwelling place that Jesus has prepared for his people.

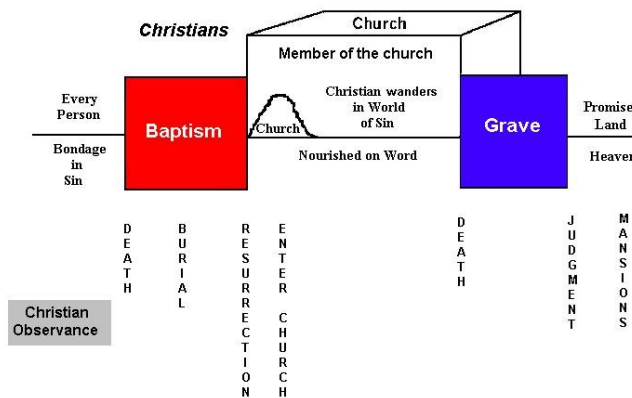
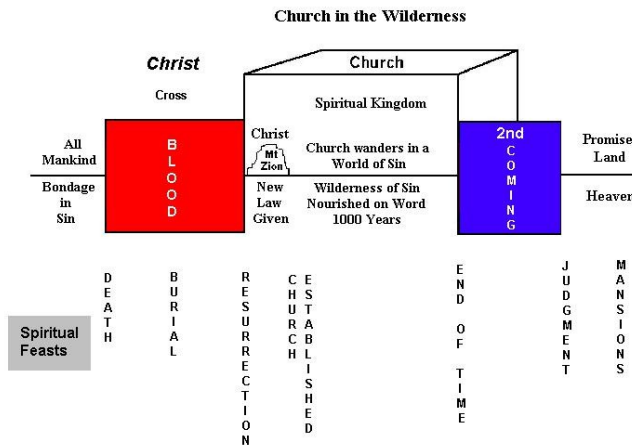
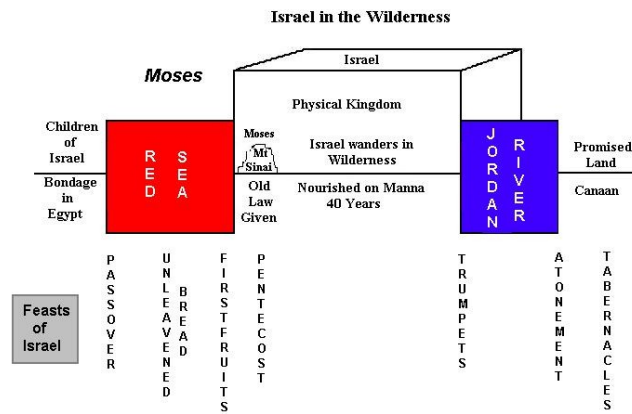
All Christians today participate in the great spiritual feasts that were foreshadowed by the literal feasts of Israel. We follow Christ in the Passover as we crucify the old man of sin (Rom. 6:6). We participate in the feast of Unleavened Bread as we are buried in the waters of baptism. We then

take part in the feast of Firstfruits as we are raised out of the waters of baptism to walk a new life in Christ (Rom. 6:4). Because of this we become a part of the church which was established on Pentecost. We are now working in the spiritual fields of this world, attempting to gather the spiritual harvest of the Lord. At the end of time, we will participate in the feast of Trumpets as the great trumpet sounds. Christ will take us home to heaven where his blood will atone for our sins at Judgment. Because of the blood of Atonement, we will dwell in heavenly tabernacles or mansions forever.

If we assemble the above information concerning the feasts of Israel into a table, it becomes easy to see how the feasts God commanded Israel to keep represent major events in the nation of Israel and correspond to major events in the church. As we look at the following table, the first column is the feast; the second column explains the meaning of the feast for the Israelites; the third identifies the corresponding spiritual feast for the Christian dispensation; and the last column shows how every Christian participates in that particular feast of God.

Feast	Israelites	Spiritual Feast	Christians
Passover	Hebrews place blood of lamb on door post to save their firstborn	Christ (our Passover Lamb) gave his life to save mankind	Emulate the death of Christ by going under the waters of baptism
Unleavened Bread	Passover meal eaten with unleavened bread	Jesus lay in the grave	Buried in the waters of baptism to symbolize the burial of Christ in the grave
Firstfruits	Give firstfruits to God because the firstborn was spared	Resurrection - Jesus was the firstfruit among many brethren	Resurrected out of the waters of baptism as a child of God
Pentecost	Observed at the time of the spring harvest	Peter preaches - Law went out from Zion - Spiritual harvest of world began	We come to spiritual mount Zion - Lord adds us to his church
Trumpets	End of the summer harvest for the year	End of harvest of souls - 2nd coming of Christ	Spiritual harvest of the world ends - No one else allowed in the church
Atonement	Priest enter Holy of Holies to atone for the sins of the people	Christ presents the church to God - Judgment	Our High Priest (Christ) presents his blood to God to atone for our sins
Booths	Dwell in booth for seven days	Heaven	Christians dwell in mansions forever

These feasts of Israel also correspond to the major events in the physical and spiritual time lines drawn earlier in this book for Israel and the church. The following illustration is an attempt to show how all of these feasts and major events in the lives of the Israelites coincide with spiritual feasts and events in the lives of Christians. The information presented is parallel both vertically and horizontally. It would be virtually impossible to write down all the relationships that exist on that page. Our hope is that you will take time to study this illustration and make comparisons concerning these time lines and feasts. We sincerely believe this will enhance our understanding of the church as it dwells in the wilderness of this world and makes its way toward the Promised Land of heaven.



This symbolism used throughout scripture is truly astounding as comparisons are made between physical events in the lives of the children of Israel and spiritual events of the lives of Christians. Only God could have designed such a marvelous plan and carried out such a great chain of events. The more we study and learn about the Bible, the more reasons we have to be convinced of the power and providence of God.

Kingdom of Israel

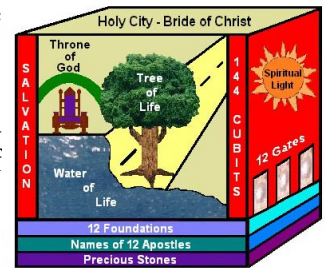
As we continue our study of Old Testament types and patterns of the church, we will now examine the governmental structure of Israel during the time they were ruled by kings. Israel exhibited an attitude similar to many in the religious world today in that they wanted their own way. Israel never seemed to be satisfied with God's plan for them, and furthermore they wanted God to do things their way. It was God's desire that they be ruled by judges, but Israel thought they had a better idea. They looked at other nations around them and saw that they were ruled by kings, and Israel wanted to be like those nations; so they asked God to give them a king (1Sam. 8:5-7). God reluctantly granted their wish and the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as the first king of Israel. When Israel moved into the period of the kings, God used this situation to demonstrate many valuable lessons concerning the church today.

An ongoing controversy exists in the religious world today, as well as within the church, concerning the relationship between the kingdom and the church. Some say the kingdom is the same as the church while others believe they are different. Since Israel is a pattern for the church, it is possible to examine Israel's situation as a kingdom and apply that meaning to the church. Judges first governed Israel, but later God granted that kings should rule them. Changing the form of government from judges to kings did not change the makeup of the nation. The same people began to be ruled by kings as were ruled by judges. The only change was their system of government. The kingdom and the church are one in the same entity. The terms are simply two different ways of designating the same people. Israel represented the true Israel (church) to come. Israel being called a kingdom denotes the governmental structure of the nation. In God's scheme of things, the kingdom of Israel was symbolic of the church --- the true kingdom to come during the gospel age. It may be a little more difficult for us to understand the concepts of a kingdom because most nations in the world today do not have that type of governmental structure. Especially in nations of the free world, it is hard for us to comprehend what it may have been like to live in a nation ruled by a king who had total power and authority. However, since God's church is likened to a kingdom, we must examine the structure of a kingdom and apply that to the church today. A kingdom in Old Testament times was simply a group of people or nation that were ruled by one man, a king. The king had total authority and the subjects were bound to follow every order or law established by the king or face punishment. They also paid tribute or taxes to him. From the time of King Saul until Babylon took Jerusalem captive, the nation of Israel functioned as a kingdom. God used this situation to explain the concept of the church, which is a spiritual kingdom.

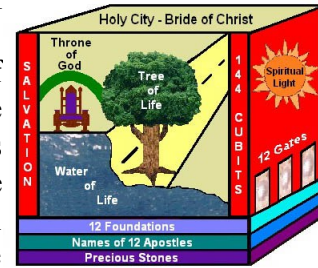
As citizens of a kingdom, we observe the laws of that particular kingdom. Those who live outside that kingdom do not observe those same laws, but neither are they eligible for the rewards of citizenship. This is true throughout the world today. We are born citizens of a particular nation. As citizens of that nation, we have all the rights of citizenship. We are allowed to live in that country, but we must abide by the laws established for its citizens. As Christians we are citizens of the kingdom of God and subject to his laws.

The kingdom of Israel was a shadow of the kingdom that Christ was to establish. A prophecy showing that the kingdom of God would be established in the times of the Roman Empire is found in Dan. 2:44. It states,

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.



According to Dan. 2:40, this kingdom was to be established in the time of the fourth kingdom which would rule the world from the time of Daniel. Daniel lived in the time of the Babylonian Empire. The kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece would rise and fall, then the Roman Empire would rule the world. So, the fourth kingdom from the time of Daniel was the Roman Empire. The kingdom of God was to be established while Rome was in power. Jesus came to earth during the time of the Roman Empire and began to teach that the kingdom of heaven was soon to be established. Matt 4:17 says, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This was not to be a physical kingdom of this world. Instead, it would be a spiritual or heavenly kingdom. Jesus said in John 18:36,



My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

In Acts 1:6b, just before Christ ascended to heaven, the apostles asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" The apostles were inquiring when the kingdom would be established, so it had not been established at that time. Jesus told them in Acts 1:8,

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

The Holy Ghost descended on them and they received this power on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). After this time, the Apostles taught the people how to enter the spiritual kingdom of God. Acts 8:12 says,

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

We know that people could enter the kingdom of God after the day of Pentecost because Col. 1:13 says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." These people had moved from spiritual darkness to spiritual light by entering the kingdom. The apostle John also said that he was in the kingdom of God. Rev. 1:9 states,

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of God was prophesied by Daniel to come in the time of the Roman Empire. Christ came to earth at this exact time. The kingdom was not established at the time he ascended back to heaven, but he sent the Holy Ghost to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost to guide them in teaching the things necessary to enter the kingdom. The kingdom of God was established on the day of the first Pentecost following the resurrection. From that time forward people could enter the kingdom by doing the commandments of God as taught by the Apostles. That kingdom which they could enter was the church. Acts 2:47 says, "Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." To enter the kingdom is the same as being added to the church. This kingdom is a heavenly kingdom that will stand forever. Heb. 12:28 says,

Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

As Christians, we live in that kingdom or church which was established on the day of Pentecost, and we will remain in that kingdom forever.

David was the beloved king of the kingdom of Israel and a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22). He was a likeness of the Savior to come. God promised David that he would establish his throne forever (2Sam. 7:13). It became the eternal throne of spiritual Israel. All those who ruled

Israel, and later Judah, were descendants of David. Christ was also a descendant of David as he came through the tribe of Judah (Heb. 7:14). Revelation 5:5 describes Christ as a lion of the tribe of Judah. When Christ came to this earth and died for our sins, he took his place on the throne of David and became King over the spiritual kingdom. Christ does not rule on the literal throne of David in a physical kingdom on this earth. He reigns instead on a spiritual throne in a spiritual kingdom. This analogy is used in Acts. 2:25-36. Peter explains that David did not ascend to the heavenly throne because he is dead and still buried. Acts 2:29 states,

Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

David was not raised from the dead to sit upon the heavenly throne; Christ was. He arose from the dead to sit on the throne of David. Speaking of David, Acts 2:30 states,

Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne.

Christ was a descendant of David and was raised up from the dead by God to reign on the spiritual throne of David for all eternity. This made the throne of David an eternal throne and fulfilled that prophecy. Acts 2:33-34 says,

Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand.

Christ, as King over the kingdom, is sitting on the eternal throne of David today at the right hand of God. As Christians, we are subject to that throne and are eligible for all rewards of citizenship in his kingdom.

Since a king also establishes laws for his kingdom, Christ gave us the laws of his spiritual kingdom by the words he spoke while on earth and through the mouths of the apostles as they preached the gospel to a world lost in sin. The word of God is the law of our spiritual kingdom. If we desire to be a part of the spiritual kingdom (church), we must obey the laws of that kingdom. If we are subjects in that kingdom, we must continue to obey the laws. If we break those laws, we must repent and obtain forgiveness or we will be removed from that kingdom just as Adam and Eve were removed from the Garden of Eden.

A physical kingdom also has defined boundaries. Every nation in this world knows exactly where its boundary lines are. If boundary disputes arise, they must be settled or wars may occur. The spiritual kingdom of the Lord also has boundaries. Since we live in a spiritual kingdom, the boundaries must also be spiritual. The law of God also serves as the boundary for the church. Those who have obeyed the spiritual law of Christ through baptism have moved from the world of sin into the spiritual kingdom of Christ. The boundary of the spiritual kingdom is the Word of God. This establishes an unchangeable boundary. The Word of God is the same today as it was in the first century. It will never change; therefore, the boundaries of the church will remain the same forever. Those who are obedient to God's laws are in the spiritual kingdom. Those who break those laws are outside its boundaries.

The concept of the church as a kingdom also establishes certain other characteristics about the church. Only one spiritual kingdom exists. In an earthly kingdom, the king would only reign over those people inside its defined boundaries. Christ does not reign over several kingdoms. He reigns over one --- the church. Also in a manner similar to that of an earthly kingdom, the church has only one set of laws. A nation could not exist in this world with many different sets of laws. One set might declare certain acts legal while another set made the same acts illegal. No one would have any idea which laws should be followed. The religious world has attempted to give the

kingdom of God many sets of laws, but the fact remains that Christ gave only one set. The kingdom is made up solely of those who have obeyed the spiritual law of God, thereby becoming a citizen of that one kingdom. All others are outside the kingdom. We must continue to abide by those laws in order to remain in the kingdom. Those who break the laws will be punished and those who obey the laws will be rewarded.

We must therefore learn to view the church as a spiritual kingdom since the church and the kingdom are synonymous. These two terms are simply two ways of designating the same people. The church is made up of those who are "called out" of the world of sin to become a part of the kingdom of Christ. They are Christians. The term "kingdom" simply shows that they have Christ as their King.

We should give glory to God for the fact that we are the true Israel of God. Israel was the kingdom of God under the Law of Moses. When Christ came to earth the first time, he fulfilled that law. He took it out of the way and established a new law (Heb. 8:7-8). This new law was for a new kingdom. It is for the church, which is made up of all people who follow the teachings of the New Testament. Christians are the Israel of God today.

Christ will not return to this earth to reestablish a physical throne and a physical nation of Israel. We already have something much better. We have a spiritual kingdom that will last forever. It is inconceivable to think that God would do away with a spiritual kingdom to establish a physical kingdom.

As we think about the church being the kingdom of God, this can help us understand some passages in the Bible such as the "parables." As Jesus taught the disciples by using common everyday situations, he began most of them by saying, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto..." This phrase tells us that the subject of these lessons is the church. People in this world need to recognize that Jesus came to this earth and established the kingdom he intended to establish. It is a heavenly spiritual kingdom that was foreshadowed by an earthly physical kingdom named Israel. It is the greatest kingdom on this earth. It will never be replaced (Heb. 12:28). Kingdoms of this earth will come and go. Nations will rise to power and then fall, but the kingdom of God will stand forever. Phil 3:20 says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ "(NKJ). We are citizens of a heavenly kingdom. Many in this world teach that Christ will someday return to this earth to reestablish the throne of David in Jerusalem. They say Christ will reign on the throne of David and make the nation of Israel the most powerful nation on earth. These ideas are caused by a lack of understanding of what the church really is. The church will stand forever. It will not be replaced by another physical kingdom of Israel. We must realize what a great kingdom we live in today. Let us give thanks to God that we are citizens in the greatest kingdom of all --- the church of our Lord.

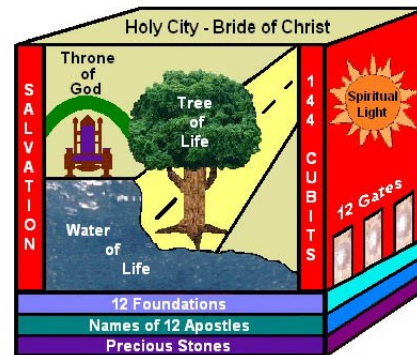
Jerusalem

The Israelites were God's chosen people under the Law of Moses, and they were a type of Christians today who are subject to the law of Christ. The Israelites finally acquired a land of their own and a city as their capital in which they worshipped God. The situation of the Israelites worshipping in Jerusalem is analogous to Christians worshipping in the church. Notice also that the throne of their king was located in Jerusalem. Understanding that Jerusalem was a shadow of the church to come in the Christian dispensation ties many concepts together which helps us understand how God used Israel as a pattern of the church. The church is the Christian's new Jerusalem which is the city of God today, and this spiritual city is described in magnificent physical terms in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation. As we study the characteristics of the city of Jerusalem, keep in mind that Christians live in New Jerusalem today.

Old Jerusalem



New Jerusalem



After King Saul was killed, David was anointed King and reigned for six months in Hebron and seven years in Judah. He then went up and captured Jerusalem where he reigned over all Israel for thirty-three years (2Sam. 5:5). Jerusalem, also called Zion, became known as the city of David. 2Sam. 5:7 states, "Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David." Also see 2Sam. 5:9. Jerusalem became the capital city of the nation of Israel. 2Sam. chapter 6 relates the story of David bringing the ark of the Lord up to the city of Jerusalem. It was placed in the midst of the tabernacle that had been prepared for it (2Sam. 6:17). After the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem, the Lord through the prophet Nathan told David that Jerusalem would be a permanent capital of Israel. 2Sam. 7:10 states,

Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime.

Since the ark of God was in the city of Jerusalem, it became the city where the Jews gathered to worship and observe the feasts of God. The Jews had a specific place to worship, which is made clear in Acts chapter 2, as Jews from every nation were gathered in Jerusalem to observe the feast of Pentecost. In the Christian age we do not have to go to a literal Jerusalem to worship. We do have a spiritual place to worship, which is a likeness of old Jerusalem. Speaking of Christians, Heb. 12:22a says, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Christians do not go to old Jerusalem to worship. Instead, we worship in the "heavenly Jerusalem." As was previously discussed, mount Zion represents the church. In this passage Zion is also called the "city of God" and the "heavenly Jerusalem." Hebrews 12:23 then calls Zion the "church of the firstborn." Therefore, the "heavenly Jerusalem" is a descriptive term for the church.

Literal Jerusalem was the city of David, and it was a pattern of the spiritual city of God, the "heavenly Jerusalem," which is the church. Christians today have a place to worship that is a likeness of the physical place where the Jews worshipped. We worship God in the heavenly Jerusalem, the church. Christ fulfilled the Law of Moses. He took it out of the way and nailed it to the cross (Col. 2:14). This in effect did away with the nation of Israel. Many Jews still live in a place called Israel today, but it is nothing like the Israel of old. The ordinances of the Law of Moses are no longer observed. The lineage of the throne of David is no longer intact. The Jews are no longer God's chosen people. They are simply a race of people attempting to govern themselves in a land named Israel. They refused the Messiah and because of that, they are no longer his people. They lost what God had previously given them. Remember, Adam and Eve also lost everything they had when they were cast from Eden. When Israel turned from God, they lost their Promised Land and their status as God's chosen people. God even destroyed their city of Jerusalem in AD 70. This was the final blow that destroyed the old nation of Israel, as it was known in Biblical times. Daniel had prophesied this destruction. See Dan. 9:27 and Matt. 24:15. The old city of Jerusalem simply served as a pattern of a new Jerusalem which was to come during the Christian dispensation. Christians are now the chosen people of God, and we worship God in our spiritual Jerusalem.

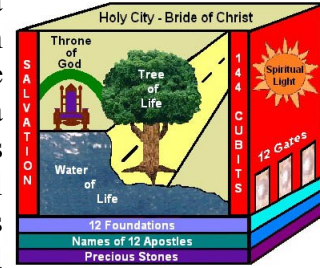
Many of the features of the city of Jerusalem had special meanings concerning the church to come in the Christian age. As we examine each of these features, keep in mind that we are living in the heavenly Jerusalem today. Let us look first at the name of the city and compare it to the church today. The literal Jerusalem in Judea was called the city of David. The spiritual Jerusalem in which we dwell today is called the city of the Lord. See Isa. 60:14 and Heb. 12:22. David was a likeness of Christ and the city of Jerusalem that contained David's throne was a likeness of the spiritual Jerusalem (church) where Christ reigns today. The church is also called the heavenly Jerusalem in Heb. 12:22. Literal Jerusalem was a city or collection of God's people. It contained the true worshippers of God. The church is the collection of those who worship God today. It contains the true worshippers of God in the Christian dispensation. Other terms such as "holy city", "holy Jerusalem" and "new Jerusalem" also describe the church. The church is the holy city of God today. It is precisely what John saw coming down out of heaven in Revelation chapters 21 and 22. Rev. 21:2 states, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." John saw the "new Jerusalem" coming down out of heaven. The old Jerusalem was the literal, physical city where the Jews worshipped. The new Jerusalem is the spiritual city where Christians worship today. It is the church. It is the "bride of Christ" and the city of God. It is the location of the throne of Christ, precisely as the old Jerusalem was the location of the throne of David. Jerusalem was a likeness of the church and David was a likeness of Christ. Christians are subjects of the throne of Christ just as the Israelites were subjects of the throne of David. Notice also that this new Jerusalem was "prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Since the church is the bride of Christ (Rom. 7:4), this again defines the church as the "heavenly Jerusalem." This once again agrees with Heb. 12:22 which calls mount Zion "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." Revelation 21:9b-10 also confirms that the vision John saw was a description of the church. The angel tells John,

Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

As was stated earlier in this book, in order to understand many of the prophecies in the Old Testament, it is very important to understand that Revelation chapters 21 and 22 is a symbolic description of the church.



Jerusalem was a strong city with a great high wall that provided protection to the Jews from their enemies. The heavenly Jerusalem (church) also has a great high wall to protect it. It is described in Rev. 21:12-19 as a wall 12,000 furlongs high and 144 cubits wide. The wall of our spiritual Jerusalem is greater and higher than any



wall ever conceived by people in the Old Testament times. Isa.

26:1 says, "In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." The church is the strongest spiritual city known to man. A wall of salvation separates the church from a world of sin. Also, Isa. 4:6 describes the church as it states,

And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the day time from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.

As studied before, the tabernacle also represents the church. The church is truly a spiritual place of refuge for a troubled soul today. To come inside the spiritual wall is to leave a world of sin and find a place of comfort for our souls. As long as we are faithful to God, he will protect our souls from harm. Let us not confuse protection for our physical bodies with protection for our souls. In this world we will have many physical hardships and trials, but if we remain faithful to God, our souls will have peace and comfort forever. Speaking of Christians, John 10:29 says, "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." As long as we keep ourselves in the hand of God, no man can harm our souls. No one is powerful enough to break down the great wall of salvation around the church and force us to leave our city. Nothing can harm our souls if we choose to remain faithful to God.

Although the number and names of the gates of the original city of Jerusalem are unknown, there were probably twelve gates. The number of gates and their names may have changed from time to time as the city grew or was destroyed and rebuilt. However, we do know that the city as described by Ezekiel had twelve gates (Eze. 41:31-34). The wall of our spiritual, heavenly Jerusalem also has twelve gates. Rev. 21:12a says, "And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates." The gates of the literal Jerusalem were obviously the means of entrance into the city, and they could be opened in the day and closed at night to keep out intruders. A valuable lesson can be learned by comparing the gates of physical Jerusalem with those of spiritual Jerusalem. The gates of our spiritual Jerusalem are never closed. They remain open day and night. Rev. 21:25 says, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there." The entrance to the church is never closed. Anyone who desires to follow God and worship him may enter the city at any time. No spiritual night exists, so the gates of the church are never closed. Jesus is the light of the church and that light never goes out. The only requirement for entrance is doing the commandments of God. Rev. 22:14 states, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."

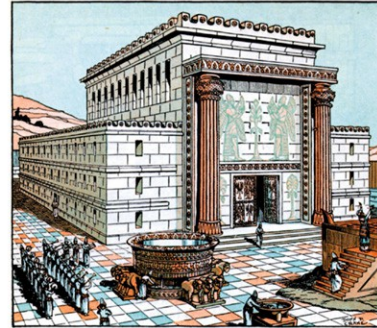
The gates of this great spiritual city are made of pearl. Jesus taught his disciples about a pearl of great price in Matt. 13:45-46. Once someone found the pearl of great price, he was willing to give up all he had in order to own this great pearl. Our attitude should be the same concerning the church today. The gates of the church are the pearl of great price. When one realizes this, he should be willing to give anything or everything he owns in order to become a part of the church and enter through the gates of pearl.

The foundation of our spiritual city has the names of the twelve apostles and prophets written in it. This explains what supports our city. Speaking of the household of God, which is the church, Eph. 2:20 states, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." The apostles taught the word of God as it was revealed unto them by the Holy Spirit. That is the foundation of our city -- the Word of God.

The Jews had a marvelous city in which to worship. It had a great wall that protected the people from their enemies. The wall had gates that could be opened and closed at the discretion of the people. The throne of King David was also located in this city. Today, we have a magnificent spiritual city whose foundation is the word of God. Its wall is salvation; its gates are pearl; the light of our city is Jesus who is reigning on his spiritual throne today. Revelation 21:23 says that Jesus is the light of the spiritual city. The church does not receive its light from the sun and moon, but instead, it receives spiritual light from Jesus Christ. The Jews worshipped in the literal city of Jerusalem, which was a symbol or pattern of the spiritual Jerusalem to come during the Christian dispensation. The physical features of that city represented the spiritual features of the church. Just as Jerusalem was the only city where the Jews were instructed to gather and worship by keeping the annual feasts, the church is the only place where we can worship God today. It is a spiritual city made up of all who obey the commands of God. To be a resident of new Jerusalem should be the greatest desire we have. No city in this world can begin to compare with the spiritual city of God.

Temple

People of all religions have constructed temples almost since the beginning of time as a place to worship their gods. It was believed that the gods manifested themselves to the people and lived in the temples that the people had built for them. Because of this, temples were considered to be sacred buildings. The Israelites had a similar belief concerning their temple. The difference between Israel and the pagan nations around them was that the temple built by the Israelites was for the true God. Their temple was the dwelling place of the one true God and a holy place of worship. The Israelites gathered in their temple to worship in the presence of God.



Since the Israelite nation had wandered in the wilderness for forty years and then spent many years conquering their Promised Land, they had not been afforded an opportunity or a suitable place to build a temple for God. So, shortly after David conquered Jerusalem, the Lord spoke to him through the prophet Nathan concerning the building of a temple. 2Sam. 7:4-6 states,

And it came to pass that night, that the word of the Lord came unto Nathan, saying, Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in?

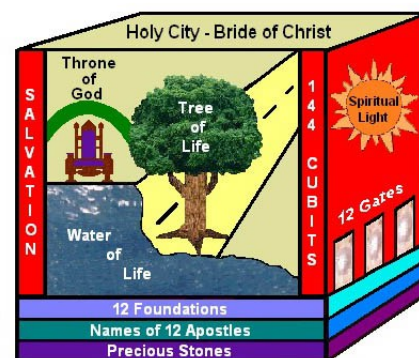
The Lord told David that he had lived in a small tabernacle for many years and now he wanted David to build him a house. One point must be made about the relationship between the tabernacle and the temple and that is they both served as a dwelling place for God. They served basically the same purpose. The tabernacle was relatively small and could be moved from place to place. The temple was to be constructed in Jerusalem where it would remain. The main difference is that one was small and portable, but the other was large and stationary. David was never able to actually build this temple because of the wars in the land, so his son Solomon finally constructed the building (1Kings 5:3-5).

Just as the tabernacle was a pattern of the church today, the temple is also a pattern of the church. This building was the dwelling place of God (2Sam. 7:5). Just as God dwelt in the temple in Old Testament times, he dwells in his spiritual temple today. 1Cor. 3:16-17 says,

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

We commonly interpret this passage as referring to individual Christians. These verses are written in the context of 1Cor. 3:9

which says, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." The building, which is under consideration in this passage, is the temple. The church is the temple of God. It really makes no difference if we interpret the temple in these verses as being individual Christians or the church because the church is made up of Christians. Therefore, the meaning will remain the same regardless of whether it refers to individual Christians or the collection of Christians who make up the church.



The church is that spiritual building which the Lord built for his children to dwell in. Zechariah 6:12-13 states,

And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

These verses explain that the BRANCH who is Jesus (Jer. 23:5-6) would build the temple of the Lord. We know what Jesus built. In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, "I will build my church." The temple is used in prophecy as a description of the church and was a pattern that we can use to learn more about the church that Jesus built. Zechariah 6:13 says that Jesus would sit upon his throne, which agrees perfectly with the information presented in the previous section concerning Jesus sitting upon the throne of David. The church is the temple of God and is also his kingdom, and Christ is sitting on the throne. Jesus is also our High Priest (Heb. 9:11). Thus as our King and High Priest, Jesus sits on the throne of David and rules over his kingdom which is made up of Christians.

This is an excellent place in our study to demonstrate how many of these symbols work together. The throne of God is located in the spiritual kingdom (church) today just as the physical throne of King David was located in the physical kingdom of Israel. Christ is reigning on the throne of David, and he is dwelling among his people. 2Cor. 6:16 states,

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

When we become members of the church, we are entering the temple of God. It is not a literal building as was the temple in Jerusalem, but it is a spiritual temple where we worship God continually. This exact symbolism is used in Rev. 7:14-17. In this vision, John sees a great multitude dressed in white robes standing before the throne of God. Verse 14 says that these people have come out of great tribulation and made their robes white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. This fits precisely with the patterns that have been discussed in this book. Believers in Christ come out of the great "spiritual" tribulation of sin by washing their robes in the blood of the Lamb. They cross the Red Sea of the blood of Christ by going down into the waters of baptism. When they come up out of these waters, they are then members of God's kingdom and stand before his throne. They are Christians. Then, verse 15 says that after they wash their robes they are "before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." This is exactly what happens when one obeys the gospel of Christ. Through baptism, we wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb, and because of this we enter the temple (church) where we stand before the spiritual throne of God and serve him continually as he cares for our spiritual souls. Rev. 7:16-17 explains that Christians are fed and watered by the Lamb which is a likeness to the way God fed the children of Israel in the wilderness. All of these figures and patterns work together, and they all teach us valuable lessons concerning the church --- the spiritual kingdom that Christians dwell in today.

Some may question how the city of Jerusalem and the temple could both be figures of the church since the temple was located inside Jerusalem. The symbolism of the city of Jerusalem employs symbols such as the wall, gates, and street. The temple stresses mainly our close relationship with God in worship. The city of Jerusalem and the temple both illustrate important characteristics about the church by using their different features. It is simply two different ways of describing the church. We do this in our conversations today. If two people were asked to describe some object, they would most likely choose different words and illustrations to describe different aspects of that object. This is how the Lord describes the church. He uses many different items and

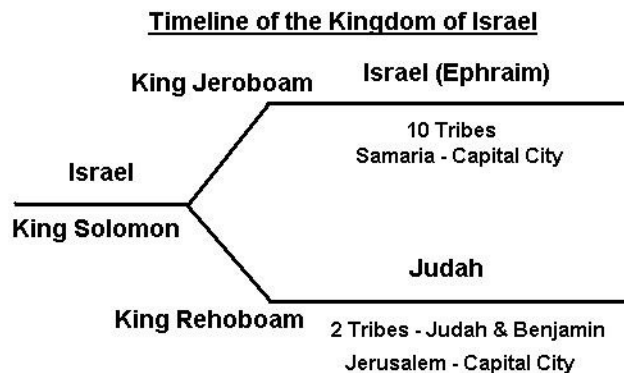
events to describe the many different aspects of the church. Many Old Testament figures are descriptive pictures of the church.

Since both the city of Jerusalem and the temple are symbols of the church, some passages in Revelation could be confusing. For example, Revelation 21:22 says that no temple exists in the new Jerusalem. Is this a conflict in interpretation? Absolutely not. We must first understand how the figures of the temple and Jerusalem are being used. This passage is dealing with the features of the city of Jerusalem. The temple was located in the city and the people had to go to the temple to worship because this was the place where God dwelt. Today, no literal building stands inside the "new Jerusalem" (church). God dwells among his people at any place and at any time. Thus, the temple is being used as a symbol in the city of Jerusalem to show that during the Christian age, we will not have to go to a specific physical place to worship God. We can worship anywhere the saints desire to gather.

The church is made up of Christians, and it is the temple of God. As members of the church, we are gathered into his temple to worship. Compare this concept to any literal organization or club with which you are familiar. If you are a member of that organization, you represent it in any situation in which you find yourself because people associate you with that organization. They draw conclusions about your organization by your actions. You represent the organization wherever you go. In order for the organization to conduct business, its members must come together. The organization is not the building in which they meet. It is the people gathered to conduct business. If the members never gathered together, the organization would soon cease to exist and the building would fall down. These things are true concerning the church. Christians are the temple of God, which is the church. We represent the church in the daily situations of our lives. We gather together as the temple of God in order to worship him. If the church never gathered together, it would soon lose its identity as a church and cease to exist. It is also important that every member of the church understand this. If someone quits attending meetings of some club or organization, they soon become unaware of the business being conducted. Even though they may keep their names on the roll by paying membership dues, they are really not a part of the organization. We cannot fool God by just keeping our names on a membership roll. We must be a working part of the church, for we are the temple of God.

Gathering into the Church

After David's death, his son Solomon reigned as king over the nation of Israel, and God blessed him with wisdom and riches. He built the temple that his father David could not build because of wars in the land (1Kings 8:18-19). The building projects of Solomon required great amounts of labor and money, so he began to oppress the people and tax them heavily. Because of this, a great amount of discontent grew among the people. When Solomon died, his son Rehoboam oppressed the people even more. Finally, the ten northern tribes rebelled



against Rehoboam and appointed Jeroboam as their king. This Northern Kingdom became known as Israel or Ephraim. Samaria became the capital city of the Northern Kingdom. Two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, retained Rehoboam as their king and Jerusalem as their capital city. This Southern Kingdom became known as Judah. Corrupt kings ruled from time to time in both kingdoms, and the people fell further and further away from God. Prophets were sent to warn the people of God's anger and to encourage them to repent. The people failed to heed those warnings and continued to worship God in ways he had not commanded. They also accepted the pagan gods of nations around them and began to worship them. Because of their acceptance of other gods, God became very angry with the people of both Israel and Judah. In fact, he became so angry with them that he allowed other nations to make war against them and eventually take them as slaves. Assyria plundered and destroyed the Northern Kingdom of Israel and much of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but God did not let them take Jerusalem (2Kings 19:32-36). Eventually, because of the sins of the people, God allowed Babylon to conquer Jerusalem. God caused Israel to fall because they had left his ways (Micah 3). He drove them from their Promised Land and caused them to be slaves in other countries. They were spread throughout the nations of the world. This is almost identical to the situation of Adam and Eve being cast out of the Garden of Eden. Israel brought this destruction upon themselves because of their disobedience to God. A statement in Jeremiah 32:37 shows that God had driven them out of their land because he was displeased with them. It says, "whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath." Because the people had turned away from God, he became very angry with them and drove them out of their land, and they were scattered abroad to live in many other countries.

God was angry with Israel, but in the same verse that he expressed his anger (Jer. 32:37), he said, "Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them." The question that must be answered now is when did he gather his people together again or has it yet taken place? Many in the religious world today believe that the Jews will be gathered from all nations of the earth back to the literal country of Israel, where Christ will lead his people to fight against the anti-Christ in the battle of Armageddon. They believe that Christ will be victorious and establish his throne in Jerusalem to reign for one thousand years on this earth. Much of this theory is developed from passages in the Old Testament that tell about the gathering of the Israelites back to Jerusalem. This misunderstanding of the prophetic scriptures comes from the fact that they do not understand the concept of "new Jerusalem." The comparison being used in this type of prophetic language deals with the comparison between literal Jerusalem and spiritual Jerusalem. At this point in our study, it should be clear that "spiritual Jerusalem" is the church. In the Old Testament, the gathering of the

nations back to Jerusalem is speaking of the gathering of people from all countries into new Jerusalem, the church, rather than the migration of Jews back to literal Jerusalem. The Jews were gathered back to Jerusalem when Christ came to earth the first time.

God had scattered the people of Israel all over the world. Jews may have been in every nation on the earth. Again, we learn this from Ezek 36:24 which says, "For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land." In Acts 2:5 we find that devout Jews "from every nation under heaven" were come together in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to celebrate the feast. These Jews who had been scattered throughout all nations of the world were going to have an opportunity to return to a new Jerusalem. God was going to gather them again unto himself. As Peter stood to preach the first gospel sermon, they were hearing God's call to come back to him. On that day, three thousand were gathered into new Jerusalem as they repented of their sins and were baptized into Jesus Christ. Matthew 23:37 says,

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Many of the prophets had spent their entire lives warning Israel to turn from their sins and come back to God, but time after time, they refused to listen. The Jews had gotten themselves into such a terrible spiritual situation that it seemed as if they had no way out, but God provided a way. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, into this world to provide a way for the Jews to receive forgiveness of their sins. At the same time, he brought salvation unto the Gentile nations. God loved mankind enough that he was willing to send his only Son to earth to die in order that all people might be gathered into the new Jerusalem. Some of the Jews heeded the words of Christ and came to him, but many of them refused his teachings and continued in their ways of sin. Christ was gathering the people back into a spiritual kingdom rather than an earthly kingdom. The Jew's refusal to accept Christ as the Messiah did not stop him from setting up his spiritual kingdom. Jesus said, "I will build my church" (Matt. 16:18), and he did just that. The church was established through the teachings of the apostles on the day of Pentecost. He gave mankind a new country, a new land, a new Jerusalem, but it was spiritual in nature. It was offered to the Jews first (Matt. 10:5-6), but after they refused to hear, it was then offered to the Gentiles (Matt. 28:19). Christ gathered people from all nations into this new spiritual Jerusalem.

It was prophesied that a time would come when Israel would no longer praise God because he delivered them from the land of Egyptian bondage. Instead, they would praise him for delivering them from all countries where he had driven them. Jer 23:7-8 states,

Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

According to Jer. 23:5-6, this was to take place when Christ came to this earth. It reads,

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

When Christ came to this earth the first time, he attempted to gather all the Israelites who were scattered abroad into a spiritual kingdom. They were going to once again dwell safely in their own land, but this time it was a spiritual land --- the church. We also see in Isa. 59:20-60:5, that the Gentiles would come to Christ at this time. When he gathered all nations into his spiritual kingdom,

the people would no longer praise God for delivering them out of the physical bondage in Egypt. Instead, they would praise him for delivering them out of spiritual bondage and bringing them out of all countries where he had driven them into a new spiritual land of their own.

When Christ came to earth to gather the Jews back to him, he also brought the Jews and Gentiles together into one kingdom. Up until this time, the Jews had been God's chosen people and were the only ones subject to the Law of Moses. Isa. 59:20-21 says,

And the Redeemer shall come to Zion, and unto them that turn from transgression in Jacob, saith the LORD. As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the LORD; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the LORD, from henceforth and for ever.

When the Redeemer (Christ) came to Zion, he made a new covenant with the people that would remain in effect forever. The gospel is the new covenant that Christ made with the people, and it is the light of the world. Isa. 60:3-5 reads,

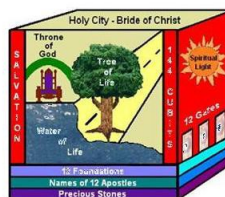
And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.

In John 8:12, Jesus calls himself the "light of the world." When Christ came to earth the first time, he brought light to the world, and the words that he left with us are still the light of the world today. At this time, the Gentiles came to the light (Isa. 60:3). The Jews and Gentiles would both "flow together" (Isa. 60:5) into one spiritual kingdom, the church. Eph. 3:5-6 says,

Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel.

It was not revealed to the people under the Law of Moses how the Jews and Gentiles would be united into the same body. However, the union was made known when Christ gave the gospel to all men. The Jews and Gentiles were gathered together from all nations of the earth into one spiritual kingdom as they followed the teachings of the gospel and were added to the church.

God became angry with Israel in Old Testament times, but he did not forsake them. He loved them and sent his Son to die for them. He gave them a new land, a new city, in which to dwell. He gathered back unto himself all those Jews who would come. In addition, he gathered the Gentiles who would accept him into this one nation, the new Jerusalem, which is the church ---a spiritual kingdom for God's people to inhabit. The Lord is no longer angry with his people. He will not drive us out of that spiritual kingdom and destroy it as he drove the Jews from Jerusalem and destroyed it (Zech. 14:11). We may fall short of his expectations, but the blood of Jesus Christ is there to provide forgiveness for us. He has gathered his chosen people, Christians, back unto him in the church. We dwell in the land he has prepared for us, and he walks and talks with us today just as he did with Adam and Eve in the garden. The difference is that we are gathered into a spiritual garden rather than a physical garden.



Covenant of Peace

The world in which we live today is in constant turmoil. As we read the newspaper, listen to the radio and watch the television, we are constantly made aware of fighting, killing, robbery and all types of evil. We are afraid to leave home without locking our doors. We buy anti-theft devices to put on our vehicles. Gangs seem to be taking over our large cities, as well as invading smaller communities. Governments still oppress people in many places and nations are at war. Jesus told us in Matthew chapter 24 that this situation would exist in the world until he comes again. Matt. 24:6a says, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars." Then in verse 7 we read,

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.

With all of these problems in the world, one of man's greatest desires is to have peace. However, we must remember as we study about peace, that God never promised Christians a peaceful life. In fact, the exact opposite is true. In Luke 6:22, Jesus tells his disciples,

Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.

Considering all the problems in this world, it seems that Christians are destined to have a life of turmoil and hardship, but Jesus also said in John 14:27a, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you." It appears contradictory for Jesus to say in one place that Christians will live lives of turmoil, but in another that he will give us peace. We know that Jesus did not contradict himself on this point, so we must determine what peace Jesus was speaking about in each of these two statements. In John 16:33, Jesus said,

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

In this verse Jesus speaks of both tribulation and peace. He says that Christians will have tribulation in this world, but he also says that his words will enable us to have peace. The answer to how Christians will have both tribulation and peace is found in Romans 5:1 which says, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The peace Christians have in this world is peace with God. It is not peace among the nations or peoples of the world because that will never completely take place. Instead, it is a spiritual peace we have with God, knowing that we are in a close relationship with him and that we will eventually live eternally in heaven with him.

It is easy for us to understand that today Christians can have peace for our souls. Many of us have heard that preached and taught all our lives, but the point we want to stress here is the contrast between our situation today and that of the people who lived under the Law of Moses. Those people did not have peace. The physical nation of Israel, which was a likeness of the true spiritual Israel to come, was a nation of war. In order to capture their Promised Land, they had to defeat the people living there in actual battle. As long as they were faithful to God, he would be with them in their wars and they would be successful. If they disobeyed God, he would forsake them and they would be defeated. Throughout much of the history of the nation of Israel, the people had no physical peace.

As was studied earlier, while the Israelites dwelt in the land of Egypt, much time was spent in physical bondage. In the later times of the kingdom of Israel, the people spent much time in exile and slavery in Assyria and Babylon. Their lives were filled with trials and tribulations. In fact, the only time when Israel was at peace was when they were following the words of God. Since Israel so often disobeyed God, they experienced very little time of peace. Not only were the Israelites not at

peace with the nations around them, but they also were not at peace with God. They proved time and again that they were not capable of following the ways of God. Just reflect upon some of the times that Israel disobeyed God. Even while Moses was on mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, Israel fell away by making a golden calf to worship. To punish them, Moses ground up the calf, mixed the powder in water and made the children of Israel drink it (Exod. 32:20). They did not trust God to deliver the Promised Land into their hands, so they had to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Even Moses disobeyed God by smiting the rock the second time, and because of his disobedience he was refused entrance into the Promised Land. The list could go on and on. The point is that the old Law of Moses did not provide for the immediate forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 2:2b says, "every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward." They were punished for every sin they committed. Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Since they had all sinned, they were all subject to punishment. According to Hebrews 10:3, the blood of bulls and goats, which they offered for their sins, did not forgive or take away their sins. Those same sins were remembered again every year (Heb. 10:3). Since the Law of Moses did not provide for the complete forgiveness of sins and all had sinned, the people could not have spiritual peace with God. Speaking of the children of Israel, Isaiah 59:2 states, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." The sins of the people had separated them from God. God can have nothing to do with sin so he had turned his face away from them or as the verse says, he "hid his face from them." Israel was in a terrible spiritual situation. Speaking of this spiritual situation of the children of Israel, Isaiah 59:10-12 says,

We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if we had no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; we are in desolate places as dead men. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves; we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.

The people were compared to those who stumble around in darkness. They were roaring like bears and mourning like doves. They were in distress over their spiritual situation with God. The reason for this spiritual distress is given in verse 12. They were in sin with no way of receiving forgiveness. Verse 11 says they were looking for salvation, but there was none. The answer to their dilemma is found in Isaiah 59:16-17. The Lord says,

And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

Jesus would come to earth and take away their sins. This would bring spiritual peace between God and man. God would no longer hide his face from his people, but instead, he would hear their prayers and reach out his arm of salvation to them because of the sacrifice of Jesus. Colossians 1:20 says,

And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

Through his blood on the cross, Jesus made peace between God and man. He reconciled all things to God. He brought man back into a close relationship with God, which parallels the relationship Adam and Eve experienced in the Garden of Eden before their fall.

When Jesus brought man back into this close spiritual relationship with God, he also established a new covenant between God and man. He did away with the old covenant, which was the Law of Moses, and brought in a new covenant, the gospel of Christ. Isaiah 59:21 states,

As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever.

Isaiah prophesied of a new covenant to be established between God and man, and the following passage in Hebrews shows that Jesus established this new covenant. Hebrews 8:6-8 says,

But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.



Also speaking of these two covenants, Hebrews 8:13 states, "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old, Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." This new covenant is a covenant of peace because it provides for the total and complete forgiveness of sin. It brings spiritual peace between God and man.

This covenant of peace was prophesied by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 37:26-28 as he spoke these words of God,

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply

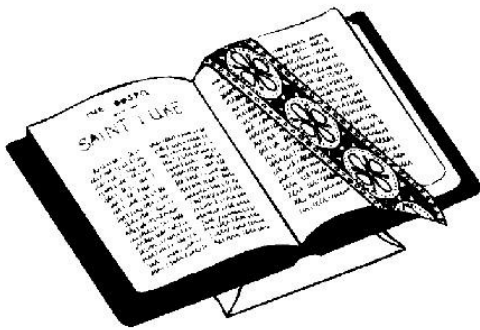
them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore.

As studied before, the tabernacle is a pattern of the church and the sanctuary was a part of the tabernacle. The sanctuary was the dwelling place of God, so God dwells among Christians today in the true tabernacle, which is the church, just as he dwelt in the literal tabernacle in the wilderness under the Law of Moses. In the above passage in Ezekiel, God states, "I will be their God and they shall be my people." Christians are the people of God today, and we live under a law of peace which has brought us back into a close relationship with God comparable to that which Adam and Eve experienced in Eden. We walk and talk with God in spiritual Eden just as Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in physical Eden.

God is concerned about the spiritual welfare of mankind. As has been discussed previously, we will always face hardships on this earth for our physical bodies, but we can have spiritual peace for our souls through Jesus Christ. John 16:33 says,

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

We too can overcome this world of sin. 1John 5:4-5 says,



For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

Jesus overcame this world by his death, burial and resurrection. We overcome this world of sin in the same manner. We follow this pattern of Jesus by our death, burial and resurrection in the waters of baptism (Rom. 6:4-6). When we do this, we are following the commands of Jesus that he established through the gospel, which is the covenant of peace. Our sins are forgiven and we are again in that close relationship with God. We have spiritual peace, but this does not mean that our work is finished. We must keep ourselves in that close relationship with God, or he will hide his face from us because of our sins. Rev. 2:26 tells us that when we overcome, we must then keep his works "unto the end." When we obey the gospel, we bring spiritual peace between God and ourselves. Even though this world holds many physical trials and hardships, if we continue to do the works of God, we can have spiritual peace for our souls.

No Tears

Before concluding this study, other prophetic statements need to be discussed so that we may better understand our relationship to God in the church today. Isaiah records several magnificent prophecies dealing with a time to come when Israel would cease from their sorrows, and their tears would be wiped away. In order to understand these prophecies, we must first determine the exact time in which this would occur. Let us first examine the prophecy of Isaiah 60:20, where he says there would come a time in Israel when the "days of thy mourning shall be ended." The question then becomes: when will these days of mourning cease? The context of this chapter deals with the first coming of Christ. In verse 3 of that chapter we read, "And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." So, the days of mourning for Israel were to cease at the same time the Gentiles were to come to the light. Light and darkness have always been used as symbols of good and evil. The light of the world is the gospel that Jesus brought. Speaking of this gospel, Paul stated in 2Tim. 1:10-11,

But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel:

Whereunto I am appointed a preacher, and an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles.

The Gentiles came to the light through the teachings of the gospel. Jesus gave us the gospel, so the Gentiles came to the light at the first coming of Christ. Since the days of mourning for Israel ended when the Gentiles came to the light, then Israel's days of mourning ended at the first advent of Christ.

We now have established the point in time when the tears of Israel were wiped away, but the question remains as to how this took place. In Isaiah 59:11-12, Isaiah is describing the terrible spiritual condition of the nation of Israel as he states,

We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us. For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.

They had forsaken the true God for other gods and were in the clutches of sin. They needed forgiveness and a Savior. Though they looked for salvation, it was far from them. They wept because of their unanswered cries for salvation. The tears, which Israel would have wiped away at the first coming of Christ, were the tears of sorrow for sin. The answer to their need for salvation is given in Isa. 59:20 which says, "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion." This can be none other than Jesus Christ. Verse 17 says,

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak.

He would bring salvation to a world lost in sin. He would be the Savior of all people of all times. The blood he shed on the cross was for the forgiveness of the sins of those who lived before him as well as those who lived after him. Speaking of Christ, Heb. 9:15 says,

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

So, how were the days of mourning ended when Christ came the first time? The answer to this lies in the fact that he removed the pain and sorrow of their sins. This statement in Isa. 60:20, "and the days of thy mourning shall be ended," is the answer to the cries of the people in Isa. 59:11, "We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far off from us". In 59:11, they were mourning because of the guilt of sin. They were looking

for salvation. Isaiah then told them in 60:20 that Jesus would come to this earth and wipe away those tears of sorrow for sin. Jesus came to earth and died to bring salvation to those who lived under the first testament, which was the Law of Moses. This was the salvation for which Israel had been looking. They were mourning and weeping up until this time, because they had no way of receiving forgiveness of their sins. Jesus was the one who put on the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation and brought the gospel to this world to redeem all mankind from sin. Therefore, the reason for the weeping and crying of the Israelites is given in verse 12 which states,

For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and as for our iniquities, we know them.

These tears were wiped away when Jesus came to this world and died on the cross. He brought the light of the gospel into the world through his death and resurrection. He put on the helmet of salvation and brought forgiveness to all who had been obedient under the Law of Moses and to all who follow him today.

Notice also that the statement in Isa. 59:20a, "And the Redeemer shall come to Zion" coincides perfectly with the information presented earlier in this book concerning Zion. Jesus brought the gospel to this world, established the church, and now reigns in mount Zion (Micah 4:7).

This time when the sorrows of Israel would cease is further described in Isaiah 60:18 as a time when there would be no more violence. Unlike the nation of Israel who conquered other nations through wars and violence, the church does not use force to bring people into it. Instead, the church is a peaceful people who fight battles for Christ by preaching and teaching his word. The church is not a violent kingdom. At the time when the violence ceased, the days of their mourning were to be ended.

Jesus did not come to earth to take away the pains and sorrows of this physical life. In fact, just the opposite is true. Jesus told his disciples that they would have to suffer for his cause (1Pet. 4:16). Throughout the history of the Christian dispensation, Christians have suffered for Christ, so the tears Jesus wiped away at his first coming were not the physical tears of this life. Instead, they were the spiritual tears of the guilt of sin. When a person is baptized, they come up out of the water rejoicing. This rejoicing is not because some physical pain or illness has been cured. They are rejoicing because their sorrow for sin has been wiped away. In Acts 8:26-40, we read the account of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. Verse 39 says that after he was baptized, he "went on his way rejoicing." He rejoiced because his soul had been cleansed and his sins wiped away. The same is true for the Israelites who lived before Christ. When he died, he took away the guilt of sin which had kept them in spiritual bondage all their lives because the Law of Moses did not provide for complete forgiveness of sin (John 8:32-34). They were no longer in a sinful relationship with God. They rejoiced because they now belonged to God. They are now among his chosen people and a part of his kingdom that will spend eternity in heaven. This is cause for great joy. Their tears of spiritual pain and sorrow are wiped away.

This same reasoning is used to understand Isaiah 35:8-10. These verses state,

And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

We studied the symbolism concerning Zion in a previous section in this book and understand that it is a description of the church in the Christian age. When we therefore enter the church, our sorrow and sighing shall flee away. This is the same as saying our tears shall be wiped away. When Christ

died, the sins of those who had followed God under the Law of Moses were also forgiven. Their tears of spiritual sorrow were wiped away.

One of the verses in Revelation that cause many to interpret the last two chapters of the book as a description of heaven instead of the church is Rev. 21:4. It says,

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

This verse is telling us that when we enter the church, the spiritual pain and sorrow for our sins are wiped away. This takes place because the "former things have passed away." These former things are the laws and ordinances of the Mosaic Age, which did not provide for the complete forgiveness of sin. We are now under the gospel of Christ that will wipe away the spiritual tears through the forgiveness of our sins. Notice that this passage in Revelation also says death will be no more. Since the tears which were wiped away were spiritual in nature, this "death" must also refer to spiritual death. This is precisely the situation in the church. When we enter the church, we overcome spiritual death. This physical body will die, but our spiritual souls will live forever. This is always contingent on the fact that we remain faithful throughout our lives. Those who are a part of the church will never die spiritually. They are subjects in a kingdom that will last forever.



We need to realize that those in the church are the ones who have begun their spiritual lives. They have passed from death to life. Speaking of those who hear his words and believe them, Jesus says in John 5:24b that they are "passed from death unto life." Then he also states in John 5:25,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.

When those who are dead in sin hear the words of Jesus Christ and follow them, they pass from spiritual death to spiritual life.

Jesus brought eternal life to light through the gospel. Speaking of Jesus, 2Tim. 1:10 states, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

We can have eternal life today by obeying the gospel of Christ.

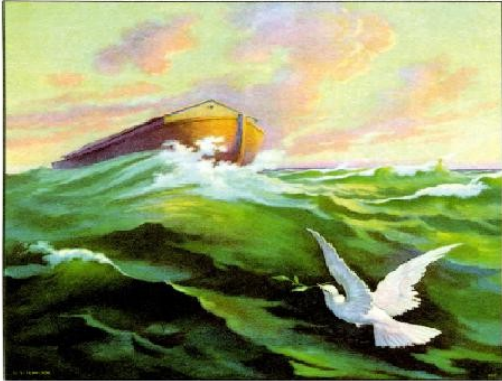
It is truly wonderful to know that when we become a Christian, our tears of spiritual sorrow are wiped away. Unlike those who lived under the Law of Moses who had to wait for Christ to come to wipe their tears away, we can live today in a close spiritual relationship with God as his chosen people. Christians are the recipients of the great prophecy of Isaiah 30:19 which says,

For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: he will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when he shall hear it, he will answer thee.

How great it is to be a member of the Lord's Church!

The Church

God has always had a plan for mankind, even before the world was formed (Eph. 1:4). One extraordinary part of this plan is how God used so many situations throughout the history of the world to teach us lessons concerning the church. He began with the Garden of Eden as he formed a literal, physical garden according to the pattern of the spiritual garden to come. He used Noah and the flood to illustrate how we can avoid the final



destruction of hell by being in the church. He

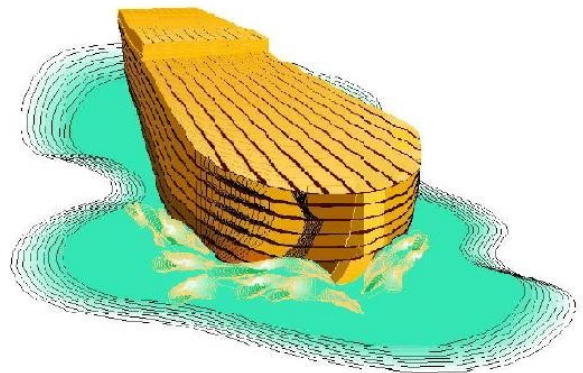
used the nation of Israel to illustrate how mankind would be delivered from sin and to show how the church would exist

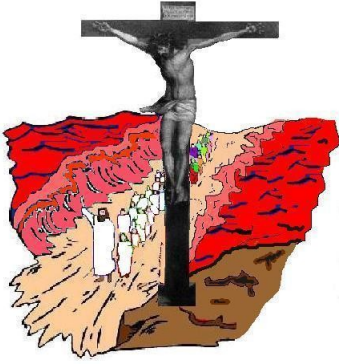
in this present world while waiting for its Promised Land of heaven. In the time of the kings of Israel, the structure of the kingdom illustrated how the church is a kingdom, and Christ is our King sitting upon his spiritual throne. The Old

Testament prophets prophesied of the first coming of Christ and the establishment of the church. Jesus has fulfilled those prophecies by coming into this world and dying on the cross to give man that spiritual kingdom which was promised. We now have that spiritual kingdom in the world today and it is the greatest institution known to man. It is the church of the living God.

The church is truly our spiritual Garden of Eden. It is our spiritual paradise upon this earth and contains everything we need in order to live eternally with God. It is a spiritual garden with beauty beyond compare. So many times we think of the church as a place to go on Sunday and perhaps on Sunday night and Wednesday night. It is, however, far more than that. It is the spiritual home of Christians today and a great spiritual paradise where God dwells among his people on this earth. The church provides Christians an opportunity to walk and talk with God today just as Adam and Eve walked with God in Eden. If we desire to be with God, we must dwell in spiritual Eden.

The church is also the ark of God. Jesus Christ built it on the day of Pentecost. Those who board this ark will escape the fiery destruction of hell. The door of the ark is open today for anyone who wants to follow God, but someday God will close the door. At that time, all those outside the ark will be punished for all eternity in the fires of hell, but those inside the ark will sail safely to a place of eternal rest prepared by God.

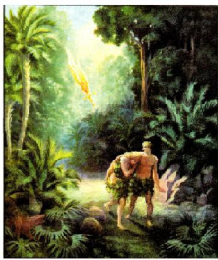




The church is the Israel of God today, and Christians are God's chosen people. As we cross the Red Sea of the blood of Christ, we begin our journey from the bondage of sin to the Promised Land of heaven. We journey through the wilderness of this world where many trials and hardships come along the way. However, if we are courageous on our journey and remain faithful to God, a glorious Promised Land where we will dwell in mansions built by God awaits us.

The church is also our new Jerusalem. It is a spiritual city made of pure gold and surrounded by a great, high, massive wall. This wall will keep the enemies of the church from destroying it. It also provides spiritual protection to its inhabitants from a world of sin. Those inside the wall have been cleansed of their sins by the blood of the Lamb. Those outside the wall are living in a world of sin. This wall separates the people of God from the followers of the devil. It is a great spiritual wall of salvation. Those who have passed through the gates of this wall are saved from their sins and are living and walking in God's spiritual city today. This city is our new Jerusalem and it is also our spiritual garden of Eden. It is the church.

Even though the wall of this great city is extremely massive, the gates are open continuously (Rev. 21:25). They are not shut during the day or night (Isa. 60:11). Entrance into this city can be gained at any time, but God controls who passes through these gates. An angel stands at every entrance into the city (Rev. 21:12). Just as the angel whom God placed at the entrance to the Garden of Eden kept Adam and Eve from returning, the angels at the gates to the church keep all sinners outside its walls. Only those who have had their sins forgiven are allowed to enter this spiritual city. The prophet Isaiah tells us in Isa. 35:8 that "it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err herein."



No one will accidentally wander into the church. It must be a conscious effort on the part of every individual to meet the requirements of entrance into this spiritual paradise. Revelation 22:14 explains how man may enter into this Eden as it states,

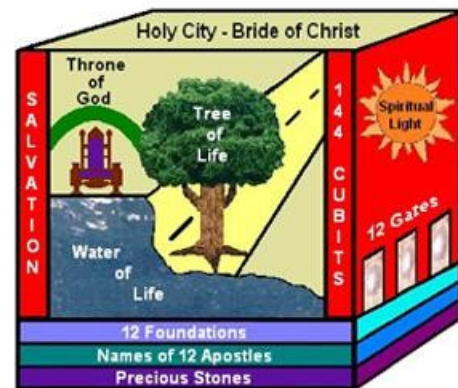
Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Those who do his commands may enter the spiritual city of Eden where the tree of life is located. Every person must decide if he is willing to follow the commands of God. Acts 2:47b says, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." The Lord, not man, will add those to the church who are being saved. God will not place anyone in this Garden of Eden who has not obeyed his commands and had their sins forgiven by the blood of the Lamb. Forgiveness of sins is accomplished by crossing the Red Sea of the blood of Christ through the waters of baptism.

Old Jerusalem



New Jerusalem



We should point out that the church as described by God is pure in nature. Some people may come through the "church building" doors on Sunday morning and claim to be Christians, but they are not. Those living in a world of sin may profess Christianity, but they are not a part of the church as God knows it. Only those who are cleansed from sin are a part of the church. Others may pretend to be, but God knows the difference. We must begin to view the church as God designed it.

Throughout the scriptures, God has used the most desirable physical objects of this earth to describe the spiritual church. By using these physical items, let us now examine the journey that every individual must take if he or she desires to be a part of the spiritual Garden of Eden and eventually live in heaven with God. We will look at the path everyone must take from the bondage of sin to our Promised Land of heaven by following the pattern of events used in the scripture to explain this journey. Hopefully, we will also learn more about the church by examining the physical items that God used to describe it. In the following discussion, the church will be referred to as the: (1) Garden of Eden, (2) Ark, (3) New Jerusalem, (4) Temple, (5) Kingdom, (6) Zion, and (7) Israel. Each of these symbolic names has been previously discussed in detail in this study. Please keep in mind that all of these terms are used as symbolic descriptions of the church throughout the Word of God. As we study the journey that every individual must take in order to be pleasing to God, we must remember that we are dealing with things that are spiritual in nature. They are described in physical terms, but they affect our spiritual souls. Let us now examine the Biblical pattern of the journey from the bondage of sin to our great spiritual Eden --- the church.

We will begin by examining the spiritual situation of all people before becoming members of the church. The very first thing we must do is realize that we are guilty of sin and have no hope of eternal life. We must believe that we stand condemned before God and experience the tears of sorrow for those sins. Anyone in this spiritual situation is in bondage to the devil and living his life as a slave to sin. One must desire to be freed from those sins, be delivered from that spiritual bondage, and have our tears of sorrow wiped away. One can learn how to be freed from the bondage of sin in two ways: (1) We can read the Bible and learn for ourselves what we must do in order to be freed from sin, or (2) Some Christian must teach us. As we study God's Word, we will realize that a spiritual city exists whose inhabitants have been freed from the bondage of sin and are living a life of spiritual freedom. Because of the beauty and value of this city, we should have a strong desire to live there and make every attempt to find this city. It is not difficult to find. Almost everyone knows that this city exists, but many people are too busy with the events of this world to be concerned with a spiritual city. As we continue searching through the Bible and understanding the message from God, we should understand that God has told us we must repent of our sins, believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and obey his commandments in order to gain entrance into his city. This marvelous city is the church that Jesus built. See Matt. 16:18. God has described his church as a marvelous city with a wall so massive and high that it would be impossible to break. This wall is made of pure jasper and its foundation is embedded with all types of precious stones (Rev. 21:18-20). The gates are made of pearl (Rev. 21:21). Nothing even imaginable to man can come near to the value of this city. Once we recognize the tremendous value of this city, it should be our greatest desire to live there and have spiritual freedom and spiritual wealth beyond compare. We have found the pearl of great price (Matt. 13:45-46). God has told us in his Word that we must repent of our sins and confess before men that Jesus is the Son of God.

The Apostles had a great desire to follow Jesus, and we must also have that same desire to follow him and enter this glorious paradise. The gates of this city are never closed (Rev. 21:25). We can enter at any time by obeying the commands of God.

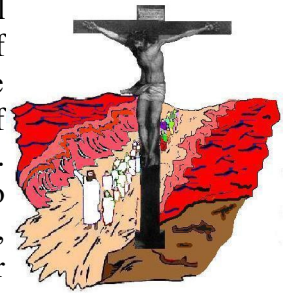
The great, high wall is the dividing line between the saved and the lost. So, in order to become part of God's people, we must pass through this wall. Above the gates of this city are the names of the twelve tribes of Israel (Rev. 21:12). The Israelites were God's chosen people under the

Law of Moses and Christians are the chosen people of God today. Therefore, this city is where God's people dwell.

The message being proclaimed by those inside the city is that we must do the commands of God in order to enter the city (Rev. 22:14). Because of our sinful state, we feel the tears of sorrow for our sins, and we are now ready to leave the bondage of sin and enter our spiritual Eden. We have decided to follow Christ. As we attempt to escape the world of sin, we come to the Red Sea of the blood of Christ. On the other side of this river is our Eden, the city of spiritual freedom.



We know that the devil's army is attempting to keep us from crossing the Red Sea, but thankfully, Christ is here to lead us across in the same manner that Moses led the Israelites across the Red Sea.



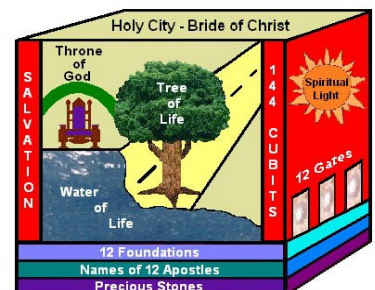
We cross the waters of the Red Sea as we submit to the waters of baptism. As we come up out of these waters, we feel a cleansing. Our sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb. The guilt of sin has been lifted and our tears are wiped away as we rejoice because of

our salvation. We pass through the great wall of salvation and enter new Jerusalem. It is the spiritual paradise of God, our Garden of Eden.

Once inside the city, we find its magnificence and beauty overwhelming. It provides everything we need in order to sustain our spiritual lives. The light of this city is brilliant, but no sun or moon regulates the light. It is a constant spiritual light produced by the glory of God that will never fade (Rev. 21:23). Because God gives this light, no night exists in this spiritual paradise (Rev. 22:5). As long as we remain faithful to His teachings, we can remain in this great city and walk in the light of God. Those outside this city are living in spiritual darkness. We have left the world of spiritual darkness behind to live in a glorious spiritual Eden.

The value of this city is beyond comprehension. The street or highway we walk on in this city is made of gold so pure that it is transparent like glass (Rev. 21:21). The prophet Isaiah foretold of a highway upon which the redeemed would walk (Isa. 35:8-9). Gold has always symbolized value and walking in the ways of the Lord is the most valuable event on this earth. Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." Jesus Christ constructed this street or highway on which we are walking in the spiritual city of God. As we follow his teachings, we are walking in his footsteps on the street of gold. No one walks on this street except the redeemed. Those we leave outside this beautiful city are walking in the ways of the world. They are following the devil in spiritual darkness. In order to walk on the street of gold, one must be inside the city. Only those who are members of the Lord's church can walk on this street of gold. As Christians today, we need to realize what a marvelous spiritual city we possess. We have something so valuable that even the streets are paved with gold. We need to turn our attention from the corruptible things of this world and center on that which has value beyond compare.

Upon entering, we can see the features of this marvelous city. In the center of this spiritual paradise stands the most magnificent tree imaginable. It is the tree of life. Jesus is our tree of life, and if we continue to follow him, he will never forsake us because this tree is planted in the midst of the spiritual garden. It will never move. If we remain faithful to him, he will always be there for us. This tree bears fruit continuously, twelve months out of the year (Rev. 22:2). Just as the tree of life in the original Garden of Eden would have given Adam and Eve eternal physical life, this magnificent spiritual tree of life will give us eternal spiritual life. This tree also has healing properties. It will heal the people of all



nations of this world if they will only come into the beautiful garden and eat of this tree (Rev. 22:2). Anyone from any nation on earth who does the will of God and enters into the spiritual paradise will be healed spiritually by this tree of life. We must remain faithful to God and do his will so we can always have access to this tree of life. We do not want to be barred from this tree like Adam and Eve were barred from the tree of life in the original Garden of Eden. If we sin, God will turn us back out into the world to live with those who follow the devil exactly like he drove Adam and Eve out of their garden (Rev. 22:19). The gate to the original Garden of Eden was closed behind Adam and Eve when they were cast out, but the gates of our spiritual Eden are never closed (Rev. 21:25). During the time of Adam and Eve, the perfect sacrifice of the blood of Christ had not been made to cleanse man from his sins. The blood of Jesus has now been shed, so the gates of Eden are never closed. If one falls back into the ways of the world, he can still return to this city by asking forgiveness of his sins by speaking to the Rock (Jesus).

As we examine other features of our spiritual Eden, we see that the tree of life is growing by the river of water of life. This water has healing properties that will quench the thirst of our spiritual souls forever. This river of water flows freely in the garden and it will never run dry. God is the fountain of these living waters (Jer. 2:13). He supplies our every spiritual need. These waters are the words that Jesus gave us by which we are to live. As he told the woman at the well in John 4:14a, "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." As we follow the teachings of Jesus, we are drinking of the spiritual water of life that flows only in the church. It is impossible to remain outside the church and drink of the spiritual water of life. Our physical bodies cannot exist without water; neither can our spiritual souls expect to live without spiritual water.

As we live in this world today and preach the Word to a world lost in sin, the spiritual water of life is flowing from us. Jesus says in John 7:37b-38,

If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

In spiritual Eden today, we can drink of the water of life and live spiritually forever. At the same time, it is our duty to proclaim the Word to a world lost in sin and offer this living water to anyone who is willing to come into the city and drink (Rev. 22:17).

This water is as clear as crystal and completely pure (Rev. 22:1). The spiritual water of life that God provides has no impurities, and it is exactly what we need to sustain our spiritual lives. We must make sure that this water (gospel) does not become polluted with false teachings. Man may pollute these waters with his own ideas, but the water of life from God is totally pure.

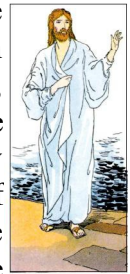
The source of this water of life is the majestic throne of God (Rev. 22:1). God is sitting upon this throne with Christ at his right hand. Revelation chapter 4 describes this spiritual throne of God, and chapter 5 pictures Christ taking his place on the throne at God's right hand. This is the throne that Christians worship today. We are subjects in God's kingdom and Christ is sitting on the throne as King over his people today. It is the most powerful throne in existence. We are part of a kingdom with such great power that it gives us a feeling of security as never before known. We realize that no power on earth can harm this great city. It is a kingdom that will stand forever. All other powers of this world pale in comparison to God's mighty throne. We are the only kingdom of this world which will never be shaken (Heb. 12:28). The church will stand forever. At the end of time, Christ will deliver the kingdom up to God, and we will dwell in the place he has prepared for all eternity. The church will move to its Promised Land of heaven.

The people in this magnificent city are pictured as a great multitude of people standing before the throne. We are now a part of the people of God who are serving him day and night in his temple (Rev. 7:15). Jesus is standing in the midst of this great crowd of people (Rev. 7:15; 1:12-13). We are following the Lamb wherever he goes (Rev. 14:4), and the Lamb is feeding us and leading us

to the fountain of waters (Rev. 7:16). We neither hunger or thirst after spiritual righteousness, because God is providing our every spiritual need (Rev. 7:17). He is also protecting us and providing us a place of shelter from the spiritual storms of this world (Rev. 7:16). We should feel secure knowing that no one is allowed to harm our spiritual lives as long as we follow the Lamb.

This is truly a glorious picture of the church today. The spiritual throne of God is with us as he dwells among his people. As residents of this spiritual Eden, we are standing before the throne of God and serving him day and night. We are fed and watered through the Word he has given us. This Word provides everything we need in order to live spiritually forever. If we remain faithful to God, the devil and his followers cannot harm us spiritually. God is protecting us. He is holding us in his hand and no man can take us from him (John 10:28). No force is powerful enough to remove us from the hand of God. It is our choice either to stay under the protection of God or leave that protection. The church is made up of those who are following the Lamb and are under his care. We are the servants of God, and we are standing before his majestic throne in his spiritual paradise.

Another outstanding feature of this great multitude of people standing before the throne of God is that they are all dressed in white robes. Our spiritual clothes have been made as white as snow by the blood of Christ. White is the color of purity and holiness, and our white robes symbolize the state of our spiritual being. To be dressed in white robes is to show that the blood of the Lamb has cleansed us. As an explanation of how these robes were made white, Revelation 7:14b states, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Christians today wear the spiritual white robes of righteousness, because we have parted the waters of the Red Sea and escaped the great spiritual tribulation of sin by washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb. These white robes show that we have been cleansed of our sins and are living in a righteous state with God. Isaiah described the sinful state of the nation of Israel as a people wearing "filthy rags." Isaiah 64:6 states, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." The people outside the church today are wearing "filthy rags" which symbolize the unrighteous state of their souls. They may have their filthy rags cleansed by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. As they do this, they become a part of the great multitude of people dressed in white robes who are standing before the throne of God. Speaking of the church, Rev. 19:8 describes it as being "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for fine linen is the righteousness of saints." All Christians have had their filthy rags made white by washing them in the blood of the Lamb. We are wearing the white robes of righteousness, and we are standing before God's throne in spiritual Eden.



In order to remain in this pure state in the sight of God, we must keep our robes clean. Ephesians 5:25-26 states,

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

Christians are wearing the white robes of righteousness today, and we must keep them spotless. When Christians gather together into a building to worship God, it is a gathering of the great multitude who are wearing white robes of righteousness. Let us begin to view the church as God views it. Let us be considerate of each other and realize that we are God's people and that he has given us the white robes to wear. We must strive to help each other keep our robes pure and white in the sight of God.

In Sardis, some had defiled their garments, but others had remained faithful and were walking with Jesus in white because they were worthy (Rev. 3:1-6). The Laodiceans had become apathetic. They were neither hot nor cold. Jesus told them to purchase white raiment that they

might be clothed (Rev. 3:14-22). He was imploring them to turn from their sins and put on the white robes of righteousness. This is exactly what the people of the world must do today in order to live with God. They must turn from their sins and have their "filthy rags" washed in the blood of the Lamb in order to make them spotless and white.

As a part of the great multitude dressed in white robes, we also join in singing a beautiful song of praise and glory to God. It is a new song that we can now sing for the first time (Rev. 14:3). It is the song of salvation (Isa 26:2). It is the greatest song that can ever be sung by man. Because of the beauty of the sound of this singing, it is symbolically described as harpers harping with their harps (Rev. 14:2). No one can learn this song except those who have been redeemed. Only those who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb can sing the new song of salvation.

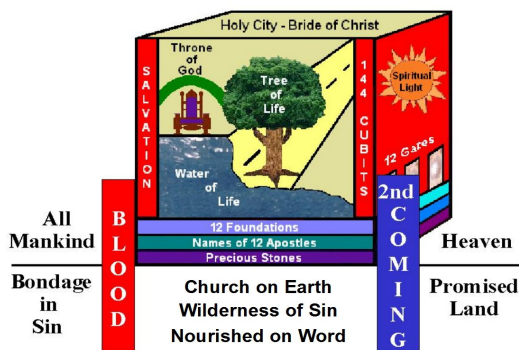
This great multitude who are dressed in white are also holding palm leaves in their hands (Rev. 7:9). The palm leaves are symbolic of our service and work for the Lord. When Jesus rode the young donkey into Jerusalem, the people laid palm branches in front of him to indicate their servitude toward him (John 12:13-14). As Christians, we have had our robes cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, and we are serving him day and night in his temple, the Eden of God, which is the church (Rev. 7:15).

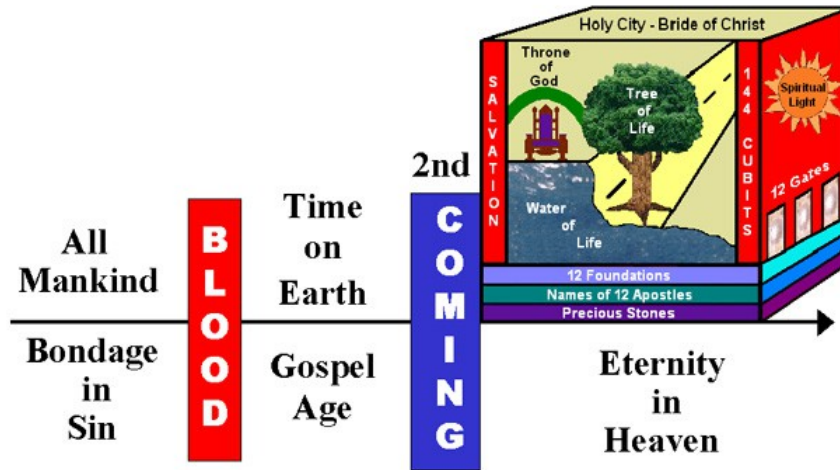
As Christians, we make up this great multitude of people dressed in white robes. The blood of the Lamb has redeemed us and the tears of sorrow for sin have been wiped from our eyes (Rev. 21:4). The pain and guilt of sin has been taken away, and our spiritual joy is complete in the Lord. We are also living eternal spiritual lives. We will see no spiritual death, and we will live with God eternally if we remain faithful to him in this spiritual paradise.

Christians today should be the happiest people on the earth. We live in a spiritual paradise where our sins are forgiven. Unlike those under the Law of Moses whose sins were remembered every year, the sins of Christians are forgiven, never to be remembered again. Our spiritual tears of sorrow for sin have been wiped away. Because of this, we will never experience spiritual death. Just as Adam and Eve could have lived in their Garden of Eden forever if they had not sinned, we can live in our spiritual Eden forever. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were cast from their Eden. They experienced the tears and sorrow for their sin, but they had no one to wipe the tears away. When Christ came to this earth and died for all mankind, he wiped the spiritual tears of sorrow for sin away. When we sin today, we can receive forgiveness because of the blood of Christ. He will wipe our tears away, and we can remain in our Eden for all eternity.

As God's children today, we live in this glorious spiritual Eden while on earth. The church is dwelling in the wilderness of this world and will continue to do so until Christ comes again. The

church will then cross our Jordan River and leave behind the physical things of this world. Our physical journey through this wilderness of sin will come to an end, and we will cross over to a spiritual Promised Land of eternal peace and rest. Only the spiritual Eden of God, the church, will be involved in this crossing. The composition of the church will not change. Those people who are members of the church on earth will also be the ones to cross Jordan and dwell in heaven. We will simply change places of residence.





We will move from this earth to heaven as our place of eternal rest (Heb. 4:9). We must learn to think of the church as our eternal abode. 1Cor. 15:24a says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God." We live in that kingdom today, and it will eventually be taken to heaven. Just as Israel, and only Israel, crossed Jordan to the Promised Land, the church, and only the church, will cross over from this earth to heaven. Christ will come back to earth the second time to lead his people across the Jordan River to our Promised Land. This spiritual kingdom of the church will then be moved to a spiritual dwelling place for all eternity. The things that are true about the spiritual nature of the church today will be the total situation in heaven because we will be spiritual beings. When the church enters heaven, we will no longer have this physical body. As spiritual beings, we will continue to enjoy all the spiritual blessings that God has given the church. We have no way of knowing or understanding what our spiritual body will be like, but we have been given a glimpse of what heaven will be like through the spiritual nature of the church. While on this earth, we live in a physical body with all the pains and sorrows that accompany it; yet, Jesus has taken away our spiritual pains and sorrows. Since our spiritual tears of sorrow, pain and death have already been wiped away, we will certainly not experience any of these tribulations when we live in a spiritual body. We are preparing ourselves to live in heaven as members of the Lord's church today.

God has always had a plan for man. He began by placing man in the beautiful Garden of Eden. Man proved that he was not capable of remaining in that garden because he was weak and sinful. The world became so corrupt that God determined to destroy it with water, but he provided a way for those who would follow him to avoid this destruction. He instructed Noah to build an ark. Soon after the flood cleansed the world, the people turned from God again. God then chose a people (Israel) to prepare the world for Jesus. He gave them a law to follow. If they had continued to be obedient to God's law, they could have remained in their Promised Land. However, once again man was not capable of following the laws of God. Israel sinned and their Promised Land was taken away. The only way man could possibly remain in a true relationship with God was to have a Savior who would take away his sins. Thus Jesus came to this earth and died in order that we might have forgiveness of our sins. He once again gave man a beautiful Garden of Eden in which to live. This time it was spiritual in nature. Those who choose to follow him and do his commandments may enter this wonderful spiritual garden. If we remain faithful to him, we will never leave our Eden. It will eventually be moved from this earth to heaven where its residents will spend eternity with God. God began by placing man in a beautiful paradise called Eden. God's final revelation to man is a

description of the beautiful spiritual Eden in which Christians live today. The Bible is truly a remarkable book that records the journey of man from Eden to Eden.

