



God's Festivals in Scripture and History

Part II: The Fall Festivals

by

Samuele Bacchiocchi

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DEDICATED
to all who take time
to honor God by consecrating
their time to Him on
His Holy Days

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the story behind a book is as interesting as the book itself. The inspiration to undertake this research on *God's Festivals in Scripture and History* came from invitations I received to speak at several Sabbath conferences during 1995. The conferences were sponsored by Sabbatarian churches and groups, most of which observe the annual Holy Days in addition to the weekly Sabbath day.

During these Sabbath conferences, I was frequently asked if I had researched the annual Holy Days and if I would speak on them. I declined to lecture on this subject for two reasons. First, I had not adequately investigated the theological meaning and historical development of the ancient Feasts of Israel. Second, my assumption was that such Feasts were part of the ceremonial services of the Temple that came to an end with the sacrifice of Christ at the Cross and, consequently they no longer are relevant for Christians.

Several people encouraged me to pursue the study of the annual Holy Days with the same dedication I have investigated the history and theology of the Sabbath. The person who encouraged me most to undertake this research is without doubt John Merritt, M. D., who currently serves as Department Chairman of Physical Medicine at the Medical College in Wisconsin. Merritt is also the founder of the "Friends of the Sabbath," a nondenominational, lay organization devoted to fostering dialogue among Sabbatarians.

Merritt not only challenged me to undertake this research but also offered me the opportunity to share my conclusions at a Sabbath conference held at the end of December 1995, in San Antonio, Texas. I accepted the challenge, fearing, however, that my conclusions would disappoint those Christians who believed in the continuity and value of the Old Testament feasts.

Being free from teaching commitments at Andrews University every year from June to December, I devoted every spare moment of my 1995 and 1996 study leave to research and write the two volumes of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*.

Objectives of the Two Volumes. The general objective of this research has been to trace the meaning and observance of the annual Holy Days both in the Old and New Testaments. My original intent was to extend the investigation into their observance in early Christianity. The latter objective was only partially realized, primarily because of time limitations. A thorough investigation of the history of the Holy Days in the early church would have required far more time than was available to me. Thus, the historical aspect of this research is limited. Sometimes in the future, I hope to continue my historical investigation into the observance of the weekly Sabbath and annual Holy Days in the early church.

The more specific objective has been to understand the typical nature, predictive function, and antitypical fulfillment of the ancient Feasts of Israel. The conclusion of this study is that the annual feasts were both commemorative and typical. On the one hand, they served to commemorate important events in the past history of Israel, while on the other hand, they typify the unfolding of redemptive history from its inauguration at the first Advent to its consummation at the second Advent.

The study is published in two volumes. This first volume, which appeared on December 1995, deals with the Spring Festivals, namely, Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost. The second volume, which appeared on December 1996, examines the Fall Festivals, namely, the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.

Procedure and Style. The procedure I have followed throughout the two volumes has been to trace the origin and historical development of each feast in the Old Testament and then to seek to understand its antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament. The task of defining the meaning and fulfillment of the feasts in the New Testament has not been easy. The themes of the feasts are pervasive in the New Testament and are used in subtle ways to bring out a variety of spiritual truths. For examples, the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used to reveal the nature and mission of Christ as well as to depict the glorious destiny of God's people.

Concerning the style of the book, I have attempted to write in simple, nontechnical language. To facilitate the reading, each chapter is divided into major parts and subdivided under appropriate headings. A brief summary is given at the end of each chapter. Unless otherwise specified, all Bible texts are quoted from the Revised Standard Version, copyright 1946 and 1952.

Surprising Discoveries. This research has been full of surprising discoveries for me. I was surprised to find considerable interest in the study of the feasts among scholars of different denominations. This is indicated by

the numerous scholarly articles and several doctoral dissertations dealing with the feasts that have appeared in recent times. Several of my colleagues at Andrews University have written papers and articles on the Feasts of Israel. Early this year (1996), Henry Ross Cole from Australia defended his doctoral dissertation at Andrews University on “The Sacred Times Prescribed in the Pentateuch: Old Testament Indicators of the Extent of Their Applicability.” I am most indebted to the contribution that many scholars have made to my understanding of the history, theology, and typology of the Feasts of Israel. Their works are cited throughout the two volumes.

I was surprised also to find supportive statements for the annual feasts in the writings of Ellen White, cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For example, she comments on Acts 20:6 (“We sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread”), “At Philippi Paul tarried *to keep the Passover*. . . . The Philippians were the most loving and truehearted of the apostle’s converts, and *during the eight days of the feast* he enjoyed peaceful and happy communion with them.”¹ Ellen White acknowledges also the importance of Pentecost for Paul when she writes that he shortened his stay at Ephesus, because “he was on his way to Jerusalem *to celebrate the Feast of Pentecost*.”² The implication of these statements is clear. Ellen White believed that Paul celebrated the Feasts of Passover and Pentecost.

In her book *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Ellen White devotes a whole chapter to “The Annual Feasts.” Reflecting on the value of the Feast of Tabernacles for Israelites and Christians today, she writes: “*Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeying from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth.*”³ In this statement, Ellen White clearly recommends the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles by the church today.

The Importance of Typology. Perhaps the greatest surprise was to discover that I was wrong in assuming that the function of the annual Feasts came to an end with the sacrifice of Christ, simply because they were connected with the sacrificial system. I came to realize that the continuity or discontinuity of the feasts is determined not by their connection with the agricultural and sacrificial system of ancient Israel, but by the scope of their typology. If the feasts served to commemorate *only* events of Israel’s history or to typify *only* the redemptive accomplishments of Christ’s first Advent, then obviously their function would have terminated at the Cross. But, if the

Feasts foreshadow *also* the unfolding of salvation history from its inauguration at the first Advent to its consummation at the second Advent, then it is evident that their didactic function continues in the Christian church, though with a new meaning and relevance.

It came as a pleasant surprise to discover that the feasts have both a commemorative and prefigurative function. They commemorate past events of Israel's history, but they also prefigure future events of the unfolding of salvation history. To illustrate this point, let us look at the first and last of the feasts, namely, Passover and Tabernacles. In the Old Testament, Passover marks the *inauguration* of Israel's salvation history by commemorating the supernatural deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Being a memorial of the past deliverance, Passover came to typify the future Messianic deliverance and restoration of Israel.

When we come to the New Testament, the typical aspects of Passover are fulfilled *Christologically* and *eschatologically*. Christologically, Passover was fulfilled at the Cross when Christ our "Paschal Lamb" was sacrificed (1 Cor 5:7) to deliver us from the bondage of sin. Eschatologically, Passover will be fulfilled at the establishment of God's Kingdom when the redeemed will be invited to participate at the marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Christ Himself pointed to this future fulfillment of Passover when He said: "I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you I shall not eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). In this statement, Christ makes it clear that the ultimate fulfillment of Passover will be at the End with the establishment of God's kingdom.

The Example of the Feast of Tabernacles. The second example is the Feast of Tabernacles—the last of Israel's religious calendar. Like Passover, Tabernacles had in the Old Testament a commemorative and prefigurative function. The feast commemorated God's protection of the Israelites on their journey from Egypt to Canaan where their temporal redemption was *consummated*. The divine sheltering of the Israelites during the Exodus experience served to foreshadow the blessings of the Messianic age when "there shall be neither cold nor frost . . . continuous day . . . living water, and . . . security" (Zech 14:6, 7, 11). At that time, all the surviving nations will come to Jerusalem "to keep the feast of booths" (Zech 14:16).

When we come to the New Testament, the typical aspects of the Feast of Tabernacles are fulfilled *Christologically* and *eschatologically*. Christologically, the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used in the Gospels to reveal the nature and mission of Christ. He is the fulfillment of the "booth" which typifies God's protective presence. By becoming flesh, Christ

became God's ultimate "booth" for in Him and through Him, God tabernacled among men (John 1:14). Christ is also the Living Water (John 7:37-38) typified by the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, and the Light of the World (John 8:12) typified by the night illumination of the Temple during the feast. Indeed, through Christ, the blessings typified by the Feast of Tabernacles have become a reality for every believer.

Eschatologically, the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles serve to depict the glorious destiny of God's people in their harvest home. The redeemed are described in Revelation as bearing palm branches which is a feature of Tabernacles (Rev 7:9). Their song, "Salvation belongs to our God" (Rev 7:10)," recalls the cry of *hosanna* of Psalm 118:25 which was uttered at the feast. The reference to God erecting a booth over His people with His presence (Rev 7:15) is a clear allusion to God's protection over Israel in the wilderness. The promise of "springs of living water" (Rev 7:17; 22:1) and of the continuous light of God's glory (Rev 21:23) are allusions to the two central ceremonies of the feast, water pouring and the night illumination, both of which from the time of Zechariah had assumed a Messianic significance. The ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles is in the new earth when the saints are gathered in their harvest home and God shelters them with the "booth" of His presence for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

The above examples of the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles serve to illustrate how the festival typology points beyond the Cross to the ultimate consummation of redemption. The feasts commemorates the redemption already accomplished through Christ's first Advent and typify the final restoration that will be realized at the second Advent. Thus, they unite the past redemption to the future restoration.

Valuable Object Lessons. The realization that the typology of the Feasts was initially fulfilled at Christ's first Advent but ultimately will be realized at His second Advent, caused me to take a fresh look at the continuity and relevance of Israel's feasts for the church today.

This new inquiry was spurred also by the realization that the feasts provide valuable object lessons which can help us conceptualize, internalize, and experience the reality of salvation. They meet some fundamental spiritual needs of Christians today as they met the spiritual needs of ancient Israel. The Fall Festivals, for example, which typify End-time events leading to the consummation of redemption, can help us appreciate the solemnity of the time in which we live and the need to prepare ourselves to meet our Lord at His glorious coming.

Like Israel of old, we Christians today need to hear, for example, the annual wake-up call of the Feast of Trumpets to repent and forsake our sinful ways because “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). We need to be reminded periodically that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor 5:10). The Feast of Trumpets provides this much needed wake-up call to prepare oneself to stand before God’s judgment by seeking for His cleansing grace.

Like Israel of old, we Christians today need the reassurance of the Day of Atonement: the reassurance of God’s provision for the cleansing of sins and the restoration to fellowship with Him through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. At a time when many are experiencing the crushing isolation of sin, the Day of Atonement has a message of hope. It reassures Christians that Christ will soon appear the second time, as did the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to punish unbelievers, to bind Satan, to cleanse believers and restore them to an harmonious relationship with Him. Such a hope gives us reason to encourage “one another, and all the more as . . . [we] see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:25).

Like Israel of old, we Christians today need the opportunity accorded by the Feast of Tabernacles to thank God for the material blessing and for the providential way He has led us out of darkness into the precious light of His grace and truth. We need the reassurance of the Feast of Tabernacles that the Lord is leading us providentially to our harvest home where He will shelter us with the “booth” of His presence for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

The fact that the feasts typify the unfolding of redemptive history and help us to experience in the present the reality of salvation and the joyous anticipation of the world to come indicates that they are still relevant and helpful for the spiritual life of God’s people today.

God Revealed in Human Time. To appreciate the value of the biblical Holy Days for today, it is important to remember that the heart of the biblical message is that God has revealed Himself in human time by creating, redeeming, and ultimately restoring His creatures to a harmonious relationship with Him. The Christian faith is rooted in the belief that God has acted in human history. The weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts recognize this fact and seek to relate all time to the redemptive purposes of God.

The major events of the first Advent of Christ are commemorated by the Spring Festivals and those related to the second Advent by the Fall Festivals. As the major redemptive accomplishments of Christ pass in review perennially during the course of the year, they keep us constantly mindful of all that the Lord has done and is doing for our sakes. While it is true that God does

not reserve the communication of His grace to specific days, it is also true that God uses time to reveal Himself. He invites us to make ourselves free and available for Him at certain times so we can experience more freely and fully the awareness of His presence, peace, and grace in our lives.

The biblical sacred calendar is more than an annual cycle of recurring festivals. It provides an opportunity to experience afresh what God has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will do in the future. It enables us to take the time which God has created and offer it back to God through Jesus Christ who has redeemed it.

Commemoration of the Great Works of God. The feasts offered to the Israelites an opportunity to commemorate specific saving acts of God which revealed unique attributes of His character. On the Sabbath, the Israelites acknowledged God as their *Creator* (Ex 20:11) and *Redeemer* (Deut 5:12-15). At Passover, they especially praised God as their *Deliverer* from Egyptian oppression (Deut 16:1; Ex 12:13). At Pentecost (Feast of Weeks), they thanked God for being their *Provider* of the material blessings of the harvest (Lev 23:10, 18, 19). At the Feast of Trumpets, they acknowledged God as their *Judge* who would decide their destiny ten days later on the Day of Atonement (Num 29:7; Lev 23:29). On the Day of Atonement, they would celebrate the fact that God was their *Vindicator* and *Restorer* who had forgiven and cleansed them of their sins (Lev 16:14-15, 21). At the Feast of Tabernacles, they rejoiced that God had been their *Protector* throughout their pilgrimage to the Promised Land (Lev 23:43).

The commemoration through the annual feasts of the saving acts and attributes of God can enhance the worship experience of Christians today as it did that for ancient Israel. There is a prevailing skepticism today about God being the *Creator, Redeemer, Provider, Judge, Vindicator, and Restorer*. Many think that God is dead or at least indifferent to what is happening in this world. This prevailing skepticism well could have been facilitated by the widespread abandonment of the Sabbath and annual holy days.

Skepticism is often the outgrowth of forgetfulness. When we forget a person we have not seen for long time, we tend to become skeptical about that person's accomplishments. In the same way, when we forget to commemorate God's saving acts, in time we can become skeptical about God's redemptive accomplishments for this world and for our lives. The weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days offer us this unique opportunity to commemorate, and thus, constantly remember, the great works of God for us.

Importance of This Study. The importance of this study is largely determined by the theological orientation of the reader. Those who interpret

the freedom of the Gospel as freedom *from* the observance of any holy time, will find at most an antiquarian interest in this study. The end result of such a philosophy is that no real worship is offered to God because nothing really matters.

Sabbatarians who observe the annual feasts should find this study valuable because it provides considerable new information on the typical nature and antitypical fulfillments of the annual feasts. Unfortunately, much of the literature on the Holy Days produced by churches that observe them offers very little insight into the historical, theological and typological development of the feasts. In some instances, the antitypical fulfillment of certain feasts is misinterpreted simply because the writer did not adequately investigate the correlation between the typical nature of the feasts and their antitypical fulfillment. This study should contribute to dispel some misunderstanding on the meaning and message of the feasts for today.

Adventists should find this study surprising; first, because it proposes to consider the relevance and value of the annual Holy Days for our Christian life today. This proposal is new to the thinking of most Adventists who in the past have given little thought to the typical nature and antitypical fulfillment of the feasts of Israel. Second, many Adventists will be surprised to learn how much the typology of the Fall Feasts impacts on Adventist eschatology. Distinctive Adventist doctrines such as the heavenly ministry of Jesus, the pre-Advent judgment, the close of probation, the timing of the second Advent, the millennial binding of Satan, and the final eradication of sin, all derive largely from a unique understanding of the antitypical fulfillment of events associated with the Day of Atonement.

The founders of the Adventist church understood that the Spring Festivals were types which were fulfilled in connection with the first Advent of Christ, and that the Fall Festivals are also types that find their fulfillment in the events related to the Second Advent. "In like manner," writes Ellen G. White, "the types which relate to the second advent [Fall Feasts] must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service."⁴

The focus of Adventist pioneers, however, was primarily the typology of the Day of Atonement. They studied with great diligence the ritual of the Day of Atonement in order to establish the antitypical fulfillment of the cleansing of the sanctuary as predicted in Daniel 8:14. Their overriding concern to understand the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement caused them to overlook the contribution of the Feasts of Trumpets and Tabernacles to the overall understanding of End-time events. The result was, for example, that they developed the doctrine of the investigative judgment

primarily on the typology of the Day of Atonement, largely ignoring the typological function of the Feast of Trumpets. Our study shows that the Day of Atonement typifies the termination of the judgment process that was inaugurated ten days earlier with the blowing of trumpets on the Feast of Trumpets. This means that for the sake of coherency, it is necessary to broaden the typological base of the investigative judgment by including the Feast of Trumpets as well.

A Statement of Intent. The intent of this study is not to point out some of the deficiencies in the typological interpretation of Adventist pioneers, but rather to build upon their foundation by expanding the understanding of the typical nature and antitypical fulfillment of the Fall Feasts. I am under no illusion that all my fellow Adventists will be pleased by this endeavor. Any attempt to modify a traditional doctrinal position can be readily interpreted by some as a “denial of the faith,” even if such an endeavor is motivated by the desire to provide a more coherent, biblical basis for a doctrine.

In my recent dialogue with Sabbatarians belonging to different churches I forcefully have been made aware that Protestants are conditioned by tradition just as much as the Catholics. In theory, most Protestants adhere to the principle of *Sola Scriptura*, but in practice they interpret the Scripture just like the Catholics, in accordance with their traditional positions. Any interpretation that deviates from the traditional position automatically is viewed as suspect, if not altogether heretical. This is especially true in smaller, conservative churches with strong doctrinal beliefs.

A recent experience may serve to illustrate this point. The editors of a Sabbatarian magazine interviewed me about my first volume of *God's Festival in Scripture and History*. The interview was published in the magazine with an insert encouraging readers to write to the editor for information on how to obtain the book. In a following issue, the editor regretfully announced that he could not let the readers know how to obtain the book, presumably because they discovered in the book some minor points with which they could not agree. Unfortunately, this kind of close-mindedness is pervasive in smaller, fundamentalist churches who are unwilling to reexamine the soundness of their doctrines. For them preserving tradition is more important than exploring truth. This policy makes it very difficult for members to grow in the understanding of biblical truths.

It is my fervent hope that readers will sense my sincere desire is to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15), even if it means reexamining my own doctrinal positions. My intent is not to be confrontational, but confessional, sharing what I have found after two years of dedicated study of

God's Holy Days. If you cannot agree with some of my conclusions, please do not let your disagreements prevent you from reading the book with an open mind. You may be surprised to find much valuable information that will enrich your understanding and experience of Biblical truths.

Acknowledgments. It is most difficult for me to acknowledge my indebtedness to the many persons who have contributed to the realization of this book. Indirectly, I feel indebted to the authors who have written articles, pamphlets, books, and dissertations on the biblical feasts. Their writings have stimulated my thinking and broadened my approach to this subject.

Directly, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to church members, doctoral students, and colleagues at Andrews University who took time to share with me ideas and papers. Fourteen scholars whom I respect took time in their busy schedule to read this lengthy manuscript, offering me valuable comments. Words fail to express my gratitude for their valuable service to me. Several ministers of the United Church of God who learned about this project graciously sent me books and papers dealing with the feasts. To each one of them, I wish to express my gratitude for their helpfulness and encouragements.

A special thanks to Joyce Jones for correcting and improving the style of the manuscript. Mrs. Jones has worked many hours on this manuscript, reworking sentences so that they would sound more English and less Italian.

Last but not least, I need to express my special thanks to my wife who has been my constant source of encouragement and inspiration during the past thirty-five years of our married life. She saw little of me while I was researching and writing this book. Without her love, patience, and encouragement, it would have been most difficult for me to complete this project in a relative short a time.

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA, 1960), pp. 390-391. Emphasis supplied.

2. Ellen G. White, *Redemption: Or the Teaching of Paul, and His Mission to the Gentiles* (Battle Creek, Michigan, 1878), p. 65.

3. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California, 1958), pp. 540-541.

4. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA, 1960), pp. 399-400.

Chapter I

BIBLICAL

AND

FESTIVAL TYPOLOGY

Even a casual reading of the Bible reveals that God has communicated His saving knowledge not only through abstract reasoning, but also through symbolic representations. The reason is that the human mind grasps symbolic representations more readily than it does abstract reasoning. A picture is worth a thousand words. Thus, it is not surprising that God used object lessons to help His people conceptualize and experience spiritual realities.

A significant kind of symbolic representation which is pervasive in Scripture is known as “types,” and the study of types is called “typology.” A type is an Old Testament institution, event, ceremony, object, or person that God specifically designed to serve as predictive prefiguration (types) of His saving grace and power yet to be revealed.

In several instances, the New Testament explicitly identifies as “type” (*tupos*) an Old Testament person, event, or ceremony. For example, the experiences of Israel in the wilderness are types (*typoi*) of the experience of Christians in this world (1 Cor 10:6). Adam is a type (*typos*) of Christ, the second Adam “who was to come” (Rom 5:14). The salvation of Noah and his family through the Flood corresponds to its antitype (*antitypon*), the Christian baptism (1 Pet 3:21). The priesthood and sacrifices of the sanctuary are a “shadow” (*skia*) and “type” (*tupon*) of Christ’s sacrifice and heavenly ministry (Heb 8:5).

The annual feasts of ancient Israel are not designated explicitly as “types” in the New Testament, but their typological function is clearly shown by the use of their themes to depict the unfolding of salvation history. For example, the sacrifice of the Passover lamb is seen in the New Testament as a type of the sacrifice of Christ, our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). The offering

of the Firstfruits on the day after the eating of Passover (Nisan 16) is seen as a type of Christ who was raised from the dead at that very time, as “the first fruits of those who are asleep” (1 Cor 15:20). The Feast of Pentecost celebrated fifty days after Passover as the grain harvest ingathering is seen as a type of the ingathering of God’s people, consisting not only of Jews but of “all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39).

Our study of the Spring and Fall Festivals of ancient Israel has shown that these feasts were more than mere ceremonies designed to meet the immediate religious needs of the people. They were divinely designed prefigurations (types) of the unfolding of the plan of salvation. We have found that the Spring Feasts of Passover, Firstfruits, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost typify the inauguration of Christ’s redemptive ministry and the Fall Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles represent the consummation of His redemptive ministry. An understanding of the typological meaning of the annual Feasts can help us appreciate more fully the unfolding of Christ’s redemptive ministry from its inauguration to its final consummation.

Objectives of the Chapter. This introductory chapter is divided into two parts according to its two objectives. The first part considers the nature and importance of Biblical typology in general. An attempt is made to identify some of the essential characteristics of Biblical typology in general and to relate them to Festival typology in particular.

The second part examines the typical nature of the annual feasts and offers an overview of their typological meaning and function. The overview of the Spring and Fall Festivals is, in essence, a brief summary of the study conducted in the two volumes of *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*. This summary is provided out of consideration for those readers who appreciate an overview of the basic content and structure of the two volumes.

PART I BIBLICAL TYPOLOGY

The Importance of Typology. Bible students who accept the Bible as divinely inspired, traditionally have recognized that the typology of the Old Testament provides the key to interpret much of the message of the New Testament. In recent times, even prominent liberal scholars have emphasized the importance of typology for understanding the message of the Bible. For example, respected New Testament scholar Leonard Goppelt, who produced the first comprehensive study of the New Testament typology from a modern historical perspective,¹ stresses that typology “is the central and distinctive New Testament way of understanding Scripture.”²

In a similar vein, Old Testament scholar G. Ernest Wright affirms that “the one word which perhaps better than any other describes the early church’s method of interpreting the Old Testament is ‘typology.’”³ The same view is expressed by New Testament scholar E. Earle Ellis, who says: “Typological interpretation expresses most clearly the basic attitude of primitive Christianity toward the Old Testament.”⁴

Ada Habershon illustrates the importance of typology in understanding the Bible by means of a fitting analogy. She writes: “The Bible may be compared to those beautifully illustrated volumes so often published with a number of engravings of choice pictures at the beginning, followed by chapters of letterpress describing them, giving their history, or telling something of the life of the artist. We can scarcely conceive of anyone trying to understand such descriptions without referring to the pictures themselves; yet this is how the Bible is often treated.”⁵

These recent affirmations of the importance and centrality of typology for the understanding of the message of the Bible, are remarkable in view of the previous negative assessment of typology among critical scholars. Owing to the triumph of higher criticism, the interest in the study of Biblical typology largely disappeared in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Liberal theologians came to view typology as merely “an historical curiosity, of little importance or significance to the modern reader.”⁶ However, after World War II, liberal scholars who had largely rejected the value of typology have exuberantly embraced and defended a new, liberal view of typology.

Liberal Versus Traditional Typology. There are some basic differences between the traditional and liberal understanding of Biblical typology. The traditional view of typology (which forms the basis for our interpretation of the annual feasts) is rooted in Old Testament historical realities which are seen as divinely designed prefigurations pointing forward in specific details to their fulfillment in the redemptive accomplishments of Christ’s first and second Advents.

By contrast, liberal scholars view typology merely as a form of analogical thinking, which in the Bible involves a retrospective recognition of correspondence between similar modes of divine activity. In other words, for liberal scholars, typology involves only some general parallel situations. For them, Old Testament types are not divinely designed and have little or no predictive function. They only find some analogical correspondence to God’s activities in the New Testament. Thus, for liberal scholars no consistent principles of interpretation can be developed from the study of Biblical typology, because there is no system or order in the use of types.

These two views of typology raise the question: What is the *Biblical* view of typology? Are the Biblical types divinely designed prefigurations or merely analogical correspondences of divine activities perceived by Bible writers? Is Biblical typology predictive or retrospective? Does it deal with specific details or only with general parallel situations?

The answer to these questions is not difficult to find because the New Testament writers themselves provide clues in those passages which establish a clear correspondence between the Old Testament types and the New Testament antitypes. Six verses in the New Testament are identified as typological because they explicitly employ the word *type* (*typos*) or *antitype* (*antitypon*) to describe the New Testament's interpretation of the Old Testament types. These verses are Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10:6, 11; 1 Peter 3:21; Hebrews 8:5; and 9:24. A detailed exegesis of these passages has been done by Richard Davidson in his doctoral dissertation *Typology in Scripture*.⁸

Davidson's dissertation clearly shows that "the structures of Biblical typology, as they emerge from representative scriptural passages, harmonize fully with the traditional view of typology."⁹ His detailed exegesis of the above-mentioned passages indicates that, contrary to the liberal view of typology, New Testament typology is "rooted in the historical reality of the Old Testament types; the correspondence consists of divinely designed prefigurations; it is basically prospective/predictive, and not simply retrospective; and it involves a correspondence of details as well as of general 'similar situations.'"¹⁰

Davidson's analysis of the six representative New Testament passages which use the terms "type" (*typos*) and "antitype" (*antitypos*) to interpret the Old Testament prefigurations, suggests that Biblical typology has historical, eschatological, prophetic, Christological, and ecclesiological elements. We briefly look at these elements of Biblical typology, since they apply also to our study of the typology of the feasts.

Historical Element. Biblical typology is rooted in history. Both the type and the antitype are historical realities whose historicity is assumed by the Biblical writers. In this respect, a type differs from an allegory, for the latter is a fictitious narrative that does not depend upon historical realities. In the early church, the allegorical method of interpretation blurred the true meaning of the Old Testament to such an extent that it was impossible to develop a legitimate typology. The allegorical method completely ignored the literal and historical sense of Scripture, making every word or event mean something totally foreign to its original setting.

By contrast, the typological method of interpretation depends upon the historical reality of the Old Testament types. The question of their historicity is so crucial that the typological correspondence between Christ and Adam in Romans 5:12-21, the Exodus events and the Christian experience in 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, and the Flood and Christian baptism in 1 Peter 3:18-22, “would collapse if the historical reality of Adam, the Exodus, or the Flood was not accepted.”¹¹

Another characteristic of the historical element is that there is an *escalation* or *intensification* from the Old Testament type to the New Testament antitype. “For instance, Israel’s food and drink in the wilderness are intensified to become the Christian Lord’s Supper of the antitype (1 Corinthians 10). In Hebrews, the inadequate, temporary Old Testament sacrifices and ceremonies are escalated into the once-for-all efficacious sacrifice and superior, permanent priesthood of Christ.”¹²

The same principle of escalation applies to the typology of the feasts. For example, the Feast of Trumpets which served to call the Jews to stand trial before the heavenly court, escalates in the New Testament into angels blowing trumpets and crying in the midst of heaven to announce to mankind the beginning of the time of judgment (Rev 11:18; 14:7). The annual cleansing of sin on the Day of Atonement escalates in the New Testament into the final and permanent removal of sin at Christ’s coming (Heb 9:23-28). The temporary booths built during the Feast of Tabernacles to commemorate God’s protection during sojourning in the wilderness, escalates in the New Testament into the permanent sheltering of the redeemed by the booth of God’s glorious presence (Rev 7:15; 21:3).

Prophetic Element. Biblical typology has also a prophetic element inasmuch as the Old Testament types are predictive foreshadowing or advance-presentations of the corresponding New Testament antitypes. For example, Adam is seen as a “type of the one who *was to come*” (Rom 5:14). The wilderness experience of Israel is seen as a prefiguration of the Christian church (1 Cor 10: 6, 11). The earthly sanctuary and its services are “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1). These Old Testament types presuppose a purpose in history and an organic relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

Typology differs from prophecy in the means of prediction. Prophecy predicts mainly by means of the word, while typology predicts by means of institution, event, ceremony, or person. The prophetic element of Biblical typology is evident especially in the typology of the annual feasts which serve as prefiguration of the redemptive accomplishments of Christ’s first and

second Advents. Our study of the feasts has shown that each of them was divinely designed to prefigure a major event in the unfolding of the plan of salvation.

Eschatological Element. The prophetic element of Biblical typology is further clarified by the eschatological fulfillment of Old Testament types in the New Testament antitypes. For example, the experiences of Israel in the wilderness are types (*typoi*) of those “upon whom the end of the ages has come” (1 Cor 10:11). Adam is a type (*typos*) of the second Adam “who was to come” (Rom 5:14) to inaugurate the eschatological new age.

Davidson notes that Biblical typology may have three possible kinds of eschatological fulfillments: “(1) *inaugurated*, connected with the first advent of Christ; (2) *appropriated*, focused on the church as she lives in tension between the ‘already’ and the ‘not yet’; and (3) *consummated*, linked to the apocalyptic second coming of Christ.”¹³

These three possible kinds of eschatological fulfillments of Biblical typology, in general, apply to a large extent to Festival typology, in particular. For example, we found that the Christian Passover has an *inaugurated* eschatological fulfillment, since it *looks back* to what has already happened. It is a *proclamation of the death of Jesus* (1 Cor 11:26). It also has an *appropriated* eschatological fulfillment, since it enables believers in the *present* to enter into fellowship with the exalted Lord at the Lord’s Table. Paul calls this fellowship as “a participation in the blood . . . [and] body of Christ” (1 Cor 10:16). Finally, the Christian Passover will have a *consummated* fulfillment at the *future* Messianic banquet. Christ alluded to the consummated fulfillment of Passover when He said: “I shall not drink of it again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God” (Mark 14:25; cf. Matt 26:29; Luke 22:16, 18).

Christological Element. Biblical typology is above all Christological, that is, Christ-centered, and soteriological, that is, salvation-centered. Davidson explains that “The Old Testament types are not merely ‘bare’ realities, but *salvation realities*. They find their fulfillment in the person and work of Christ and/or in the gospel realities brought about by Christ. Christ is thus the ultimate orientation point of Old Testament types and their New Testament fulfillments.”¹⁴

The Christological element of Biblical typology is especially evident in the typology of the annual feasts. We have found that the major events of Christ’s first Advent are seen in the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Spring Feasts of Israel and the redemptive accomplishments of the second Advent are associated with the Fall Feasts. This is why a study of the typology

of the Feasts can help us appreciate the *inauguration*, *appropriation*, and *consummation* of Christ's redemption.

Ecclesiological Element. Biblical typology has also an ecclesiological element, seeing that it relates to the appropriation of the work of Christ by the individual believer and by the church at large, especially through the sacred ordinances. "In 1 Corinthians 10 all of these aspects come to the fore. The experience of ancient Israel in the wilderness happened typologically (*typikos*) as types (*typoi*) of eschatological Israel, the Christian church (verses 6, 11), and involved the sacraments [sacred ordinances] (verses 2-4) and a personal decision whether to be faithful or disobedient (verses 5-10)."¹⁵

The ecclesiological element, that is, the personal and corporate appropriation of the work of Christ, is especially present in the typology of the annual feasts. Our study has shown that each of the feasts, not only foreshadows the redemptive work of Christ, but also invites the believer to appropriate His provision of salvation. For example, the Feast of Unleavened Bread invites the individual believer and the church at large which celebrates the redemption accomplished by Christ, the Paschal Lamb, to clean out the old leaven of sin from their lives just as the Jews removed the old leaven from their homes before Passover. Paul exclaims: "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor 5:6-8).

Summing up, we may define Biblical typology as a study of the way the New Testament interprets the Old Testament types (persons, institutions, events, ceremonies) which were designed by God to prefigure predictively the antitypical fulfillment of significant aspects of the plan of salvation. The major characteristics of Biblical typology we have just considered will help us to clarify and appreciate the typical nature of the annual feasts.

PART II FESTIVAL TYPOLOGY

In the preceding discussion of Biblical typology, we referred to the typical nature and predictive function of the annual feasts without attempting to prove that they constitute real types designed by God to foreshadow the unfolding of redemptive history. At this juncture, we wish to examine some of the indications of the typical character of the feasts before summarizing their antitypical fulfillments that we have examined in the two volumes of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*.

Importance of the Typical Nature of the Feasts. The determination of the typical nature of the annual feasts of Israel is most important for establishing their continuity or discontinuity in the New Testament. If the annual feasts were connected *exclusively* to the agricultural life and the ceremonial system of the Jews, then it is evident that their function terminated at the Cross. But, if the feasts foreshadow *also* the unfolding of salvation history, then their function continues in the Christian church, though with new meaning and relevance. This means that it is of fundamental importance to establish the typical and prefigurative nature of the feasts, before examining their antitypical fulfillments in the New Testament.

The determination of the typical nature of the annual feasts is of crucial importance for Seventh-day Adventist eschatology. The Adventist doctrines of the heavenly ministry of Jesus, the pre-Advent judgment, the close of probation, and the millennial binding of Satan, all derive largely from an understanding of the antitypical fulfillment of events associated with the Day of Atonement. The founders of the Adventist Church understood that the Spring Festivals were types (Passover, Wave Sheaf, and Pentecost) which were fulfilled in connection with the first coming of Christ. By analogy, they concluded that the Fall Festivals are also types that find their fulfillment in the events related to the Second Advent. "In like manner," writes Ellen G. White, "the types which relate to the second advent must be fulfilled at the time pointed out in the symbolic service."¹⁶

The founders of Adventism, however, focused primarily on the typology of the Day of Atonement, largely ignoring the contribution of the Feasts of Trumpets and Tabernacles to the understanding of the consummation of the redemption. Their concern was to understand the antitypical fulfillment of the cleansing of the sanctuary as predicted in Daniel 8:14. Thus, they studied with great diligence the ritual of the Day of Atonement in order to establish its antitypical fulfillment.

The purpose of this study is not to expose the theological deficiencies of the Adventist pioneers, but rather to build upon the foundation of their work by expanding our understanding of how the typology of the Fall Feasts reveals the unfolding of events leading to the consummation of redemption. It would be unreasonable to expect the founders of Adventism to have fully grasped Biblical typology, in general and Festival typology, in particular, when only in recent times these areas have become the subject of scholarly inquiry.

The Prevailing View. The prevailing view among Christians today is that the annual feasts were strictly socio-ceremonial institutions given to Israel. Their function terminated at the Cross with all the sacrificial system of

the Old Testament. I must admit that I subscribed to this view until I became involved in this research. It came as a surprise to me to discover that the feasts were designed by God, not only to meet the socio-religious needs of the Jews, but also to foreshadow the unfolding of salvation history until its consummation. This suggests that while the sacrificial, ceremonial aspects of the feasts terminated at the Cross, their typological function continues in the Christian church, though with a new meaning and relevance.

Some writers rule out the possibility that the annual feasts have relevance for Christians today, because they were so closely related to the history and agricultural life of ancient Israel.¹⁷ To support this view, they argue that there are no indications that the Israelites themselves attached some deeper predictive significance to the feasts. This argument is patently weak for two reasons: first, because the Israelites did attach prophetic significance to the feasts. We have found that the Feasts of Passover and Tabernacles, for example, were seen by the Jews not only as commemorative of their past deliverance and protection, but also as typical of future Messianic redemption and restoration.

Second, the typical nature of the feasts does not depend upon finding some indications to that effect at the time they were established. Rather it depends upon whether or not they were designed by God to fulfill a predictive function. The Passover lamb was typical of the crucifixion of the Lamb of God, not because this typical function was clearly stated to the Israelites or understood by them, but because God designed that the sacrifice of the Passover lamb was to prefigure Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

The Israelites had a limited understanding of the deeper meaning of many things God commanded them to do. The deeper meaning of the annual feasts was veiled, since they had significance and use for the time then present, apart from their prefiguration of God's future redemptive plan. A type always involves God's design, but does not necessarily include making known immediately its predictive purpose. Thus, the identification of the annual feasts as types does not depend on finding internal indicators to that effect at the time they were appointed. It is an unacceptable method of Biblical interpretation to make the knowledge which the ancient Israelites possessed regarding the prospective import of particular types, the measure by which we establish their meaning for us today.

The feasts could serve as annual celebration in Israel and as types foreshadowing the future unfolding of the plan of salvation, though the latter was dimly understood by the participants. Joseph Seiss remarks that "There are three general aspects in which these remarkable festivals may be consid-

ered. They had important relations to the peace and prosperity of the Jews as a nation; they embodied a great religious idea; and they presented chronological prefiguration of the great facts of our redemption.”¹⁸ The latter is understood especially through the witness of the New Testament.

The Typical View of the Feasts in the New Testament. The typical nature and meaning of the feasts or of any other Old Testament institution is ultimately determined by their antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament. It is the witness of the New Testament that sheds light on the typological meaning of the Flood, the Exodus, Moses, the sacrificial system, the Sabbath, and the annual feasts. Without the interpretation given them by the New Testament it would be nearly impossible for us to realize, for example, that the Flood was a prefiguration of the Christian baptism (1 Pet 3:31), or that the Passover lamb was a type of Christ’s sacrifice (1 Cor 5:7).

The typical nature of the annual feasts is attested in the New Testament explicitly and implicitly. We have found that the typical significance of the first four feasts of Passover, First Fruits (Wave Barley Sheaf), Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost, is *explicitly* recognized in the New Testament by those references which explain their antitypical fulfillment. The typical significance of the last three feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles, is *implicitly* acknowledged by the use of the themes of these feasts to depict events leading to the consummation of redemption. We shortly shall mention both the explicit references and implicit New Testament allusions to the feasts in our summary of their typological meaning.

The Sabbath and the Feasts. The typical nature of the annual feasts is also indicated by their parallel with the Sabbath in Leviticus 23. The chapter begins by introducing the “appointed feasts” (*mo‘ed*) to be observed. These consisted of the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts, both of which are ordained as *mo‘ed*, “appointed feasts.” The term *mo‘ed* stresses the *time* set for the Sabbath and the feasts and is thus translated as “appointed feasts,” “set times,” or “set feasts.”

In his doctoral dissertation Terry Hulbert notes that “The occurrence of the weekly Sabbath and [annual] feasts together in Leviticus 23 was not accidental. The common term *mo‘ed* used to designate them was likewise not accidental. What it implied for one, it implied for the other, and this implication is very important.”¹⁹ The implication in Hubert’s view is that both the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts had a commemorative and typical function.

In Old Testament times, the weekly Sabbath rest served, on the one hand, to commemorate God’s creation (Ex 20:11) and the deliverance from

Egyptian bondage (Deut 5:15), and on the other hand, to typify the future Messianic redemption and restoration. In *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness*, I have examined at considerable length the Sabbatical typologies of Messianic redemption that are present in numerous texts of the Old Testament and of Jewish literature.²⁰ We find the same typical meaning in Hebrews 3 and 4 where the Sabbath typifies both the rest of the land of Canaan, which the Israelites never experienced because of unbelief, and the rest of salvation into which believers are entering today.

What is true for the Sabbath is also true for the annual feasts. The weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts are grouped together in Leviticus 23 presumably because they both were *moadim*, that is, divinely “appointed times” with a prophetic significance. Terry Hulbert emphasizes this point, saying, “The reason for the introduction of the Sabbath [in Leviticus 23] was that both the feasts and the Sabbath were *moadim*. Both were appointed times. The feasts had been discussed elsewhere (e. g. Exodus 12 and Leviticus 16) and the Sabbath often had been mentioned before. But in Leviticus 23, they are specially and specifically treated as *moadim*. This phenomenon can only be explained as revealing a special characteristic common to both feasts and Sabbath. This characteristic is that, although each had real historical import for Israel, they also had real prophetic significance.”²¹

Just as the Sabbath served to remind Israel, not only of the past divine creation, but also of the future Messianic redemption and restoration, so the annual feasts served to remind Israel, not only of the past exodus, wilderness protection, the need for cleansing, etc., but also of the future Messianic redemption and restoration. We would conclude then that the weekly Sabbath and the annual feasts are presented together in Leviticus 23 as *moedim*, because both of them are divinely designed types which prefigure the unfolding of important events of the plan of salvation.

The Unity of the Festal Cycle. Another indication of the typical nature of the annual feasts is the fact that they form a unified cycle with a beginning, progression, and completion. They move from the Feast of Passover, the celebration of Exodus deliverance, to the Feast of Tabernacles, the rejoicing for the safe arrival to the Promised Land. By reenacting the journey of Israel from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land, the feasts could serve to foreshadow fittingly also the spiritual pilgrimage of God’s people from the bondage of sin to the freedom and rejoicing of the new earth.

Though the feasts differed in the time, place, and circumstances of their origin, they were all brought them together by God in Leviticus 23, who ordained their proper sequence and times of their celebration. This was done

obviously for a reason. Joseph Seiss rightly suggests that the reason the annual feasts were brought together under one view in Leviticus 23, is ‘that their relations to each other, and their general significance, might be the more clearly perceived.’²²

When we look at the sequential order of the feasts, we note an internal symmetry, interdependence, and progression. The symmetry can be seen, for example, in the cycle which begins with three feasts (Passover, Wave Barley Sheaf and Unleavened Bread), and closes with three feasts (Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles). The cycle opens with an eight-day celebration of Passover followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread and closes with an eight-day celebration of the seven-day Feast of Tabernacles which is followed by an eighth day, known as *Atzeret* (Lev 23:39). The middle feast, Pentecost, serves as a divider between the first three and the last three.

The interdependence among the feasts is evident in the fact that the purpose and meaning of each feast depends upon the preceding one and, consequently, upon all the others. Terry Hulbert remarks that “If each feast stood alone in its significance, and involved no prerequisites, as for example the cleansing of the Day of Atonement before the joy of the Feast of Tabernacles, it might be argued that they did not form an organic whole, but were isolated rituals. But such is not the case, as proven in Chapter II. The purpose and meaning of each feast rest upon the one preceding it and, in effect, upon all of the others.”²³

Interdependence implies progression, for as each feast builds upon the preceding one, it contributes to unfold the theme of God’s redemptive activity. Progression presupposes a planned sequence. The historic events commemorated by the feasts would be completely confused if they occurred in any other order. The Feast of Tabernacles which commemorates the divine sheltering of the Israelites during their journeying from Egypt to the Promised Land, could not have been observed before Passover, which commemorates the deliverance from Egypt.

The order of the feasts is significant not only in terms of their linkage to the past historical events, but also in terms of their prefiguration of the future unfolding of God’s redemptive acts. David Baron notes that not only the feasts were full of meaning, “but the *very order* in which they stand in the sacred calendar, is, I believe, significant as setting forth the order of sequence in which the various stages of God’s great redemption scheme were to unfold themselves in the course of the ages.”²⁴ Later in this chapter, I summarize the interdependence and progression that is evident in the antitypical fulfillment of the feasts in the New Testament.

The fact that all three Fall Feasts fell in the seventh month, may well reflect the importance that Scripture attaches to the septenary cycle as the symbol of the perfection and completion of God's creative and redemptive accomplishments. The number seven also is woven into the Biblical calendar. The Sabbath is observed every seventh day, the sabbatical year every seven years, the jubilee year every seven weeks of years. Passover opens the religious calendar with a seven-day observance of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread. Seven weeks after Passover comes the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost. The seventh month, Tishri, contains the most holy days of the Hebrew calendar, with the feasts of Trumpet, Atonement, and Tabernacles. The religious calendar closes with the Feast of Tabernacle which lasts for seven days. It appears that just as the seventh day marks the completion and culmination of creation, so the three Fall Feasts of the seventh month point to the consummation and culmination of redemption.

Feasts and Seasons. The typical nature of the feasts is also suggested by their relation to the Spring and Fall harvests. The religious calendar of ancient Israel was divided into two cycles of feasts which coincided respectively with the Spring grain harvest and the Fall fruit harvest. The Spring Feasts celebrated how God brought Israel into existence as a nation by liberating the people from physical oppression. The Fall Feasts challenged the people to reach to God for moral and spiritual freedom in order to experience the ultimate blessedness.

For Israel, the religious year began on Nisan with the celebration of Passover on the 14th day of that month (Ex 12:1), and closed seven months later on Tishri with the observance of the Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles, all of which fell on the seventh month. Within the compass of these seven months, the entire harvest that sustained life was gathered in and all the annual feasts were celebrated. The feasts were not scattered over the whole twelve months, but only over the first seven months. Their occurrence within these seven months paralleled the Spring harvest of the grain (barley and wheat) and the Fall harvest of the fruits. Thus, the unity of the cycle of the feasts is reflected by the unity of the harvest season in Palestine.

Why did God place the celebration of the annual Feasts in conjunction with the Spring and Fall harvests? Presumably because these seasons provided the ideal setting to help the people appreciate the great spiritual truths typified by the feasts. In his commentary on *The Book of Leviticus*, S. H. Kellog notes that it was most fitting that the celebration of the annual Holy Days "should be so arranged and timed, in all its parts, as that in each returning sacred season, visible nature should present itself to Israel as a manifest parable and eloquent suggestion of those spiritual verities."²⁵

Physical experiences are used by God to help us conceptualize and internalize spiritual realities. The reviving of the earth at springtime provides the ideal setting to celebrate Passover, which commemorates the Springtime of Israel's history, when God delivered the people from Egyptian oppression, and the Springtime of grace, when Christ was sacrificed to deliver us from the bondage of sin. Similarly, the completion of the harvest season in the Fall provides a fitting occasion to celebrate the Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles, all of which point to the future spiritual harvest of the redeemed that Christ will gather in their harvest home. We can say that the Spring and Fall harvests provide an ideal setting to celebrate the inauguration and completion of Christ's redemptive ministry.

Today, most people no longer live in an agrarian society like that of the ancient Israelites, yet all are still responsive to seasonal changes. Spring is still the time of new beginnings which can remind us through Passover and Pentecost of the new life that has come to us through the redemptive accomplishments of Christ's first Advent. Similarly, the Fall is still the completion of the harvest season which can remind us through the Fall Feasts of the consummation of redemption to be accomplished by Christ's second Advent. In His wisdom, God has keyed the unfolding of the plan of salvation to the Spring and Fall harvest seasons for pedagogical purposes. The beginning of the harvest in the Spring and the completion of the harvest in the Fall can serve as constant reminders of the inauguration of redemption at the first Advent and the consummation of redemption at the second Advent.

The foregoing considerations indicate that the annual feasts were both commemorative and typical. On the one hand, they served to commemorate important events in the past history of Israel, while on the other hand, they typified important future redemptive acts of God. In the two volumes of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, I have examined first the history and meaning of each of the annual feasts in the Old Testament and then their antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament.

At this juncture, I attempt to briefly summarize the highlights of the two volumes by succinctly stating first the meaning of each feast in the Old Testament and then its corresponding antitypical meaning and fulfillment in the New Testament. This summary is designed to offer to the reader an overview of the structure, content, and conclusions of the whole study.

Passover in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, Passover evolved from a private family sacrifice of the paschal lamb to an elaborate and solemn sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem. In spite of its evolution, the underlying theme of Passover remained the same: the commemoration of the

supernatural deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage which brought freedom and new life to the people.

Passover marks the *inauguration* of Israel's salvation history: "This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you" (Ex 12:2). The Feast of Tabernacles, the last festival of the sacred calendar, points to the *consummation* of Israel's salvation history when all the inhabitants of the earth will come year after year "to keep the feast of booths" (Zech 14:16). The salvation history of Israel is a type of the New Testament salvation history of mankind.

Being a memorial of the past deliverance from Egyptian bondage, Passover fittingly could serve to typify the future Messianic deliverance and restoration of Israel. During times of foreign oppression, hope ran high at Passover that soon the Messiah would come to liberate His people, even as the Lord had delivered His people from the Egyptian bondage in days of old. Thus, in Old Testament times, Passover was both commemorative of the past Egyptian deliverance and prefigurative of the future Messianic deliverance.

Passover in the New Testament. The Messianic hope of future deliverance nourished by the Passover celebration helps us to appreciate the antitypical fulfillment of the feast in the New Testament. There Christ is presented as our "Paschal Lamb" (1 Cor 5:7) sacrificed at the Passover season to deliver Jews and Gentiles alike from the bondage of sin. Jesus identified Himself with Passover by eating the Paschal meal the night before the official Passover, because He knew that He would suffer death as the true Paschal Lamb at the time of the slaying of the paschal lamb.

The Passover meal Jesus ate with the disciples was without the paschal lamb because the Savior wanted to institute a new Passover meal commemorative of His redemption from sin through bread and wine, the new symbols of His own body and blood soon to be offered "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28).

The *meaning* of the Christian Passover is both commemorative and prefigurative, just like the Old Testament Passover. On the one hand, it commemorates the *past* deliverance from the bondage of sin through Christ's suffering and death. On the other hand, it prefigures the *future* celebration of the marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9) at the establishment of God's Kingdom. Christ Himself alluded to the eschatological fulfillment of Passover when He said to His disciples that He would not eat Passover again "until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16).

The benefits of Christ's atoning death are mediated to believers in the *present* when they partake of the emblems of His blood and body. At the Lord's Table, believers enter into fellowship with the exalted Lord. Paul describes this fellowship as "a participation in the blood . . . [and] body of Christ" (1 Cor 10:16).

The earliest Passover documents clearly show that early Christians observed Passover as a night vigil, beginning at sundown on Nisan 14 and continuing until the next morning. They celebrated Passover as their annual commemoration of the suffering and death of Christ. They engaged in prayer, singing, reading of Scripture, and exhortations until dawn, when they broke their fast by partaking of the Lord's Supper and an *agape* meal.

As Gentile Christians gained control of the church, they adopted and promoted Easter-Sunday instead of the traditional Passover date. The change was influenced by the repressive policies adopted by Roman emperors against the Jewish people and religion, as well as by the defamatory campaign waged by Jews against Christians. As a result, the Biblical Passover themes were gradually replaced by pagan symbols and myths, which became part of the Easter celebration. In time, Easter became associated with numerous pagan practices and superstitions which are foreign to the redemptive meaning and experience of the Biblical Passover.

In conclusion, Passover is a typical institution which served in the Old Testament to commemorate the inauguration of Israel's salvation history and to nourish the hope of the future Messianic deliverance and restoration of Israel. The antitypical fulfillment of Passover is manifested in the New Testament in three significant ways. *Christologically*, that is, in relation to Christ, Passover was fulfilled at the Cross when Christ was sacrificed as our "Paschal Lamb" (1 Cor 5:7) at the Passover season to deliver us from the bondage of sin. *Ecclesiologically*, that is, in relation to the church, Passover is fulfilled in the church as believers through the emblems of Christ's body appropriate the reality of salvation accomplished at the Cross and yet to be consummated in God's Kingdom. *Eschatologically*, that is, in relation to the End, Passover will be fulfilled at the Second Advent when the redeemed will celebrate the Paschal Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). The three aspects of the Passover's fulfillments may be termed, respectively, as the *inauguration*, *appropriation*, and *consummation* of redemption.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread in the Old Testament. The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread is connected to Passover, since its observance began the day after Passover, Nisan 15th. During the seven days of the feast only unleavened bread could be eaten. While Passover commemorated the

night of the deliverance from Egypt, the Feast of Unleavened Bread served to remind devout Jews of the circumstances of the Exodus and symbolized for them God's call to holy living (Ex 12:39; Deut 16:3; Lev 23:6-8).

The Unleavened Bread was known as "the bread of affliction" (Deut 16:3) because of the haste and anguish of spirit with which they left Egypt. But there is no doubt that it also pointed to the religious and moral purity which was to be the abiding character of the ransomed people of the Lord. This is suggested by the fact that leaven was absolutely prohibited in connection with any sacrifices to the Lord (Ex 23:18; 34:25) and in meal offerings (Lev 2:11; 6:17). While the offerings to the Deity were unleavened, those eaten by the priests or others such as the peace offering (Lev 7:13) and the offering of the wave loaves (Lev 23:17) were leavened. This could be reflective of the difference between God's sinless nature and the human sinful nature.

Leaven became emblematic of moral corruption, presumably because a small piece of fermented dough is capable of corrupting the mass of the dough. This view prevailed also in the pagan world. The Greek moralist Plutarch (about A. D. 46-120) explains that the pagan priests were not allowed to touch leaven because "it comes out of corruption, and corrupts that with which it is mingled."²⁶ The New Testament leaves us in no doubt that leaven was commonly understood as symbolizing malice, hypocrisy, and wickedness (Mark 8:14-15; 6:14-18; Matt 16:5-12).

By partaking of unleavened bread for seven days, the Israelites were reminded that God had delivered them from the Egyptian bondage so that they might live free from physical and spiritual bondage. They were to be consecrated and separated to do the work of God who had called them to a life of holiness. It is noteworthy that unleavened bread was used in the consecration of the priests to their ministry (Lev 8:2, 26; Ex 29:2, 23) and in conjunction with the vows of separation of the Nazarite (Num 8:1-12). Thus, by eating unleavened bread during the feast, the Israelites were constantly reminded of their consecration to God and separation from all things that are sinful (leavened).

The Feast of Unleavened Bread in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Unleavened is related to that of Passover as *cause* and *effect*. While Passover celebrates the deliverance from the bondage of sin offered to us through the sacrifice of Christ, our Paschal Lamb, the Feast of Unleavened Bread typifies Christ's provision for the removal of sin in our lives. As believers, we accept the salvation offered to us by Christ, our Passover, by living new lives of purity and sincerity as typified by the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The ethical implications of the Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are expressed by Paul in his letter to the Corinthians where he challenges the members to proper Christian behavior by appealing to these feasts as a model for what Christians should be. “Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us, therefore, celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:6-8).

This passage suggests that the Feast of Unleavened Bread has profound ethical implications for the Christian’s life-style. Celebrating Passover, the feast of our redemption from sin, demands a new way of life typified by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The old and sinful ways must be cleansed out of our lives the way the old leaven is removed from Jewish homes before Passover begins. The new period initiated by Passover demands that we live a new life characterized by the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread serves as a model for the Christian life-style because it reminds believers that Christ was sacrificed as the spotless Paschal Lamb, not only to pay for the penalty of our past sins, but also to empower us to live upright and holy lives. In a sense, this Festival points to the heavenly ministry of Jesus who is actively working in our behalf to cleanse us from the presence and power of sin (Heb 7:25). The Feast of Unleavened Bread assures us that God is still setting His people free from the bondage of sin, just as He freed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage.

The Offering of First-Fruits in the Old Testament. On the day after Passover the first barley sheaf (known as *omer*) was waved by the priest before the Lord (Lev 23:11). The ceremony marked the countdown of the fifty days to Pentecost. The purpose of the wave-sheaf offering was to consecrate and inaugurate the Spring grain harvest which lasted about seven weeks until Pentecost (Lev 23:9-14). The first sheaf of the barley harvest was waved before the Lord as a pledge of the full harvest that was to follow. Before the wave-sheaf offering, no reaping of the harvest for personal use could be done (Lev 23:14). A portion of the wave-sheaf was placed on the altar and the rest was eaten by the priest. A male lamb was sacrificed as a burnt offering (Lev 23:12).

The offering of the first fruits represented a human expression of thanksgiving to divine generosity. This meaning is clear in Deuteronomy 26:10 where the Israelites are instructed to bring some of the first fruits of the harvest to the priest and publicly to confess: “Behold, now I bring the

first of the fruits of the ground, which thou, O Lord, has given me.” The gift from God calls for a gift from His people.

The Bible attaches special significance to the offering of the first fruits or firstborn. Everything on the earth, including man and beast, was to be presented before the Lord as first fruits to Him (Ex 13:2; 22:29). The consecration of the first fruits sanctifies the whole harvest, since the part stands for the whole. As Paul puts it, “If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump” (Rom 11:16). By the symbolic gesture of consecrating the first fruits, the whole of the harvest was consecrated to God. The same principle applies to the consecration of the Sabbath time, which represents the consecration of our total life to Him.

The First-Fruits in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the typology of the wave-sheaf offering has a Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological fulfillment. Or, we might say that the wave-sheaf offering is related to Christ, the church, and the End.

Christologically, Christ’s resurrection is seen as the antitypical fulfillment of the wave-sheaf offering because He rose as the first fruits of redeemed humanity on the very day when the first sheaf of barley was presented at the Temple. Paul alludes to the connection between the two events when he writes: “But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the *first fruits* of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the *first fruits*, then at his coming those who belong to Christ” (1 Cor 15:20-23).²⁷ In this passage, Paul speaks of Christ twice as “*the first fruits*,” not only to indicate that He was the first to rise bodily from the grave, but also that by so doing He fulfilled the offering of the first fruits.

Eschatologically, that is, in relation to the End, the New Testament sees the ultimate fulfillment of the first fruits typology in the resurrection of the redeemed at Christ’s Return. As the first sheaf of the barley harvest was waved before the Lord by the priest as a pledge of the full harvest to follow, so Christ’s resurrection is the ‘first fruits,’ or pledge, of the great harvest that will follow when all the righteous dead are raised at the second coming of Jesus (see 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 4:14-16). “Each in his own order,” (1 Cor 15:23), explains Paul. First, there is the fulfillment of the first fruits of Christ’s resurrection and then of all the believers.

It is noteworthy that the priest did not present before the Lord just one head of grain, but a whole sheaf of barley. Similarly, Christ did not come forth from the grave alone, for “many bodies of the saints who had

fallen asleep were raised” (Matt 27:52). Paul tells us that when Christ “ascended on high he led a host of captives” (Eph 4:8). Those who were raised at Christ’s death (Matt 27:53) ascended with Christ to heaven as trophies of His power to resurrect all who sleep in the grave. As the offering of the first sheaf of barley was a pledge of the coming harvest, so the saints that Christ raised at the time of His death are a pledge of the countless multitude that Christ will awaken from the dust of the earth at His Second Advent. The 144,000 saints who follow the Lamb are “the first fruits for God and the Lamb” (Rev 14:4) because they represent the glorious destiny that awaits the redeemed of all ages.

Ecclesiologically, that is, in relation to the church, the first fruits typify our present privilege to receive the first fruits of the Spirit while we await the resurrection harvest. “We ourselves,” Paul says, “who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies” (Rom 8:23). This typological meaning of the offering of the first fruits can be lived out every day in our life as our inward being is renewed daily by God’s Spirit (2 Cor 4:16). As we receive the fruits of the Spirit, we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit in our life, namely, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal 5:22). These, in turn, enable us to become the first fruits of God. When we respond to the Gospel’s invitation, we become God’s first fruits. James brings out this truth, saying: “Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures” (Ja 1:18).

The various applications of the first fruits typology to Christ’s resurrection, the reception of the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the Spirit in the life of the believer, the Christian calling to be God’s first fruits in this world, and the redeemed as the first fruits of mankind show the importance of this Old Testament type in Christian thought and practice.

The Feast of Pentecost in the Old Testament. The term “Pentecost” is not found in the Old Testament. The feast was variously called the “Feast of Weeks” (Ex 34:22; Deut 16:9-10), because it was celebrated seven weeks after the offering of the barley sheaf; the “Feast of the Harvest” (Ex 23:16), because it came at the end of the wheat harvest; and the “Feast of the First Fruits” (Ex 34:22; Num 28:26), because it marked the beginning of the time the first fruits of the wheat harvest were offered at the Temple.

The Feast was a joyous celebration of the Spring harvest. By offering the first fruits of the harvest, the Israelites expressed their thanksgiving to God for His bountiful provisions. In time, Pentecost was transformed into a feast commemorating the giving of the law at Sinai

which, according to Jewish tradition supported by the Biblical data, occurred fifty days after the Exodus from Egypt. The few ceremonies associated with the Feast of Weeks were designed to express gratitude for the material blessings of the harvest and for the spiritual blessings of the Law, which provides principles of life and happiness for God's people.

The Feast of Pentecost in the New Testament. The antitypical fulfillment of Pentecost is of fundamental importance to the origin and mission of the Christian church. The first Christian Pentecost is linked to the Old Testament feast chronologically and typologically, because it occurred on the very day of the Jewish feast ("when the day of Pentecost was fully come" Acts 2:1, KJV) as the spiritual harvest of the first fruits of Christ's redemption.

Like the preceding feasts, Pentecost is fulfilled in Christ, the church, and at the End-time. Or we might say that Pentecost has a Christological, ecclesiological, and eschatological fulfillments. Christologically, Pentecost celebrates the crowning of Christ's Paschal sacrifice in heaven, which was manifested on earth with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:32-33)—the first-fruit of the spiritual harvest (Rom 8:23; James 1:18) procured by Christ's redemptive mission. As in the original Pentecost at Sinai, so in the Christian Pentecost there was fire, earthquake, and a blast of wind (Acts 2:1-3). As God gave His Ten Commandments at Sinai to Israel, so now He gives the enabling power of His Spirit to the New Israel. As Israel became God's covenant people at Sinai, so the church now becomes Christ's new covenant people.

Ecclesiologically, that is, in relation to the church, Pentecost marks the founding of the Christian church and mission. It represents the initial fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the ingathering of God's people from all the nations to the uplifted temple in Zion and the going forth of the Law to teach all the nations (Is 2:2-3; Mic 4:1-2; cf. John 2:19; 12:32). A new people of God (the Church) was formed on the day of Pentecost, consisting not only of Jews but of "all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him" (Acts 2:39). The speaking in tongues at Pentecost for a moment set off in bold relief God's redemptive purpose for the whole world. The missionary outreach of the Church which unites people of different languages and cultures as one body in Christ, represents the reversal of the scattering and hostility of the nations that followed God's judgment at Babel (Gen 11:1-9).

Pentecost marks the beginning of the bestowal of spiritual gifts on all the redeemed so that each may participate in the life and mission of the Church. All Christians can receive the spiritual gifts that "equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

Eschatologically, that is, in relation to the End-time, Pentecost typifies the continuation of the mission of the Holy Spirit until the completion of the Gospel proclamation (Matt 24:14). The End-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is known as the “latter rain” because it is likened to the “former rain” that ripened the Spring harvest that was gathered in at the beginning of Christianity. “But near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ In response, ‘the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.’ ‘He will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain’ (Zech 10:1; Joel 2:23).”²⁸

Pentecost, like Passover, is a remarkable typological feast which began in the Old Testament as the celebration of the blessings of the Spring harvest and continues in the New Testament as a celebration of the spiritual harvest of souls reaped by Christ’s redemptive ministry. The feast affords us an opportunity to be thankful for material and spiritual blessings. We can be thankful that Christ arose as the first fruits of redeemed humanity (1 Cor 15:20). His resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection. We can be thankful Christ ascended to heaven to begin a special intercessory ministry on our behalf. We can be thankful for the gifts of the Holy Spirit which are made available to us through the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary.

In summing up the typology of the Spring Feasts, we can say that they reveal both a theological and an existential progression. Theologically, we can characterize Passover as *redemption*, Unleavened Bread as *regeneration*, and Pentecost as *empowering*. Existentially, Passover invites us to accept the *forgiveness* provided us by Christ, our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7); the Feast of Unleavened Bread summons us to experience the *cleansing* from sin resulting from Christ’s forgiveness; Pentecost calls us to become receptive to the *infilling*, and enabling of the Holy Spirit. The progression is evident. The *forgiveness* typified by Passover makes it possible for us to experience the *cleansing* represented by the Feast of Unleavened Bread. These in turn enable us to become receptive and responsive to the infilling of the Holy Spirit, typified by Pentecost.

The Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament. The three Fall Feasts of ancient Israel coincided with the end of the harvest season and were ushered in by the Feast of the Trumpet which fell on the first day of the seventh month. After the return from the Babylonian exile, the name *Rosh Hashanah*, which

means “New Year” (literally, “head of the year”), was attached to the feast. Within the same seventh month, the last two important feasts were observed, namely, the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) on the tenth day and the Feast of Tabernacles (*Sukkot*) from the fifteenth to the twenty first day.

The Feast of Trumpets reflects God’s desire to summon His people to repentance so that He can vindicate them on the day of His judgment. The name of the feast is derived from the blowing of the trumpets (*shofar*) which was its distinguishing characteristic. The massive blowing of the *shofar* on the first day of the seventh month was understood by the Jews as the beginning of their trial before the heavenly court where books would be opened and the destiny of each individual would be decided. The trial lasted ten days until the Day of Atonement (*Yom kippur*) when God would dispose of their sins in a permanent way.

The blowing of the *shofar* during the Ten Days of Penitence served not only to call upon the Jews to repent but also to reassure them that God would remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The ten days preceding the Day of Atonement were not an abstract theological truth, but an existential reality lived out with real trumpet-calls to repentance, trusting in God’s mercy to vindicate them. The Jews developed some interesting customs and ceremonies to help them live out their belief that God would judge them with mercy during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement.

Summing up, the Feast of Trumpets in Old Testament times was understood and experienced as the inauguration of a judgment process that culminated on the Day of Atonement with the final disposition of all the sins committed during the previous year. This understanding and experience of the Feast of Trumpets helps us appreciate the antitypical fulfillment of the feast in the New Testament.

The Feast of Trumpets in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Feast of Trumpets is not explicitly mentioned. The themes of the feast, however, are frequently found in the book of Revelation. The same holds true for the Fall Feasts of Atonement and Tabernacles, both of which are clearly alluded to in Revelation. The reason the imagery of the Fall Feasts is present especially in Revelation is to be found in the fact that these feasts typify the consummation of redemption which is the focus of the book. Furthermore, since the entire book of Revelation has a comprehensive sanctuary setting with a rich sanctuary festival typology, one would expect to find in it more allusions to the feasts than in other books of the New Testament.

The themes of the Feast of Trumpets are evident in the seven trumpets of Revelation which serve to announce God’s final judgment like the blowing

of the shofar during the feast in Old Testament times. Our study suggests that the blowing of the seven trumpets in Revelation corresponds to the blowing of trumpets at the seven New Moon festivals in the Old Testament. Each new moon trumpet blowing was understood as a day of judgment in miniature, which warned people to prepare for the final judgment ushered in by the Feast of Trumpets. Correspondingly, the blowing of the first six trumpets in Revelation warns people to prepare for the final judgment inaugurated by the blowing of the seventh trumpet.

Support for this interpretation is provided by the warning function of the first six trumpets (Rev 9:20-21) and by the explicit announcement of the final judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:18). The seventh trumpet is unique because it announces the judgment that transpires in heaven: “The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Rev 11:15, 18).

It is noteworthy that the announcement of the judgment is followed by the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen (Rev 11:19). This is a clear allusion to the Day of Atonement which finds its antitypical fulfillment in the coming of Christ as indicated by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the End. “There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the End with the ritual of the Day of Atonement, suggests that Christ’s coming represents the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement.

The thematic development of the seven trumpets reveals a movement from the warning judgment messages on this earth in conjunction with the blowing of the first six trumpets, to the announcement of God’s enthronement and the inauguration of His heavenly judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The same movement can be seen in the blowing of the trumpets during the seven new moons of the Hebrew religious calendar. During the new moons of the first six months, the trumpets were blown to warn the people about the forthcoming judgment, but on the new moon of the seventh month the trumpets were blown to announce the inauguration of the heavenly judgment. These thematic similarities suggest that the seven trumpets represent the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets.

The Feast of Trumpets in the Old and New Testaments reveals that God is not in the business to punish but to save. He uses attention-catching methods

to warn and lead His people to repentance before executing His judgments. In the Old Testament, God summoned His people by means of the annual trumpets blasting to repent and amend their lives in view of the judgment going on in heaven. In the New Testament, God sounds the same clarion call to mankind by the flying angel of Revelation who proclaims with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7).

Christians today, like God’s people in ancient times, need to hear the annual trumpet-call of the Feast of Trumpets to stand trial before God and seek for His cleansing grace. After all, Christians, too, need to be reminded periodically that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor 5:10). The Feast of Trumpets provides a much needed annual wake up call to prepare oneself to stand before God’s judgment by repenting and forsaking sinful ways.

The Day of Atonement in the Old Testament. The Day of Atonement was the grand climax of the religious year in ancient Israel. The rites performed on that day concluded the atoning process of the sins of the Israelites by removing them permanently from the sanctuary. The record of forgiven sins was kept in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonement because such sins were to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the final judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets. The Day of Atonement was the culmination of the judgment process in which God executed His judgment by giving life to those who had confessed their sins and availed themselves of the divine provision for their atonement. It was also a day of death for impenitent sinners who rejected God’s provision for the cleansing of their sins.

The sacrificial rites of the Day of Atonement provided *total* cleansing from all the sins of God’s people. The totality of the cleansing is emphasized several times in Leviticus 16 by the expression “all your sins” (Lev 16:16, 30, 34). In contrast to the sacrificial rites of the bull and Lord’s goat, the rite of the scapegoat was non-sacrificial. Its function was to dispose of the sins of God’s people in a desert region where there is no life.

The emphasis of the Day of Atonement on judgment and cleansing, sin and atonement, fasting and prayer was designed to drive home important lessons to the Israelites. It showed them the seriousness of sin and the divine provision for its eradication through confession, sacrifice, recording, judgment, and final disposition. It taught the Israelites that before their sins could be cleansed and permanently eliminated on the Day of Atonement, they had to be repented of, forsaken, and judged by the heavenly court.

The Day of Atonement in the New Testament. In the New Testament, the Day of Atonement is alluded to several times, especially in the books of Hebrews and Revelation. Its antitypical fulfillment is associated especially with the cleansing and removal of sin by Christ at His Second Coming. Hebrews recognizes that the work of cleansing and removing sins typified by the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement has a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect. In the *past*, Christ “*has appeared* once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). In the *present* (“now”), Christ “*appears* in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24). In the *future*, Christ “*will appear* a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28). The last of these is accomplished by Christ at His Second Advent when He will appear, like the High Priest at the close of the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sins but to save the believers and punish the unbelievers.

The past, the present, and the future ministries of Christ are in Hebrews ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same “once for all” sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same atoning sacrifice that enables Christ to fulfill the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

In Revelation, the vision of the Day of Atonement (Rev 11:19) occurs immediately after the announcement of the judgment (Rev 11:18), with the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen. “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen within the temple” (Rev 11:19). This is the first and clearest allusion to the Day of Atonement because only on that day the door to the Most Holy Place was open and the High Priest could see “the ark of the covenant” while he officiated in front of it.

The opening of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple on the Day of Atonement is accompanied by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent. “There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent with the ritual of the Day of Atonement suggests that Christ’s coming is seen as the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement. The sequential order in Revelation, namely, announcement of the judgment, opening of the Most Holy Place, and the Second Advent, corresponds to the progression from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets to that of the Day of Atonement

The vision of the Day of Atonement in Revelation 11:19 plays a pivotal role in the structure of Revelation. It functions as a dividing point between the first half of Revelation which reflects more the daily liturgy of the temple and the second half of the book which mirrors more the annual ritual of the Day of Atonement. The visions of the second half of Revelation focus inside the Temple where the central activities of the Day of Atonement took place (Rev 14:15, 17; 15:5, 6, 8; 16:1, 17). These visions portray humanity in two groups: those who worship the true Trinity (introduced in Rev 1:4-5) and those who worship the counterfeit trinity (the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet (Rev 16:13). Such a division along spiritual lines reflect the divisions that took place on the Day of Atonement. “On that day,” writes Jon Paulien, “individuals chose between two types of atonement, the one offered by the service and the one represented by their own ultimate death. In the Apocalypse the entire world is represented as facing such a life-and-death decision (cf. Lev 23:29, 30).”²⁹

The last and climactic judgment visions of Revelation 19 and 20 reflect in a unique way the typology of the Day of Atonement. Just as the High Priest wore a special white linen robe on the Day of Atonement, so Christ wears a special robe at His coming. “He is clad in a robe dipped in blood” (Rev 19:13), a reminder of the blood used by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement to cleanse the sanctuary. Christ does not carry blood like the High Priest but wears a robe dipped in blood because it is His own blood that cleanses the sins of His people. The latter is indicated by the fact that those who accompany Christ are “arrayed in fine linen, white and pure” (Rev 19:14).

The outcome of the coming of Christ is also similar to that of the Day of Atonement. Christ destroys the wicked by His “sword” (Rev 19:21), a reminder of the impenitent who were “cut off” on the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:29). Satan is bound and thrown into “the pit” (Rev 20:3), a reminder of the sending of Azazel into the desert (Lev 16:21). The righteous are resurrected and reign with Christ, a reminder of the cleansing of God’s people on the Day of Atonement which resulted in the jubilee celebration of new beginnings (Lev 25:9). This amazing correspondence between the typology of the Day of Atonement and its antitypical fulfillment at Christ’s Return, shows how important is the Day of Atonement in the New Testament for understanding the events associated with the coming of Christ.

The Day of Atonement in the Old and New Testaments embodies the Good News of God’s provision for the cleansing of sins and restoration to fellowship with Him through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. At a time when many are experiencing the crushing isolation of sin, the Day of Atonement has a message of hope. It reassures Christians that Christ will soon appear the

second time, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to punish unbelievers, to bind Satan, to cleanse believers and restore them to an harmonious relationship with Him. Such a hope gives us reasons to encourage “one another, and all the more as . . . [we] see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:25).

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Old Testament. The Feast of Tabernacles was the most joyous festival celebration in Old Testament times. It was commonly known as “the Feast of Ingathering—*asif*” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) and “the Feast of Booths—*sukkot*” (Deut 16:13, 16; Lev 23:34). The Hebrew *sukkot*, which literally means “booths” or “huts,” is rendered in the Latin Vulgate as *tabernacula*, from which we derive the English designation of the feast as “Tabernacles.”

The two names of the feast reflect its dual meanings and functions. With reference to the harvest, it is called “the Feast of Ingathering” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) because it is a thanksgiving celebration for the blessings harvest. With reference to the history of Israel, it is called “the Feast of Booths” (Lev 23:34, 43; Deut 16:13, 16; 31:10; Ezra 3:4) because it commemorated God’s protection of the people as they dwelt in booths during their sojourn in the wilderness. Both of these features are preserved in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The observance of the Feast of Booths at the close of the Fall harvest made it possible for the Israelites to have a double thanksgiving celebration: thanksgiving for the blessing of the harvest and for God’s protection through the sojourning in the wilderness. These dual themes of *past* and *present* divine protection and blessings, served to nourish the hope for a *future* Messianic restoration.

During the seven-day duration of the feast, a considerable number of sacrifices were offered in addition to the regular offerings (Lev 23:36; Num 29:12-39). On no other occasion were so many sacrifices required of Israel to be offered on a single day. Presumably, the vast number of sacrifices were to reflect Israel’s depth of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest.

The distinguishing characteristics of the feast was the dwelling in booths for the duration of the feast (Lev 23:40, 42-43). Various branches of leafy trees were used to build booths that would house the people for the duration of the feast. Living in booths served as a reminder of God’s protection during the forty years of wandering in the desert. (Lev 23:42). The temporary booths symbolized the human need to depend upon God for His provision of food, water, and shelter. This applies to our spiritual life as well, for without the life-giving provisions of divine grace, our spiritual life would be a scorching desert.

Another major ritual of the Feast of Booths was the waving of a bundle of willow, myrtle, and palm branches, which were tied together and waved in rejoicing during the feast. This waving served to express joy, thanksgiving, and praise to God for the material blessings of the harvest and the spiritual blessing of His past and present protection.

Praying for rain was an important part of the ritual of the Feast of Booths. Palestine is not rich in water resources. Its fertility largely depends on the amount of rainfall it receives from year to year and not on a river like the Nile which is the major source of irrigation for Egypt. Since the rainy season starts in Palestine at about the time of the Feast of Booths, it was the appropriate time to pray for rain.

Prayers for rain were offered in conjunction with the popular water-drawing ceremony, which was rich in symbolism and high drama. The water was drawn at the pool of Siloam in a golden pitcher by a priest who carried it to the Temple accompanied by a procession of faithful worshippers. The water was poured over the altar while the people chanted to the accompaniment of flutes the 'great Hallel' consisting of Psalms 113 to 118. It was at the conclusion of this suggestive ceremony that Christ offered His living water (John 7:37).

Another significant ceremony was the nightly illumination of the Temple's Court of Women with gigantic candelabra which provided light for the nightly festivities. This provided an ideal setting for Christ to reveal Himself as the Light of the world (John 8:12).

The Feast of Booths fulfilled a vital role in the religious experience of God's people in Old Testament times. It summoned them annually to rejoice for a whole week over the material blessings of a bountiful harvest and over the spiritual blessings of the protection God had granted them in their past history. The celebration of the material blessings of the harvest and of the spiritual blessings of the divine sheltering during the Exodus experience, served to foreshadow the blessings of the Messianic age when "there shall be neither cold nor frost . . . continuous day . . . living water, and . . . security (Zech 14:6, 7, 11). A highlight of the Messianic age would be the annual gathering of all the surviving nations "to keep the feast of booths" (Zech 14:16) in order to celebrate the establishment of God's universal Kingdom.

The Feast of Tabernacles in the New Testament. The rich Old Testament typology of the Feast of Tabernacles finds in the New Testament both a Christological and an eschatological fulfillment. The themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used in the Gospels to reveal the nature and mission of Christ and in the book of Revelation to represent God's protection of His

people through the trials and tribulation of this present life until they reach the heavenly Promised Land. There God will shelter the redeemed with the booth of His protective presence (Rev 7:15) and dwell with them for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

In his Gospel, John introduces the nature and mission of Christ by employing the metaphor of the “booth” of the Feast of Tabernacles. He explains that Christ, the Word, who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1), manifested Himself in this world in a most tangible way, by pitching His tent in our midst: “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14). The Greek verb *skenoo* used by John means “to pitch tent, encamp, tabernacle, dwell in a tent.” The allusion is clearly to the Feast of Tabernacles when the people dwelt in temporary booths.

John chose the imagery of the Feast of Booths to describe the Messiah’s first coming to His people, since the feast celebrates the dwelling of God among His people. Being the feast of thanksgiving for God’s willingness to protect His people with the tabernacle of His presence during the wilderness sojourning, it could serve fittingly to portray Christ’s willingness to become a human being and pitch His tent among us in order to become our Savior.

The connection between Christ’s birth and the Feast of Tabernacles has been recognized not only by modern authors but also by early Christian writers who associate the Feast of the Nativity with the true Feast of Tabernacles. Several significant indications presented in our study suggest that the Feast of Tabernacles in September/October provides Christians today with a much more accurate Biblical timing and typology for celebrating Christ’s birth than the pagan dating of December 25th. The latter date is not only removed from the actual time of Christ’s birth, but also is derived from the pagan celebration of the return of the sun after the winter solstice.

The two suggestive ceremonies of the water libation and night illumination of Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles provide the setting for Christ’s revelation of His nature and mission. He is the living water (John 7:37-38) typified by the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. He is also the Light of the World (John 8:12) typified by the night illumination of the Temple during the feast. Indeed, through Christ the blessing typified by the Feast of Tabernacles have become a reality for every believer.

The themes of the Feast of Tabernacles serve not only to reveal the nature and mission of Christ, but also to depict the glorious destiny of God’s people. In Revelation 7:9-17 and 21:1 to 22:5, the major themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are effectively used to portray the final ingathering of God’s

people in their harvest home. The redeemed are described as bearing palm branches which is a feature of Tabernacles (Rev 7:9). Their song “Salvation belongs to our God” (Rev 7:10),” recalls the cry of *hosanna* of Psalm 118:25 which was used at the feast. The reference to God erecting a booth over His people with His presence (Rev 7:15), is a clear allusion to God’s protection over Israel in the wilderness. The promise of “springs of living water” (Rev 7:17; 22:1) and of the continuous light of God’s glory (Rev 21:23), are allusions to the two central ceremonies of the feast, water pouring and the night illumination, both of which from the time of Zechariah had assumed a Messianic significance. The ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles is in the new earth when the saints are gathered in their harvest home and God will shelter them with the “booth” of His presence for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

All these references to the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation presuppose more than an antiquarian interest on the part of John. Since the Temple of Jerusalem no longer stood at the time of John’s writings, the meaning of the feast must have been kept alive by its observance in the synagogues and Christian churches. John hardly could have used so effectively the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles to portray the consummation of redemption, if the feast was unknown in the Christian churches of Asia Minor.

In summing up, we can say that the Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the redemption already accomplished through Christ’s first Advent and typifies the final restoration that will be realized at the second Advent. The feast, then, unites the past redemption to the future restoration. It affords the opportunity to celebrate in the present the salvation and protection Christ has already provided us, while we look forward to the future consummation of our redemption that awaits us in God’s eternal Kingdom.

The Significance of the Fall Feasts for Today. The preceding typological survey of the Fall Feasts offers the basis for a few final reflections on their relevance for today. The three feasts of the seven month reveal a progression in the eschatological unfolding of redemptive history. The Feast of Trumpets announces the beginning of the judgment in heaven which calls people on earth to repent. The Day of Atonement points to the final disposition of sins that Christ will accomplish at His Second Coming. The Feast of Tabernacles typifies the joyful celebration for the providential way the Lord has led His people to the Promised Land, the new earth.

In a sense, the three Fall Feasts typify also the three steps leading to the consummation of Christ’s redemptive ministry: *repentance*, *cleansing*, and *rejoicing* for the final restoration. The Feast of Trumpets represents God’s last call to *repentance* while the destiny of God’s people is being reviewed by the

heavenly court during the antitypical ten days preceding the Day of Atonement. We refer to this period as the “Pre-Advent Judgment.” The Day of Atonement typifies Christ’s final act of *cleansing* that will be accomplished at His coming when He will cleanse His people of their sins and will place all accountability on Satan (Azazel). The cleansing accomplished by Christ at His Return makes it possible to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles which foreshadows the *rejoicing* at the inauguration of a new life in a new world.

On a more practical plane, the Fall Feasts can give substance to our faith by reminding us that our relationship to God is based, not only on the profession, but also on the practice of our faith. At the final judgment, Christ will invite into His kingdom “not every one who says to me ‘Lord, Lord . . . but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Matt 7:21).

By summoning us to prepare for the final judgment, the Fall Feasts can give seriousness to our living. They remind us that our thoughts, words, deeds, and attitudes count for eternity. They teach us that the final judgment will reveal whether we have lived self-centered lives, ignoring God’s moral principles, or God-centered lives, reflecting His moral values. As Christians today, we need to be reminded of the message of the final judgment, and the Fall Feasts of Trumpets and Atonement can effectively meet this need.

The Fall Feasts teach us that we need to go through repentance, judgment, and Christ’s final cleansing before we can celebrate the new beginnings of the world to come. By reminding us of the consummation of redemption, the Fall Feasts can help us experience in the present a joyous anticipation of the future.

NOTES TO CHAPTER I

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 14. Ibid., pp. 101-102.
 15. Richard M. Davidson (note 9), p. 19.
 16. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA, 1960), pp. 399-400.
 17. See, for example, George W. Macrae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (1960), p. 251. Macrae maintains that the three pilgrimage festivals "commemorated successively the first fruits of the barley crop, the end of the wheat harvest, and the ingathering of the harvest of grapes and olives" (p. 251).
 18. Joseph A. Seiss, *The Gospel in Leviticus* (Grand Rapids, MI, n. d.), p. 344.
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 20. The Sabbatical typologies of Messianic redemption are discussed at great length in chapter 5 of my book *Divine Rest for Human Restlessness* (Rome 1980), entitled, "The Sabbath, Good News of Redemption."
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24. David Baron, *Types, Psalms, and Prophecies* (Minneapolis, 1981, reprint of 1907 edition), p. 5.

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27. Emphasis supplied.

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Chapter 2

THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS

IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

God has always had a heart to warn people before He executes His judgment. God warned the people before the Flood, and He warned Niniveh before it was ruined. The Feast of Trumpets reflects God's desire to summon His people to repentance so that He can vindicate them on the day of His judgment.

The Feast of Trumpets fell on the first day of the seventh month, a month which stood out in the religious year as the Sabbatical month that ushered in the last three annual feasts, namely, Trumpets, Atonment and Tabernacles. These feasts, which became known as "The High Holy Days," marked the conclusion of the religious year and typify the conclusion and consummation of the plan of redemption.

The number seven, which is woven into the Biblical calendar, represents in Scripture completion and termination. This meaning is accentuated in three feasts of the seventh month, since they completed the yearly cycle of sacrifices and harvests. The Feast of Trumpets heralded through the blowing of trumpets the final phase of the Jewish religious year which, as we shall see, typologically brought to completion God's plan for the final disposition of sin and the inauguration of a new world.

Objectives of the Chapter. This chapter examines the origin, meaning, and development of the Feast of Trumpets during Old Testament times. The first part of the chapter gives special attention to the two major typological themes of the feast, namely, divine judgment and mercy. We shall see how the blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seven month announced to the people the beginning of a ten days heavenly trial during which God judged each person with mercy and compassion before the execution of His judgment on the Day of Atonment. The second part of the chapter looks at some of the Jewish practices and ceremonies associated with the Feast of Trumpets in order to appreciate the practical impact of the feast in the lives of the people.

This survey of the typological meaning and practical observance of the Feast of Trumpets in Old Testament times is of vital significance for our study in the following chapter of the antitypical fulfillment of the feast in the New Testament. Our study will show that the Feast of Trumpets inaugurated a the heavenly judgment that terminated on the Day of Atonment when the destiny of each Israelite was revealed. This judgment process finds its antitypical fulfillment in the pre-Advent judgment that will terminate on the day of Christ's coming when the destiny of every human being will be revealed.

PART I THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

In the Old Testament the Feast of Trumpets was observed on the first day of the seventh month, which after the Babylonian exile was called "the first of Tishri." The original practice of identifying the months by their numerical order was eventually abandoned in favor of the Babylonian names of the month. Thus "the first day of the seventh month" became known as "the first day of Tishri." Since Tishri was the first month in the Babylonian calendar, the Jews called the first day of Tishri *Rosh Hashanah*, literally meaning "Head of the Year." The Jews still observe *Rosh Hashanah* as their New Year which marks the beginning of what is alternatively called the "Ten Days of Repentance," or the "Days of Awe." These are the ten days of introspection and preparation for the Day of Atonment (*Yom Kippur*), which falls on the tenth day of the seventh month.

The Feast of the Trumpets shares with the Day of Atonment two fundamental differences from the other festivals. First, both feasts were not connected with any special historical or national event. They were seen as universal and most personal celebrations. A time for the individual to stand before the judgment seat of God, seeking for forgiveness and cleansing. Second, both feasts were observed, not like the other festivals in a spirit of exalted joyfulness, but in a spirit of intense moral and spiritual introspection, as befits a plaintiff coming before the Supreme Judge and Ruler of the universe, appealing for his life.

The Name of the Feast. The Feast of Trumpets became the second most solemn day of the Jewish religious calendar, being surpassed in importance only by the Day of Atonment (*Yom Kippur*). The solemnity of the feast is hardly evident to a casual reader of the pertinent Biblical texts where the feast is simply designated as "a remembrance blast" (Lev 23:24) and "a day of blowing" (Num 29:1).

The first reference to the Feast of the Trumpets is found in Leviticus 23:24: “In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall observe a day of solemn rest [*shabbaton*], a memorial proclamation with a blast of trumpets (*ziccaron teruah*), a holy convocation.” The Hebrew phrase *ziccaron teruah*, can be literally translated as “a remembrance blast.”

The second major reference is found in Numbers 29:1: “On the first day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work. It is a day for you to blow the trumpets (*yom teruah*).” The Hebrew phrase *yom teruah* literally means “a day of blowing.” The crucial word in both references is *teruah*, a series of staccato sounds on a wind instrument.

These two passages offer little indications of the importance of the feast. The term *shabbaton* “a day of solemn rest” is mentioned in the Bible in conjunction with the Sabbath (Ex 16:23), the Day of Atonment (Lev 16:3), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Lev 23:39). Thus the term is commonly used for other festivals as well. Similarly there was nothing unusual about the sacrifices prescribed for the first day of the seventh month, inasmuch similar rites were conducted on the other festivals as well.

The description of the feast as a “day of blowing” is not impressive because the shofar was blown at the beginning of each month (Num 10:10). Moreover the phrase “day of blowing” is not the actual title of the feast, but only a distinguishing characteristic of the day. While the other appointed feasts are given a name (the Sabbath, the Passover, the Day of Atonment) this feast has no title. It is simply “*Yom Teruah*—the Day of Blowing.” Since the blowing of the trumpets became the distinguishing characteristic of the day, it became known as the Feasts of the Trumpets: the feast that called people to prepare to stand before the judgment of God.

The texts give no specific reason for observing the Feast of the Trumpet. This is surprising because the Bible usually gives the reason for the observance of the feasts. Apparently the reason was self-evident. In his book *The Jewish Festivals*, Rabbi S. M. Lehrman notes that “The Bible which usually gives the reason for every observance, does not do so in the case of *Rosh Hashanah* [New year or Feast of Trumpets], deeming the spiritual well-being of each individual too obvious to require comment. To subsequent teachers we owe the picture of a Day of Judgment on which all mortals pass before the Heavenly Throne to give an account of their deeds and to receive the promise of mercy.”¹

The blowing of the trumpets was understood to be a call to repent and prepare oneself to stand trial before God who would execute His judgment ten days later on the Day of Atonement. The importance of the feast is indicated by the fact that the Jews anticipated its arrival on the first day of each month (new moon) through short blasts of the shophar (Num 10:10; Ps 81:3). These short blasts were an anticipation of the long alarm blasts to be sounded on the new moon of the seventh month.

New Year or *Rosh Hashanah*. Before looking further into the theological meaning of the Feast of the Trumpets, it might be well to clarify how this feast became known as *Rosh Hashanah*, “the beginning of the year,” though it was observed on the first day of the seventh month.

The answer to this apparent contradiction is found in the fact that the Jews had both a religious and civil calendar. The religious calendar, which regulated the festivals, began in the spring, in accordance with God’s command at the time of the Exodus: “This month shall be for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you” (Ex 12:2; cf. Deut 16:1). The first month in the religious year was the month in which the Israelites left Egypt and celebrated Passover, the feast of their redemption. It was originally called *Abib* “the month of the ears,” but after the Babylonian exile was named Nisan. It began at our new moon of our March or April.

The civil and agricultural year, as well as the sabbatical and jubilee years, began in the autumn with the seventh month, which after the Babylonian exile became known as Tishri. If it seems strange that the Jews should begin their civil year on the seventh month, it may be well to remember that even in our society the fiscal year for many organizations begins in other months than January.

There are indications that prior to the Exodus the Israelites’ calendar began in the autumn. In the book of Exodus, for example, though the month of Abib (Nisan) is designated as the first month (Ex 12:3), the Feast of Ingathering or Tabernacles in the seventh month (Tishri) is said to come “at the year’s end” (Ex 34:22). We find a similar expression in Exodus 23:16: “You shall keep the feast of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in from the field the fruit of your labor.” Since the Feast of Ingathering celebrated the bounties of the agricultural year which had just closed, it was seen as marking the end of the year, although the feast actually began 15 days after the end of the year.

The seasonal cycle of nature came to an end with the fall harvest, which marked also the beginning of a new agricultural cycle with the return of the early rains that softened the ground for plowing which was done in

October and November. This contributed to place the beginning of the civil and agricultural year on the month of Tishri, though it was the seven month with respect to Nisan. Thus the Jews had a double reckoning, the religious year beginning with the first month and the civil year beginning with the seven month.

Josephus, the famous Jewish historian, says that the Egyptians began their year on the fall, but “Moses appointed that Nisan, which is the same with Xantichus [the corresponding macedonian month name], should be their first month for their festivals, because he brought them out of Egypt in that month: so this month began the year as to all the solemnities they observed to the honor of God, although he preserved the original order of the months as to selling and buying, and other ordinary affairs.”² According to Josephus, then, when Moses introduced the spring (Nisan) beginning of the year for the religious calendar, he retained the Egyptian beginning of the new year in the fall for civil purposes. This information accords with the references mentioned earlier to the Feast of Ingathering coming “at the end of the year” (Ex23:16; 34:22).

Memorial of Adam’s Creation. The observance of the first day of the seventh month as *Rosh Hashanah*, the New Year of the civil and agricultural calendar, may have inspired the rabbinical tradition that Adam also was created on that day. According to this tradition Adam sinned on the very first day of his creation and God forgave him on the same day. Adam was told by God on this day: “Just as you stood before me in judgment on this day and came out free, so your children, who will stand before me in judgment on this day, will be set free.”³

The rabbis thought it logical to assume that man should be judged on the anniversary of his creation. This view in turn influenced the belief that mankind also would be judged on the same day. The rabbis expressed confidence in God’s mercy. Just as God forgave Adam, so He would forgive those who repent during the Ten Days of Penitence.⁴

There is merit to the concept of a new year celebration that calls believers to take an annual spiritual inventory of their lives and repent of cherished sins, knowing that God will temper His judgment with mercy. We shall see that this is a fundamental theme of the Feast of the Trumpets, an annual trumpet-call to repentance during the ten awesome days of judgment, knowing, however, that God will remember favorably His people and vindicate them.

To understand more fully the theological meaning of the Feast of the Trumpets, we shall consider its characteristic feature, namely, the blowing of the shofar. The sounding of the shofar has a rich biblical and Jewish typology

which points to the human need to prepare for the final judgment. This study will provide the basis for understanding the antitypical fulfilment of the Feast of the Trumpets in the New Testament as God’s final call to mankind to prepare for the final judgment that precedes Christ’s return.

The Blowing of the Shofar. The unique feature of the ritual of the Feast of Trumpets was the blowing of an instrument. This is reflected in the Biblical name *yom teruah*, a “day of blowing” (Num 29:1). Historically the instrument blown on *Rosh Hashanah* has been the shofar, that is, a curved ram’s horn. In fact the feast came to be identified as “The Festival of the Shofar.”

Surprisingly, however, the Biblical texts cited above do not name the instrument to be used. The feast is simply referred to as *yom teruah*, that is, “a day of blowing” (Num 29:1). A blowing (*teruah*) sound could be produced with a trumpet (Num 10:5), a horn (Lev 25:9), or cymbal (Ps 105:5). The texts do not give us a clue as to the identity of the instrument to be blown on the day of the feast.

One wonders why the Feast of Trumpets, later known as *Rosh Hashanah*, came to be associated with the blowing of the shofar, ram’s horn. After all to the average Jew the silver trumpets had far greater significance than the shofar, because trumpets were widely used in conjunction with many sacrificial rites.

The reasons for the preference given to the shofar for the Feast of the Trumpets, appear to be both practical and theological. Practically, as Abraham P. Block explains, “The shophar was a mass-produced instrument, relatively cheap, a common household article in the homes of farmers, shepherds, and many urbanites. It was used as a means of communication in everyday life. The shophar was a less sophisticated instrument than the trumpet, and its use required little skill. . . . When an occasion called for mass participation of wind instrumentalists, it was imperative to use the shophar. That was the reason for Joshua’s use of shopherot prior to the fall of Jerico (Josh 6:4). . . . The same was true of Gideon’s army, which used three hundred shoferot (Jud 7:12).”⁵ Block continues explaining that since “the obligation to blow an instrument on that day [Feast of Trumpets] devolved upon each individual Jew (*Rosh Hashanah* 33a) . . . the instrument for practical reasons, had to be the shofar.”⁶

Another practical reason suggested by Naphtali Winter is that the “stirring notes [of the shofar] arouse a feeling of apprehension. . . . arouse people from their apathy, shake their equanimity, and set in motion the train of thought leading to a heightened spiritual awareness.”⁷

Theologically, the rite of blowing the shofar came to be associated with the Feast of the Trumpets, apparently because, as Bloch explains, “The first historical occasion associated with the sounds of the shofar was the Sinaitic revelation (Ex 19:16). The opening of the jubilee year, a momentous event in the life of the people, was also announced by the sound of the shofar [Lev 25:9]. The Decalogue established a Judaic social and religious order. The jubilee year renewed one’s social order by proclaiming freedom from poverty and bondage. *Rosh Hashanah* offered an opportunity to set one’s religious life in order by liberating him from sin and transgression.”⁸

The historic association of the blowing of the shofar with Sinaitic revelation of God’s moral law and the jubilee liberation from bondage, could make the blowing shofar during the first 10 days of the seven month a fitting reminder of God’s justice and mercy. It is significant to note how the blowing of the shofar served, on the one hand, to remind the people of their need of repentance and, on the other hand, to “remind” God of the needs of His people.

The Shofar: A Call to Repentance. To appreciate the significance of the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* we need to look at the progressive nuances of its symbolism that we find in the Old Testament. The prophets used the metaphor of the shofar to call the people to repentance and return to God. For example, the prophet Joel called for blasts of the shofar in Zion to impress the people with the needed repentance: “Blow the trumpet [shofar] in Zion; sanctify a fast; call a solemn assembly” (Joel 2:15). Joel may be referring figuratively, if not, literally, to the Feast of the Trumpet, since he mentions its three major characteristics, shofar, fast, and solemn assembly.

During the religious reformation of King Asa, the Israelites “entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their fathers, with all their hearts and all their souls” (2 Chron 15:12) and they sealed their oath “with trumpets, and with horns [shoferot]” (2 Chron 15:14). Isaiah explicitly associated the sound of the shofar with an admonition against sin. “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up your voice like a trumpet [shofar]; declare to my people their transgression, to the house of Jacob their sins” (Is 58:1).

The literal and figurative usages of the shofar by the prophets to warn people of their sins and call them to repentance, was most likely derived from the Feast of the Trumpets, the annual trumpet-call to repentance and cleansing in view of the judgment conducted in the heavenly court during the ten days running from the Feast of Trumpets to the Day of Atonment. In his book *What Christians Should Know about the Jews and Judaism*, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein explains that the shofar “is sounded on *Rosh Hashanah* to arouse us from our moral reverie, to call us to spiritual regeneration, and to alert us to the need

to engage in *teshuvah* (repentance). The shofar is the clarion call to perform *teshuvah*—to search our deeds and mend our ways before the awesome day of judgment. It is a reminder of our need to confront our inner selves just as God confronted Adam with the existential question, ‘Where are you?’ (Gen 3:9)”⁹

On a similar vein, Maimonides, the great Jewish philosopher, explained that the blowing of the shofar on *Ros Hashanah*, is a wake up call for people to abandon their evil ways and return to God: “Awake, O you sleepers, awake from your sleep! Search your deeds and turn in repentance. O you who forget the truth in the vanities of time and go astray all the year after vanity and folly that neither profit nor save—remember your Creator! Look at your souls, and better your ways and actions. Let every one of you abandon his evil ways and his wicked thoughts and return to God so that He may have mercy upon you.”¹⁰

The shofar beckoned the people with a solemn message of warning to repent for the time of judgment had come. It called upon the people to examine their lives, mend their ways, and experience divine cleansing. “In the trial imagery,” writes Rabbi Irving Greenberg, “the shofar blast communicates: Oyez! Oyez! This court is in session! The Right Honorable Judge of the World is presiding!”¹¹

The Shofar Announces the Beginning of the Trial. The blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* was understood by the Jews as the beginning of their trial before the heavenly court, a trial that lasted ten days until the Day of Atonement (*Yom kippur*). Greenberg explains that the central image underlying the Ten Days of Awe is that of the trial. “Jews envision a trial in which the individual stands before the One who knows all. One’s life is placed on the balance scales. A thorough assessment is made: Is my life contributing to the balance of life? Or does the net effect of my actions tilt the scale toward death? My life is being weighted; I am on trial for my life. Who shall live and who shall die? This image jolts each person into a heightened awareness of the fragility of life. This question poses the deeper issue: If life ended now, would it have been worthwhile?”

“The trial image captures the sense of one’s life being in someone else’s hands. The shofar of *Ros Hashanah* proclaims that the Judge before whom there is no hiding is now sitting on the bench. Sharpened self-awareness, candid self-judgment, and guilt are activated by the possibility that a death sentence may be handed down. Like standing before a firing squad, a trial for life wonderfully concentrates the mind.”¹²

One of the clearest depiction of the sounding of trumpets to announce the inauguration of the heavenly judgment is found in 4 Ezra, a Jewish

apocryphal book written in the first century A. D. “Behold the days come and it shall be, when I am about to draw night to visit the dwellers upon the earth, and when I require from the doers of iniquity (the penalty of) their iniquity: (And when the humiliation of Sion shall be complete), and when the Age which is about to pass away shall be sealed, then (will I show these signs): the books shall be opened before the face of the firmament, and all shall see together. . . . And the trumpet shall sound at which all men, when they hear it, shall be struck with sudden fear” (4 Ezra 4:18-2-, 23).

A similar text traditionally recited by the Jews on *Rosh Hashanah* is found in G. H. Box’s book on 4 Ezra: “God seated on His throne to judge the world opens the Book of records; it is read, every man’s signature being found therein. The great trumpet is sounded: a still small voice is heard. The angel shudder . . . and say: ‘This is the Day of Judgment.’”¹³

In both passages the final judgment in which the heavenly books are opened is announced with the sounding of the trumpet. The same view is expressed in another apocryphal book, contemporary to 4 Ezra, the Apocalypse of Moses. In section 22 it says: “And at the same hour we heard the archangel Michael blowing on his trumpet, calling the angels, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord, Come with me into paradise (Garden of Eden) and hear the words with which I will judge Adam.’ And as we heard the archangel trumpeting we said: ‘Behold God is coming into paradise to judge us.’”¹⁴ In this text the coming of the Lord to judge is announced by the blowing of the trumpet.

The Final Judgment. The texts just cited show how of the blowing of trumpets of *Rosh Hashanah* was seen as a prototype of the Great Final Judgment of mankind. This helps us appreciate why the eschatological day of the Lord is announced by the prophets with the blowing of the shophar. For example, Joel wrote: “Blow the trumpet [shophar] in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, it is near” (Joel 2:1). Similarly Zephaniah announced “the great day of the Lord” as “a day of trumpet [shophar] blast” (1:14,16). In the New Testament also, as we shall see in the next chapter, trumpets call people to repent in view of the final judgment (Rev 9:20-21). This shows a continuity in Scripture in the typological use of trumpets to announce God’s final judgment.

For the Jews the final judgment that determines the destiny of every human being, opened on *Rosh Hashanah* with the blowing of trumpets and closed ten days later on the Day of Atonment. For this reason these ten days are still called by the Jews, “Days of Awe,” or “Days of Repentance.” During

these ten days a universal judgment is conducted in heaven on the basis of records kept in books on the life of every person. We shall see that the rabbinical literature speaks explicitly of books opened by the heavenly court on the Feast of Trumpets in order to decide the destiny of every human being. The heavenly judgment that begins on the Feast of Trumpets, is “sealed” or confirmed ten days later, on the Day of Atonment. As the *Mishnah* puts it, “All [the human beings] are judged on *Rosh Hashanah*, and the [divine] sentence is sealed on *Yom Kippur*”.¹⁵

We shall return to the themes of repentance and judgment in conjunction with our study of the Jewish customs and ceremonies associated with the Feast of the Trumpets. At this juncture it is important to note that the Feast of the Trumpets was viewed as the beginning of a judgment process that lasted ten days until the Day of Atonment. This understanding of the Feast of the Trumpets has enormous significance for our study of the investigative judgment that precedes Christ’s return. We shall see in the next chapter that as God called upon His people with the loud sounding of the shofar in Old Testament times on *Rosh Hashanah* to repent and prepare themselves to stand before His judgment seat, so He calls us today with a loud voice, saying: “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). A study of the typology of the Feast of the Trumpets in the Old Testament, will help us appreciate its antitypical fulfilment in the New Testament.

The Heavenly Judgment in Daniel 7:9-10. The understanding of the Feast of Trumpets as the inauguration of heavenly final judgment that lasted 10 days until the Day of Atonment when the verdict was issued, reminds us of the judgment scene found in Daniel 7:9-10. In Daniel the heavenly court consists of the Ancient of Days who is surrounded by “ten thousand times ten thousand” of angels. They “sat in judgment and the books were opened” (Dan 7:10). The imagery of books being open in the heavenly court reminds us of the Feast of Trumpets when typologically the heavenly books were opened to ascertain the destiny of each individual.

The Jews saw the connection between the heavenly judgment of Daniel 7:9-10 and the heavenly judgment of the Feast of Trumpets. In commenting on Daniel 7:9-10, Edward Chumney writes: “Since the court was seated and the books were opened, it is understood to be *Rosh Hashanah*. The books are the book of the righteous, the book of the wicked, and the book of remembrance. The third book that will be opened is the book of remembrance (*zikkaron*). This is why the common greeting during *Rosh Hashanah* is, ‘May you be inscribed in the Book of Life’”¹⁶ We shall return later to the Jewish understanding of the opening of the books by the heavenly court on the Feast of Trumpets.

It is interesting to note that in Daniel the celestial judgment takes place after the war against the saints by the despotic little horn and before the coming of Christ to establish God's eternal kingdom (Dan 7:8-14). The complete historical sequence runs as follows: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, ten horns, apostate horn, judgment, coming of the Son of Man, establishment of God's eternal Kingdom.

This sequential order clearly indicates that the judgment described in Daniel 7 is not an executive act carried out on this earth at the time of Christ's Return, but the evaluative process conducted in heaven before myriads of heavenly beings prior to the Second Advent. The function of the judgment in Daniel 7 is both saving on behalf of the suffering saints (Dan 7:22), and punitive against the little horn, the oppressor of God's people, who is condemned "to be consumed and destroyed to the end" (Dan 7:26).

This dual function of the judgment accords well with the typology of the Feast of Trumpets which inaugurated a ten days judgment process that terminated with the Day of Atonment. On the latter day God's people were vindicated and impenitent sinners were "cut off" (Lev 23:29). The drastic separation between the saved and unsaved that occurred on the Day of Atonment finds its antitypical fulfilment at the Return of Christ. In chapters 3 and 5 we will examine the antitypical fulfilment of the Feast of Trumpets and Day of Atonment respectively.

The Heavenly Judgment in Daniel 8:13-14. The judgment scene of Daniel 7 is complemented by the vision of Daniel 8:13-14. Both visions cover much of the same ground. In the vision of Daniel 7 we have the succession of four empires represented by four beasts. These are followed by the appearance of the despotic little horn who oppresses the saints (Dan 7:21) and by the vision of the heavenly court which vindicates the saints and punishes the little horn (Dan 7:25-26).

In the vision of Daniel 8 we have the succession of two empires represented by two beasts (Dan 8:1-4). These are followed by the appearance of the same despotic little horn who oppresses the saints and profanes the sanctuary (Dan 8:5-13). The oppressive and destructive activities of the little horn are terminated by the divine restoration of the sanctuary to its rightful state (Dan 8:14) The parallelism between the two visions clearly shows, as Frank Holbrook points out, that "The judgment scene of Daniel 7 and the cleansing/restoring of the heavenly sanctuary of Daniel 8 *describe the same event.*"¹⁷

The contribution of the vision of Daniel 8 is that it expands on the activity of the little horn and it pinpoints the time for restoration of the

sanctuary, namely, after “two thousands and three hundred evenings and morning; then the sanctuary shall be restored (*nisdaq*) to its rightful state” (Dan 8:14). The Hebrew term *nisdaq* comes from the root *sdq*, which has a wide range of meanings such as “to vindicate, to justify, to set right, to restore, to cleanse.” The term is “widely employed in judgment settings and legal procedures,”¹⁸ thus suggesting that the restoration or vindication of the sanctuary, corresponds to the judgment scene of Daniel 7.

“The judicial-redemptive end-time activity before the intelligences of the universe (Dan 7:9-10),” rightly observes Gerhard Hasel, “restores the sanctuary to its efficacy (Dan 9:24), which was attacked by the rival system of the ‘little horn.’ On the basis of the judicial-redemptive activity in the sanctuary for the people of God, Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people’ (Dan 12:1; cf. 10:10-13, 21; 9:25; 8:11), is able to come forth victoriously in the time of trouble and physically deliver the saints, ‘every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting contempt’ (Dan 12:1b-2).”¹⁹ This grand climax of the judgment process represents the antitypical fulfilment of the Day of Atonment, when, as we shall see in chapter 4, the saints are vindicated and the wicked are “cut off” (Lev 23:29).

Historically Adventist have associated the restoration of the sanctuary mentioned in Daniel 8:14 with the heavenly court scene of Daniel 7:9-10.²⁰ The linkage is legitimate because, as we have seen, the parallelism between the two visions indicates that the heavenly court scene of Daniel 7:9-10 stands in parallel to the vision of the restoration of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:13-14. In other words, the same heavenly court that in Daniel 7 vindicates the saints and condemns the little horn, in Daniel 8 also vindicates God’s people (“the host”- Dan 8:12) and punishes the little horn for his oppressive and destructive activities. The outcome is the restoration of the sanctuary to its rightful place, that is, the vindication of God and His people, since the sanctuary represents God’s redemptive activity on behalf of His people.

Seventh-day Adventists have historically interpreted the restoration or cleansing of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 in the light of the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonment described especially in Leviticus 16. This connection has been facilitated the KJV’s translation of *nisdaq* in Daniel 8:14 as “cleansed:” “Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” The KJV follows the Greek Septuagint translation of *nisdaq* which is *katharizo*—“to cleanse,” or “purify.” This is a legitimate translation of *nisdaq*, though, we have seen that *nisdaq* has a broad range of meanings, including, “to vindicate, to justify, to set right, to restore.”

To interpret the restoration or cleansing of the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 solely on the basis of the cleansing of the sanctuary accomplished on the Day of Atonement, appears to me to be somewhat restrictive. The reason being that the vision of Daniel 8:13-14 stand in parallel to the heavenly court vision of Daniel 7:9-10. The latter can hardly be linked exclusively to the typological cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement, because such cleansing represented the outcome of a judgment process, rather than an actual ongoing judgment process. Therefore this study proposes to broaden the typological base of Daniel 8:14 by including the heavenly judgment process typified by the Feast of Trumpets. Ultimately this will contribute to place the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment on a broader and stronger typological base.

This digression on the heavenly judgment of Daniel 7 and 8 was triggered by our discussion of the Jewish understanding of the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah*, as representing the beginning of the trial before the heavenly court. Now we wish to resume our study of the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* by considering some of its other meanings.

The Shofar: A Symbol of God's Enthronement. The blowing of the shofar was seen not only as a call to stand trial before the judgment throne of God, but also to reaffirm God's sovereignty and kingship over the world. The themes of judgment and kingship are closely related, because the king was enthroned to judge over his people. The anointment of a new king to the throne was announced by the blowing of the shofar. After Solomon was anointed king by Zadok, the priest, "they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!'" (1 King 1:39). On a similar fashion the sound of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* was seen as a symbol of God's enthronement.

In his classic study *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, Sigmund Mowinckel finds that some forty Psalms were used in conjunction with the Feast of the Trumpet to celebrate God's enthronement.²⁰ While Mowinckel may have gone too far in applying some many Psalms to the Feast of the Trumpets, there is some merit on some of his selections.

In Psalm 47, for example, God is depicted as ascending up the temple mount to be enthroned as king of all the earth. The call of the shofar is here used to remind the people that God is sovereign, judging from His holy throne the nations of the earth: "God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet [shofar]" (Ps 47:5). In Psalm 98:6, the people are exhorted "to make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord . . . with trumpets and the sound of the horn [shofar]."

In Psalm 87:15-16 the shofar is linked to divine justice and mercy: "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of thy throne; steadfast love

and faithfulness go before thee. Blessed are the people who know the festal shout [literally, “the sound of the shofar”], who walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, who exult in thy name all the day, and extol thy righteousness.”

The festal sound of the shofar most probably refer to *Rosh Hashanah*, the day when the shofar reminded the people in a special way of God’s justice and mercy.

The Shofar: Symbol of the Messianic Era. An important aspect of God’s mercy is His promise of a Messianic Deliverer. The sounding of the shofar has served as a reminder of God’s promise to send the Messiah to gather His scattered children. “And in that day a great trumpet [shofar] will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out of the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (Is 27:13). On a similar vein, Zechariah wrote that the Lord Himself will blow the shofar when He delivers His people from attacking heathen armies; “Then the Lord will appear over them, and his arrow go forth like lightening; the Lord God will sound the trumpet [shofar], and march forth in the whirlwinds of the south” (Zech 9:14).

The sound of the shofar announces in the Bible not only the first advent of the Messiah (Is 27:13), but also the second coming of Christ. Just as the shofar was sounded to proclaim the freedom and liberation of the Jubilee year, so “the sound of the trumpet” will herald the descent of Christ from heaven (1 Thess 4:16) to gather the faithful and punish the wicked. It is significant that Paul calls this “the last trumpet” (1 Cor 15:52), evidently because it is sounded for the last time to mark the consummation of redemption. “Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at *the last trumpet*. For *the trumpet* will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor 15:51-52). We shall come back to this theme in the next chapter which examines the Feast of the Trumpets in the New Testament.

The Shofar: A Reminder of Divine Mercy. The shofar did not always strike a fearful note. We noted that the shofar was blown to inaugurate the Jubilee year (Lev 25:9), the time of the great sabbatical release God provided to the people. Slaves and those dispossessed of their properties eagerly listened for the sound of the shofar that signaled their freedom! The land itself welcomed the sound of the shofar that allowed it to rest (Lev 25:11).

On a similar fashion the sound of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* reminded the Jews of God’s mercy and forgiveness during the ten days of judgment inaugurated by the Feast of the Trumpets. “On this Day of Judgment,” writes Philip Goodman, “motivated by a profound faith in God’s

mercy and loving-kindness, the Jew renders an accounting of his life and actions during the past year before the Supreme Judge. But he does so with a feeling and ardent hope that the Almighty will pardon his shortcomings and gratify his yearning for spiritual regeneration.”²¹

As a reminder of divine mercy, the Jews still read today in the synagogue on *Rosh Hashanah*, the story of the binding of Isaac, known as *Akedah* (Gen 22), a story which permeates a great deal the liturgy of the High Holy Days. The Talmud says: “Why do we blow on a ram’s horn? The Holy One, blessed is He, said: ‘Sound before Me a ram’s horn so that I may remember on your behalf the binding of Isaac the son of Abraham, and account it to you as if you had bound yourselves before me.’”²²

The ram’s horn, which was caught in the brushes, became for the Jews the symbol of God’s willingness to remember penitent sinners and to atone for their sins. A rabbinical tradition brings out this point eloquently: “The offspring of Isaac will someday transgress my will, and I will judge them on *Rosh Hashanah*. Should they appeal to my leniency, I will recall the binding of Isaac and let them blow then the horn of this ram [which was substituted for Isaac].”²³

This understanding of the Feast of Trumpets as a time when God judges His people with mercy, is clearly expressed in another rabbinic statement: “It is on New Year’s Day that I acquit My creatures. Accordingly, when I judge them, let them be sure to lift up *shofars* and blow them before Me, and I will bring to remembrance in their behalf the binding of Isaac and I will acquit them at the judgment. Whence do we know that the blowing of the *shofar* is a reminder to God? From what is read in the lessor for the day, ‘In the seventh month, in the first day of the month . . . a time of remembrance proclaimed with the blast of horns’ (Lev 23:24).”²⁴

A Day of Divine Remembrance. The Jewish tradition of recalling the binding of Isaac on *Rosh Hashanah* as a reassurance of God’s willingness to atone for their sins, introduces us to another important function of the Feast of the Trumpets, namely, to “remind” God of the needs of His people.

So far our focus has been on how the blowing of the shofar served to remind people of their sins and of divine mercy. But the blowing of the trumpets serves in the Bible also “to remind” God of the needs of His people. Since God is not forgetful, we need to understand His remembering in a more dynamic sense, namely, as His intervention on behalf of His people.

We noted earlier that the two key words in Leviticus 23:23-25 that help us define the theological meaning of the Feast of the Trumpets are

“remembrance–*ziccaron*” and “trumpet blast–*teruah*.” So far we have studied how the blowing of the shofar reminded people to repent of their sins before it was too late. But the term “remembrance–*ziccaron*” is applied also to God’s remembering His people.

The concept of God remembering His people is frequently found in the Bible. We read that “God remembered his covenant with Abraham” (Ex 2:24) when He saw the affliction and heard the cry of the Israelites in Egypt. The result of His remembering was His decision to intervene. “I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a land good and broad land, a land flowing with mild and honey” (Ex 3:8).

The ephod of the High Priest contained two onyx stones where the names of the twelve tribes of Israel were engraved as a remembrance before God. “Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for remembrance” (Ex 28:12). Apparently Aaron’s bearing of the names engraved in the two stones before the Lord, served as a “reminder” to the Lord of His covenant with His people.

Jon Paulien rightly notes that “When the stones are brought into the tabernacle they ‘stimulate God’s remembrance’ of His people. If the Lord has ‘no remembrance’ of a person or a nation, it means that they are rejected by Him (Neh 2:20). Thus ‘remembering’ by God is to be a continual assurance of His acceptance of His people. The people were encouraged to ‘prod His memory.’”²⁵

A clear indication of God’s remembrance of His people is found in Numbers 10:9,10: “And when you go to war in your land against the adversary who oppresses you, then you shall sound an alarm with trumpets, that you may be remembered before the Lord your God, and you shall be saved from your enemies. On the day of your gladness also, and at your appointed feasts, at the beginning of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; they shall serve you for remembrance before your God.”

Here it is explicitly stated that the blowing of the trumpets in battle or in connection with the feasts serves to remind God of the needs of His people. The implication is that the blowing of the shofar at the Feast of the Trumpets, which is the only feast that fell on a new moon, served the purpose not only of reminding the people to repent of their sins, but also to remind God to be merciful toward His people.

Commenting on Numbers 10:9,10, Keil and Delitzsch write: “The trumpet blast was intended to bring before God the prayers of the congrega-

tion embodied in the sacrifice, that God might remember them in mercy, granting them the forgiveness of their sins and the power for sanctification, and quickening them again in the fellowship of His saving grace.”²⁶

Some rabbinical sources explain that the purpose of blowing the trumpet was to rouse God to action on behalf of Israel. “When Israel take their horns and blow them in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, He rises from the Throne of Judgment and sits upon the Throne of Mercy—for it is written, ‘The Lord (of mercy) amidst the sound of the horn’—and He is filled with compassion for them, taking pity upon them and changing for them the attribute of justice to one of mercy.”²⁷

Moses Nahmanides, a medieval rabbi, wrote this insightful comment: “*Rosh Hashanah* is a day of judgment with mercy and *Yom Kippur* is a day of mercy with judgment.”²⁸ This statement captures admirably the emphasis of two feasts. The Feast of Trumpets tells us that God will judge us with mercy, while the Day of Atonment that God will atone for our sins with justice.

In the light of these observations we conclude that the blowing of the shofar on *Ros Hashanah* had a dual function. On the one hand it called the people to repent in view of the ten days of judgment that began on that day and on the other hand it reassured the people that they would be remembered with favor by God. These dual aspects of the judgment process inaugurated by the Feast of the Trumpets, will help us in our study of the antitypical fulfillment of the feast. We shall see that the Pre-Advent judgment serves not only to call upon believers on earth to repent for the hour of judgment has come, but also to reassure the same believers that God will remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment.

It is significant to note that for the Jews the judgment process going on in heaven during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonment was not an abstract theological truth, but an existential reality lived out with real trumpet-calls to repentance, trusting in God’s mercy to vindicate them.

Christ is the Basis of God’s Remembrance. When God remembers He acts redemptively on behalf of His people. Since redemption is accomplished through Christ’s atoning death and intercessory ministry, ultimately Christ is the basis of God’s remembrance. This truth is brought out, for example, in Luke 1:72 where Zechariah bursts forth in a poem of praise to God for in sending Jesus He was about “to remember his holy covenant.”

In the Old Testament God remembered His covenant with Israel by sending Moses (Ex 2:24). In the New Testament God remembers His

covenant with the New Israel by sending a new Moses (Deut 18:15-18), Christ Himself. In many ways the life of Christ parallels the life of Moses. Like Moses' life was threatened at birth by a suspicious king (Ex 1:16), so the life of the infant Christ was threatened by an insecure king (Matt 2:13-18). Like Moses fasted forty days before receiving the law (Ex 34:28), so Christ fasted forty days before clarifying the principles of God's law from the mountain (Matt 4:2; 5 to 7). Like Moses fed the Israelites with the manna sent by God (Ex 16:35), so Christ fed the multitudes with both physical and spiritual bread (John 6: 30-33). Like Moses was used by God to bring forth water from the rock (Num 20:8), so Christ offers the water that will quench the thirst for ever (John 4:14). Like Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so Christ was lifted up (John 3:14).

The above parallelisms suggest that the New Testament sees Jesus as the new Moses sent by God to deliver the new Israel from the bondage of sin and death. Truly, when God remembers, marvellous things happen! God's remembrance typified by the Feast of the Trumpet is above all Christ centered. Through Jesus Christ God reassures us that He remembers our physical and spiritual needs in the present, and He will remember us in the final judgment and consummation. That will be the last trumpet when we will be remembered for ever.

The Feast of the Trumpets in Biblical History. There is no mention in the Old Testament of the observance of the Feast of Trumpets between its institution at Sinai and the Babylonian exile. Some scholars assume from this silence that the feast was not observed during this period. This may be true, but an argument from silence is never conclusive.

If Mowinckel's thesis is correct that the enthronement Psalms were used on the Feast of the Trumpets to celebrate God's sovereignty, then there is the possibility that the feast was observed. Some scholars support this view on the basis of the practice to enthrone the kings of Israel and Judah on the first of Tishri.²⁹

One must admit that support for the observance of the Feast of Trumpets during the pre-exilic period, is very scarce. In fact there are indications suggesting that the observance of the Holy Days had been grossly neglected. For example, when the Scriptures were found during the spiritual reformation inspired by the leadership of King Josiah, the king charged Hilkiah the priest, saying: "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord, to do according to all that is written in this book" (2 Chr 34:21).

If, as Josiah's admits, the teachings of the Scriptures had been largely forgotten, this must have been true of the observance of the annual feasts as well. In fact, at the climax of his reform, Josiah summoned the people to "keep the passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant" (2 Kings 23:21). The reason given for the command is "For no such passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel, or of the kings of Judah" (2 Kings 23:22).

The author apparently meant that no Passover had been observed in Jerusalem as a nation, because there are indications of Passover celebrations during the reign of Solomon (2 Chron 8:13) and Hezekiah (2 Chron 30:15). Yet the fact remains that Passover had been largely neglected. If this was true for Passover, the same must have been true for the Feast of Trumpets. We must not forget that, as Abraham Bloch points out, "up to the time of the Babylonian exile, monotheism had waged a losing battle against idolatry, and ignorance of the Bible was commonplace,"³⁰

After the Exile. The assumption that the ritual of the shofar had been largely forgotten during the exile appears to be corroborated by some Old Testament texts. We read, for example, that when Zerubbabel came to Palestine, probably in the summer of 536 B. C., he restored the sacrificial rites on the first of Tishri (Ezra 3:6). The Temple had not yet been rebuilt, and the offerings were brought to an altar especially built for that purpose. Since there is no mention of the blowing of the shofar, it would seem that the practice had been forgotten during the exile.

When later Ezra came to Jerusalem (about 457 B. C.) he discovered a community weakened by intermarriage with heathen wives and lax in the observance of the law. He assembled the people on the first day of Tishri and he led them in the public reading and translation of the law. The people hungered to know God's Word. When they realized how far they had strayed from God's holy precepts that they mourned and wept. Ezra comforted them, saying: "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep" (Neh 8:9). Apparently the people were unaware of the nature of the day. Ezra told them to go home "eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions to him for whom nothing is prepared" (Neh 8:10). On the following day the people were instructed to prepare for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The omission in the account of the blowing of the shofar on either days, suggest that this characteristic ritual of the Feast of Trumpets had been forgotten. Furthermore the sober themes of repentance and judgment associated with the Feast of Trumpets are also totally absent. It would seem that though the first of Tishri was recognized as a holy day, the rituals associated with the day had largely been forgotten.

PART II
THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS
IN EXTRA-BIBLICAL LITERATURE

The Feast of Trumpets, though largely neglected in the pre-exilic period, became the second most important solemn day of the Jewish year in the post-exilic period. An important factor which contributed to its increasing importance, was the establishment of the synagogue, where the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* became a significant ritual.

Since the Jews, who were widely scattered, were not required to travel to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets, the blowing of the shofar took added significance in the synagogues of the Dispersions. Most of the information about the Jewish observance of the Feast of Trumpets comes to us from the rabbinic literature. Before looking at the rabbinic literature, we shall mention two references from the book of Jubilees (late second century B. C.) to the first day of the seventh month, since they seem to reflect the prevailing understanding of the Feast of Trumpets.

A Time for Family Purification. In Jubilees chapter 5 there is a description of the inclusive nature of “the great judgment day.” “And the judgment of every one is ordained and written on the heavenly tablets, and there is no injustice in it: all who stray from the path marked out for them to follow, and do not follow it—judgment is written down *for them*. For every creature and for every kind of creature. And there is nothing in heaven or earth, or in light or darkness, or in sheol or in the depth, or in the place of darkness, which will not be judged; and all their judgments are ordained and written and engraven. . . . And about the sons of Israel it has been written and ordained, If they repent in righteousness, he will forgive all their transgressions and pardon all their sins. It is written and ordained that he will show mercy to all who repent of all their sins they have committed inadvertently, once every year” (Jubilees 5:13-14, 17-18).

The forgiveness granted “once every year,” most probably refers to the annual cleansing from sin associated with the Feast of Trumpets. This is supported by the fact that the author places the purification that Jacob carried out in his family after the affair at Shechem (Gen 35:2-4), “on the new moon of the seventh month” (Jubilees 31:3). On that day “Jacob spoke to all the members of his household, saying, Purify yourselves and change your clothes, and let us get up and go to Bethel, where I vowed a vow to the Lord on the day I fled from my brother Esau, because he has been with me and brought me into this land in peace; and do you rid yourselves of the foreign gods that are among you. And they gave up the foreign gods, and the ornaments that were in their ears and on their neck; and Rachel gave to Jacob

all the idols that she had stolen from her father Laban. And he burnt them and broke them into pieces and destroyed them, and he hid them under an oak near Shechem” (Jub 31:1-2).

The fact that the book of Jubilees dates this event “on the new moon of the seven month,” suggests that by the time the book was written in the late second century B. C., the Feast of Trumpets had come to be seen as a time for family purification and soul-searching. This theme, as we shall see, becomes the central motif of the feast in later Judaism.

A Day of Judgment. In the rabbinic tradition the Feast of Trumpets is clearly seen as a day of judgment. “The central motif of *Rosh Hashanah* is that of the Day of Judgment. On this day, says tradition, all who enter the world pass before the Heavenly Judge like troops in review or like sheep beneath the shepherd’s crook. God opens His great book and records the fate of each according to his desert: ‘Who is to live and who is to die, who to rest and who to rove, who to grow rich and who to grow poor.’”³¹

The theme of divine judgment is emphasized in the special morning service (*Musaf*) of *Rosh Hashanah*. “The most famous element of this service,” as Theodor Gaster explains, “is the solemn chanting of the hymn entitled *Unetanneh Tokef* (“Now let us recite the majesty of this day”), in which God is represented as sitting in heavenly assize, while mankind pass before him in judgment: ‘The great trumpet is blown, and a still small voice is heard. The angels quiver in fright; fear and trembling seize them. And they cry one to another: Behold, the Day of Judgment is here, when the hosts on high shall be visited with judgment, for they are not guiltless in God’s eyes. And all that enter the world shall pass before Him as troops in review. Even as a shepherd tends his flock, making them to pass beneath his crook, so shall God make every living being to pass beneath His gaze, as He counts and numbers and tells them, and sets His brand upon all creation, and seals the doom of each.’”³²

This view of the Feast of Trumpets as the time when God judges the world, as Abraham P. Bloch points out, “has its origin in scriptural texts and in the admonitions and proclamations of the prophets and psalmists. The rite of the shofar was another revealing indication of the judgment aspect of the holiday.”³³

The rabbinic consensus that the Feast of Trumpets is a day of judgment generated considerable controversy over the scope and character of the judgment. The earliest opinion attributed to the school of Rabbi Ishmael (second century A. D.), is that God has determined four seasons of judgment for the world. The judgment of God was expressed mostly in agricultural terms, as He withheld or bestowed His blessings upon the nations’s crops.

“At four times in the year is the world judged: at Passover, for the grain [Passover was the time of the barley harvest]; at Pentecost, for the fruits of the tree [Pentecost was the beginning of the fruit season]; on New Year’s Day all that come into the world pass before him like a flocks of sheep [when they are counted for tithing], for it is written, ‘He that fashioneth the hearts of them all, that considereth all their works’ (Ps 33:15); and at the Feast [of Tabernacles] they are judged for the water [Tabernacles was the time of the early fall rains].”³⁴

According to this widely accepted view, the judgment of the New Year’s Day is the most important judgment because it affects the destiny of every human being. This universal judgment is conducted in heaven on the basis of records kept in heaven on the life of every person. The Talmud explains: “Three books are opened (in heaven) on New Year, one for the thoroughly wicked, one for the thoroughly righteous, and one for the intermediate. The thoroughly righteous are forthwith inscribed definitely in the book of life; the thoroughly wicked are forthwith inscribed definitely in the book of death; the doom of the intermediate is suspended from New Year till the Day of Atonment; if they deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of life; if they do not deserve well, they are inscribed in the book of death.”³⁵ Since, according to the rabbis, every person should regard himself as “half guilty and half meritorious,”³⁶ it is incumbent upon all to repent and forsake their sins during the ten days of penitence.

The heavenly judgment that began on the Feast of Trumpets was “sealed” or confirmed ten days later, on the Day of Atonment. As the Talmud puts it, “All [the human beings] are judged on *Rosh Hashanah*, and the [divine] sentence is sealed on *Yom Kippur*.”³⁷ For this reason the ten days that separated the two feasts were called “Ten Day of Penitence.” In a sense these ten days were, as K. Hruby observes, “days of grace par excellence for the *shekinah* [God’s glorious presence manifested in the Most Holy] was near, and God wanted to grant forgiveness to His people.”³⁸

Rather than separating the two feasts, the ten days of penitence united them, because, as L. Ligier points out, “the two feasts find their importance in a common eschatological theme: the determination of the destiny of the community, the individual, and the world on the new year.”³⁹

The Jewish understanding of the Feast of Trumpets and of the Day of Atonment has largely been ignored by Christian authors, possibly because of anti-Judaic bias. However, as the studies of the Levitical system advance, there will be a greater appreciation for the Jewish understanding of these feasts, because their understanding is well-rooted in the Old Testament. After all the Jews received and observed these Holy Days long before Christian

authors began studying them. The Jewish understanding of these feasts allows us to see their typological projections in Biblical texts normally ignored by most commentators.

Preparation for the Feast. The judgment inaugurated by the Feast of Trumpets was so important that the Jews were reminded of it on the first day of every month (new moon) through the blowing of trumpets. Since the months of the year in the Jewish calendar were numbered beginning with Nisan, the blowing of trumpets on the first day (new moon) of the first six months was seen as a series of mini-Feasts of Trumpets that anticipated the climactic arrival of the Feast on the first day of the seventh month.

Hayyim Schauss explains that the only difference between the blowing of the shofar on the New Moon of other months and that of the seventh month is that “short blasts were blown at the New Moon of other months, while long alarm blasts were sounded on the New Moon of the seventh month.”⁴⁰

The spiritual preparation for the Feast of Trumpets began in earnest a month in advance, with the start of the sixth month, Elul. The month of Elul is intended to set the psychological and emotional tone for repentance during the coming Ten Days of Awe.

Rabbi Irving Greenberg explains that “just as the month before the summer is the time when Americans go on crash diets, fearing how their bodies will look on the beach, so Elul, the month before *Rosh Hashanah*, became the time when Jews went on crash spiritual regimens, fearing how their souls would look when they stood before God.

“Consciousness of going to trial always precedes the trial itself. So Elul reflects the awareness and anxiety of the trial. In the traditional synagogue, the shofar is blown every day in Elul to shake up people and remind them of the approaching trial. Understandably, Elul became a time for reconciliation with enemies (a trial for life is no time to fight other battles) and a time for resolutions (‘If I get off, I’ll never do it again!’) and for heroic efforts to correct personal flaws (‘Your Honor, I’ve turned over a new leaf!’).”⁴¹

Greenberg continues explaining that “One should not exaggerate the tone of Elul. It is awe, not terror. There is a strong conviction that God is understanding, merciful, and loving. Sin, error, and failure are inescapable parts of human behavior. Judaism is not a religion of excessive guilt or of judgment standards that can never be met, but neither is it a religion of permissiveness. Through the self-criticism of Elul and the High Holy Days, Judaism keeps life from settling into deadening routine or evil habits.”⁴²

As *Rosh Hashanah* approaches traditional Jews gather for *Selichot*, penitential prayers which focus on human guilt and divine forgiveness. Taking a haircut and dressing in new clothes are also part of the preparation for the Feast of Trumpets. “In spite of the awe of the moment, the joy of the holiday is not stilled. On the contrary, joy expresses confidence in God’s forgiveness and love. Despite the fear and trembling, the trial is before a merciful Judge. If joy were suppressed, it would represent a failure to appreciate God’s nature.”⁴³

This Jewish understanding of the Feast of Trumpets as an annual trumpet-call to stand trial before God and seek for His cleansing grace, is most relevant for Christians today. After all, Christians too need to be reminded periodically that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body” (2 Cor 5:10). The Feast of Trumpets provides a much needed annual wake up call to prepare oneself to stand before God’s judgment by repenting and forsaking sinful ways.

Ten Days of Penitence. The ten days between the Feast of Trumpet and the Day of Atonment were seen by the Jews as a continuous judgment process that determined their fate. Abraham Bloch notes that the view that “the fate of the average individual, who is neither perfect nor wicked, is reviewed beginning on *Rosh Hashanah* and determined on *Yom Kippur* [the Day of Atonment] (*Roh Hashanah* 16b), has converted the entire period between the two holy days into a season of continuous judgment.”⁴⁴

The notion of a ten days period of testing is not foreign to the Bible. Daniel and his three companions were tested for ten days (Dan 1:12). In Revelation the church of Smyrna is told that she would be tested for ten days (Rev 2:10). Nabal died ten days after learning from his wife, Abigail, how she spared his life by providing food for David and his men, contrary to his refusal to do so (2 Sam 25:38). Apparently during those ten days Nabal did not repent for his wrongdoing. Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman connects this episode with the Ten Days of Penitence. “God waited for him (Nabal; 1 Sam 25:38) ten days, like the ten days between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* so that he may repent.”⁴⁵

Rabbi Irving Greenberg helps us capture the mood of the Ten Days of Penitence, through this vivid description: “On *Rosh Hashanah*, the trial opens, the Judge enters and takes the bench. The evidence is reviewed. Individual Jews hasten forward to plead their cases. The liturgy attempts to capture this mood. On *Rosh Hashanah*, God as Creator and ruler is the central focus of the prayer. The divine quality of awesomeness and judgment stand

out in the human mind. By the time of *Yom Kippur* the primary liturgical focus shifts to the trial itself and to God's mercy, which more than anything else sustains the people in the process of the judgment. As the trial wears on, the initial panic or tension lightens and the people relax enough to see that the judge is not an impersonal authority who will be relentless but, rather (what good fortune!), a loving old friend who will do all to show mercy. Nachmanides suggested that in human experience *Rosh Hashanah* is a day of judgment with mercy; *Yom Kippur* is a day of mercy with judgment.⁷⁴⁶

A Lesson from the Jews. The religious practices performed on *Rosh Hashanah* and the subsequent Ten Days of Penitence, reveal how the Jews lived out in practical ways their belief that God would judge during those days their conduct of the previous year. This is one of the areas where as Christians we can learn valuable lessons from the Jews. We tend to make our beliefs more of a profession than a practice, more creed than deed.

Most Christians believe, like the Jews, that they must appear before the judgment seat of God (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10), but no significant attempt is made to translate such a belief in some religious practices. In my own Seventh-day Adventist church, we believe, somewhat like the Jews, in a heavenly judgment process that precedes the Second Advent. We call it "the Pre-Advent Judgment." But to the average Adventist the pre-Advent judgment is primarily something that goes on in heaven. No significant attempt is made to integrate this belief in the church calendar or in the daily life of our members. The major thing pastors or evangelists may do about "the Judgment Message" is to proclaim that "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). Even this proclamation is seldom heard today, because it is not a popular preaching.

Our Adventist church calendar does not summon us annually, like the Feast of Trumpets did to the Jews, to repent and amend our lives in view of the judgment going on in heaven. The result is that fewer and fewer Adventists know what the pre-Advent judgment is all about. Recently in my college Bible class of 45 college students I was surprised to find out that only three of them had heard about the pre-Advent judgment, though this doctrine is a fundamental belief of our Seventh-day Adventist church. A church calendar patterned after the feasts of ancient Israel, would challenge us on an annual basis to live out our faith, by taking time to remember and respond to God's redemptive acts, such as His final judgment and vindication of His people.

Jewish Practices. Over the years the Jews have developed numerous religious practices designed to help them conceptualize and internalize the significance of the judgment process inaugurated at the Feast of Trumpets. In this context we can only briefly refer to few of them.

On the day preceding *Rosh Hashanah* it is customary for Jews to bathe, cut their hair, and wear Sabbath clothes in the evening. At the synagogue service on *Rosh Hashanah* many Jews wear a white garment or some white article of clothing, such as a *kippah* (skullcap) or a white tie. The ark and the lectern at the synagogue are also covered with white cloth during the period between *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*. The Talmud explains that the wearing of white garments on *Rosh Hashanah* represents forgiveness, purity and continuity of life.⁴⁷

Special phrases reflecting the mood of the period are added to traditional prayers. Some of the phrases are: “Remember us for life, King who loves life; write us into the book of life, for Your sake, Lord of life. . . . In the book of life, blessing and peace, and good fortune, may we and all Your people of Israel be remembered and inscribed for a good life and peace.”⁴⁸

Following the evening service, as people leave the synagogue, a special form of greeting is used: “May you be inscribed (in the Book of Life) for a good year.” This special greeting is used with some variations during the ten days.

One of the best known and most beloved hymns sang on *Rosh Hashanah* in most Ashkenazic synagogues (Eastern European Yiddish-speaking synagogues) is entitled “He Who Ordains Judgment.” The hymn is built on the twin refrain of “judgment” (*din*), and “Day of Judgment” (*Yom Din*).

And thus let all acclaim God as King:

It is He who ordains judgment;

He searches hearts on the Day of Judgment.

He reveals hidden things in judgment;

He ordains righteousness on the Day of Judgment.

He applies knowledge in judgment;

He bestows mercy on the Day of Judgment.

He remembers His covenant in judgment;

He spares His creatures on the Day of Judgment.

He clears His faithful in judgment;

He discerns thoughts on the Day of Judgment.

He curbs wrath on the Day of Judgment;

He is robed in mercy on the Day of Judgment.

He pardons iniquity in judgment;

He is beyond our praises on the Day of Judgment.

He forgives His people in judgment;

He answers His suppliants on the Day of Judgment.

He invokes His compassion in judgment;

He beholds secrets on the Day of Judgment.

He redeems His faithful in judgment;
He loves His people on the Day of Judgment.
He guards His adherents in judgment;
He supports the innocent on the Day of Judgment.⁴⁹

In this hymn the poet enumerates the attributes of mercy, compassion, and forgiveness manifested by God on the Day of Judgment. These attributes reflect a fundamental characteristic of the Feast of Trumpets we discussed earlier, namely, a day when God remembers His people with mercy and compassion. This Biblical understanding of the final judgment, not as a scheme of divine retribution, but as a plan of divine vindication of God's people, will be examined in the following chapter in conjunction with the antitypical fulfilment of the Feasts of Trumpets in the New Testament.

Casting Away of Sins. One of the most suggestive Jewish ceremonies of the Feast of Trumpets is the *Tashlich*, the symbolic casting away of sins into a body of water. After the morning religious service of *Rosh Hashanah* people go to rivers, oceans, lakes or any body of living waters and recite special prayers of repentance like this: "You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea, and may You cast all the sins of Your people, the house of Israel, into a place where they shall be no more remembered or visited or ever come to mind."⁵⁰

After the prayer, the people shake crumbs from their pockets into the water to express their belief that as the crumbs float away, so God will carry away their sins represented by the crumbs. "The inspiration for this symbolic ceremony, as well as the name of the ritual, is derived from Micah 7:19: 'He will again have compassion upon us, he will subdue our iniquities and you will cast (*tashlich*) all their sins into the depth of the sea.'"⁵¹

The symbolism of the *Tashlich* ceremony is significant because it reveals how the Jews act out their belief that God will forgive and dispose of all their sins of the past year during the ten days of judgment between the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement. "By sending his sins away on the bosom of the ocean or the flowing stream, he [the Jew] figuratively expresses his desire that they might disappear from the sight of God and might not serve as a deterrent in the way of his gaining the favor of Providence."⁵²

During the Ten Days of Penitence the Jews perform several other ceremonies to which we can only allude. For example, it is customary to seek reconciliation and forgiveness from all persons whom one might have offended in the preceding year. It is also customary to confess one's sins (*al chet*) after the conclusion of the morning service of *Rosh Hashanah*. Pious

Jews immerse themselves in water prior to the morning service. This practice was apparently inspired by the immersion of the High Priest on the Day of Atonment.⁵³

The foregoing survey of some of the Jewish customs and ceremonies associated with the Feast of Trumpets, suffice to show the importance of the feast in the thinking and living of the Jews. The feast has been understood and experienced as the annual trumpet-call for Jews to stand trial before God and to prepare themselves for the disposition and cleansing of their sins on the Day of Atonment. This Jewish understanding and experience of the Feast of Trumpets will help in our study of the antitypical fulfilment of the feast in the New Testament and its relevance for us today.

Conclusion. The Feast of Trumpets reflects God's desire to summon His people to repentance so that He can vindicate them on the day of His judgment. Our study has brought out four significant features of the feast . First, we have found that this feast has no title or an explicit reason for its observance in the Bible. It is simply called "the day of blowing" or "a remembrance blast" (Num 29:1; cf. Lev 23:24). Since the blowing of the trumpets (shofar) was the distinguishing characteristic of the day, it became known as the Feasts of the Trumpets. The texts give no specific reason for observing the Feast apparently because the reason was too obvious to require comment. The blowing of the trumpets was understood to be a call to stand trial before the Heavenly Throne to give an account of one's deeds and to receive the promise of God's mercy.

Second, we have seen that the blowing of the shofar on the first day of the seventh month was understood by the Jews as the beginning of their trial before the heavenly court where books would be opened and the destiny of each individual would be decided.. The trial lasted ten days until the Day of Atonment (*Yom kippur*) when God would dispose of their sins in a permanent way.

Third, we have found that the blowing of the shofar during the Ten Days of Penitence served not only to call upon the Jews to repent, but also to reassure them that God would remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The ten days preceding the Day of Atonment were not an abstract theological truth, but an existential reality lived out with real trumpet-calls to repentance, trusting in God's mercy to vindicate them.

Lastly, we have observed that the Jews developed some interesting customs and ceremonies to help them live out their belief that God would judge them with mercy during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonment.

Summing up, the Feast of Trumpets in Old Testament times was understood and experienced as the inauguration of a judgment process that culminated on the Day of Atonement with the final disposition of all the sins committed during the previous year. This understanding and experience of the Feast of Trumpets provide us with a basis for investigating the antitypical fulfilment of the Feast in the New Testament. To this we must now turn our attention in the following chapter.

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Chapter 3

THE FEAST OF THE TRUMPETS

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

To know in advance the likely occurrence of important events which will impact on our lives is a burning, human desire. To satisfy such a desire, we listen daily to a host of forecasters who predict with more or less accuracy when to expect, for example, a snowstorm, a tornado, an eclipse, a lunar landing, an economic upturn or downturn, a stock market advance or decline, the end of a hostage crisis, or a war. Advance knowledge of when to expect a major development can sometimes make the difference between success or failure, gain or loss, and, in some cases, life or death.

The most important event that will make the difference between life and death for every human being is the Final Judgment. Thus, it is not surprising that God gives us in the Bible advance warnings about the important event that will decide our destiny. In chapter 2 we noted that in the Old Testament times the approach of the final judgment was announced in advance by the blowing of trumpets on the first day (new moon) of the first six months. The blowing of trumpets served to warn the people to prepare themselves for the final judgment that would begin on the first day of the seventh month. The latter was known as the Feast of Trumpets, because on that day the shofar was blown in a massive way throughout the land to announce to the people that the Day of Judgment had arrived and they should prepare themselves to stand trial before the heavenly court.

In this chapter, we examine the themes of the Feast of Trumpets as found especially in the book of Revelation. We find that the feast fulfills the same warning function in the New Testament. God has a heart to warn His people because He is not in the business to punish but to save. Sometimes His warning takes the form of calamities so people might repent before it is too late (Rev 9:20; 16:9).

Many today have difficulty accepting the idea of a divine final judgment that will decide the destiny of every human being. But the Scripture does not argue for the reality or necessity of a final judgment, it simply acknowledges its reality as a self-evident truth and warns us to prepare for it. The Feast of Trumpets fulfills this important warning function. The only way into the coming world is through a final judgment, and not through a gradual evolution. The reality of the final judgment is as inescapable as death: “It is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment” (Heb 9:27).

Paul asks rhetorically: “Do you suppose, O man, that . . . you will escape the judgment of God?” (Rom 2:3). The answer is never in doubt. The final judgment is such a self-evident and fundamental reality that it makes any present judgment of the conduct of fellow-believers inappropriate (Rom 14:10) and any judgment of a “human court” passed upon believers of relative value (1 Cor 4:3-4).

The necessity of a final judgment rests on the moral nature of God and on the moral order of His creation. Only by abrogating His moral nature and the moral order of His universe could God dispense with the final judgment. If God is a moral, just God, He must judge in a final, decisive way the moral conduct of all His rational creatures. God’s justice and mercy need a final outward judgment for their revelation and vindication. It is only the final judgment that brings the conflict between good and evil to an end by disposing of evil in a decisive and permanent way. It is not surprising that such an important event is announced in Scripture by the blowing of trumpets.

Objectives of the Chapter. This chapter examines the doctrine of the final judgment in the context of the Feast of Trumpets in the New Testament. It is divided into three parts according to its objectives. The first part examines some aspects of the continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments that were left out of the discussion of this issue in chapter 3 of volume I of *God’s Festivals in Scripture and History*. Special attention is given to the indications of the continued use of the Jewish calendar in the Apostolic Church.

The second part looks at the Feast of Trumpets in the New Testament. Special consideration is given to the connection between the Feast of Trumpets and the seven trumpets of the book of Revelation. The study reveals striking similarities between the themes of the Feast of Trumpets and those of the seven trumpets. We note that the heavenly judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets finds its antitypical fulfillment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15-18). Adventists refer to the heavenly judgment that proceeds Christ’s Return as the “investigative judgment” to distinguish it from the executive judgment carried out by Christ at His coming.

The third part explores the broader Biblical base and theological implications of the pre-Advent judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets. Our analysis focuses on significant passages which refer explicitly or implicitly to the judicial process that proceeds the Second Advent. To bring into focus the importance of the pre-Advent judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets, we reflect on the theological relevance of this doctrine for our Christian life today.

This study of the typological meaning and antitypical fulfillment of the Feasts of the Trumpets has important implications for the doctrinal positions of Sabbatarian churches, in general, and of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, in particular. Most Sabbatarian, who observe the Feast of Trumpets believe that the feast represents Christ's Return which is announced "with the sound of the trumpet of God" (1 Thess 4:16). This interpretation is not quite accurate because the typological function of the Feast of Trumpets is to announce the final judgment that precedes the Second Advent, and not Christ's Return per se.

This study is relevant also for the Seventh-day Adventist doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment which historically has been based largely on the typology of the Day of Atonement. Our study shows that the judgment process that precedes the return of Christ cannot be based exclusively on the typology of the Day of Atonement; it must include also the typology of the Feast of Trumpets. The reason, as we see it, is that the Day of Atonement typifies the completion and not the inauguration of a judgment process. The latter began ten days earlier with the blowing of the trumpets on the first day of the seventh month.

This means that the typological base of the pre-Advent judgment should be broadened to include the Feast of Trumpets. This would provide a coherent correspondence between the heavenly judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets and the antitypical investigative judgment realized prior to Christ's Return.

PART I CONTINUITY AND DISCONTINUITY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The lack of explicit instructions in the New Testament regarding the time and manner of observance of the Fall Feasts of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and Tabernacles is often interpreted as proof of their termination with the death of Christ. It is widely assumed that the meaning and function of the annual feasts terminated at the Cross because they were associated

with the sacrificial system of the temple which came to an end with the death of Jesus.

This prevailing view rests on the assumption that the coming of Christ brought about a radical discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments, Law and Grace, Judaism and Christianity. The abandonment of the Jewish religious Holy Days and the adoption of a new Christian liturgical calendar is seen by many as the most obvious evidence of this radical discontinuity.

Continuity Between Judaism and Christianity. This traditional understanding of Christian origins is grossly inaccurate and misleading. The New Testament recognizes that Christ's coming brought about a certain discontinuity by fulfilling Old Testament typological institutions, but this discontinuity is never interpreted in terms of abrogation of the Mosaic law, in general, or of Holy Days, in particular. The meaning of the discontinuity is defined in the light of the sense of continuity in God's plan of salvation that is evident in the New Testament.

In chapter 3 of the first volume of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, we discussed at some length the continuity between Judaism and Christianity that is present in the writings of Luke and Paul. We found that Luke, for example, emphasizes the continuity between Judaism and Christianity in his portrayal of the apostolic church. Again and again he reports the mass conversion of thousands of Jews (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:42; 12:24; 13:43; 14:1; 17:12; 21:20). To a modern reader, "conversion" implies a radical change in religious practices. This, however, was not the case with the earliest converts. The "many thousands" of Jews who "believed" (Acts 21:20) did not view their acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah as representing a breaking away from their Jewish religion and the joining to a new religion, Christianity. They simply viewed themselves as "believing Jews."

Jews could be converted by the thousands because their acceptance of Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah did not entail a rejection of their religion, but the realization of their Messianic expectations. Luke describes the thousands of Jewish converts as "zealous for the law" (Acts 21:20). Paul is described in his speeches as a "Pharisee" (Acts 23:6) who believes everything written in the law and the prophets (Acts 24:14) and who has done nothing "against the law of the Jews, nor against the Temple" (Acts 25:8; and 28:17). To prove that he lived "in observance of the law," Paul agreed to undertake a ritual purification at the Temple (Acts 21:24-26) during his last visit to Jerusalem, about A. D. 58. It is evident that if Paul and the Jewish converts lived in the observance of the law, they could hardly have abandoned an important aspect of the law, namely, their religious calendar.

Continuity of the Jewish Religious Calendar. If the primitive Christian communities had abandoned the Jewish religious calendar, they would have been left with only two options. The first would have been to adopt the pagan calendar which named the days and the months after pagan deities and marked out the seasons by pagan rites.¹ This option was rejected not only by Paul (Gal 4:10) but also by early Christian teachers (Fathers) who denounced as idolatry the adoption by Christians of the planetary week which names its days after planetary gods, as well as the adoption of pagan feasts.² It must be admitted that eventually most Christians did adopt not only the pagan planetary week but also the pagan seasonal feasts. This, however, is a later development that cannot be traced back to New Testament times.

The second option would have been for Christians to avoid time-keeping altogether. Some commentators uncritically assume this position by appealing to the Pauline notion of Christian freedom.³ Unfortunately, they ignore that Paul's concept of Christian freedom did not entail the abandonment of the Jewish religious calendar and the adoption of an unstructured lifestyle without time-keeping.

Paul's time references clearly reflect his adoption of the Jewish religious calendar, though modified and transformed by the coming of Christ. For example, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul recommends a fund-raising plan for the Jerusalem church consisting of laying aside at home some money *kata mian sabbaton*, that is, "every first day from the Sabbath." The fact that Paul refers to the first day of the week, not by the prevailing pagan name *dies solis*—Day of the Sun, but by the Jewish designation "first day from the Sabbath," reveals that he taught his Gentile converts to regulate their lives by the Jewish calendar.

In his article "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-Keeping Schemes in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16," published in *New Testament Studies* (1996), Troy Martin rightly observes that "The references to time in Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians exclusively reflect the adoption of a Jewish calendar. Even in a place like Corinth, Paul speaks of the first day from Sabbath (*kata mian sabbaton*; 1 Cor 16:2), and not of the day of the sun. He builds an elaborate argument based upon the festival of Passover and unleavened bread (1 Cor 5:6-8) in order to exhort the Corinthians, 'Let us keep the festival' (1 Cor 5:6-8). Although the temporal references in Paul's letters are sparse, 1 Corinthians provides strong evidence for the Pauline adoption of the Jewish practice that marked time by festivals and Sabbaths."⁴

The Christian adherence to the Jewish calendar is especially evident in the book of Acts. Repeatedly, Paul proclaims the Gospel in synagogues and in the outdoors on the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2). In Troas, Paul

speaks to the believers on the first day from Sabbath (*mia ton sabbaton*) (Acts 20:7). “The portrayal of Paul in Acts,” as Troy Martin points out, “supplies clear evidence that Christians mark time by segments of festivals and Sabbaths.”⁵

Concerning the feasts, we are told that Paul sails from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread (Acts 20:6) and that he intends to arrive at Jerusalem by the feast of Pentecost. The Western and Byzantine text of Acts 18:21, which is accepted by the King James Version, reads: “But bade them farewell, saying, I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem: but I will return unto you again, if God will. And he sailed from Ephesus” (KJV).

Paul’s statement “I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem” is generally regarded as an addition of the Western and Byzantine texts, because it does not appear in other early manuscripts. This may well be the case, yet the fact remains that in two very early textual traditions Paul is portrayed as very eager to keep a festival in Jerusalem. Such an interpolation, if indeed it is one, reflects a concern to show Paul’s eagerness to keep Jewish feasts, presumably to justify their observance within certain Christian churches.

It is difficult to tell for how long Christians continued to use the Jewish religious calendar. The Passover controversy of the late second century indicates that it was still widely used at that time. In A. D. 186, Pope Victor excommunicated the entire church in Asia Minor for observing Passover on the fourteenth of Nisan, rather than on Easter-Sunday. The continued use of the Jewish religious calendar is presupposed also by the sense of continuity between Judaism and Christianity that we find, for example, in Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation. To these books we briefly turn our attention.

Continuity in Matthew. In Matthew, the major events of Christ’s life, such as the conception, the birth, the massacre of innocent children, the announcement of Christ’s ministry by John the Baptist, the baptism, etc., are all presented as the direct fulfillment of Messianic prophecies.

Not only the life but also the teachings of Christ are presented as the continuation and confirmation of the Old Testament. The “golden rule” in Matthew 7:12 is presented as being in essence “the law and the prophets.” In Matthew 22:40, the two great commandments are viewed as the basis upon which “depend all the law and the prophets.” In Matthew 19:16-19, Jesus tells the rich young man who wanted to know what he should do to have eternal life: “keep the commandments.” Then He proceeds to list five of them.

Perhaps Matthew’s most emphatic affirmation of continuity is found in the passage where Jesus affirms to have come not “to abolish” but “to fulfill” the law and the prophets (Matt 5:17-20). In the light of the antitheses of verses

21-48, “to fulfill” appears to mean “to clarify,” “to explain” the meaning of the law and the prophets. Repeatedly in Matthew, Jesus acts as the supreme interpreter of the law who attacks external obedience and some of the rabbinical (Halakic) traditions (Matt 15:3-6; 9:13; 12:7; 23:1-39).

“To fulfill” could also refer to the prophetic realization of the law and prophets in the life and ministry of Christ. This would imply an element of discontinuity which has led some to conclude that the law and the prophets came to an end in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. This interpretation goes too far because verse 18 explicitly affirms that the law would be valid “till heaven and earth pass away.” This expression clearly goes beyond the earthly ministry of Christ.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that Matthew sees in Christ not the termination of the law and the prophets, but their realization and continuation. We might say that in Matthew the law and the prophets live on in Christ who realizes, clarifies and, in some cases, intensifies their teachings (Matt 5:21-22, 27-28). The Christological realization and continuation of the Old Testament law has significant implications for the New Testament understanding of how the Feasts of Israel relate to Christ’s first and second Advents. This Christological understanding is found especially in the books of Hebrews and Revelation.

Discontinuity in Hebrews. The book of Hebrews provides valuable insights into the manner in which the tension between continuity and discontinuity was being resolved in the New Testament times. The book suggests that the sense of continuity with the Old Testament was so profound that some Christians (Hellenistic Jews according to F. F. Bruce)⁶ actually returned to the practice of their “ancestral Jewish faith” and “Jewish Liturgy.”⁷

To counteract the influence of Jewish sacrificial cultus, the author shows the superiority of Christ over the angels, Moses, and the priesthood. The last of the three is discussed at great length in chapters 7 to 10, apparently because the Jewish sacrificial cultus still exercised a great attraction upon these Christians.

The author of Hebrews emphasizes the discontinuity brought about by the coming of Christ, when he says: “If perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood” (7:11), there would have been no need for Christ to come. But because the priests, the sanctuary, and its services were “symbolic” (9:9; 8:5), they could not in themselves “perfect the conscience of the worshipper” (9:9). Consequently, it was necessary for Christ to come “once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26).

The effect of Christ's coming is described as "setting aside" (7:18), making "obsolete" (8:13), "abolishing" (10:9) all the Levitical services associated with the sanctuary.

Some have interpreted these affirmations as indicating a radical abrogation of the Old Testament law, in general, and of the Holy Days, in particular.⁸ Such an interpretation ignores that the statements in question are found in chapters 7 to 10, which deal with the Levitical, sacrificial regulations. Though the author uses in these chapters the term "law" (10:1) and "covenant" (8:7, 8, 13), he mentions them with reference to the Levitical priesthood and services. It is in this context of the Levitical ministry that they are declared "abolished" (10:9). But this declaration can hardly be taken as a blanket statement for the abrogation of the law in general.

Continuity in Hebrews. Note should be taken of the fact that Hebrews teaches not only discontinuity but also continuity. The latter is expressed in a variety of ways. There is continuity in the revelation which the same God "spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets" and now "in these last days has spoken to us by a Son" (1:1-2). There is continuity in the faithfulness and accomplishments of Moses and Christ (3:2-6).

There is continuity in the redemptive ministry offered typologically in the earthly sanctuary by priests and realistically in the heavenly sanctuary by Christ Himself (chs. 7, 8, 9, 10). By virtue of His death and resurrection, Christ became "a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord" (Heb 8:2).

There is continuity in the cleansing of the Day of Atonement which is accomplished in the heavenly sanctuary by Christ with "better sacrifices" (Heb 9:23). "For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24). As the Israelites waited for the reappearance of the high priest on the Day of Atonement, so Christians await the return of Christ from the most holy of the heavenly sanctuary. There is continuity in faith and hope, as New Testament believers share in the faith and promises of the Old Testament worthies (chs. 11-12).

More specifically, there is continuity in the "*sabbatismos*"—a term used in a technical way by Plutarch, Justin, Epiphanius, *Apostolic Constitutions* to designate Sabbath observance—which "remains" (*apoleipetai*), literally "is left behind for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).⁹ It is noteworthy that while the author declares the Levitical priesthood and services as "abolished" (Heb 10:9), "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13), he explicitly teaches that a "Sabbathkeeping is left behind for the people of God" (Heb 4:9).

The above examples show that Hebrews endeavors to clarify both the continuity and discontinuity brought about by the coming of Christ. The Levitical priesthood, the temple, and its services are proclaimed to be terminated by the coming of Christ, but other aspects of the law, such as “the Sabbath rest,” are declared to be “left behind for the people of God” (4:9).

The continuation of the Sabbath as a faith response to Christ is indicative of how the Hebrew calendar had been transformed in the Christian community in the light of the Gospel. This transformation of the Hebrew calendar is evident, especially for the Day of Atonement whose antitypical fulfillment is explained at great length in chapter 9. The fact that the author labors to show the correspondence between the annual purification of the earthly sanctuary with blood by the high priest and the purification of the heavenly sanctuary with “better sacrifices” (Heb 9:23) by Christ Himself, reveals that the Day of Atonement was still significant in the religious experience of that Christian church. It is evident that its meaning had been transformed by Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

George Buchanan rightly observes that “Christian and Jews have been slow in changing liturgy and worship patterns, and many Jewish practices continued into Christianity without analysis. The author of Hebrews argued strongly that Jesus’ sacrifice made further sacrifices on the Day of Atonement unnecessary, but if the temple had not fallen, Jewish-Christians might have continued to share with Jews this sacrifice in Jerusalem. Faced with this new crisis [i. e., the destruction of the Temple], however, Christians found in the Book of Hebrews a justification for discontinuing this practice.”¹⁰

There is no question that the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70 caused not only the Jews and also the Christians to re-evaluate their observance of the Holy Days, since sacrifices could not longer be offered. But as the Jews developed a non-sacrificial observance of their religious calendar after the destruction of the Temple, so Christians transformed the Jewish calendar in the light of the Gospel.

In his book *The Primitive Christian Calendar*, Philip Carrington, Archbishop of Quebec, concurs with Buchanan. He writes: “The Epistle to the Hebrews makes use of the old Hebrew liturgical tradition as it has been transformed by the Christian gospel. It would be natural to ask whether it is not a *megillah* (or roll) for the Day of Atonement, the ritual of which it interprets in a Christian sense; Hebrews 12:22 is distinctly reminiscent of the ‘Shofarot’ [blowing of shophar] of Tishri 1 which is the Day of Trumpets.”¹¹

The passage in Hebrews to which Carrington refers speaks of the festal gathering of thousands of angels to which believers have come: “You have

come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men” (Heb 12:22-23, NIV).

The reference to “thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly” reminds us of the judgment scene of Daniel 7:10, where “ten thousand times ten thousand” of angels stood before God when the judgment books were opened. The reference to the “names written in heaven” and to God as “the judge of all men” adds support to the possible connection between the festal gathering of angels and the Feast of Trumpets, because we found in the previous chapter that the feast inaugurated the heavenly judgment which terminated ten days later on the Day of Atonement.

The Continuity of the Hebrew Calendar. The study of the literary structure of certain New Testament books has led scholars to conclude that the apostolic church adopted a Christianized form of the Old Testament religious calendar.

Philip Carrington finds indications of the observance of the Old Testament Feasts in the liturgical use of some New Testament books. For example, regarding the Corinthian epistles he wrote: “The rich liturgical material of the Corinthian epistles, which is closely connected with a gospel tradition, makes it perfectly evident that a Christianized form of the Hebrew Calendar was then in existence, so that it would have been possible and even quite natural for Mark to have arranged his gospel for the liturgical year with a view to having it read in the churches. This Christianized Calendar was of course merely a simplified form of the Hebrew Calendar as used by Jewish Christians in Palestine where the whole Christian tradition had received its primitive form. There is no reason to think that there ever was a form of Christianity anywhere which dispensed with this Calendar.”¹²

It is significant that Carrington finds in New Testament books indications of a Christianized Hebrew calendar. He goes so far as to say that “*There is no reason to think that there ever was a form of Christianity anywhere which dispensed with this Calendar.*” This statement needs some clarification. Apparently what Carrington means is that Christianity never dispensed *altogether* with the Jewish religious calendar, because it gave to it new meaning and form. In time, however, the Jewish religious calendar was radically changed as a result of an interplay of social, political, and pagan factors which I have examined elsewhere.¹³

“In the Gospel of St. Mark,” continues Carrington, “we found lections [Scripture readings] which we felt obliged to associate with the autumn

solemnities of the New Year, the Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Tabernacles.”¹⁴ If Carrington’s conclusion is correct, it would support a Christianized observance of the Fall Feasts in the apostolic church.

Allusions to the Feasts in Revelation. In the Johannine literature, both the Gospel and the book of Revelation, we find the richest storehouse of references and allusions to the annual feasts. The Gospel of John is built on a system of three Passovers with an elaborate section based on the Feast of Tabernacles in chapters 7 and 8 in which Jesus makes his final appeal. We examine the Gospel of John in chapter 7 in conjunction with the Feast of Tabernacles.

The typology of the ancient feasts of Israel is embedded in the book of Revelation. Carrington rightly points out that “The Revelation lives and moves in the color and order of the Temple liturgy glorified and transformed by the Christian gospel and by the superlative imagination of the author; it reflects the Christian worship of the ecclesia [church] of the time, and became the storehouse of liturgy and hymnology for the future. It is clear from both the Gospel and Revelation that the Feast of Tabernacles was a living tradition in Johannine circles; it provided a language which Christian prophecy and evangelism could use.”¹⁵

Note that Carrington believes that the presence of the annual feasts in Revelation and John’s Gospel “reflect the Christian worship of the ecclesia of the time.”¹⁶ This view is held by several scholars.¹⁷ Leonard Thompson, for example, thinks that the allusions to the annual feasts in Revelation “reflect actual church life in the way he [John] interrelates cult and eschatology.”¹⁸

The Feasts in the Literary Structure of Revelation. Several studies of the literary structure of the book of Revelation find that the general outline of the book seem to follow the sequential order of the Old Testament festivals. In an article on “Sanctuary Typology,” Richard Davidson wrote: “The overall structure of the book of Revelation may be seen to follow the sweep of salvation history as set forth in the OT festival typology. The general outline of Revelation appears to progress sequentially through the OT festivals.”¹⁹

Jon Paulien follows and supports Davidson’s sequential order of the annual feasts in the book of Revelation. In an article on “Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions,” Paulien wrote: “Striking is the evidence that the book of Revelation appears to be patterned also after the annual feasts of the Jewish year.”²⁰

In his classic study *A Rebirth of Images, The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse*, Austin Farrer also finds the literary structure of Revelation based

largely on the annual feasts, though his sequential order differs somewhat from that of Davidson and Paulien. Farrer wrote: “St. John does not see the scripture in what seems to us to be their ‘own’ pattern, he sees them artificially arranged in the Jewish sacred calendar, with its feasts and its lessons.”²¹

The above sample of testimonies suffice to show that several scholars recognize that the allusions to the annual feasts in Revelation reflect a Christianized form of their observance during apostolic time.

The Order of the Feasts in Revelation. Both Davidson and Paulien concur on the sequential order of the annual feasts found in the literary structure of the book of Revelation. Overall, I find their insights very valuable, but I am not yet persuaded that the structural scheme of Revelation follows strictly the pattern of the annual feasts. My impression is that the alleged allusions to the Spring Feasts of Passover and Pentecost in Revelation 1 to 5 are too elusive to be decisive. On the other hand, the allusions to the Fall Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacle are more explicit and conclusive. Before making some specific comments, I briefly summarize the order of the feasts as the two authors see them in the general outline of Revelation.

In the first three chapters of Revelation, Davidson and Paulien find indications of Passover themes in the strong concentration upon Christ’s death and resurrection (Rev 1:5, 17-18). Paulien notes also that “the searching scrutiny of the churches by ‘one like a son of man’ reminds one of the Jewish household’s search for leaven just before Passover (Ex 12:19; 13:7).”²² He also sees Revelation 3:20 where Christ offers to dine with the believer who opens the door of his heart, as a call for a Paschal “meal of mutual fellowship.”²³

In the next sanctuary scene of Revelation 4-5, Davidson and Paulien see in the vision of the throne the inauguration ceremony of the Lamb in the heavenly temple, an event which “is fittingly associated with Pentecost.”²⁴ Both authors associate the scroll in the hand of the Lamb (Rev 5:7-8) with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai, an event the Jews celebrated at Pentecost. “As the New Moses, the Lamb receives, as it were, the new Torah from God in Rev. 5.”²⁵

In the third major section of the seven trumpets (Rev 8-9,11), Davidson and Paulien see a reminder of “the seven monthly new moon festivals which form a transition between the spring and fall feasts and climax in the ‘Feast’ of Trumpets (Num 10:2, 10; 29:1).”²⁶ They rightly view the seventh trumpet of Revelation as the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets which inaugurated the judgment process that culminated on the Day of Atonement.

Paulien wrote: “The Feast of Trumpets itself, falling on the first day of the seventh month (corresponding to the seventh trumpet) ushered in the time of judgment that led up to the Day of Atonement (cf. 11:18-19).”²⁷

This understanding of the seventh trumpet as being the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets that ushers in the time of judgment leading to the Day of Atonement, that is, the events leading to the return of Christ, is of crucial importance for Seventh-day Adventists. The reason is that historically Adventists have developed the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment out of the typology of the Day of Atonement, ignoring the typology of the Feast of the Trumpets. But our study of the typology of the Feast of Trumpets and of its antitypical fulfillment in the seventh trumpet of Revelation suggests, as Paulien recognizes, that the pre-Advent judgment begins with the Feast of Trumpets and ends with the Day of Atonement. If this is true, and the evidence is compelling, it is necessary for the Seventh-day Adventist church to broaden the typological base of the pre-Advent judgment to include the Feast of Trumpets as well in order to be consistent with festival typology. This question is addressed more fully later in this chapter.

The Day of Atonement themes are first introduced, according to Davidson, in Revelation 11:19, which “ushers us into the Most Holy Place for the commencement of the antitypical holiest day of the cultic year, the day of atonement (Yom Kippur).”²⁸ The seven great controversy scenes that follow to chapter 20 represent the outcome of the investigative and executive phases of the Day of Atonement.

Finally, according to Davidson and Paulien, the Feast of Tabernacles themes are found, in the final section of Revelation (chapters 21 and 22) which is couched with the imagery of tabernacles. God is “tabernacling” with His people (Rev 21:3). Water and light, which are the primary images of the feast, find their ultimate fulfillment in Revelation 22:1, 5, which speaks of “the river of the water of life” and of God who “will be their light.”²⁹

Evaluation of the Order of the Feasts in Revelation. Davidson and Paulien are to be commended for alerting us to the rich festival typology found in the book of Revelation. The typological evidences for the Fall Feasts in my view are more explicit and conclusive than those for the Spring Feasts. The allusions which both authors detect in the first part of Revelation to the Spring Feasts seem to me to be too elusive to be conclusive.

The Passover themes are not self-evident in the first three chapters of Revelation. While it is true that there is “a strong concentration upon Christ’s death and resurrection” (Rev 1:17-18; 1:5),³⁰ no reference is

made to Christ as *Lamb* or to elements of a Paschal meal. Instead, Christ is referred to as *Son of Man* (Rev 1:13), a term associated by Daniel with the heavenly judgment (Dan 7:13-14).

The imagery of Christ offering to dine with the one who opens the door suggests more a personal fellowship with the Savior than a Paschal “meal of mutual fellowship.”³¹ There is no indication of a collective communion typical of a Paschal meal. The pronoun is singular: “I will come in to *him* and eat with *him*” (Rev 3:20). “Christ’s intense scrutiny of the churches”³² can hardly be associated with the search for leaven in the Jewish household, because the latter took place before Passover, while Revelation 1-3 presents Jesus’ death and resurrection in the past. Moreover, the purpose of the “scrutiny” is not merely to seek for the leaven of sin, but primarily to reassure each church that Christ is fully aware (“I know” recurs seven times) of their works, tribulations, faith, love, and service.

The Pentecost themes are largely derived from the assumption that the scroll in the hands of the Lamb (Rev 5:7-8) correspond to the book of the law Moses received on Mount Sinai at the time when, according to Jewish tradition, Pentecost was instituted. This assumption, as we see later, is discredited by the nature of the scroll which seems to contain not the law as such but the destiny of mankind.

Fusion of Festival Typologies. What militates against an exact sequential order of the annual feasts in Revelation is also the fact that the typology of the feasts often overlaps. Davidson recognizes this fact when he says: “Each succeeding section of Revelation must not be expected to have exclusive reference to the corresponding festival.”³³

A good example of the fusion of festival typologies can be seen in the vision of the great multitude in Revelation 7:9-17 where John employs the themes of both Passover and Tabernacles. Austin Farrer offers this insightful analysis of the fusion of the two feasts: “That Revelation 7:9-17 is a paschal vision can hardly be disputed. The initial object of vision is a numberless multitude praising God and the Lamb, and dressed in white robes. It is explained that the white robes are white because they are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and that these are men who have come out of the great oppression, the new Egyptian bondage. There can be no hesitation about the predominant paschal character of the vision, and yet St. John cannot restrain himself from looking beyond Passover to the feast of Tabernacles. The saints carry palm branches, a characteristic Tabernacles ceremony. More explicit still are the words, ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple, and he that sitteth upon the throne shall *tabernacle*

over them,' as when they were in the wilderness-tabernacles and he spread his cloudy tabernacle over their heads. So canopied, and supplied with spring-water and manna, 'they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more, nor shall the sun strike them, nor any heat: for the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and lead them to water-springs of life'—the waters of life are a promise especially recalled and invoked at the tabernacles feast."³⁴

The fusion of the typologies of Passover and Tabernacles in Revelation 7:9-17 is not surprising because the two feasts typify the inauguration and consummation of redemption. The vision of the great multitude at the opening of the sixth seal offers to John a preview of the conclusion of redemption, which is the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacle. The final celebration of the Feast is described more fully in the last two chapters of Revelation which are couched in the imagery of tabernacles. Since the celebration of the ultimate restoration (Feast of Tabernacles) is made possible by the redemption accomplished by Christ, the Paschal Lamb (Feast of Passover), the typologies of the two feasts can readily overlap in Revelation.

Whether the allusions to the annual feasts occur in Revelation according to the exact order of the calendar or in an overlapping, irregular way, the fact remains that they are present in the book. Ultimately, this is what matters as far as the present investigation is concerned, because their presence suggests, as noted earlier, the observance of a Christianized form of the feasts in the apostolic church. John could hardly have profusely used the typologies of the annual feasts if, by the time of his writing at the end of the first century, their observance were a thing of the past. If that were the case, the many allusions to the feasts would have been incomprehensible to the readers of Revelation. It is more reasonable to believe that the many allusions to the annual feasts reflects, as several scholars recognize, a Christianized form of their observance.

Colossians 2:16 and the Annual Feasts. Paul's reference in Colossians 2:16 to "a festival or a new moon or a sabbath" is of special importance to our study of the use of the Jewish religious calendar in the apostolic church. The three words (festival, new moon, and sabbaths) represent a progressive and exhaustive enumeration of the Old Testament sacred times. These three terms occur in similar or reverse sequence, five times in the Septuagint and several times in other literature.³⁵ In these passages, these terms designate the sequential order of the sacred times of the Jewish religious calendar.

The festivals are the annual Holy Days celebrated in the spring and fall. The new moon is the monthly celebration of the first day of the month on which the trumpets were blown in ancient Israel to remind the people of the forthcoming Feast of Trumpets (Num 10:10; Ps 81:3). It was a day of special

worship (1 Sam 20:5) on which work was suspended and additional sacrifices were offered (Num 29:11-14). The Sabbath obviously is the weekly Holy Day observed on the seventh day. It is evident that the three terms represent an enumeration of the sacred times of the Jewish calendar.

Paul's use of the specific name "new moon" (*neomenia*) in Colossians 2:16, instead of the generic name "month" (*men*) as used in Galatians 4:10, clearly shows that he is thinking about the sacred times of the Jewish and not of the pagan calendar. The mention of the "new moon" is relevant to our study of the Feast of Trumpets, since the two were ideologically connected. The blowing of the trumpets on the new moon served as a monthly reminder of the forthcoming Feast of Trumpets on which the trumpets were blown in a massive way to call the people to stand trial before God during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement when their sins would be disposed in a final and permanent way.

Approval or Disapproval of Holy Days? The important question to consider at this point is whether Paul in Colossians 2:16 is approving or disapproving the observance of the sacred times of the Jewish calendar. Historically, as I have shown in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*,³⁶ this text has been interpreted as a Pauline condemnation of the observance of Old Testament Holy Days. In spite of its antiquity and popularity, this interpretation is totally wrong because in this passage Paul is warning the Colossians not against the observances of the five mentioned practices (eating, drinking, feasts, new moon, and Sabbaths), but against "anyone" (*tis*) who passes judgment on how to observe them.

Note should be taken of the fact that *the judge who passes judgment is not Paul, but the Colossian false teachers* who impose "regulations" (2:20) on how to observe these practices in order to achieve "rigor of devotion and self-abasement and severity to the body" (2:23).

D. R. De Lacey, writing in the symposium *From Sabbath to Lord's Day*, rightly comments: "The judge is likely to be a man of ascetic tendencies who objects to the Colossians' eating and drinking. The most natural way of taking the rest of the passage is not that he also *imposes* a ritual of feast days, but rather that he *objects* to certain elements of such observation."³⁷ Presumably, the "judge," that is, the false teachers, wanted the community to observe these practices in a more ascetic way ("severity to the body"—2:23, 21); to put it crudely, the false teachers wanted the Colossian believers to do less feasting and more fasting.

By warning against the right of the false teachers to "pass judgment" on how to observe Holy Days, Paul is challenging not the validity of the Holy

Days as such, but the authority of the false teachers to legislate on the manner of their observance. The obvious implication is that Paul in this text is *not* expressing a *condemnation but an approbation of the mentioned practices*, which included Holy Days.

It is noteworthy that De Lacey reaches this conclusion in spite of his view that Paul did not expect Gentile converts to observe the Holy Days. He writes: “Here again (Col 2:16), then, *it seems that Paul could happily countenance Sabbathkeeping . . .* However, we interpret the situation, Paul’s statement ‘Let no one pass judgement on you,’ indicates that *no stringent regulations are to be laid down over the use of festivals.*”³⁸

Paul’s warning against the stringent “regulations” of the false teachers can hardly be interpreted as a condemnation of Mosaic laws regarding food and festivals, since what the apostle condemns is not the teachings of Moses but the perverted use of them promoted by the Colossian false teachers. A *precept* is not nullified by the condemnation of its *perversion*.

Early Christians Observed the Feasts and the Sabbath. It is most unfortunate that a faulty exegesis of Colossians 2:14-17 for centuries has misled Christians into believing that the Sabbath and the Holy Days were nailed to the Cross. Fortunately, recent research has exposed the fallacies of this traditional interpretation.

A most recent example is the article cited earlier “Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-keeping Schemes in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16” by Troy Martin, Professor at Saint Xavier University in Chicago. The article appeared in the 1996 Spring issue of *New Testament Studies*, a respected scholarly journal. Martin wrote: “This essay provides evidence that the Pauline community at Colossae, not the opponents, practiced the temporal schemes outlined by Col 2:16. . . . This investigation into the function of the list in Col 2:16 indicates that the Colossians Christians, not their critics, participate in a religious calendar that includes festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths.”³⁹

Martin rightly points out that “The adoption of the Jewish religious calendar by Paul and his communities does not necessarily mean that they also practice Jewish religious rituals. Following the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, the Jewish temporal system remains intact even when the Jews are no longer able to offer the prescribed sacrifices. Furthermore, the Gentile adoption of Sabbath observance that Josephus reports does not involve the concomitant adoption of all the Jewish rituals. Even if Paul and his communities adopt the Jewish religious calendar, they may either practice, modify, or reject the Jewish religious rituals associated with it. The type of religious rituals practiced by Paul and his communities is a separate issue from the recognition that they adopted a Jewish liturgical calendar.”⁴⁰

Martin reaches the same conclusions in an earlier essay on Colossians 2:17 published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*. He wrote: “The preceding grammatical and syntactical investigation of the clause *to de soma tou Christou* [but the body is of Christ] in Colossians 2:17 suggests that the practices mentioned in 2:16 are those of the Colossians Christians and not the opponents. . . . Although the observance of *neomenia* [new moon] is less certain, early Christians observe both feasts and sabbaths.”⁴¹

Comparison of Colossians 2:16 and Galatians 4:10. A significant contribution of Martin’s research is his analysis of the difference between the time-keeping scheme found in Galatians 4:10 (“days, and months, and seasons, and years”) and that found in Colossians 2:16 (“a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths”). Martin shows that while the list in Colossians 2:16 is unquestionably Jewish because the temporal categories of festival, new moon, and Sabbaths are characteristic of the Jewish religious calendar, the list in Galatians 4:10 “describes a pagan calendar unacceptable to Paul and his communities.”⁴²

Martin reaches this conclusion by examining not only the time structure of pagan calendars,⁴³ but especially the immediate context where Paul condemns the Galatians’ attempt to return to their pagan practices (Gal 4:8-9) by reverting to the use of their pagan calendar. “As the immediate context clearly states, Paul is worried that he has labored for the Galatians in vain since they have returned to their former pagan life as evidenced by their renewed preconversion reckoning of time. Because of its association with idolatry and false deities, marking time according to this pagan scheme is tantamount to rejecting Paul’s Gospel and the one and only true God it proclaims (4:8-9). Galatians 4:10, therefore, stipulates that when the Galatians accepted Paul’s Gospel with its aversion to idolatry (4:8), they discarded their pagan method of reckoning time. . . . A comparison of these lists demonstrates that the Gentile conversion to Paul’s gospel involves rejection of idolatrous pagan temporal schemes in favor of the Jewish liturgical calendar.”⁴⁴

The conclusion of Martin that the Gentiles’ conversion to the Gospel involved the rejection of their pagan calendar built upon the idolatrous worship of many gods, and the adoption of the Jewish religious calendar which had been transformed by Christ’s coming, represents in my view a significant breakthrough in our understanding of the continuity between Judaism and Christianity. Let us hope that these recent scholarly studies will contribute toward putting to rest the prevailing mistaken assumption that the Apostolic Church broke away immediately and radically from Judaism, in general, and from the Jewish religious calendar, in particular.

PART II
THE FEAST OF TRUMPETS
IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The Feast of Trumpets, as already noted, is not explicitly found in the New Testament. What we find instead are the themes associated with this feast, especially in the book of Revelation. In fact, 14 of the 23 New Testament occurrences of the noun “*salpinx*–trumpet” and of the verb “*salpizo*–to sound the trumpet” appear in Revelation 8-11, the passage dealing with the seven trumpets. This is not surprising because the typology of the Feasts of Trumpets, as we shall see, finds its antitypical fulfillment especially in the seven trumpets.

The same holds true for the Fall Feasts of Atonement and Tabernacles, both of which are clearly alluded to in Revelation. The reason the imagery of the Fall Feasts is present especially in Revelation is to be found in the fact that these feasts typify the consummation of redemption which is the focus of the book. Furthermore, since the entire book of Revelation has a comprehensive sanctuary setting with a rich sanctuary festival typology, one would expect to find in it more allusions to the feasts than in other books of the New Testament.⁴⁵

Trumpets and the Parousia. Before focusing our attention on the correlation between the Feast of Trumpets and the seven trumpets of Revelation, let us briefly consider four other occurrences of trumpet in conjunction with the classic passages dealing with the Second Coming.

In Matthew 24:31, Jesus says: “And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The angels that gather the elect do not blow the trumpet, rather, they are accompanied by “a loud trumpet call” which is sent by the Son of Man to raise the dead and to translate the living saints. This function of the trumpet call is explained in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52: “Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”

The trumpet that is blown at the Second Advent is rightly called “the last trumpet–*eschate salpiggi*” because it heralds the consummation of redemption with the resurrection or translation of believers. The sound of the last trumpet is most likely the very voice of Christ, because Jesus said: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth” (John 5:28-29). The trumpet is associated with the

voice of Christ also in Revelation 1:10 where John hears “a loud voice like a trumpet” which is identified as the voice of the glorified Son of Man (Rev 1:12-13).

“The trumpet of God” is also mentioned in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 where we find the most vivid description of the Second Advent in the Bible: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord.”

The Lord here descends from heaven with a shout of command, the voice of the archangel, and the trumpet of God. These three sounds which are essentially one sound bring back to life the dead in Christ and transform the living righteous. This outcome of the trumpet sound which accompanies Christ’s coming reminds us of the “remembrance” function of the Feast of Trumpets.

We noted in chapter 2 that the blowing of the shofar on the Feast of Trumpets served the purpose not only of reminding the people to repent of their sins but also of reminding God to be merciful toward His people (Num 10:9,10). The last trumpet which accompanies Christ at His Return proves that God has not forgotten His people in the graves and in distress on earth. He remembers them by delivering them from sin, sorrow, and death. In a sense, this is the antitypical fulfillment of the judgment inaugurated on the Feast of Trumpets and terminated on the Day of Atonement. The latter is the day when Christ “will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28).

The judgment nature of the “loud trumpet call” which accompanies Christ’s coming is evident in the immediate context of Matthew 24:31 which describes the cosmic signs of the final judgment executed by Christ at His coming. These signs include the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, and the shaking of the earth (Matt 24:29). All these signs are frequently associated in the Old Testament with the Day of the Lord (Jer 4:23-27; Ez 32:7-8; Hag 2:6-9; Is 13:9-13; Joel 2:28-32). Thus the “loud trumpet call” of Matthew 24:31 is clearly in the same judgment context of the Old Testament texts related to the Day of the Lord. We can see in the Scripture a common thread associated with the trumpet sound.

Day of Atonement and the Parousia. From a typological perspective, however, the loud trumpet call that accompanies Christ’s Return represents more the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement than of the Feast of Trumpets as such. The reason is that the Feast of Trumpets represents the

inauguration of the pre-Advent judgment, while the Day of Atonement typifies its termination which results in the final disposition of sin. Jesus comes not to institute the judgment typified by the Feast of the Trumpets but to execute the judgment foreshadowed by the Day of Atonement. Christ comes to eliminate sin in a final and permanent way, as typified by the cleansing ritual of the Day of Atonement.

This finality of the elimination of sin was expressed on the Day of Atonement through the blasting of the ram's horn to inaugurate the Jubilee year celebration of new beginnings. "Then you shall send abroad the loud trumpet on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the day of atonement you shall send abroad the trumpet throughout your land" (Lev 25:9). The liberation and restoration of the Jubilee Year was ushered in by a loud trumpet blowing throughout the land. This served to remind the people of the cleansing and new moral beginning granted them by God on the Day of Atonement.

This typological meaning of the blasting of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement helps us to understand why the imagery of the Jubilee's trumpet blast is used in the Scripture to describe both the messianic ingathering of the exiles (Is 27:13; Zech 9:9-14) and the Return of Christ (Matt 24:31; 1 Thess 4:16; 1 Cor 15:52). Thus, the trumpet blast that accompanies Christ's Return represents more the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement than of the Feast of Trumpets. Christ comes to accomplish the elimination of sin and the inauguration of a new order, events typified by the ritual of the Day of Atonement.

The Worship Setting of the Seven Trumpets. The themes of the Feast of Trumpets are more evident in the seven trumpets of Revelation than in the trumpet blast that accompanies Christ's Return. The temple worship setting of the seven trumpets already suggests a possible connection with the Feast of Trumpets. It is important to remember, as Jon Paulien points out, that "the entire book of Revelation is placed in a setting that is based on the Old Testament tabernacle and temple cultus. Preceding each major section of the book is a sanctuary scene."⁴⁶

The general setting of the seven trumpets is the offering of the incense at the golden altar of the Holy Place (Rev 8:3-5). But with the blowing of the seventh trumpet there is a movement from the Holy to the Most Holy place where the ark of the covenant is seen (Rev 11:19). This is an obvious allusion to the liturgy of the Day of Atonement when the High Priest ministered before the ark of the covenant. The transition from the Holy to the Most Holy Place suggests a movement from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets to that of the Day of Atonement. This becomes clearer when we look at the thematic development of the seven trumpets.

We have seen in chapter 2 that the blowing of the shofar on the Feast of Trumpets served the purpose not only of reminding the people to repent of their sins, but also of reminding God to be merciful toward His people (Num 10:9-10). These themes are found in the seven trumpets which are introduced in Revelation 8:3-5 in the setting of the offering of incense at the golden altar together with the prayers of the saints. The response to their prayers is the casting down of the censer and the blowing of the trumpets.

The seven trumpets are unleashed in answer to the prayers of the saints. This means that the vision of the angel casting the censer filled with fire upon the earth (Rev 8:5) and of the seven angels readying themselves to blow the seven trumpets conveys a simple truth already expressed in the prayer of the souls of the martyrs under the altar (Rev 6:9-11), namely, that God's judgment is a response to the prayers of the saints. In Revelation the censer of prayer becomes the censer of judgment.

Jon Paulien brings out this important point: "This is a remarkable parallel to Numbers 10:8-10. There the sounding of a trumpet was understood as an act of prayer reminding God of His covenant with His people. God's response would be to deliver them militarily and cultically. In Revelation the trumpets are unleashed by the prayers of the saints and signal God's response to those prayers. This strong thematic parallel with Numbers 10 argues that the trumpets in Revelation 8-11 are to be understood in relation to worship and prayer as is the case in much of the Old Testament."⁴⁷

This understanding of the seven trumpets as a divine response to the prayers of the saints helps us appreciate their connection with the Feast of Trumpets, the feast when the shofar was blown throughout the land to remind God to be merciful toward His people. Furthermore, this understanding of judgment as a divine response to the prayers of the saints reveals the positive function of judgment, namely, a method for the divine vindication of believers rather than merely a scheme for the divine retribution of sinners.

Seven Trumpets and the Feast of Trumpets. The worship setting of the seven trumpets suggests their possible connection with the Feast of Trumpets in other ways also. The association of the number seven with trumpets reminds us of the seven New Moon festivals, each of which was accompanied by the blowing of trumpets to remind the people of the forthcoming Feast of Trumpets. Thus, the seven trumpets could represent the seven new moons from the beginning of the religious year to the first day of the seventh month. The blowing of trumpets at each new moon was an anticipated Feast of Trumpets that served to remind people to prepared for the day of judgment that would be inaugurated by the massive blowing of trumpets at the new moon of the seventh month.

Jon Paulien brings out clearly the connection between the seven trumpets of Revelation and the new-moons festivals: “The Feast of Trumpets is closely associated in Jewish thought with the new-moon festivals that were celebrated at the beginning of each month. Since the month of the year in the Jewish calendar are numbered beginning with Nisan, there is a sense in which the Feast of Trumpets comes as the climax of a seven-month series of mini-Feast of Trumpets. The festival, in principle then, covers the span between the spring and fall festivals. If John is familiar with Jewish thinking in these matters, and we have already seen abundant evidence that he is, the seven trumpets of Revelation probably represent the ongoing sequence of seven months with the seventh trumpet representing the Feast of Trumpets itself. It is, interestingly, within the seven trumpet (Rev 11:18) that we find the first explicit use of judgment terminology in Revelation. In Jewish thought the seventh-month Feast of Trumpets ushered in the time of judgment that led up to the Day of Atonement (cf. 11:18, 19). Correspondingly, from Revelation 11:19 to near the end of the book there is an increasing focus on judgment.”⁴⁸

Paulien’s comment is significant, not only because it recognizes a possible correlation between the seven trumpets of Revelation and the seven new-moon festivals but also because it acknowledges that the seventh trumpet in Revelation, like the Feast of Trumpets in Jewish thought, ushers in the time of judgment that leads up to the Day of Atonement. This is an important observation because in Adventist thought the time of judgment has generally been ushered in by the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. This view is not quite correct since we noted in chapter 2 that the time of judgment actually began with the massive blowing of trumpets on the first day of the seventh months, *Rosh Hashanah*, and terminated ten days later on the Day of Atonement with the final disposition of sin.

The blowing of trumpets at each New Moon was understood as a day of judgment in miniature, warning people to prepare for the final judgment ushered in by the Feast of Trumpets. Correspondingly, the blowing of the first six trumpets in Revelation warns people to prepare for the final judgment inaugurated by the blowing of the seventh trumpet. Richard Davidson also notes this correlation: “Just as the Feast of Trumpets (also called *Rosh Hashannah*, the Jewish New Year), summoned ancient Israel to prepare for the coming judgment, Yom Kippur, so the trumpets of Revelation especially highlight the approach of the antitypical Yom Kippur.”⁴⁹

Support for this interpretation is provided first of all by the warning function of the first six trumpets. The plagues unleashed by the blowing of the first six trumpets are judgments of grace designed to lead people to repentance. This is clearly stated in Revelation 9:20, 21 where twice we are told that

people “did not repent,” in spite of the judgments that accompanied the blowing of the first six trumpets. Gerhard Friedrich notes that the judgments of the six trumpets are “the final warning of God, His summons to repentance. . . . That these penal judgments are at root judgment of grace is emphasized in Revelation 9:20-21. The aim of God in sending the plagues is that men should be converted from idolatry. They are meant to drive men to repentance before it is too late.”⁵⁰

The first six trumpet judgments are a warning to beware of the final judgment which is explicitly announced at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:18). God is not in the business of punishing but of saving. Consequently, He warns people through both calamities and preaching to repent before it is too late. The trumpet judgments become a call to repentance when they are combined with oral warnings, or, we might say, with the preaching of the Gospel. A good example is found in Ezekiel 33:2-4: “Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman; and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; then if any one who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not take warning.”

The warning function of the first six trumpets is indicated also by the partial character of the plagues they unleash. The plagues are limited territorially because they fall on thirds of the earth (Rev 8:7, 9, 11, 13). They are also limited temporally because they are allowed to torture mankind for only “five months” (Rev 9:5). By contrast, the seven bowl plagues fall upon *all* the earth (Rev 16:1, 2, 3, 4, 8). They are called the seven “last” plagues because they represent the final, end-time manifestation of God’s wrath. The trumpets, on the other hand, are a series of judgments that lead up to the final judgment, which is announced with the blowing of the seventh trumpet, the antitypical Feast of Trumpets.

The Seventh Trumpet and the Judgment. The seventh trumpet is unique because it announces the consummation of redemption. The angel informs John that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet “there should be no more delay . . . the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled” (Rev 10:6-7). “What the angel announces,” as Eldon Ladd explains, “is that there will be no more time intervening before the coming end. The consummation will no longer be delayed.”⁵¹ The reason is that the seventh trumpet is the antitypical Feast of Trumpets which ushers in the final judgment whose outcome is the rewarding of the righteous and the retribution of the ungodly at the coming of Christ.

“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. . . . The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth’ (Rev 11:15, 18).

It is noteworthy that the announcement of the judgment is followed by the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen (Rev 11:19). This is a clear allusion to the Day of Atonement which finds its antitypical fulfillment in the coming of Christ as indicated by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the End. “There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the End with the ritual of the Day of Atonement suggests that Christ’s coming represents the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement. This topic is examined in chapter 5.

It is important to note that the seventh trumpet is depicted very differently from the preceding six. While the blowing of the first six trumpets unleash warning judgments on the earth, the blowing of the seventh trumpet announces God’s enthronement and judgment that transpire in heaven. “There were loud voices in heaven, saying: ‘The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever’” (Rev 11:15). Then the twenty-four elders mentioned in chapters 4 and 5 fall down in worship and sing a song which contains three major themes.

The first theme is the celebration of God’s enthronement: “We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and began to reign” (Rev 11:17). This reminds us of the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* which was seen, as we noted in chapter 2, as a symbol of God’s enthronement. The themes of judgment and kingship are closely related because the king was enthroned to judge over his people.

The second theme is the announcement of God’s judgment and the visitation of His wrath to establish His gracious rule in the world: “The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged” (Rev 11:18). This reminds of the judgment that was announced by the blowing of trumpets on *Rosh Hashanah*. The judgment was redemptive for the penitent people and punitive for unrepenting sinners.

The third theme is the outcome of the judgment manifested in the rewarding of the righteous and the destroying of the ungodly. “[The time has come] for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear

thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Rev 11:18). This points to execution of the final judgment at Christ’s coming, which represents the antitypical Day of Atonement. In fact, the announcement of the judgment is followed immediately by the opening of the Most Holy place in heaven where the ark of the covenant is seen (Rev 11:19). We noted earlier that this is a clear allusion to the Day of Atonement which finds its antitypical fulfillment in the coming of Christ as indicated by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the End (Rev 11:19).

The thematic development of the seven trumpets reveals a movement from the warning judgment messages on this earth in conjunction with the blowing of the first six trumpets to the announcement of God’s enthronement and the inauguration of His heavenly judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet. The same movement can be seen in the blowing of the trumpets during the seven new moons of the Hebrew religious calendar. During the new moons of the first six months, the trumpets were blown to warn the people about the forthcoming judgment, but on the new moon of the seventh month the trumpets were blown to announce the inauguration of the heavenly judgment. These thematic similarities suggest that the seven trumpets represent the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets.

The Seventh Trumpet and Daniel 7:9-14. The connection between the judgment theme of the Feast of Trumpets and the seven trumpets can also be seen by comparing the themes of the seventh trumpet mentioned above with those of judgment scene of Daniel 7:9-28. The two reveal striking similarities. The first theme in Daniel 7 is like that of the seventh trumpet, namely, God’s enthronement: “As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat” (Dan 7:9). In Revelation, the twenty-four elders praise God because He “began to reign” (Rev 11:17).

The second theme in Daniel 7 is similar to that of the seventh trumpet, namely, a heavenly judgment: “The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened” (Dan 7:10). Revelation says that “the time [has come] for the dead to be judged” (Rev 11:18) and “the dead were judged by what was written in the books” (Rev 20:12).

The third theme in Daniel 7 resembles that of the seventh trumpet, namely, the vindication of the saints and destruction of the ungodly powers: “And as I looked the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. . . . Judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom” (Dan 7:11, 22). Revelation says that the time has come “for rewarding thy servants . . . and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Rev 11:18).

These three themes are followed in Daniel 7 by the coming of the Son of Man to establish His everlasting kingdom (Dan 7:13-14). The corresponding event in the seventh trumpet is the opening of the Most Holy place in heaven which unleashes the cosmic signs associated with the Second Advent (Rev 11:19).

The striking similarities between the themes of the seventh trumpet and those of Daniel 7 suggest that both visions focus on the judgment in heaven that precedes the Return of Christ. The pre-Advent judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets is fulfilled in the judgment visions of Daniel 7:9-14 and Revelation 11:17-18.

In chapter 2, we noted how the Feast of Trumpets was understood in Old Testament times as the beginning of a heavenly judgment in which the destiny of every human being was decided. The purpose of the judgment was not only punitive but also redemptive. We found that the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* had a dual function. On the one hand, it called the people to repent in view of the ten days of judgment that began on that day and, on the other hand, it reassured them that they would be remembered with favor by God.

In many ways the seven trumpets fulfill the same function. On the one hand, the first six trumpets unleash judgments that are designed to call people to repent (Rev 9:20-21). On the other hand, the seventh trumpet reassures believers that God will remember them in the day of judgment by rewarding them and punishing the ungodly.

The Feast of Trumpets and Three Angels' Messages. The judgment themes of the Feast of Trumpets can be seen also in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. These messages are God's final warnings, trumpet-calls to mankind. Just as the Jews announced the beginning of the judgment on the Feast of Trumpets by a massive blowing of the shofar, so the first angel announces the arrival of the time of judgment with a "loud voice," saying: "Fear God and give glory to him for the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7).

The second angel proclaims God's judgment upon Babylon: "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great" (Rev 14:8). Babylon is a symbol of the false worship promoted by the false trinity, the dragon, the beast, and false prophet (Rev 16:13).

The third angel warns people about God's punitive judgment upon any one who "worships the beast and his image" (Rev 14:9). These three judgment messages are followed by the coming of the Son of Man for the harvest of the earth. The sequential order is instructive. Just as the judgment announced by

the Feast of Trumpets was followed by the final cleansing of the believers and the punishment of the unbelievers on the Day of Atonement, so the judgment announced by the three angels is followed by the salvation of believers (represented by the harvest of the wheat—Rev 14:14-16), and punishment of unbeliever (typified by the harvest of the grapes thrown in the wine press of God’s wrath—Rev 14:17-20) on the day of Christ’s coming.

The timing of the three angels’ judgment messages is significant. They come, as noted by John A. Bollier, between the end of the first two series of judgments (seven seals and seven trumpets—Rev 6 to 13) and beginning of the last series of judgments (seven plagues, punishment of Babylon, of the beast, the false prophet, Satan, and the wicked—Rev 15 to 20).⁵² What this means is that the heavenly judgment begins before the outpouring of the seven last plagues which terminate with the Coming of Christ (Rev 16:15).

The Pre-Advent nature of the three angels’ judgment-messages is indicated also by the fact that they precede the vision of the two harvests reaped by Christ at His Coming. The fact that the announcement about the beginning of the judgment is made before Christ comes “for the harvest of the earth” (14:15) suggests that this is the Pre-Advent phase of the final judgment. This is a time when not only an evaluative judgment is conducted in heaven but also God’s last trumpet call to repentance is sounded upon the earth.

Just as in the typical Levitical system the trumpets were blown during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement to call the people to repent and stand trial before the heavenly court, so in the antitypical service an angel calls with “a loud voice” upon mankind to repent and worship God because “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). Also, just as the investigative judgment of the Feast of Trumpets was followed by the executive judgment of the Day of Atonement, so the investigative judgment announced by the three angels is followed by the executive judgment of the Day of Christ’s coming for the harvest of the earth. The correspondence between the typological meaning of the Feasts of Trumpets/Day of Atonement and their antitypical fulfillment in Revelation 14 can hardly be missed.

Assurance of Divine Vindication. In our study of the Feast of Trumpets in the Old Testament, we found that the blowing of the shofar had a dual function. On the one hand, it called the people to repent in view of the judgment that began on *Rosh Hashanah* and on the other hand, it reassured the people that they would be remembered with favor by God.

In Revelation, this message of reassurance of divine vindication is expressed in a unique way. Each of the three judgment visions of Revelation 14, 15, and 19 is preceded by a vision of the redeemed singing before the

throne of God. The function of the introductory visions of the redeemed singing before the throne of God is to offer to believers reassurance of divine vindication on the day of judgment. The message seems to be: “Do not be afraid of the coming judgment. Look the redeemed are already singing!”

In Revelation 14, the judgment messages of the three angels are preceded by the vision of 144,000 singing “a new song before the throne” (Rev 14:3). In Revelation 15, the judgment of the seven last plagues and of Babylon (Rev 16 to 18) is introduced by the vision of the redeemed standing upon “what appeared to be a sea of glass” singing “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (Rev 15:2-3). Incidentally, the theme of the song is the praise of God’s justice for His “judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:4). God’s judgments are revealed during the antitypical Feast of Trumpets when the books are opened so that heavenly beings could verify the justice of divine judgments (Dan 7:9-10).

The judgment to be executed by Christ at His coming is also introduced in Revelation 19 by “a great multitude in heaven” (Rev 19:1) crying for joy and praising God “for his judgments are true and just” (Rev 19:3) and “for the marriage of the Lamb has come” (Rev 19:7). The fact that the three judgment visions of Revelation 14, 15, and 19 are introduced by a vision of the redeemed singing songs of triumph and praise suggests that God gives a preview of the outcome of the judgment to reassure His people that His judgment is not a scheme of divine retribution but a reassurance of divine vindication. To put it differently, the judgment is not merely a moral deterrent, but a moral stimulant to live “chaste,” “spotless” lives (Rev 14:4-5) in the expectation to “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev 14:4).

The Feast of Trumpets and the Seven Plagues. The judgment theme of the Feast of Trumpets is present also in the description of the seven last plagues. The function of the seven last plagues is similar to that of the seven trumpets, namely, to call mankind to repent before it is too late. This is indicated by the negative response to the plagues: “They did not repent and give him glory” (Rev 16:9; cf. v. 11). Just as God called upon the Israelites at the Feast of Trumpets to repent through the massive blowing of trumpets, so He will call people to repent at the End through the manifestation of unprecedented calamities.

With the seventh and last plague, “A loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’” (Rev 16:17). This announcement is followed by the usual cataclysmic signs of Christ’s coming: lightning, peals of thunder, great earthquake, fleeing of islands, and mountains (Rev 16:18-21; cf. 6:12-17; 11:19). This follows the pattern we have already found in

Revelation, namely, a judgment process that culminates with Christ's coming to punish the ungodly and save the faithful. This is the pattern typified by the judgment process of the Feasts of Trumpets which culminated on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest appeared to reveal God's saving and punitive judgments.

The foregoing discussion has shown that though the Feast of Trumpets is not explicitly mentioned in the New Testament, its judgment theme is evident especially in the book of Revelation. This is not surprising, since the theme of judgment is central both to the typology of the Feast of Trumpets and to the book of Revelation.

PART III THE PRE-ADVENT PHASE OF THE FINAL JUDGMENT

Our study of the Feast of Trumpets in the Old and New Testaments has shown that a fundamental function of the feast is to call people to prepare for the heavenly judgment that reveals the destiny of mankind. We refer to this judgment process as the pre-Advent judgment because typologically and antitypically it precedes the Second Advent.

The questions we wish to address in the last part of this chapter are: Is the doctrine of the pre-Advent judgment derived solely from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets or from a broad Biblical base? How important is this doctrine for our overall understanding of the plan of salvation? How relevant is this doctrine for our Christian life today?

Historically, little or no attention has been given to the judicial process which precedes and follows the Advent judgment. The focus has been primarily on the final judgment executed by Christ at His coming. Even this aspect has been viewed largely as Leonardo Da Vinci's Universal Judgment of the Sistine Chapel, where Christ manifests His vengeance by inflicting punishment upon the wicked. A contributing factor to this prevailing misunderstanding has been the failure to understand the unfolding of redemptive history as typified by the Biblical feasts. Our study of the Feast of Trumpets has shown that the investigative phase of the final judgment takes place in heaven before Christ comes to execute such judgment.

Reality More Important than Modality. It must be admitted that the Bible speaks more of the *fact* than of the *phases* of the final judgment. The reason is that from a Biblical perspective, the *reality* of the final judgment is more important than its *modality*. This observation applies to other Biblical

truths such as the resurrection. For example, no attempt is made by Christ or by most of the New Testament writers to differentiate between the resurrection of believers at the time of Christ's coming and the resurrection of unbelievers at the end of the millennium.

Jesus speaks of "the hour" that is coming "when *all* who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28-29). In this statement, Christ presents the resurrection of the "good" doers and that of the evildoers as taking place contemporaneously (cf. Matt 25:32; Luke 11:32). Yet, John the Revelator distinguishes between the two resurrections by placing the former at the beginning of the millennium and the latter after "the thousand years were ended" (Rev 20:4-5).

To a scientific, modern mind, those two statements stand in open contradiction. Yet Biblical writers had no difficulty in reconciling the two statements because for them the *reality* was more important than the *modality* of the resurrection.

The same principle applies to the Biblical references to the final judgment. In most cases the concern is to emphasize the *reality* and *finality* of the event rather than its *modality*. Yet as in the case of the resurrection, there are Biblical passages which suggest a pre-Advent phase of the final judgment. We have found this doctrine embedded in the typology of the Feast of Trumpets. Now we wish to explore the broader Biblical support for this doctrine.

1. The Pre-Advent Judgment in the Teaching of Jesus

The Notion of Reward. The notion of a pre-Advent judgment is an underlying assumption of much of Jesus' teachings. Such a notion is implied even in those numerous passages where the technical terms for judgment are not used. Jesus often spoke about receiving or missing God's *reward* (Matt 6:1; cf. 6:2, 4, 5, 16, 18; 10:41, 42; Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35) which implies a previous evaluative judgment.

The time for assigning rewards or retribution is clearly given as the Second Advent: "For the Son of man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and *then* he will repay every man for what he has done" (Matt 16:27; cf. 25:31-32). In this and similar statements, the Second Advent is perceived as the time for the assignment of rewards or punishments, and not for the evaluation of what each person deserves. We may reasonably assume that the evaluative process that determines such decision takes place *before* the Advent.

Some may wish to argue that there is no need for God to investigate the deeds and attitudes of each person to determine what they deserve because He already knows it all. This is true for God obviously does not need to seek for lacking information about His creatures. Yet, Jesus and the Biblical writers speak of a judgment that investigates not only deeds but also words: “I tell you, on the day of judgment men will render account for every careless word they utter” (Matt 12:36). The purpose of this investigation, as we shall see, is not to enable God to ascertain the truth about each person but rather to expose and disclose this truth to His moral universe.

The Dead Resurrected Already Judged. The destiny of each human being is obviously decided before Christ comes to call forth “those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment” (John 5:28-29). The resurrection to life or to condemnation represents Christ’s executive judgment which presupposes the termination of the evaluative judgment. In this text, Christ indicates that people will be resurrected *not to be judged* but *already judged*. If those who are resurrected to eternal life or death were still to be judged, we would have an incongruous situation whereby the results of the judgment would be meted out before the convening of the judgment itself.

The Notion of Separation. The idea of the separation that takes place at the Coming of Christ between the saved and the unsaved also presupposes a Pre-Advent judgment. Jesus describes this Advent separation in a variety of ways. He compares it to the separation that takes place at harvest time between the wheat and the weeds. Note that the reapers are simply told: “Gather the weeds . . . gather the wheat” (Matt 13:30). There is no need for them to ascertain which is the wheat and which is the weeds because by harvest time the distinction between the two has already been established.

A dramatic reference to the Advent separation is found in the Olivet Discourse where Jesus, speaking of the day of “the coming of the Son of man,” says: “Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one is taken and one is left” (Matt 24:40-41). The sudden separation between the saved and the unsaved presupposes a previous determination of their respective destinies.

The Advent separation is also compared by Christ to a shepherd who “separates the sheep from the goats” by placing the former at the right hand and the latter at the left (Matt 25:32-33). In a similar fashion, Christ “will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, . . . inherit the kingdom . . .’” and “to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, . . . into the eternal fire’” (Matt 25:34, 41).

Some have interpreted the description of the gathering of all the nations before Christ (Matt 25:32) as representing a universal investigative judgment conducted at the time of Christ's Return. The description, however, contains only Christ's *invitation* and *condemnation* (Come, . . . Depart . . .) with the respective *explanation* ("For I was hungry and you gave me food" or "you gave me no food"), but not an *investigation* of who did or did not act compassionately. The judicial process that led to this determination is presupposed as having already occurred.

The Wedding Garment. A pre-Advent evaluation process is also presupposed in Christ's parable of "a king who gave a marriage feast for his son" (Matt 22:2). When the original guests refused to come to the marriage feast, the wedding invitation was extended to as many as could be found and "so the wedding hall was filled with guests" (vv. 3-10). The king went to a great deal of expense not only in extending the invitation but also, according to custom, in supplying to each guest a beautiful robe to wear for the occasion. "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment" (Matt 22:11).

Evidently the king examined the guests *before* the marriage feast began. In Revelation 19, the coming of Christ is compared to the "marriage of the Lamb" (vv. 7, 17). The consistency of this imagery suggests that the marriage feast of Matthew 22 is an allusion to the celebration that accompanies the Second Advent. The Church, espoused to Christ by faith (Eph 5:32), waits, as in the parable of the Ten Virgins, for the coming of the Heavenly Groom to celebrate the marriage feast. If this interpretation is correct, then the examination by the king of the wedding guests *before* the celebration of the marriage feast would represent an evaluation process that takes place before the coming of Christ.

Ellen White offers this interpretation when she writes: "In the parable of Matthew 22 the same figure of the marriage is introduced, and the investigative judgment is clearly represented as taking place before marriage. Previous to the wedding the king comes in to see the guests, to see if all are attired in the wedding garment, the spotless robe of character washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb . . . This work of examination of character, of determining who are prepared for the kingdom of God, is that of the investigative judgment, the closing work in the sanctuary above."⁵³

This brief survey indicates that the idea of a Pre-Advent evaluative judgment is an underlying assumption in much of Jesus' teaching about the judgment. The themes of reward, accountability, and separation presupposes a Pre-Advent judicial investigation that determines who is "accounted wor-

thy” to attain to the resurrection of life and who to the resurrection of condemnation (Luke 20:35; John 5:28-29).

2. The Pre-Advent Judgment in Paul’s Writings

Like Christ, Paul emphasizes the certainty and inevitability of the final judgment rather than its modality. He writes: “we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; . . . So each of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom 14:10-12; cf. 2 Cor 5:10; Acts 17:31).

No explicit explanation is given by Paul regarding the time of this universal accountability before the judgment seat of God. Yet, in several places Paul suggests that the evaluative phase of the final judgment precedes the coming of Christ. In Romans 2:5, Paul describes the Second Advent as the time “when God’s righteous judgment will be *revealed*.”⁵⁴ This revelation consists of the executive act of Christ who gives “eternal life” to “those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality” and “wrath and fury” to “those who are factious and do not obey the truth” (Rom 2:7-8).

This revelation of “God’s righteous judgment” presupposes some prior process of investigation that determines who is to receive the gift of eternal life and who “the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess 1:8-9).

The Judgment Precedes Appearance of Christ. The same inference can be drawn from Paul’s charge to Timothy: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, . . .” (2 Tim 4:1-2).

William Barclay notes the significance of the sequential order of the charge: (1) Judgment, (2) Appearance, (3) Kingdom. This sequence, he points out, reflects the logical progression that leads to the consummation of salvation-history.⁵⁵ Christ’s judgment of the living and the dead is followed by His appearance which will usher in His eternal Kingdom. Note also that if the dead are judged while still dead, such judgment must precede the Advent judgment when the resurrection to eternal life or eternal death takes place.

3. The Pre-Advent Judgment in the Book of Revelation

The theme of judgment is central in Revelation because it represents God’s method of finally overcoming the opposition of evil to Himself and His people. The martyrs who cry for judgment (Rev 6:10) are reassured that God will shortly vindicate them. When finally the redeemed stand beside the sea of glass they sing: “O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, . . . for they judgments have been revealed” (15:3-4).

The emphasis on the centrality and finality of God's judgment in Revelation overshadows the concern to differentiate between its phases: pre-Advent, Advent, post-Advent judgment. Yet these distinctions are not altogether absent. We have found allusions to the pre-Advent judgment in the announcement of the judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11: 18). An indication of the post-Advent judgment can be seen in the reference to the "judgment [that] was committed" to those who share "in the first resurrection" (Rev 20:4, 6).

Evidently this phase of the judgment is conducted after the Advent since its participants shared in the first resurrection associated with Christ's Return. Thus, the Book of Revelation implicitly recognizes certain distinct phases of the final judgment.

The Announcement of Judgment. A portrayal of the pre-Advent judgment is found in Revelation 14. This chapter contains three distinct visions, each introduced by the phrase: "Then I looked . . ." (Rev 14:1, 6, 14). The first vision presents the 144,000 singing the song of triumph before God's throne (Rev 14:3). They are said to be the "first fruits" of the redeemed (Rev 14:4). This vision introduces the next two visions, the first of which announces God's judgment (14:6-13) and the second of which describes its execution (14:14-20). We noted earlier that the function of the introductory vision is to offer to believers the assurance of divine vindication on the day of the judgment.

The second vision describes three angels flying in mid-heaven, proclaiming three judgment messages. The first angel declares with a loud-voice: "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water" (14:7). The loud voice proclamation reminds us of the massive trumpet blowing at the Feast of Trumpets to warn every one that the day of judgment had come. The second angel announces God's judgment upon Babylon (14:8) and the third warns people about God's judgment upon those who worship the beast and its image (14:9-11).

The Last Call to Repentance. The third vision portrays dramatically the execution of the final judgment by Christ at His Coming by means of the imagery of the harvest (Rev 14:14-20). It is noteworthy that the harvest of the earth is preceded by the announcement that "the hour of his judgment has come" (Rev 14:7). This announcement is designated as the "eternal gospel" (Rev 14:6). This means that the time of judgment that precedes the execution of the final judgment at Christ's Coming is not a time of no return, but rather the time when God sounds the last trumpet call to repentance. The pre-Advent

judgments in Revelation, as aptly stated by John A. Bollier, “are educative in purpose rather than vindictive or retributive. They are meant to bring both the church and the world to repentance.”⁵⁶

The Timing of the Judgment. The pre-Advent nature of the first angel’s judgment-message is indicated by the fact that it precedes the third vision of the same chapter which describes the two harvests reaped by Christ at His Coming. The first is the harvest of the grain which represents the gathering of the righteous into God’s Kingdom (Rev 14:14-16). The second is the harvest of the grapes which refers to the vintage of God’s wrath manifested in the condemnation of the wicked (Rev 14:17-20).

The fact that the announcement about the beginning of the judgment is made before Christ comes “for the harvest of the earth” (Rev 14:15) suggests that this is the pre-Advent phase of the final judgment. This is a time when not only an evaluative judgment is conducted in heaven, but also God’s last call to repentance is given on this earth.

As in the typical Feast of Trumpets, there was a massive blowing of trumpets ten days before the Day of Atonement to call the people to repentance during the pre-Atonement judgment, so in the antitypical service an angel announces with loud voice that “the hour of his judgment has come” and calls upon mankind to repent and worship God during the pre-Advent judgment which is followed by the Advent harvest.

4. Pre-Advent Judgment in the Book of Daniel

Earlier we saw the striking similarity between the themes of the judgment scene of Daniel 7 and those of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15-19). We found that both of them reflect the themes of the Feast of Trumpets. At this time we want to take a closer look at Daniel’s judgment vision because it sheds light on the nature and timing of the pre-Advent judgment. The chapter is structured in three parts and each of them climaxes with a court scene in heaven around the throne of “the Ancient of Days.”

In the first part (Dan 7:1-14), Daniel describes a vision in which he saw an unfolding of historical powers symbolized by the successive arising out of the sea of four great beasts, each different from the other. Daniel is astonished by the dreadfulness of the fourth beast out of which arises a persecuting power represented by a little horn with “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things” (Dan 7:8).

While observing the little horn, Daniel’s gaze shifts heavenward where he sees the dazzling appearance of the Ancient of Days seated on His throne: “A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand

stood before him; the court sat in judgment and the books were opened” (Dan 7:9-10). While viewing this celestial tribunal, Daniel’s gaze momentarily shifts back earthward, where he sees God’s judgment being visited upon the insolent despot and the beasts (Dan 7:11-12).

Then Daniel’s gaze returns heavenward where he sees “a son of man” coming to “the Ancient of Days” to receive His eternal dominion and Kingdom “which shall not pass away” (Dan 7:13-14). It is noteworthy that the celestial judgment in this first scene begins after the appearance of the insolent Little Horn and before the coming of the Son of Man to receive the eternal Kingdom. Thus the sequence of events clearly indicates that the heavenly judgment described in verses 9-10 precedes the coming of Christ to establish God’s eternal kingdom.

The Explanation of the Vision. In the second part of the chapter (Dan 7:15-22), Daniel asks for and receives the explanation of the meaning of the four beasts. He is told that the four beasts represent four kings, the last of which will give rise to a power which will make war against “the saints” (Dan 7:21). The persecution of the saints by this despotic power will continue “until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given for the saints of the Most High, and the time came when the saints received the kingdom” (Dan 7:22).

This second part adds some details to the judgment scene of verses 9-10 by explaining that the judgment concerns both the persecuting power and the persecuted saints. The outcome of the judgment is the reception of the kingdom by the saints. Here, as in the first court scene, the heavenly judgment is a process that precedes the establishment of God’s Kingdom.

In the third part of the chapter (Dan 7:23-28), the angel returns and gives to Daniel an additional explanation about the terrible fourth beast (Dan 7:23-24), especially about the powerful apostate “little horn” who endeavors to “wear out the saints of the Most High, and . . . to change the times and the law” (Dan 7:25).

The climax of this vision, as in the previous two, is again the heavenly court which sits “in judgment,” condemns the godless tyrant, and divests him of all power (Dan 7:26). These heavenly judicial proceedings result in the giving of the eternal kingdom “to the people of the saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:27).

The Time of the Judgment. We noted that each of the three parts of Daniel 7 climaxes with the scene of a heavenly judgment, and in each instance this judgment stands in historical sequence after the war against the saints by the despotic little horn and before the coming of Christ to establish God’s eternal Kingdom.

The complete historical sequence runs as follows: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, ten horns, apostate horn, judgment, coming of the Son of Man, and establishment of God's eternal Kingdom. This sequence indicates that the judgment is not an executive act carried out on this earth at the time of Christ's Return, but the evaluative process conducted in heaven before myriads of heavenly beings prior to the Second Advent.

In chapter 2 we found that Jews have identified the heavenly judgment of Daniel 7 with the Feast of Trumpets because they understood the blowing of the shofar on *Rosh Hashanah* as signaling the opening of the books by the heavenly court who would decide the destiny of every person during the next ten days. The decision of the heavenly court was revealed on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest appeared at the end of the ritual to communicate the divine verdict of cleansing and restoration for the penitents and punishment for the impenitent (Lev 23:29).

In a similar fashion the outcome of the judicial process described in Daniel 7 is the complete destruction of God's enemies ("destroyed to the end"—Dan 7:26) and the reception of the "everlasting kingdom" by "the people of the saints of the Most High" (7:27). The finality of this outcome indicates that this is the executive judgment typified by the Day of Atonement.

5. The Theological Significance of the Final Judgment

Our study of the pre-Advent phase of the final judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets raises some important questions. What does this doctrine tell us about God's nature, His relationship to the universe, the outcome of the conflict between good and evil, the value of human life and actions, our attitude toward God, and our view of ourselves? We attempt to answer such questions by considering the major theological implications of the doctrine of the final judgment, both in its pre-Advent and Advent phases.

A Transcendent Moral Order. The final judgment points first of all to the existence of a transcendent moral order in the universe. It tells us that there is a supreme Moral Arbiter in this universe who is working out His eternal purposes. This message has tremendous significance in our time when disorder, hate, immorality, wars, and senseless destruction of human life and property prevail. The message of the judgment reassures us that the eternal destiny of each individual and of the world as a whole is not in the hands of some mad, blind forces, but in the hands of our Almighty God. "He's got the whole world in His hands." The scroll of human destiny rests safely in the hands of the Lamb (Rev 5:7).

The pre-Advent judgment conducted around God's throne, in the presence of myriads of beings and on the basis of a perfect record of each individual, tells us that there is a moral order governing this universe, an order to which each individual is ultimately accountable. Those who think they have fooled everybody and every system will be surprised to discover that they never fooled God. The judgment will disclose all their deeds and punish them accordingly.

The pre-Advent judgment constantly reminds us that we cannot flaunt God's moral principles with impunity because "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). This reality makes all our actions, decisions, and choices significant because they have both immediate and ultimate consequences.

Substance to Our Faith. The final judgment gives substance to our faith by reminding us that our relationship to God, the Moral Ruler of the Universe, is based not merely on the profession but on the practice of our faith. At the final judgment, Christ will invite into His kingdom "not every one who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' . . . but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21).

"Works" are the criteria of the final judgment because they substantiate faith. Salvation is a divine gift that brings upon us a divine claim "to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:12-13).

What all of this means is that our day-by-day round of thoughts, words, deeds, and attitudes counts for eternity. When the records are examined in the pre-Advent judgment, our daily living will reveal what kind of persons we have been. Have we lived self-centered lives ignoring God's moral principles or God-centered lives reflecting His moral values?

Just as the Jews in Old Testament times, so mankind today needs to hear the trumpet call to stand trial before God during the antitypical Feast of Trumpets. This has never been a popular message. When governor Felix invited Paul to speak to him, the Apostle used the opportunity to talk not about the social unrest in Palestine or the political situation in the Empire but "about justice and self-control and future judgment" (Acts 24:25).

The three are interrelated because it is the final judgment that reveals if a person has lived justly and temperately. "Felix was alarmed" by the thought of a future judgment, but he chose to ignore it. Many today, like Felix, would

rather not hear about the trumpet call of the final judgment, preferring instead to live under the false assumption that they will never have to give account for their immoral behavior.

A Revelation of Individual Worth. The mention of “books” where our thoughts, attitudes, and actions are recorded and examined before the heavenly court indicates that God places great value on each individual person. In a society where people are often regarded as cogs in a machine or numbers in a computer, it is reassuring to know that God places a transcendent significance on our personal identity. He has written the name of each believer “before the foundation of the world in the book of life” (Rev 13:8).

The importance which God attaches to each person extends to single decisions and actions. The judgment teaches us that nothing we do is worthless or inconsequential in the sight of God. Even the “careless word” (Matt 12:36) is considered in the pre-Advent judgment. The reason is that careless, thoughtless talk is often a most accurate reflection of our inner self. Moreover, “idle talk” may sometimes have even a greater impact on others than “serious talk.” Thus, every thought, word, and action is potentially determinative of our destiny.

The far-reaching inclusiveness of the final judgment is awesome. Yet at the same time, the thought that all we do, think, and say matters in God’s sight makes our life worth living. The fact that even the most insignificant action, such as the giving of a cup of cold water (Matt 10:42; 25:35-40), will not go unnoticed gives a sense of dignity, of importance, to all that we do, think, and say.

Sometimes it seems that even our highest motives and best efforts are misunderstood. The judgment gives us courage to face human misunderstanding and criticism, with the reassurance that God understands and takes notice of all our overt and covert actions. Nothing is ignored in the sight of God and everything will receive due consideration in the final judgment.

A Vindication of God’s Justice and Mercy. Why does the Bible speak of a judgment process that precedes and that follows the coming of Christ? Does God need a judicial process to gather information necessary to execute a just universal judgment? Obviously not. After all, God is the Author of the books which are used in His final judgment. The heavenly records represent not the acquisition on the part of God of new knowledge, but the revelation of old knowledge to moral intelligences.

One of the most telling evidences that God is not seeking new information through an investigative judgment is the post-Advent judgment of the

unsaved. This judgment is designed to enable redeemed humanity to understand more fully God's justice in not saving the unrighteous. The very fact that the lost have no part in the first resurrection of believers (Rev 20:5) indicates that God has already decided their destiny.

Yet, before their final destruction at the end of the millennium, God offers redeemed humanity the opportunity to examine the record of their lives to understand the justice of His judgment. It is noteworthy that both before rewarding believers with eternal salvation and before punishing unbelievers with eternal destruction, God invites His moral creatures to evaluate the basis of His judgment.

God Is Not on Trial. In a sense, the ones who are "on trial" in the investigative phases of the final judgment are not the saved or the unsaved, but God Himself. It is God's justice and mercy manifested in His decision to save some and condemn others that is being judged by moral intelligences. But why should God submit His judgments to the scrutiny of His created beings? Obviously, God is not morally obligated to go "on trial" before the universe. First, He has no moral debt toward His creatures. He has no confession to make as to possible defects in the making of the universe or of human beings. Nor has God any admission to make as to possible unfairness in His administration of the universe.

Second, God has no external obligation because He is the Sovereign Ruler who has freely created and redeemed His creatures. As He has freely created the universe, so He could freely dissolve it, starting all over again, without being in default toward anyone. Third, even if heavenly or human beings should find some fault in God's creation or administration—an absurd hypothesis, they could not dethrone God and enthrone another God in His place.

Whether the universe accepts or rejects the justice of God's government and judgments, does not affect His Sovereignty. God would still be the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. What is in jeopardy is not the eternal security of God but that of moral beings in the universe. Thus, fundamentally, the one who is on trial is not God, but the moral universe.

God Is on Trial. Yet there is a sense in which God is "on trial" before His moral universe. For several reasons, God is willing and expected to give an account of His creative, redemptive, and punitive activities. First, God has chosen to operate on the principle of freedom of choice. God has granted His moral creatures the freedom to choose between His love and justice and Satan's hostility and injustice. Not only has God granted this freedom of choice, but He also invites His moral beings to exercise this freedom by examining His moral principles and His judicial actions.

Second, God has chosen to operate on the principle of love and not of coercion. It was love that motivated God to create a universe of free moral beings who could be the recipients of His love and who could in perfect freedom reciprocate His love. It was love that motivated God to redeem mankind by entering into the limitations, suffering, and death of human flesh in order to provide moral beings with the greatest incentive to choose His love rather than Satan's hostility. It is love that motivates God to submit the records of His judgments to the scrutiny of the moral universe so that His love and justice may be fully understood and accepted.

Love can render this universe eternally secure only if it becomes grounded on unquestionable *trust*. An attitude of trust and loyalty cannot be demanded, it must be freely given. It is only when we have had occasion to see the integrity, fairness, and trustworthiness of a person that we develop an attitude of trust toward such a person. A vital function of the pre- and post-Advent judgments is to provide an opportunity to the moral beings of the universe to deepen their trust in God by verifying, validating, and vindicating the justice of His judgments.

This trust is expressed by the redeemed—represented in Revelation as standing beside a sea of glass—singing: “Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are they ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:3-4).

It is noteworthy that the reason given for the universal acclamation of the greatness, justice, and truthfulness of God is the fact that His “judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:4). Ellen G. White aptly comments in this regard: “Every question of truth and error in the long-standing controversy will then have been made plain. In the judgment of the universe, God will stand clear of blame for the existence or continuance of evil.”⁵⁷

The revelation of the justice of God's judgment is in a sense also a vindication of the redeemed. We noted in chapter 2 that this was an important function of the Feast of Trumpets, namely, to reassure the people that God will remember and vindicate them on the day of judgment. The same truth is expressed in the vision of Daniel 7, where the Ancient of Days pronounces “judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom” (Dan 7:22, NIV).

A Basis for Hope and Confidence. The Biblical view of the final judgment as the decisive and final triumph of God's justice, manifested in the vindication and salvation of believers and in the condemnation and destruc-

tion of unbelievers, is an event to be anticipated with solemnity and joy. We have found that this was the mood of the celebration of the Feast of Trumpets. The Jews viewed the ten days before the Day of Atonement with *solemnity* (Days of Awe) because their eternal destiny was being decided by the heavenly court. They also looked upon this period with *joy* because it represented for them their final vindication and salvation.

The pre-Advent judgment announced by the Feast of the Trumpets does not destroy our joy and assurance of salvation because it is not a scheme or retribution but a revelation of our standing before God as we are found to be in Christ. “Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect?” asks Paul. “It is God who justifies; who is to condemn?” (Rom 8:33-34). As our records are opened in heaven during the antitypical Feast of Trumpets, we have nothing to fear because our Mediator stands for us. Essentially, this judgment is the outworking of the message of the Gospel which contains the Good News that God not only justifies penitent sinners in this present life, but also vindicates them on the day of His judgment by giving them the reward of eternal life.

The close connection between the Gospel and the final judgment is clearly expressed by Paul when he speaks of the “day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus” (Rom 2:16). The judgment is according to the Gospel in the sense that it is part of the gracious provision of salvation through Jesus Christ who offers us forgiveness of our sins in this present life and vindication of our forgiven sins in the final judgment. Thus, the Christian can “have confidence for the day of judgment” (1 John 4:17). This confidence rests on the assurance that Christ “is able to keep [us] from falling” in this present life and “to present [us] without blemish before the presence of his glory with rejoicing” on the day of His judgment (Jude 24). Thus, for God’s people, the announcement of the final judgment by the Feast of Trumpets represents the revelation of their faith and love for Christ and their vindication before the angelic host. It represents the coming of better days when Christ will soon appear, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to reveal the truth about them.

Conclusion. The Feast of Trumpets in the Old and New Testaments reveals that God is not in the business to punish but to save. He uses attention-catching methods to warn and lead His people to repentance before executing His judgments. By means of the annual trumpets blasting, He summoned His people in Old Testament times to repent and amend their lives in view of the judgment going on in heaven. The same clarion call is sounded today to mankind by the flying angel of Revelation who proclaims with a loud voice, “Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7).

Christians today, like God's people in ancient times, need to hear the annual trumpet-call of the Feast of Trumpets to stand trial before God and seek for His cleansing grace. After all, Christians too need to be reminded periodically that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" (2 Cor 5:10). The Feast of Trumpets provides a much needed annual wake-up call to prepare oneself to stand before God's judgment by repenting and forsaking sinful ways.

The Feast of Trumpets reminds us annually that the heavenly court will soon close the books and Christ will come to cleanse the faithful, to punish the wicked, and to bind Satan (Azazel) before destroying him "in the lake of fire" (Rev 20:10). This reassuring message inspires us to live godly lives with joy, confidence, and hope while "awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13).

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. For examples, see E. J. Bickerman, *Chronology of the Ancient World* (Ithaca, New York, 1968), pp. 20, 50, 59.

2. For a discussion of the frequent condemnations by the Fathers of the Christian adoption of pagan feasts and of the planetary week, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday, A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome, Italy, 1977), pp. 252-253.

3. Norbert Hagedé, *Commentaire de l'Épître aux Colossiens* (Geneve, 1968), p. 143; Adolf Schlatter, *Die Briefe an die Galater, Epheser, Kolosser und Philemon* (Stuttgart, Germany, 1963), p. 285.

4. Troy Martin, "Pagan and Judeo-Christian Time-keeping Schemes in Galatians 4:10 and Colossians 2:16," *New Testament Studies* 42 (1996), pp. 108-109.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 109.

6. F. F. Bruce, "Hebrews," *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1978), vol. 3, p. 87.

7. For a brief discussion, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The New Testament, Its Background, Growth, and Content* (Nashville, TN, 1965), p. 249.

8. See, for example, A. T. Lincoln, "From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical and Theological Perspective," in Donald A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day; A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation*, (Grand Rapids, MI, 1982), p. 376.

9. Plutarch, *De Superstitione* 3 (*Moralia* 166A); Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 23, 3; Epiphanius, *Adversus Haereses* 30, 2, 2; *Apostolic Constitutions* 2, 36, 7. A. T. Lincoln admits that "in each of these places the term denotes the observance or celebration of the Sabbath. This usage corresponds to the Septuagint usage of the cognate verb *sabbatizo* (cf. Ex 16:30; Lev 23:32; 26:34f.; 2 Chron 36:21), which also has reference to Sabbath observance. Thus the writer to the Hebrews is saying that since the time of Joshua, an observance of Sabbath rest has been outstanding" ("Sabbath Rest and Eschatology in the New Testament" in Donald A. Carson (note 3), p. 213.

10. George Wesley Buchanan, "Worship, Feasts and Ceremonies in the Early Jewish-Christian Church," *New Testament Studies* 26 (1980), p. 281. A similar comment by the same author is found in *To the Hebrews* (Garden City, NY, 1972), p. 266.

11. Philip Carrington, *the Primitive Christian Calendar* (Cambridge, England 1952), pp. 43-44.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

13. My discussion of the factors which contributed to the change of Biblical Holy Days is found in volume I of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History*, pp. 98-110. A fuller treatment is found in my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 159-164, 198-207.

14. Philip Carrington (note 11), p. 44.

15. *Ibid.*

16. *Ibid.*

17. See, for example, M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecy," *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981), pp. 342-367; J. A. Draper, "The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7:1-17," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 19 (1983), pp. 133-147; R. J. McKelvey, *The New Temple: The Church in the New Testament* (London, 1969), pp. 155-178; Hakan Ulfgard, *Feast and Future: Revelation 7:9-17 and the Feast of Tabernacles*, Coniectanea Biblical, New Testament Series, vol. 22 (Lund, Sweden, 1989); D. T. Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible* (New York, 1961), pp.100-119.

18. Leonard Thompson, "Cult and Eschatology in the Apocalypse of John," *The Journal of Religion* 49 (1969), p. 343.

19. Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation*, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Spring, MD, 1992), vol. 1, p. 121.

20. Jon Paulien, "Seals and Trumpets: Some Current Discussions," in Frank B. Holbrook, ed., *Symposium on Revelation* Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (Silver Springs, MD, 1992), vol. 1, p.191.

21. Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images. The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Gloucester, MA, 1970), p. 8. Contrary to Davidson and Paulien who believe that Revelation open with Passover, Farrer believes that the opening scenes of chapter 1-3 refer to the feast of Dedication, known also as the feast of lamps (*ibid.*, p. 94).

22. Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and the Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, 33 (1995), p. 258.

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23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Richard M. Davidson (note 19), p. 123.
27. Jon Paulien (note 20), p. 191.
28. Ibid. Davidson expresses a similar view, see note 14, p. 123.
29. See, Richard M. Davidson (note 19), pp. 124-125; Jon Paulien (note 14), p. 191.
30. Richard M. Davidson (note 19), p. 121.
31. Jon Paulien (note 20), p. 258.
32. Ibid.
33. Richard M. Davidson (note 19), p. 121.
34. Austin Farrer (note 21), pp.114-115.
35. See in the Septuagint, 2 Chron 2:4; 31:33; Neh 10:33; Ez 45:17; Hosea 2:11. See also Jubilees 1:14; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 8:4; *Jerusalem Berachot* 3:11.
36. See, Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome, 1977), pp. 339-343.
37. D. R. De Lacey, "The Sabbath/Sunday Question and the Law in the Pauline Corpus," in Donald A. Carson, ed., *From Sabbath to Lord's Day: A Biblical, Historical, and Theological Investigation* (Grand Rapids, MI 1982), p. 182.
38. Ibid., emphasis supplied.
39. Troy Martin (note 4), p. 111.
40. Ibid., pp. 110-111.
41. Troy Martin, "But Let Everyone Discern the Body of Christ (Colossians 2:17)," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114/2 (1995), p. 255.
42. Troy Martin (note 4), p. 119.
43. For a discussion of the pagan calendar, see also E. J. Bickerman (note 1), pp. 70-79.

44. Troy Martin (note 4), pp. 117, 119.

45. For a discussion of the typology of the sanctuary and of the annual feasts in the book of Revelation, see Richard M. Davidson (note 19), pp. 11-130; Jon Paulien (note 20), pp. 186-192.

46. Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets* (Berrien Springs, MI, Andrews University Press, 1987), p. 223.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 223.

48. Jon Paulien (note 22), pp. 259-260.

49. Richard M. Davidson (note 18), p. 123.

50. Gerhard Friedrich, "Salpinx," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI, 1971), vol. VII, p. 87.

51. George Eldon Ladd, *A Commentary on the Revelation of John* (Grand Rapids, MI 1972), p. 144.

52. John A. Bollier, "Judgment in the Apocalypse," *Interpretation* (January, 1953), p. 22.

53. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Mountain View, CA, 1950), p. 428.

54. Emphasis supplied.

55. William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Philadelphia, PA, 1960), pp. 232-234.

56. John A. Bollier, "Judgment in the Apocalypse," *Interpretation* (January, 1953), p. 18.

57. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA, 1940), p. 58.

Chapter 4

THE DAY OF ATONMENT IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A fundamental human need is to be free, not only from external oppression, but also from the internal burden of sin. Sin alienates us from God and fellow-beings, causing us ultimately to experience eternal death., “for the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23). The Good News of the Gospel is that God through Jesus Christ has made provision to cleanses us from sin and to restore us to a harmonious relationship with Him.

This marvellous truth was taught in Old Testament times typologically especially through the annual celebration of the Day of Atonment (*Yom Kippur*), which fell on the tenth day of the seventh month, known as Tishri. This was the most solemn Holy Day of the religious calendar of ancient Israel. The Bible calls it *Shabbat Shabbaton*, “a Sabbath of Sabbaths” (Lev 16:31). The reason for this special designation is apparently to be found in the fact that the day celebrated not only God’s creation, but also His new creation through the provision of atonment. On the Day of Atonment, writes Naphtali Winter, “Man, the pinnacle of God’s Creation, for whom everything else was created, stands newly created after having received atonment.”¹

The Day of Atonment was a gracious day each year when all the Israelites could experience a new beginning by being cleansed from their sins and restored to fellowship with their Maker. “On this day shall atonment be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord” (Lev 16:30). What a marvellous provision God made for His people to experience an annual cleansing and a new beginning through His atonment! This was truly the Gospel in types which finds its antitypical fulfillment through Christ’s atoning sacrifice. “Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come” (2 Co 5:17). The ultimate fulfilment of the precious promise of the Day of Atonment will be realized at Christ’s Return when He will dispose of sins and make all things new.

The concept of atonement is found in other religions as well. What is unique to the Biblical Day of Atonment is the setting aside of one day each year for the people to experience freedom from the crushing isolation of guilt and a new reconciliation with God.

In ancient Israel the Day of Atonment represented the conclusion of the judgment that began ten days earlier on the first day of the seventh month, with a massive blowing of trumpets (Feast of Trumpets). We noted in chapter 2 how the destiny of each person was decided by the heavenly court during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonment. The latter was the day when the people prepared themselves with fasting and prayer to hear their verdict. “On Yom Kippur,” writes Rabbi Irving Greenberg, “the ritual trial reaches its conclusion. . . . The people finally drop all their defences and excuses and throw themselves on the mercy of the court, yet the same people never loose the conviction that they will be pardoned. This atonment is by divine grace; it is above and beyond the individual effort or merit.”²

Greenberg explains that Yom Kippur “goes beyond the elimination of sin to the renewal of the individual. Habit and conditioning often combine with the structure of individual life to keep the person torn between evil and ethic, between apathy and ideal, between inertia and desire for improvement. Against these powerful forces which proclaim that humans cannot change, Yom Kippur teaches that there is capacity for renewal and unification of life.”³ This “capacity for renewal” is found, however, not in inner human resources, but in God’s willingness to forgive us and cleanse us of our sins (1 John 1:9).

The promise of moral cleansing and renewal of Yom Kippur embodies the hopes and aspirations common to both Jews and Christians. An understanding of how the cleansing and renewal was accomplished typologically in the Old Testament through rituals Day of Atonment, enables us better appreciate its antitypical fulfilment accomplished through Christ’s atoning death, heavenly ministry and Second Advent. We noted in chapter 1 that the Feasts of Israel typify the unfolding of redemptive history from Passover, the Feast of Redemption, to Tabernacles, the Feast of the ultimate Restoration of the new earth. The Day of Atonment plays an important role in the consummation of redemptive history because it foreshadows God’s plan for the final disposition of sin and the creation of a new “earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet 3:13).

Objectives of this Chapter. This chapter examines the meaning, function, and ritual of the Day of Atonment in the Old Testament. The study is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the defilement and purification of the sanctuary. We shall seek to understand how the sanctuary

was defiled through the symbolic transference of atoned sins into the Holy Place and why were sins kept in the sanctuary until their removal on the Day of Atonment. This study of the symbolic transference and removal of sins is vital to understand their antitypical fulfilment in the heavenly sanctuary.

The second part examines the major rites of the Day of Atonment. Special attention will be given to the sacrifice of the Lord's goat and to the rite of Azazel, the scapegoat. We shall see that the rituals of the Day of Atonment have important implications not only for the universe in general, but also for God's professed people in particular.

The third part surveys the transformation over the centuries of the Day of Atonment. We shall see that with the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70, the glorious ritual of the Day of Atonment disappeared, yet its meaning and message remained for the Jews. The rabbis substituted for the sacrificial offerings of the Day of Atonment, three key practices: prayer, charity, and repentance. In closing we shall reflect on how the Day of Atonment holds the hope of regeneration and restoration especially for Christians who believe that Christ is the antitypical High Priest who "has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, but into heaven itself" (Heb 9:24) to make expiation for our sins.

PART I

THE DEFILEMENT AND PURIFICATION OF THE SANCTUARY

The Name and Date of the Feast. The Biblical name for the Day of Atonment is *Yom Hakippurim* (Lev 23:27; 25:9), which is usually translated as "Day of Atonment." This Holy Day has been called by different names throughout the centuries. In view of the fact that the day was characterized by strict fast, it was often called "The Day of the Fast,"⁴ or "The Great Fast," or simply "the Fast," as in Acts 27:9.⁵

The importance of the Day of Atonment is revealed by the fact that in the Talmud the name was shortened to simply "The Day." Being the Holy *Day* par excellence of the cultic calendar, it could simply be called "The Day." In fact, the Aramaic version of this name, "Yoma," was given to the Talmudic tractate which describes in detail the rituals of the day. The Greek translation of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint, calls it *hemera exilasmou*, that is, "the Day of Expiation." The same rendering is found in the Latin translation, Vulgate, *dies expiationum* or *propitiationis*, "Day of Expiation" or "Propitiation."

God ordained that the cleansing of the Day of Atonment should fall on the tenth of Tishri, that is, after the ten days of repentance ushered in by

the Feast of Trumpets. It is significant that the *cleansing* of the Day of Atonment is preceded by the *repentance* of the Feast of Trumpets and is followed by the *rejoicing* of the Feast of Tabernacles. The spiritual lesson is evident. The children of Israel could only rejoice after they had repented of their sins and experienced the cleansing and renewal of redemption. We shall see that the sins cleansed on the Day of Atonment, were those which had been confessed, repented, and forgiven prior to that day.

The two major rites of the Day of Atonment were (1) the purification of the sanctuary, priesthood, and people (Lev 16:16-19, 30, 33, 34), and (2) the expulsion of Azazel, the scapegoat, with all the sins of the Israel (Lev 16:10, 20-22). The purification rites prescribed for the Day of Atonment presuppose a prior defilement/pollution of the sanctuary. This poses some fundamental questions: What caused the defilement of the sanctuary in the first place? How were the sins of the penitents transferred to the sanctuary? Why was it necessary on the Day of Atonment for the sanctuary to be cleansed of the sins already pardoned during the year? Was the forgiveness granted through the sacrificial offerings of the daily services partial and inadequate? We shall briefly address these questions before reviewing the major rites of the Day of Atonment.

The Sanctuary is God's Dwelling Place. Israel's sanctuary could be defiled by only one source, namely, the sinful acts of the people. This stands in sharp contrast to pagan sanctuaries which could be defiled by demonic incursions.⁶ Sin defiled the sanctuary because Scripture views the sanctuary not as impersonal place, but as the abiding place of God Himself. "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Ex 25:8). Repeatedly the Old Testament speaks of God sitting "enthroned on the cherubim" (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; 2 King 19:15; 1 Chron 13:6; Is 37:16; Ps 99:1; 80:1). The cherubims stood over the mercy seat, that is, the lid of the ark, which represents the throne of God (Jer 3:15-16).

The sanctuary is the seat of God's government which is based on justice and mercy. Justice is represented by the Decalogue, known as "the two table of testimony," placed inside the ark (Ex 25:16; Ex 31:18), and mercy by the cover of the ark, known as the "mercy seat." "The ark that enshrines the tables of the law," writes Ellen White, "is covered with the mercy seat, before which Christ pleads His blood in the sinner's behalf. Thus is represented the union of justice and mercy in the plan of human redemption. This union infinite wisdom alone could devise and infinite power accomplish; it is a union that fills all heaven with wonder and adoration."⁷

Sin defiles the sanctuary because it is a transgression of the principles of God's government. When God's principles are transgressed the sanctuary is morally defiled by the objective reality of sin. A holy God cannot excuse sin, but He can and will forgive penitent sinners (Ex 34:6-7). Both forgiven and unforgiven sins defiled the sanctuary, because they were figuratively deposited in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonment when God dealt with them accordingly. It is informative to note how the transference of sins to the sanctuary took place, and why they were kept there until the Day of Atonment.

Defilement of the Sanctuary by Defiant Sins. There are few passages in the Old Testament that explicitly mention the defilement of the sanctuary by wilful and defiant sins that were never confessed. For example, God ordained that child sacrifice to Molech was to be punished with death, because "he has given one of his children to Molech, defiling my sanctuary and profaning my holy name" (Lev 20: 3; cf. Ez 23:29). By following "all the abominations of the nations," the Jews "polluted the house of the Lord which he had hallowed in Jerusalem" (2 Chr 36:14; cf. Jer 7:30; Zeph 3:4).

Abominable sinful acts defiled the sanctuary, though such sins were not transferred into the sanctuary complex by means of any ritual. The reason is that these unpardonable sins defiled "the land in the midst of which I [God] dwell" (Num 35:34). The defilement of the land was tantamount to the defilement of the sanctuary, because God dwelt not only within the sanctuary but also among His people in the land. The expressions used in Leviticus 20 to describe the death sentence for those guilty of a variety of defiant sins, reveal that the sanctuary could be defiled by the contamination of the land (Lev 20:3).

Wilful, unrepented sins could not be expiated by a substitutionary animal sacrifice (1 Sam 3:14; cf. Is 47:11).⁸ The people who defiled the sanctuary by their defiant sins, could not be cleansed even on the Day of Atonment, because their sins had not been confessed and atoned for prior to that day. In such cases the defilement of the sanctuary was cleansed by the punishment of the sinners themselves who were "cut off" from the people (Lev 23:29; cf. Num 35:33-34). When rebellious conduct developed into national apostasy, it was punished by natural disasters, foreign invasions, and captivity, but it was never atoned through the sacrifices of the sanctuary system.

Defilement of the Sanctuary by the Blood of Forgiven sins. The sanctuary was defiled also by the sins which were confessed and atoned for through the daily sacrificial system. These sins were symbolically transferred into the sanctuary through the manipulation of the sacrificial blood, or in some

cases through the eating by the priest of the flesh of the sacrifice. The blood of the sacrifices offered for penitent sinners defiled the sanctuary, because it was used to symbolically carry their sins into the sanctuary where they were kept until the Day of Atonment. The sacrificial system operated on the principle of substitutional interchange (cf. Is 53:10-11).

On the one hand the purity of the sacrificial animal (Lev 4:3, 23; Num 19:2) was transmitted symbolically through the blood rites to the impure, sinful person. On the other hand, the sins of the penitent sinners were transmitted to innocent animals by confession and the laying on of hands on their heads. In turn the sins assumed by the animals were brought into the sanctuary through the manipulation of the blood or the eating of the flesh by the priest. The result was that the sanctuary was defiled by the sins deposited there and needed to be cleansed on the Day of Atonment.⁸⁹

The function of blood in the Old Testament sacrificial system was equivocal, since it was both a cleansing and defiling agent. The blood of sacrifices purified penitent sinners defiled by sin, yet the same blood defiled the sanctuary because it symbolically carried there the sins which had been atoned for. The daily accumulation of sins deposited in the sanctuary necessitated its annual cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonment.

“During the year,” as Alberto Treiyer points out. “the blood was deposited in the place which God had sanctified with His glory—His sanctuary (Ex 29:43). In this manner sin was transferred to the sanctuary complex and contaminated it. At the end of the year, on the Day of Atonement, the paradox of the substitutional principle operated again, and the blood became the element for the purification of the sanctuary from all the sins which had contaminated it to that point. Then in the figurative ritual the sins were blotted out totally from Israel.”¹⁰ This process of transference of sins into the sanctuary where they were symbolically kept until the Day of Atonment when they were disposed of in a final and permanent way, typifies an important aspect of the plan of salvation: the process leading to the ultimate eradication of sin and its effects.

Shortly we will address the question of why were sins deposited and kept in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonment, though they had been atoned for during the daily services. At this juncture we wish to consider briefly how sins were symbolically transferred to the sanctuary.

Function of the Sacrificial System. We already noted that sins were atoned for and transferred to the sanctuary through the sacrificial system. Such system was divinely established as a means to restore a relationship between God and man broken by sin. The sacrifice of an animal functioned

as a substitution for the offender, by bearing the punishment of the person to be sacrificed (Ex 32:30; Is 53:6-10). Sin offerings served the double function of cleansing penitent sinners of their sins, and carrying their contamination to the sanctuary. The value of animal sacrifice in the Old Testament lie in the fact that they were prophetic, pointing to “the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). Hebrews explains that “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4).

The process of transferring sin from the offender to the sanctuary involved first of all the laying of hands upon the head of the victim and making confession of sin (Lev 1:4; 4:4, 24, 29, 33; Lev :5-6). “The laying on of hands on the head of the victim symbolizes, together with the confession of sins, a transfer of sin from the offerer to the victim. The victim ‘carries’ the offerer’s sin, and is his substitute, as the sacrifice takes the place of the sacrificer.”¹⁰

The rite of the laying on of hands fulfilled a double function. On the one hand it removed the sin from the guilty person or group and made them clean. On the other hand it transferred the sin of the offerer to the sacrificial animal who in turn carried it to the sanctuary. The latter process needs further clarification.

The Rite of Blood Manipulation. Sins were symbolically carried into the sanctuary through the rite of blood manipulation or through the rite of eating sacrificial flesh by the priests. Through these rites the sanctuary (that is, God) assumed accountability for the sins of repentant sinners who had confessed their sins and placed them upon the Lord through the mediation of the priests.

The rite of blood manipulation is described in Leviticus 4:1-21. The sin offerings for an individual (Lev 4:1), “the anointed priest” (Lev 4:3), and the whole Israelite community (Lev 4:13-21), required the slaying of a “bull without defect” (Lev 4:3) after the laying on of hands. Then the priest handled the blood according to this specified ritual: “And the anointed priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it to the tent of meeting; and the priest shall dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary. And the priest shall put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the Lord which is in the tent of meeting, and the rest of the blood of the bull he shall pour out at the base of the altar of burnt offering which is at the door of the tent of meeting” (Lev 4:5-7).

The blood that was brought into the Holy Place for sprinkling against the veil and upon the horns of the altar of incense, served to symbolically transfer into the sanctuary the sins which had been atoned for. There the sins

remained until the Day of Atonment, when the sanctuary was cleansed of the accumulated sins of the people. This blood ritual of the daily services was not “a ritual detergent for purging the sanctuary,”¹¹ because it is explicitly stated that “the priest shall make atonment for them [the people]” (Lev 4:20), and not for the sanctuary. By contrast, it is explicitly stated that on the Day of Atonment the blood ritual served to cleanse the sanctuary (Lev 16:16) as well as the altar of burnt offerings (Lev 16:18-19).

The Rite of Eating Sacrificial Flesh. A different blood ritual was used in the case of a sin offering for a leader (Lev 4:22-26) and the common Israelite (Lev 4:27-35). In these instances the blood of the sin offering was not brought inside the sanctuary for sprinkling against the veil and upon the altar of incense (Lev 4:25, 30), but was sprinkled only on the altar of burnt offerings located in the court. “The priest shall take some of the blood of the sin offering with his finger and put it on the horns of the altar of burnt offering, and pour the rest of its blood at the base of the altar of burnt offering” (Lev 4:25). In this case the transference of sin occurred by the eating of the flesh by the priest in the sanctuary.

Leviticus 10:17-18 suggests that when the blood of a sacrifice was not brought into the sanctuary, the priest had to eat some of its flesh in the sanctuary. Moses inquired of Aaron and his sons, saying: “Why have you not eaten the sin offering in the place of the sanctuary, since it is a thing most holy and has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonment for them before the Lord? Behold, its blood was not brought into the inner part of the sanctuary. You certainly ought to have eaten it in the sanctuary, as I commanded” (Lev 10:17-18).

The reference to the earlier command seems to go back to the instruction given in Leviticus 6:26, “The priest who offers it for sin shall eat it; in a holy place it shall be eaten, in the court of the tent of meeting.” The purpose of the eating rite is explicit, “[It] has been given to you that you may bear the iniquity of the congregation, to make atonment for them before the Lord” (Lev 10:17). By eating the sacrificial flesh the priest became the carrier of the sin which had been symbolically transferred from the sinner to the sacrificial victim. The Lord stated: “You shall bear iniquity in connection with the sanctuary” (Num 18:1). It must be remembered that the priesthood was an integral part of the sanctuary. Consequently, whatever affected the priesthood affected the sanctuary also. However, since the priests could not atone for sin with their own life, they needed to bring a sin offering that provided for the transference of sin to the victim whose blood was then sprinkled *in* the sanctuary (Lev 4:6).

Summing up, all repented and confessed sins were transferred to an innocent victim by the laying on of hands. Through the sacrificial rites the guilty sinners were forgiven and cleansed, but their sins were not nullified. The sins borne by the sacrificial victim were transferred to the sanctuary either through the ritual of the blood sprinkling in the Holy Place or through the eating of the sacrificial flesh by the priest in the sanctuary complex.

Two Phases. The transference of sins by means of sacrificial offerings, taught something more than a simple recording of sins. It taught that even when God forgives His people of their sins, the consequences of their sins were not immediately eliminated. One must wait until the forgiveness granted by God is reviewed and vindicated before the heavenly court, so that the character of God would be vindicated from all accusation (Rev 15:4; 1 Cor 4:5) when He disposed of the sins of His people on the Day of Atonment.

The daily transference of the atoned sins of Israel into the sanctuary resulted in the defilement of the sanctuary. The day of atonment was the annual day of cleansing of the sanctuary from the accumulated sins of Israel. The two stages process of dealing with sins, first by removing them from the penitent through the daily sacrificial services and then by removing them permanently from the sanctuary at the annual Day of Atonment, typologically represents the two phases of Christ's redemptive ministry.

Ellen White alludes to these phases, saying: "The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonment; so in the type the blood of the sin offering removed the sin from the penitent, but it rested in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonment."¹² We shall review the rites and services of the Day of Atonment in the second part of this chapter.

What Was Cleansed on the Day of Atonment? Scholars have great difficulty in determining the reason for cleansing the sanctuary on the Day of Atonment. According to some the Day of Atonment dealt with sins which had not been atoned during the year and thus had accumulated until that day.¹³ Others maintain that the cleansing of the Day of Atonment was for the whole nation, while the cleansing of the daily services was only for the individual.¹⁴ Still others suggest that the cleansing of the Day of atonment had to do with deliberate sins or sins of ignorance.¹⁵

What militates against these theories of a limited atonment, is the inclusive nature of the cleansing accomplished on the Day of Atonment. The expression "all their sins" is used twice in Leviticus 16:16, 34, to describe the inclusive nature of the cleansing of the Day of Atonment. This suggests that

“all the sins” that were brought into the sanctuary during the daily services, were removed from the sanctuary on the Day of Atonment.

A basic reason for the conflicting views regarding the cleansing of the Day of Atonment, is the failure to differentiate between the atonement made for the *individual* during the year and the atonement made for the *sanctuary* on the Day of Atonment. It is important to underscore that all the sacrifices for sins offered throughout the year were intended to atone for the *individual*, and not for the sanctuary. There is never a mention of daily sacrifices offered to atone for the sanctuary. The atonement of the daily sacrifices is always for the individual, as indicated by the recurring phrase, “The priest shall make atonment for *him*, and he shall be forgiven” (Lev 4:31, 35; 5:6, 10, 13; 12:6-8).¹⁶

By contrast, the sacrifice and blood ritual of the male goat offered on the Day of Atonment served to cleanse the sanctuary. The cleansing was accomplished by the High Priest sprinkling the blood seven times first upon the mercy seat in the most Holy Place, and then upon the altar of burnt offering in the court (Lev 16:16-19). “Thus he shall make atonment for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins” (Lev 16:16). The altar of burnt offerings was also sprinkled with blood seven times in order to “cleanse it and hallow it from the uncleanness of the people of Israel” (Lev 16:19).

Both passages distinguish between the *object* and *reason* for the atonment. The *object* of the atonment is the holy place and the altar of burnt offering. The *reason* is the uncleanness of the Israelites. These meanings are evident in Hebrew where the verb *kipper*, usually translated “to atone” or “to cleanse,” is followed in the first instance by the particle ‘*et*, which is the sign used in Hebrew to indicate the *direct object*, that is, the sanctuary, and in the second instance by the preposition ‘*al*, which expresses a *relational* sense, that is, with respect to the people of Israel. The syntactical construction indicate that the direct object of the atonment is the sanctuary, while the beneficiaries are the Israelites.¹⁷

Another good example is found in Leviticus 16:33 where both constructions occur. “And he shall make atonment [*kipper* + ‘*et*, direct object sign] for the sanctuary, and he shall make atonment [*kipper* + ‘*et*, direct object sign] for the tent of meeting and for the altar, and he shall make atonment [*kipper* + ‘*al*, with respect to] for the priests and for the people of the assembly.” The meaning is clear. The ritual of the Day of Atonment cleansed the sanctuary with respect to the uncleanness of the Israelites, which had been transferred to the sanctuary during the daily services.

Alberto Treiyer rightly points out that “The distinction between the daily ritual and that of the Day of Atonement is emphasized further in the use of *kipper* and ‘*et*, the sign of direct object, used only in the final purification or cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. It clearly indicates that it is the *sanctuary itself* that is to be cleansed on the Day of Atonement. In the daily sacrificial rituals the sins and impurities of individuals were atoned for and transferred to the sanctuary. The Day of Atonement now focuses upon the cleansing of that sanctuary.”¹⁷ Summing up we can say that the daily rituals transferred sins to the sanctuary, while the yearly ritual of the Day of Atonement removed the accumulated sins *away from* the sanctuary.

Reasons for Transferring Sins into the Sanctuary. The foregoing survey of the process of transference of pardoned sins from the penitent into the sanctuary by means of the ritual of the blood or of the eating of the flesh, raises some fundamental questions. Why were sins symbolically transferred and recorded in the sanctuary after they had been repented, confessed, and atoned for through the sacrificial offerings of the daily services? Was the forgiveness granted through the daily sacrificial services only partial or conditional? Why did God wait until the Day of Atonement for cleansing the sanctuary and thus disposing of the accumulated sins in a final and permanent way?

The Bible does not provide explicit answers to these questions. This is not unusual because we have found the same to be true with the Feast of Trumpets where no explicit reason is given for the command to blow trumpets on the first day of the seventh month. Often the Scripture assumes that the reader understand the reason for certain divine ordinances.

In seeking to comprehend why the sins atoned for during the daily rituals were symbolically transferred to the sanctuary where they were kept until their removal on the Day of Atonement, we need to understand the typological function of the Day of Atonement in the overall plan of salvation. Our study of the typology of the feasts has shown that the Spring Feasts typify the inauguration of redemption while the Fall Feasts its consummation.

The Day of Atonement plays a vital role in the consummation of redemption, because it typifies the final cleansing and complete disposition of sin to be accomplished by Christ at His coming. This final disposition of sin is preceded by the heavenly judgment which was typologically announced by the Feast of Trumpets. Our study of the Feast of Trumpets has shown that the trumpets were blown in a massive way during the ten days preceding the Day of Atonement to call people to repent and stand trial before the heavenly court that would review their life of the past year.

Record of Sins Kept for pre-Advent Judgment. The fact that a judgment process preceded the cleansing of the sanctuary on the Day of Atonment, suggests that the record of forgiven sins was kept in the sanctuary because such sins were to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the final judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets. This review done by the heavenly court, entailed also a review done on earth by God's people who were called to examine their lives and repent of any sins which had not been forsaken. The outcome of this judgment process was the final disposition of sins on the Day of Atonment.

All of this points to a corresponding activity in the heavenly sanctuary. Just as the confessed and forgiven sins of the Israelites were transferred into the sanctuary where they remained until their final disposition on Day of Atonment, so the confessed and forgiven sins of believers today are recorded in the heavenly books where they remain until their final disposition on the Day of Christ's coming. Also, just as the sins of the Israelites were symbolically transferred and recorded in the sanctuary throughout the year in order for them to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the ten days inaugurated by the Feast of Trumpets, so our sins are recorded in the heavenly books, in order for them to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the pre-Advent judgment. "Thanks to this kind of record," writes Alberto Treiyer, "God can not only forgive His people when they repent of their sins, but also vindicate them in the final judgment, without lacking justice (cf. Rom 8:31-34). In this way, God Himself is vindicated in His verdict (cf. Rev 15:3-4)."¹⁹

In the previous chapter we noted that God keeps account of the sins of humanity which are recorded in the books of heaven. The Bible often speaks of "books" as the method of divine record-keeping (Ex 32:32-33; Dan 7:10; 12:1; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27), obviously because electronic methods of data storage were unknown in those days. God uses well-known earthly imageries to reveal unknown heavenly realities. The record of our forgiven sins kept in heaven represents the counterpart of the record of forgiven sins kept in the sanctuary. The latter was a type of the heavenly reality.

The divine records of our forgiven sins are open for investigation during the pre-Advent judgment which was typified by the ten days judgment process inaugurated by the Feast of Trumpets. The function of this investigation, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is to enable heavenly beings to verify the justice of God's judgment manifested in His decision to save some and condemn others.

God is Willing “to Go on Trial.” Obviously, God is not morally obligated to go “on trial” before the universe, because whether the universe accepts or rejects the justice of His judgments, this does not affect His Sovereignty. God would still be the Sovereign Ruler of the Universe. Yet God has chosen to go “on trial” before His moral universe, because He operates on the principle of love and freedom of choice. It is love that motivates God to submit the records of His judgments to the scrutiny of moral beings who exercise their freedom by examining God’s judicial actions. The outcome is that moral beings deepen their trust in God by verifying, validating, and vindicating the justice of His judgments.

This trust is expressed by the redeemed—represented in Revelation as standing beside a sea of glass—singing: “Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are they ways, O King of the ages! Who shall not fear and glorify they name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for they judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:3-4). It is noteworthy that the reason given for the universal acclamation of the greatness, justice, and truthfulness of God is the fact that His “judgments have been revealed” (Rev 15:4). NIV).

The Last Call to Repentance. The record of forgiven sins was kept in the sanctuary, not only to offer an opportunity to the heavenly court to review them before their final disposition on the Day of Atonment, but also to provide a last opportunity to God’s people to review their own lives and repent of any sins which had not been forsaken.

The Day of Atonment represented for the Jews the climax of ten days of intense self-examination and repentance. They were known as “Days of Awe,” or “Days of Repentance.” It is noteworthy that unlike other Holy Days, the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonment, were not linked to remembrance of historical events. These Holy Days were strictly a time for people to make a thorough assessment of their lives. It was a time to verify if the sins which had been confessed and atoned for during the previous year, had also been forsaken. If not, God provided a last opportunity to confess and forsake any lingering sin.

The consciousness of sin was deepened on the Day of Atonment as indicated by the fact that this is the *only fast day* prescribed in the Mosaic law. “And it shall be a statute to you for ever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, *you shall afflict yourselves*, and shall do no work, either the native or the stranger who sojourns among you” (Lev 16:29; cf. 23:27, 29; Num 29:7).²⁰ Practically all scholars interpret the phrase “you shall afflict yourselves” as meaning a day of fasting. “The only fast prescribed by the

Law,” writes J. Behm in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, “was the fast of the Day of Atonment, the great day of national repentance (Lev 16:29; 23:27; Num 29:7). The fast, and complete rest from work, lasted the whole day.”²¹ Since the Day of Atonment was observed as a strict day of fasting and prayer, the day came to be called “The Fast” (Acts 27:9).

The Day of Atonment was a day of fasting to show godly sorrow for sins. Fasting was designed to predispose a person to repentance and self-examination. This was God’s last call to confess and forsake sin. While the court in heaven was reviewing the records of forgiven sins and reading itself to issue the verdict, God’s people on earth were summoned to do their own reviewing of their lives and repent of any lingering sin. In a sense the penitent attitude of believers on earth serves to vindicate the justice of God’s judgment before the heavenly court.

It is noteworthy that in Revelation the announcement that “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7) is designated as the “eternal gospel” (14:6). This means that the time of judgment that precedes the final disposition of sins at Christ’s Return, which is the antitypical Day of Atonment, is not a time of no return, but rather the time when God sounds the last call to repentance.

In the light of the foregoing considerations we conclude that the symbolic transference and recording of sins in the sanctuary before their removal and final disposition on the Day of Atonment, has a profound meaning and message. On the one hand, it reveals God’s willingness to enable heavenly beings to examine the records of His judgments and thus vindicate the justice of His actions. On the other hand, it represents God’s final summon to His people on earth to repent and put away sin while the investigative judgment is going on in heaven.

It is important to note that the judgment conducted in heaven impacts upon the lives of God’s people on earth. Ellen White brings out this important point, saying: “While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven, while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary, there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among God’s people upon the earth.”²² Ultimately the cleansing of the sanctuary accomplished typologically on the Day of Atonment, finds its antitypical fulfilment in the cleansing and removal of sin in the lives of God’s people. This process begins now and will be ultimately realized at the coming of Christ.

PART II
THE RITUALS
OF THE DAY OF ATONMENT

Four Elements of the Day of Atonment. Four major elements composed the Biblical institution of the Day of Atonment: “On the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonment; it shall be for you a time of *holy convocation*, and you shall *afflict yourselves* and present *an offering by fire* to the Lord. And you shall do *no work* on this same day” (Lev 23:27-28).²³

The Day of Atonment was a *holy convocation* in which God’s people gathered to worship God, trusting in His promise to forgive and cleanse them of their sins. It was a day of *affliction*, in which the people fasted and prayed for the forgiveness of their sins. The seriousness of the occasion is indicated by the warning: “For whoever is not afflicted on this same day shall be cut off from his people” (Lev 23:29).

It was a day of special *offerings*. The whole chapter of Leviticus 16 is devoted to the description of the sacrifices offered on the Day of Atonment to cleanse the sanctuary of all the accumulated sins of the people. It was a day of *no work*, a Sabbath of Sabbaths (Lev 23:32), a day in which all secular pursuits were laid aside to give undivided attention to God.

A Warning. The instructions regarding the Day of Atonment in Leviticus 16 are introduced by first recounting the death of the two sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10:1-5), who were punished by death for offering “strange fire” before the Lord. The episode serves as a warning to the High Priest against the danger of being indolent or negligent in performing the annual ritual before the presence of God.

Aaron was warned against entering the Most Holy at any other time, except on the Day of Atonment (Lev 16:2). Only on that day the High Priest was to enter in the Most Holy with much incense in order to cleanse the sanctuary of the sins of Israel. In the Most Holy the High Priest saw the presence of God as a brilliant cloud hovering above the Mercy Seat. This was known as the Shekinah. The Mercy Seat was the cover of the ark where the atonement was made (Ex 25:17-22; 37:6-9).

The Washing and the Garments of the High Priest. The preparation by the High Priest for the ritual of the Day of Atonment was intense. He had to wash, not merely his hands and feet, but his entire body in order to be personally pure while interceding for the people (Lev 16:4). Similarly his clothing were designed to reflect the holiness and purity desired by God. Instead of donning his usual colorful robe, on the Day of Atonment the High Priest wore linen garments similar to those worn by common priests.

“The simple white of his array, in distinction to the ‘golden garments’ which he otherwise wore, pointed to the fact that on that day the High Priest appeared, not ‘as the bridegroom of Jehovah,’ but as bearing in his official capacity the emblem of that perfect purity which was sought by the expiations of that day.”²⁴

According to Numbers 29:7-11, the offerings of the Day of Atonment appear to have been divided in three groups. First, there were the continual burnt offerings which included the usual sacrifices offered in the Temple twice a day. Second, there were the festive sacrifices of the day offered for the High Priest, the priesthood, and the congregation (Lev 16:3; Num 29:8-11). These consisted of a young bull, a ram, seven lambs, and an additional goat for a sin offering, together with the required cereal offerings (Num 29:7-11). The regular and additional sacrifices of the Day of Atonment reveal that God’s forgiveness was available throughout this special day of contrition and repentance. The door of mercy was still wide open throughout the whole day.

Lastly and chiefly, there were the offerings unique to the Day of Atonment. These included a young bullock as a sin offering for the High Priest, his household, and the priesthood, and another sin offering for the congregation. The latter consisted of two goats, one of which was sacrificed and the other sent into the wilderness.

The Sacrifice of the Bull. After completing the regular sacrifices, the High Priest performed the first distinct rite of the Day of Atonment. He took a young bull and offered it as a “sin offering of atonment” (Num 29:11) for himself and the priesthood (Lev 16:6, 11). The sacrifice was similar to the sin offering for the priest (Lev 4:3-12). The difference lay in the blood ritual. While during the daily services the priest dipped “his finger in the blood and sprinkled[d] part of the blood seven times before the Lord in front of the veil of the sanctuary” (Lev 4:6), and also “put some of the blood on the horns of the altar of fragrant incense before the Lord which is in the tent of meeting” (Lev 4:7), on the Day of Atonment the High Priest entered the sanctuary with incense (Lev 16:12-13) and brought some of blood of the bull into the Most Holy where he sprinkled the blood seven times before the mercy seat (Lev 16:14).

The High Priest could enter beyond the veil only once a year with a censer full of burning coals from the outer altar and “two handfuls of sweet incense beaten small” (Lev 16:12). The smoke of the incense covered the mercy seat which was over the “testimony” (Lev 16:12), that is, the Decalogue. The purpose of the incense was apparently to form a protective cloud to shield the High Priest from the direct presence of God.²⁵

When the people outside smelled the fragrance of the incense they knew that at that moment the High Priest stood before the very presence of God. Once the Most Holy Place was filled with the smoke of the incense, the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the bull over the mercy seat, and then again, seven times in front of it (Lev 16:14). The sprinkling of the blood cleansed the priesthood and vindicated them of the responsibility they had assumed for the sins of the people during the year.

The Sacrifice of the Goat. The second “sin offering” consisted of a male goat, chosen by lot from two identical specimens. The High Priest was to “kill the goat of the sin offering which is for the people, and bring its blood within the veil, and do with its blood as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it upon the mercy seat and before the mercy seat” (Lev 16:15).

“It is curious,” notes Leon Morris, “that there is no mention either of laying on of hands or confession of sins over the goat for sin-offering.”²⁶ The reason may be that “the Lord’s goat did not serve as a transfer victim to bring sin into the sanctuary, but as a cleansing agent to remove sins from the sanctuary.”²⁷ The latter function does not exclude the possibility that the Lord’s goat sacrificed on the Day of Atonment, served also to atone for sins repented on that day. This is supported by the fact that there is no mention of the laying on of hands on the sin offerings of the feasts (Num 28-29). Apparently there was no laying on of hands on the general sacrifices offered at the annual feasts because such sacrifices were meant to be for all Israelites. Especially those Israelites who could not bring their personal sacrifices to the sanctuary, could appropriate to themselves the sacrifices offered at the annual feasts.

While the sacrifice of the Lord’s goat served to remove from the sanctuary the sins accumulated during the year, there is no reason to doubt that the people were forgiven and cleansed also of those sins repented on that day. This is implied by the offering of regular and additional sacrifices on the Day of Atonment and also by the command that all, including the stranger, were to “afflict” themselves on the Day of Atonment (Lev 16:29). There would have been no point to expect *all* to humble themselves and repent on the Day of Atonment, if no forgiveness was granted on that day.

The purpose of the sacrifice and blood ritual of the Lord’s goat is explicitly stated in Leviticus 16:16: “Thus he shall make atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleannesses of the people of Israel, and because of their transgressions, all their sins.” The blood ritual performed within the Most Holy, the Holy Place (Lev 16:17) and on the altar in the court (Lev 16:18-19; Ex 30:10), had the purpose of cleansing the uncleanness of the

people of Israel by removing their sins away from the sanctuary in a complete and permanent way. This does not mean that the blood ritual was inherently efficacious and removed all sin like magic (*ex opere operato*). Its efficacy depended upon the penitent attitude of the people, as indicated by the fact that those who refused to “afflict” themselves were “cut off” (Lev 23:29).

The purification rites which cleansed the sanctuary complex and resulted in a cleansed people (Lev 16:30, 33) symbolically vindicated God who is His mercy had assumed accountability for the sins of His penitent people.” In a real sense,” rightly notes Alberto Treiyer, “the sacrifice of the Lord’s goat on the Day of Atonment was in favor of the sanctuary and was an act of vindication for it. In this manner the Day of Atonment was an affirmation of innocence so far as the sanctuary itself was concerned, because the sanctuary was in reality a representation of the throne and government of god. The One who took on the responsibility of all the sins that were deposited therein by sacrifice was the God who lived in it, and now He was being vindicated.”²⁸

The Scapegoat Rite. The third distinct rite of the Day of Atonment was the ceremony involving the second goat, called “Azazel” (Lev 16:8-10) and generally referred to as “the scapegoat.” “Aaron shall lay both of his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away into the wilderness by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go in the wilderness” (Lev 16:21-22).

This ceremony of the live goat took place *after* the atonment had been made for the sanctuary on behalf of the people through the sacrifice of the bull and the Lord’s goat. In contrast to the rites pertaining to the latter, the scapegoat was not sacrificed and its blood was not shed. There was no blood ritual to make atonment for the sanctuary or for the people.

It is explicitly stated that the goat for Azazel “shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonment over it” (Lev 16:10). The last part of the verse needs some clarification, since no ritual atonment was executed on or through the scapegoat. The expression “to make atonment over it,” may be taken to mean, as suggested by B. A. Levine, “to perform rites of expiation besides it,”²⁹ or in its proximity. The phrase may reflect the fact that “the scapegoat was merely stationed near the altar while the priest took some of the sacrificial blood [of the other goat] for use in the expiatory rites.”³⁰

The timing of the rite of the scapegoat is significant, since it followed immediately the cleansing of the sanctuary with the blood of the Lord's goat (Lev 16:9). The rite consisted of laying hands upon the head of the goat, confessing over him the sins of the people, and sending him away into the wilderness by an appointed person (Lev 16:21-22).

This is the only time during the rites of the Day of Atonement that hands are laid upon the animal. The significance of the rite is evident. It was a symbolic act that signified the placing of all the sins of the people that had accumulated in the sanctuary, upon the goat, so that they could be taken away into the wilderness. "Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel, and all their transgressions, all their sins" (Lev 16:21).

"What is of particular significance here," rightly notes Gerhard Hasel, "is that the laying on of hands is accompanied by an oral confession of the totality of the sins of god's people over the live goat. Thus all the sins of the people, from which the sanctuary had been cleansed through oral confession and laying on of hands, were transferred to the live goat for its elimination from the Israelite community. The sending away of the live goat into the desert by the hand of a man who is in readiness' (Lev 16:21) is an elimination rite that symbolizes the taking away of all accumulated sins of Israel to the wilderness (Lev 16:10, 22)."³¹

The Identity of Azazel. Few words in the Bible have generated so much controversy throughout the centuries as the word Azazel. Within the context of this study we can only list the various hypotheses.³² Some maintain that the term *Azazel* is the proper name of the goat himself, meaning "the goat sent out."³³ This meaning is reflected in the ancient Greek and Latin translations,³⁴ from which derive the corresponding English, French, and Spanish equivalents: "scapegoat," "bouc émissaire," "chivo emisario."

A fundamental problem with this interpretation is that according to the Hebrew text the live goat is consigned "for [or to] Azazel" (Lev 16:8). The parallelism in the text between the goat "for Yahweh" (Lev 16:10) and the one "for Azazel" (Lev 16:10), suggests that Azazel is a being that stands in contradistinction with Yahweh. Since Yahweh is a personal being the same should be true of Azazel. Moreover, if Azazel meant "the goat sent out," a literal translation of Leviticus 16:26 would read: "and he who lets the goat go to the goat which is going away." It is obvious that such translation is meaningless.

Other maintain that Azazel is the name of the place where the live goat was dispatched. This view is favored by rabbinic exegetes who gave to the

term Azazel the meaning of “rough and difficult place”³⁵ or “the hardest of the mountains.”³⁶ This interpretation does not take into account the contrast in the text between the two goats: one is designated for God and the other for Azazel. Such a contrast demands, as Roland de Vaux points out, “that the second name, like the first, should be the name of a person.”³⁷ Since the only being that could have been placed in antithesis to God is Satan, Azazel has been mostly identified with Satan.

Azazel as Christ. Some Christians, however, have regarded both goats used for the cleansing of the Day of Atonment as representing a single symbol for Christ. The goat that was sacrificed would represent Christ who atoned for our sins through His death, while the goat that was sent to the wilderness with the sins of the people would represent Christ who took our sins and disposed of them permanently.

The Worldwide Church of God has recently adopted the view that the two goats most likely represent Christ, though it still allows for the possibility that Azazel might be Satan.³⁸ This represents a significant departure from the previous unequivocal stance that Azazel represents Satan, who carried away the sins already forgiven as a punishment for his own guilt in instigating them.³⁹

The identification of the two goats with Christ can be traced back to early Christianity. In his dissertation on *The Symbolism of the Azazel Goat*, Ralph Levy surveys the interpretation of Azazel in both ancient Jewish and early Christian literature. Levy finds that “in much Jewish interpretation, Azazel is a great fallen angel, perhaps Satan himself. In many Christian writings, the two goats are both Jesus Christ the Messiah.”⁴⁰

Apparently what led some early Christians teachers to adopt the view that Azazel represents Christ, rather than Satan, was their desire to correct the faulty Jewish understanding of the nature and mission of the Messiah. By interpreting the two goats as symbols of Christ, Christians could show to the Jews that Christ first had to die as the Lord’s goat, and then He “was to go on a long journey [like the scapegoat], just like the man in Jesus’s parable of the talents (Matt 25:14-30), before eventually returning to his own household.”⁴¹ This interpretation served a useful apologetic purpose by explaining “why the Jewish expectations had not come to pass.”⁴²

Two texts are generally used to support the identification of the two goats with Christ. The first is Leviticus 16:5 which says that the High Priest “shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats *for a sin offering*.”⁴³ The second is Leviticus 16:10 which says: “The goat on which the lot fell for Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord *to make atonement over it*.”⁴⁴

Five major reasons causes us to reject this view. First, as Frank Holbrook points out, “Since the casting of the lots sharply distinguishes between Yahweh and Azazel, it is also evident that these two personages stand in opposition to each other.”⁴⁵ Second, two animals were never offered at the same time for a single sin offering. A repentant sinner could offer two animals for two different offerings, such as sin offering and burn offering, but not for the same offering.

Third, atonement was accomplished through the sacrifice of an animal, because “without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb 9:22). But Azazel was not sacrificed. It was sent into the wilderness where it was abandoned to die.

Fourth, the rite of Azazel began after the cleansing of the sanctuary had been completed. “When he [the High Priest] *has made an end of atoning* for the holy place and the tent of meeting and the altar, he shall present the live goat” (Lev 16:20). The mission of Azazel is aimed at the wilderness where he is sent, never to return.

Fifth, the oldest extrabiblical source for the story of Azazel, which is found in the Ethiopic book of Enoch, identifies Azazel as the source of all the corruption and sin on the earth.⁴⁶ Such a personage in Scripture is clearly identified with Satan.

Azazel as Satan. Most modern authors adopt the oldest Jewish interpretation of Azazel as a supernatural being opposed to God. This view is supported by both Biblical and extra-biblical evidences. Biblically, as we have seen, the parallelism between “for Yahweh” and “for Azazel” (Lev 16:8), suggests a supernatural “being opposed to Yahweh.”⁴⁷ No subordinate being could have been placed in antithesis to Yahweh, but “the devil himself, the head of the fallen angels, who was afterward called Satan.”⁴⁸

The extra-biblical support for the identification of Azazel with Satan comes from both etymological considerations and literary sources. Etymologically, many authors see in the name Azazel the root *‘el*, which in Hebrew means “God.” Various combinations have been proposed. One that is favored by several scholars is *azaz+el*, that is, “a fierce god.”⁴⁹ This interpretation harmonizes with the role of Azazel in Leviticus 16 as a being opposed to Yahweh.

The oldest extrabiblical source for the story of Azazel is found in the Ethiopic book of Enoch which was written sometimes during the two centuries preceding the Christian era.⁵⁰ Asael (1 Enoch 6:1) or Azazel (I Enoch 9:4-6) is listed as the ninth of the fallen angels who eventually emerges as the leader and cause of evil and corruption (1 Enoch 13:1).

Chapter 10 of 1 Enoch is of most interest to us because here God instructs the archangel Raphael to bind Azazel and cast him in the desert. Verses 4 to 8 read as follows: “And again the Lord said to Raphael: ‘Bind Azazel hand and foot and cast him into darkness: and make an opening in the desert, which is in Dudael, and cast him therein. And place him in rough and jagged rocks and cover him with darkness, and let him abide there forever, and cover his face that he may not see light. And on the day of the great judgment he shall be cast into the fire. And heal the earth which the angels have corrupted, and proclaim the healing of the earth, that they may heal the plague, and that all the children of men may not perish through all the secret things that the Watchers have disclosed and have taught their sons. And the whole earth has been corrupted through the works that were taught by Azazel: to him ascribe all sin.’”

Similarities Between Azazel and Satan. Certain elements of this account, such as the binding and sending of Azazel to the desert, resemble the Biblical description of Azazel. Similarly the casting of Azazel into the fire looks very similar to the casting of the Devil in the lake of fire in Revelation 20:10.

Several commentators have noted the similarities between the Jewish traditions regarding the fate of Azazel as found in 1 Enoch and in the Talmudic tractate *Yoma*, and the eschatological fate of Satan in Revelation 20.⁵¹ Ralph Levy offers the following concise summary of the literary correspondence between the two.

“1. In 1 Enoch 10:4 and 13:1 Asael is bound, prior to his judgment, as is Satan in Revelation 20:2-3.

2. In 1 Enoch 10:4-5 Asael is sent through an opening in the desert referred to as ‘Dudael,’ and eventually to a place of rough and jagged rocks. *Yoma* 67ab has the Azazel goat thrown over a precipice in a rocky place. Revelation 20:3 has Satan the Devil dropped into a pit.

3. 1 Enoch 10:8 gives the reason for Asael’s removal: to prevent his ongoing corruption of humanity. Revelation 20:3 provides a rationale for Satan’s binding and removal as a measure to prevent his deceiving the nations any longer.

4. 1 Enoch 10:8 instructs that ‘all sin’ is to be ascribed to Asael, paralleling the Biblical Atonement ceremony in which all sins of Israel are confessed over the Azazel goat (Lev 16:21).

5. 1 Enoch 10:13 depicts the final fate of Semjaza and his companions (including Asael) as being led off into the abyss of fire for eternal torment, just as Satan is cast into the lake of fire and sulfur, together with the Beast and the false prophet, to be eternally tormented (Rev 20:10).⁵²

The above similarities are strengthened by the sequence of events in Revelation 19 and 20, and the correspondence of these events with the Day of Atonment. Revelation 19:11-16 describes Christ who comes to execute judgment (“he judges”—Rev 19:11). “He is clad in a robe dipped in blood” (Rev 19:13), a reminder of the blood used by the High Priest on the Day of Atonment to cleanse the sanctuary. Christ does not carry blood like the High Priest, but wears a robe dipped in blood because it is His own blood that cleanses the sins of His people.

The outcome of the coming of Christ is also similar to that of the Day of Atonment. Christ destroys the wicked by His “sword” (Rev 19:21), a reminder of the impenitents who were “cut off” on the Day of Atonment (Lev 23:29). Satan is bound and thrown into “the pit” (Rev 20:3), a reminder of the sending of Azazel into the desert (Lev 16:21). The righteous are resurrected and reign with Christ, a reminder of the cleansing of God’s people on the Day of Atonment which resulted in the jubilee celebration of new beginnings (Lev 25:9).

The association of Azazel with Satan fits the scheme of Revelation 20 and provides a remarkable connection between the Jewish tradition of the fate of Azazel on the Day of Atonment, and its antitypical fulfilment at the Return of Christ.

Objections to Equating Azazel with Satan. The two major objections to equating Azazel with Satan are derived from the two texts of Leviticus quoted earlier. The first text is Leviticus 16:5 where the people are instructed to present to the High Priest “two male goats for a sin offering.” This is interpreted to mean that both goats constitute a single sin offering. This interpretation ignores the context which indicates that the two goats were presented before the Lord for the purpose of selecting which one would be the Lord’s sin-offering goat. Thus the sentence may be considered as an abbreviated summary phrase, which is expanded and clarified later on verses 9-10 and 21.

The second text is Leviticus 16: 10 which says: “Azazel shall be presented alive before the Lord to make atonement over it.” The expression “to make atonement over it” is interpreted to mean that Azazel atoned for the sins of the people. This interpretation ignores that in the Scripture atonement can be made *in a saving sense* or in *a punitive sense*. In *a saving sense* when the sins of a penitent sinner are atoned for by the substitute’s death of an animal (cf. Lev 4:35, ect.). In *a punitive sense* when the punishment (execution) of a guilty person atones for his offense (Num 35:33; 25:13). Just as punishment of those who shed blood rendered atonment for the Israelite nation (Num 35:33), so the punishment of Azazel, as representative of Satan’s role in human sinning, rendered atonment in a punitive way.

The expression “to make atonment over it” can also be taken to mean “to perform rites of expiation besides it,”⁵³ or in proximity of it. This meaning is suggested by the fact that, as B. LeVive points out, “the scapegoat was merely stationed near the altar while the priest took some of the sacrificial blood [of the Lord’s goat] for use in the expiatory rites.”⁵⁴ The rite of the scapegoat (Lev 16:21) clearly shows that it was a rite of elimination of sin, because no ritual atonment or expiation was executed over the animal.

We may summarize the five key aspects of the Azazel rite as follows. First, the Azazel rite took place at the conclusion of the ritual of the Day of Atonment, after atonment had been made to cleanse the sanctuary of the accumulated sins of the Israelites. Second, Azazel is not slain and does not function as a sacrifice to expiate the sins of the Israelites, but as a vehicle to remove their sins away from the sanctuary. Third, the laying on of hands and the confession of sins over the scapegoat by the High Priest represents the symbolic transference of all Israel’s sins that had been deposited in the sanctuary. Fourth, the bringing of Azazel into the wilderness to die represents the permanent removal and elimination of sin. Fifth, the sacrificed goat represents Christ who atones for our sins with His sacrifice, while the live goat represents Satan who will ultimately bear responsibility for all the sins and evil he instigated.

Implications of the Day of Atonment. The Day of Atonment has important implications not only for the universe in general, but also for God’s professed people in particular. The observance of the day served to differentiate between the genuine believers and the false believers. The genuine believers were those Israelites who throughout the year repented of their sins, bringing appropriate sin offerings to the sanctuary, and who on the Day of Atonment rested, fasted, prayed, repented, and humbled their hearts before God. At the completion of the purification rites for the sanctuary, these persons were pronounced “clean before the Lord” (Lev 16:30).

The false believers were those Israelites who during the year did not repent, thus failing to bring atoning sacrifices at the sanctuary, and on the Day of Atonment they did not desist from their toil nor did they engage in fasting, prayer, and soul searching (cf. Num 19:20) or who chose to sin defiantly against God (cf. Lev 20:1-6). On the Day of Atonment these persons were “cut off” from God people. “For whoever is not afflicted on this same day *shall be cut off from his people*. And whoever does any work on this same day, that person *I will destroy from among his people*” (Lev 23:29-30).⁵⁵

The *separation* that occurred on the Day of Atonment between genuine and false Israelites typifies the separation that will occur at the

Second Advent. Both groups professed to belong to the people of God, but the rites of the Day of Atonment revealed who were the genuine and who were false believers. In a similar manner Christ taught through several of His parables that a radical separation will occur at His Return.

Jesus compared this separation to the one that takes place at harvest time between the wheat and the weeds. Since the tares were sown among the good wheat which represents “the sons of the kingdom,” (Matt 13:38), it is evident that Jesus had His church in mind. Wheat and tares, genuine and false believers will coexist in the church until His coming. At that time the drastic separation typified by the Day of Atonment will occur. Evildoers will be thrown “into the furnace of fire,” and the “righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13:42-43).

Jesus compared the Advent separation to a shepherd who “separates the sheep from the goats,” by placing the former at the right hand and the latter at the left (Matt 25:32-33). In a similar fashion Christ “will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, . . . inherit the kingdom . . .’” and “to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, . . . into the eternal fire’” (Matt 25:34, 41).

Jesus’ parables and the ritual of the Day of Atonment teach the same important truth: False and genuine Christians will coexist until His coming. But at the Advent judgment typified by the Day of Atonment, a permanent separation will occur, when sin and sinners will be eradicated for ever and a new world will be established. What all of this means is that the rituals of the Day of Atonment find their antitypical fulfilment more in the executive judgment carried out by Christ at His coming, than in the investigative judgment that precedes the Second Advent. After all it is at the Second Advent that will occur the final and permanent separation between genuine and false believers, eradication of sin, and the binding of Satan, all events that were typified by the ritual of the Day of Atonment.

The Final Separation. This typological function of the Day of Atonment as representing the final separation that will occur at the Second Advent is noted by Frank Holbrook, editor of the six volumes symposia on Daniel and Revelation, published by the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Holbrook compares Christ’s judgment parables with the parable or object lesson of the Day of Atonment. “Israel’s sanctuary parable and Jesus’ judgment parables teach the same important truth: While probation continues, God’s professed people will always be composed of the true and false. But the final judgment (as in the typical Day of Atonment) will correct the situation and will separate the two.”⁵⁶

For Holbrook, however, the final judgment typified by the Day of Atonment consists of both its investigative phase carried out in heaven before Christ comes and its executive phase executed on earth when Christ comes. For the investigative phase Holbrook turns to other portions of the Scripture, because the rituals of the Day of Atonment present “only the essence of the final judgment.”⁵⁷

Holbrook’s interpretation is reflective of traditional Adventist thinking which in my view cannot be adequately supported by the typology of the Day of Atonment. Holbrook himself acknowledges that the rituals of the Day of Atonment typify the final disposition and eradication of sin. He writes: “The Day of Atonment rituals resulted in a clean sanctuary and a clean people. All ‘evidence’ of sin and accountability had been removed from the sanctuary via the scapegoat and the false Israelites had been ‘cut off’ and destroyed. Because the Day of Atonment accomplished a complete disposition of sin, it is correctly viewed as the foreshadowing type of the final judgment, the divine action which will for ever settle and eradicate the issue of sin.”⁵⁸

The final judgment foreshadowed by the rituals of the Day of Atonment, can hardly be the investigative phase of the final judgment, because as Holbrook points out, these rituals resulted in a clean sanctuary, clean people, the removal of all ‘evidences’ of sin via the scapegoat, and the destruction of the false Israelites. All of these events are clearly associated with the executive judgment conducted by Christ at His coming.

Conclusion. The Day of Atonment was the grand climax of the religious year in ancient Israel. The rites performed on that day concluded the atoning process of the sins of the Israelites by removing them permanently from the sanctuary. The record of forgiven sins was kept in the sanctuary until the Day of Atonment because such sins were to be reviewed by the heavenly court during the final judgment typified by the Feast of Trumpets. The Day of Atonment was the culmination of the judgment process in which God executed His judgment by giving life to those who had confessed their sins and availed themselves of the divine provision for their atonement. It was also a day of death for impenitent sinners who rejected God’s provision for the cleansing of their sins.

The sacrificial rites of the Day of Atonment provided *total* cleansing from all the sins of God’s people. The totality of the cleansing is emphasized several times in Leviticus 16 by the expression “all your sins” (Lev 16:16, 30, 34). In contrast to the sacrificial rites of the bull and Lord’s goat, the rite of the scapegoat was non-sacrificial. Its function was to dispose of the sins of God’s people in a desert region where there is no life.

The emphasis of the Day of Atonment on judgment and cleansing, sin and atonment, fasting and prayer, was designed to drive home important lessons to the Israelites. It showed them the seriousness of sin and the divine provision for its eradication through confession, sacrifice, recording, judgment, and final disposition. It taught the Israelites that before their sins could be cleansed and permanently eliminated on the Day of Atonment, they had to be repented of, forsaken and judged by the heavenly court. The dramatic ritual of the Day of Atonment foreshadowed in a most impressive how Christ at His coming will save His people and destroy sin and sinners in a permanent and radical way. In the following chapter we shall examine how the typical services of the Day of Atonment, find their antitypical fulfilment in the final phase of Christ's redemptive ministry.

PART III THE JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF THE DAY OF ATONMENT

No other Holy Day has undergone such a transformation over the centuries as the Day of Atonment, better known among the Jews as Yom Kippur. After all it was a day filled with intense drama and promise of cleansing and renewal. It was a day that offered a grand spectacle in which the chief actor was the High Priest. The scenes included bulls, goats, incense, oblations, sprinkling, the High Priest entering into the very presence of God in the Most Holy, and the dispatching of the scapegoat into the wilderness with the nation's sins. Most impressive must have been to see the High Priest robed in the whiteness of linen, making a threefold confession of sin for himself, his household, and the priesthood.

Early History. In view of its impressive drama and elaborate ritual, it is surprising that there is little evidence of the observance of the Day of Atonment in Israel's later history. There is no mention of the Day of Atonment in the Biblical description of Solomon's dedication of the Temple, which took place in the week preceding the Feast of Tabernacles (2 Chron 7:8-10).

As late as 457 B. C. when Ezra came to Jerusalem to introduce much needed religious reforms, the Jewish community seem to have been unaware of the date of the Feast of Trumpets. Ezra proceeded to instruct the people regarding the law in general and the Feast of Tabernacles in particular (Neh 8:9, 14), but surprisingly he failed to mention the Day of Atonment.

Higher critics explain the silence by attributing all the Mosaic legislation regarding the Day of Atonment to postexilic times under the influence of priestly sources. Such an explanation fails to convince because, "it is an

impossible task to excise, stylistically or logically, Leviticus 16 from its fundamental place in the scheme of the Book of Leviticus or from the entire priestly system in Israel for that matter. . . . A historical difficulty of insurmountable proportions is this: if the Ark of the covenant no longer existed after the Exile, . . . how could the Day of Atonment have been inaugurated at that late date when its entire efficacy and worth were linked inseparably with that Ark?"⁵⁹

A more plausible explanation for the silence regarding the Day of Atonment during the pre-exilic period is the recurring lapses into idolatry and apostasy which resulted in the widespread ignorance of religious observances. During the religious reform introduced by Ezra, we are told that "the people wept when they heard the words of the law" (Nehm 8:9), because they had long forgotten its teachings. It is feasible to assume that their ignorance extended to the observance of the annual feasts, including the Day of Atonment.

The Post-Exilic Period. The observance of the Day of Atonment regained prominence after the Babylonian exile, in what is known as the Second Temple period. The Talmud describes some of the customs that were introduced at that time. One of these was the recitation of a short prayer by the High Priest at the conclusion of the service. The prayer expressed the hope that "no exile shall come upon us . . . and may it be your will that this year be a year when prices are low, a year of plenty . . . a year of rain."⁶⁰

Another innovation was the reading by the High Priest of portions of the Torah pertaining to the Day of Atonment.⁶¹ The Talmud preserves also the text of the three confessions the High Priest made on the Day of Atonment on behalf of himself, his household, and the priesthood.⁶²

An interesting tradition developed in conjunction with the leading away of the scapegoat to a steep cliff in the wilderness. An elaborate system of escorts was prepared to ensure that the goat would reach its destination. When the goat finally reached the designated precipice, the attending priest removed part of the red sash from the head of the goat, tying it to a protrusion on the cliff. Then he would push the goat over the cliff, sending him to his death together with Israel's sins.

There is an interesting tradition that developed in conjunction with the scapegoat ceremony. A portion of the crimson sash that was tied around the head of the scapegoat, was attached to the door of the Temple before the goat was sent into the wilderness. When the goat met its end in the wilderness, according to tradition the sash attached to the Temple's door would turn white. This was seen as a providential sign indicating that the sins of Israel had

been forgiven.⁶³ This tradition was based on the verse of Isaiah where the prophet declares: “Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool” (Is 1:18).

Another custom introduced in the postexilic period was that of bathing on the Day of Atonment. We are told that the High Priest bathed himself five times during the day.⁶⁴ From this derives the Jewish custom of bathing on the eve of the Day of Atonment.

The Post-Temple Era. With the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70, the glorious ritual of the Day of Atonment disappeared, yet its meaning and message remained. “What Yom Kippur has lost in ceremonialism,” writes S. M. Lehrman, “it has gained in spirituality.”⁶⁵ The solemnity of the Day of Atonment has survived among the Jews without the Temple pagentry, largely due to the resourcefulness of the rabbinic leadership. “In fact,” writes Abraham Bloch, the moral effectiveness of Yom Kippur was greatly enhanced, for the focal point of its observance was shifted from Jerusalem to every town and hamlet, wherever synagogues existed.”⁶⁶ What must have contributed to the survival and enhancement of the Day of Atonment is its challenge and promise of cleansing and renewal, a day to forsake the sinful past to experience a new beginning. This is a fundamental human need which makes the message of the Day of Atonment relevant to Christians today.

When the hope of obtaining forgiveness and atonment through the sacrificial system was shattered by the destruction of the Temple in A. D. 70, the Jewish leadership was faced with a crisis they had not encountered since the Babylonian captivity. Without Temple, without altar, without sacrifices, how could the Day of Atonment, the most crucial day in the Jewish consciousness, continue to be observed?

Confronted with the threat of the extinction of the Jewish religion once the sacrificial system was gone, the rabbis turned to the Old Testament in search of other means of atonment. They knew that if Judaism was to survive, they had to help Jews shift the center of their religious life from the Temple to the synagogue and from sacrificial offerings to private devotions. Thus, the rabbis substituted for the sacrificial offerings, three key practices: prayer, charity, and repentance.

Prayer. The first important religious exercise that substituted the sacrificial offerings of the Day of Atonment is prayer. The rabbis taught that prayer takes the place of sacrifices.⁶⁷ They referred to the fact that prayer was one method the Jewish exiles in Babylon used to seek favor with God. Daniel prayed three times a day at the usual hours of prayer at the Temple in Jerusalem, though the Temple had been destroyed.

Individual prayers had been associated with the sacrificial offering in Temple days. Isaiah predicted: “Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Is 56:7). With the establishment of the synagogue in the postexilic period, prayer became an important part of the communal religious life. This was a fortunate development because it filled the void when the Temple vanished away.

The Day of Atonment was spent in intense prayer and supplication. The Jewish philosopher Philo offers us a good description of the importance of prayer in the observance of the Day of Atonment in New Testament times: “Everyone is at this time in prayer and supplications . . . they devote their entire leisure to nothing else from morning till evening, except to most acceptable prayers by which they endeavor to gain the favor of God, entreating pardon for their sins.”⁶⁸

Charity. The second important religious exercise that substituted the sacrificial offerings of the Day of Atonment is charity. Giving to charity became an important part of the liturgy of the Day of Atonment because it serves to give outward expression to repentance and devotion. The rabbis made charity a fundamental attribute of piety. The following quotations illustrate the rabbinic emphasis on charity. “Great is charity in that it brings the redemption nearer.”⁶⁹ “Charity delivers from death.”⁷⁰ “Jerusalem will be delivered only through charity.”⁷¹

It is not surprising that charity played an important role in the observance of the Day of Atonment because when Ezra met with the Jews in Jerusalem, he ordered them to celebrate the Feast of Trumpets by giving some of their food to those “for whom nothing is prepared” (Num 8:10).

“In the synagogue long tables were covered with alms plates for every charity in town, for giving to charity is a central theme of the Day of Atonment. Many beggars waited outside the synagogue, certain to receive charity from worshippers eager to perform last-minute good deeds that might tip the heavenly balance in their favor and assure them of prosperity in the coming year.”⁷²

Repentance. The third important religious exercise that substituted the sacrificial offerings of the Day of Atonment is repentance. The rabbis taught that repentance is the ultimate means of atonement. “Great is repentance for it reaches to the Throne of Glory. Great is repentance, for it makes redemption [by the Messiah] to come near. Great is repentance, for it lengthens the years of a man’s life.”⁷³

The renowned Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides wrote: "At this time, when the Temple no longer exists, nothing is left but repentance. . . . Yom Kippur itself atones for those who repent, as it is written, 'For it is on this day that atonement shall be made for you' (Lev 16:30).⁷⁴ But true repentance must meet certain conditions. It must show a genuine regret for the sinful actions committed, a sincere resolve not to repeat them again, and a willingness to confess orally one's sins.

Repentance is expressed on the Day of Atonment especially by fasting and confession of sins. Fasting is designed to curb bodily appetites in order to heighten the awareness of spiritual needs. By making the body weaker fasting is designed to make the soul stronger. The confession of sins is the high point of the Yom Kippur liturgy, but confession is done in the plural form, *we* have sinned. The reason is that "we must share the guilt of another's transgression because of our lack of effort in preventing others from straying."⁷⁵ The recitation of sins is repeated ten times during the day long liturgy.

The prayer of confession is a plea for forgiveness and cleansing: "God and God of our fathers, pardon our sins on this Day of Atonment. Let our sins and transgressions be removed from Thy sight . . . When I measure my life in Thy presence, I am confused and I am ashamed. Help me, O God and God of my fathers, to steer clear of sin. And as for my past sins, purge me of them in Thy great mercy, but, I pray, not through severe and painful disease."⁷⁶

The sins are listed alphabetically according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in order to jog memory and to cover all aspects of human behavior. Everyone confesses all sins, and each individual applies the appropriate category to himself or herself.⁷⁷ The focus is not just of the sins of society, but on the changes needed in one's personal life. "People dredge up their sins, but in a way they are glad to do so because the sins remembered and repented of, are all forgiven. . . . Thus, Yom Kippur is both a fierce jolt and a great relief."⁷⁸

The Evening Service. The Day of the Atonment is an intensively religious service for the Jews. In fact, five religious services are conducted during the day. Since the Day of Atonment is observed like the Sabbath "from evening to evening" (Lev 23:32), the first service of the Day of Atonment begins for the Jews before the setting of the sun that signals the beginning of the Day of Atonment.

The Jews gather for the evening service in their synagogue dressed in white *kittels*, or white garments as a symbol of their contrite heart and of their confidence in God's promise to forgive their sins. Some worshippers carry a candle to the synagogue, chanting. "Light is sown like a seed for the righteous and gladness for the upright in heart" (Ps 97:11). Similar candles burn at home.

A feeling of awe grips the hearts of the people as they prepare for the solemn evening service. The congregation is hushed with expectations when the ark is opened, a white curtain is drawn, and the scrolls of the law are shown draped in white. White is the dominant color of the day of Atonment to symbolize the cleansing and purity offered by God on that day.

When the scrolls are returned to the ark, the most emotional part of the service, the chanting of *Kol Nidre* begins. *Kol Nidre* is a moving prayer that is chanted three times, each time increasing in volume and intensity, until the synagogue is filled with its mournful melody. The text of the song is a declaration of annulment of “all vows, renunciation, promises, obligations, oaths, taken rashly . . . May we be absolved from them, may we be released from them, may they be null and void and of no effect. May they not be binding upon us. . . . And may atonment be granted to the whole congregation of Israel and to the stranger who lives among them, for all have transgressed unwittingly.”⁷⁹

The origin of the *Kol Nidre* chant is uncertain. Some Jewish scholars maintain that the prayer originated during the Middle Ages when the Jews were forced to convert to Christianity. Some Jews would have used this prayer to absolve themselves from vows made under coercion. These forced converts would secretly remain faithful to Judaism and chanted the *Kol Nidre* on the Day of Atonment to express their grief over their apostasy and to seek God’s forgiveness for their unwilling vows.⁸⁰

For understandable reasons *Kol Nidre* has faced centuries of strong opposition from within and without Judaism. Malevolent detractors appealed to this prayer cancelling all vows as proof that Jews could not be trusted to keep their oaths or promises. Many Jews also have opposed *Kol Nidre* because the outright cancellation of vows can easily be abused.

Jews from all walks of life who during the year have neglected or even rejected their faith, are attracted to the solemnity of Yom Kippur, and especially to the emotional part of the service of *Kol Nidre*. This reflects the desire to make amends and experience a new beginning. It is perhaps the spirit of cleansing and reconciliation of Yom Kippur, that has led faithful Jews to allow offenders to join their congregations in prayer. The admission of transgressors is formalized by reciting this formula: “With the consent of God and of the congregation, we allow transgressors to pray with us.”⁸¹ After the admission of transgressors the chanting of *Kol Nidre* begins.

The plaintive melody of *Kol Nidre* is “filled with deep sadness, reaching into the soul to draw out the hidden longings of man. The melody has also found its way into the work of such non-Jewish composers as Beethoven (the penultimate movement of the G Minor Quartet, opus 131, and the first

movement of the Trio, opus 9, n. 3) and Bruch (the well-known composition entitled "Kol Nidre").⁸² The popularity of *Kol Nidre* may be due, not only to its appealing melody, but also to its message of forgiveness for broken promises. This is a message that rings true in many hearts.

The Liturgy of the Day of Atonment. Surprisingly the Day of Atonment developed few unusual liturgical practices. Essentially it was a day of fasting, prayer, and confession. Religious services were held at the synagogue in the morning, afternoon and evening. This means that most of the day was spent at the synagogue. The wearing of white robes and the removal of the Torah scrolls from the ark contributed to create an atmosphere of deep solemnity.

During the morning service, known as *Musaph*, six persons (seven if Yom Kippur fell on a Sabbath) are called to read the section of the Mosaic law dealing with the ritual of the Day of Atonment, known as *Avodah*. The purpose of this service, is to reenact verbally the Yom Kippur pageantry of the Temple. For example, as the High Priest and the congregation prostrated themselves in the Temple on Yom Kippur when the name of God was mentioned, so the readers of the *Avodah*, prostrate themselves with the congregation during the recitation of the prayer when it says: "We bend the knee and prostrate ourselves and offer thanks to the supreme king of kings, the holy one, blessed be he."⁸³

It is noteworthy that the regular posture for prayer in the synagogue during prayer is not kneeling, but standing up or sitting down. An exception to the general practice is made on the Feast of Trumpets and on the Day of Atonment. The kneeling posture of these High Holy Days reflect the solemnity of the occasion when the Jews prostrate themselves before God, pleading for forgiveness and cleansing.

A high point of the service is when the entire congregation kneels and falls upon their face when the cantor intones the ancient words which according to tradition were composed by Joshua upon entering into the Promised land: "We bend the knee and prostrate ourselves and make acknowledgment before the supreme King of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, whose glorious throne is in the heavens and the home of whose majesty is in the loftiest heights."⁸⁴

During the afternoon service, known as *Minchah*, the reading from the Law (Torah) is followed by the reading of the book of Jonah. The selection of this book for the Day of Atonment is quite obvious. "A heathen people, given over to immorality and sinfulness, is aroused to repentance by the

warning voice of a Hebrew prophet. Their cry of regret, their fasting and praying, proves acceptable to God and forgiveness is granted them. The force of repentance is demonstrated and its effect upon the divine will is clearly established. The story thus offers comfort and hope to the worshippers, who have been spending the day in fasting and in praying, that they also will gain divine favor and their sins also will be forgiven, even as was the case with the people of Nineveh.”⁸⁵

The Closing Service. The concluding service of the Day of Atonment, known as *Neilah*, is especially solemn. The service is called *Neilah*, which literally means “closing” or “shutting,” because it originally coincided with the time of the shutting of the Temple’s gates. In time *Neilah* came to mean the closing of the gates of heaven which stood ajar during the day to receive the prayers and supplications of the contrite and repentant sinners.

The *Neilah* service assumes additional solemnity because it is regarded as the last opportunity for forgiveness and reconciliation. “While the gates are being shut, the people, exhausted by fasting and praying all day long, make another supreme effort to penetrate the gate of mercy and obtain the favor of gracious Providence.”⁸⁶

The awareness that the fate of each individual is being sealed at the end of the day is reflected in the change of wording during the *Neilah* prayers. “The prayers often repeated during the ten days of penitence, in which the worshipper asks to be *inscribed* in the book of life, are changed during *Neilah* for the prayer to be *sealed* in the book of life.”⁸⁷ The service ends with a crescendo. When the sun begins to set, the congregation rises and cries out: *Shema Yisrael!* Hear, O Israel! Then it renews the pledge of loyalty to God, and calls for the establishment of His kingdom. A long, resounding blast of the shofar signal the end of the Day of Atonment. The call of the trumpet is answered by the congregation’s exclamation: “Next year in Jerusalem!” This slogan is uttered twice by the Jews. The first time at the conclusion of the Passover service, the feast of redemption, and the second time at the conclusion of the Day of Atonment, the feast of the ultimate restoration.

Conclusion. Throughout the centuries the ritual of Yom Kippur has cast its magic spell even over the most indifferent Jews. Its promise of cleansing, reconciliation, and restoration to anew relationship with God, still meets a basic need of the human heart. “Rightly observed,” writes Rabbi S. Lehrman, “Yom Kippur can to this day be the regenerator of our lives, making us at-one with our Creator and bringing us nearer to the ideal from which we have departed. Life demands continual effort and self-sacrifice, for these

things enoble and purify. It is an effort that the day exacts. Understood and observed in this spirit, it will help us to acquire 'a new heart and a new spirit,' helping us to usher in the age when wickedness will be removed from the earth, like smoke before the gusts of health-giving winds."⁸⁸

The Day of Atonment holds the hope of regeration and restoration not only for Jews but especially for Christians who believe that Christ is the antitypical High Priest who "has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, but into heaven itself" to make expiation for our sins in the present and to save us at His Second Advent (Heb 9:23-28). This is the theme we wish to explore in the following chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 4

1. Naphtali Winter, *The High Holy Days* (Jerusalem, 1973), p. 54.
2. Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way. Living the Holidays* (New York, 1988), pp. 207-208.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 211.
4. See Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 14:4.
5. See Philo, *Treatise on the Ten Festivals*, The Ninth Festival. For a discussion on the various names of the Day of Atonment, see Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York, 1978), p. 28.
6. See J. Milgrom, *Cult and Conscience* (Leiden, 1976), p. 128.
7. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* ((Mountain View, California, 1943), p. 415.
8. See S. Lyonnet, "Expiation in the Old Testament," *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice* (Rome, 1970), p. 130, note 31.
9. For a discussion of the defilement//cleansing of the sanctuary by means of the blood or flesh of the sacrifices, see, Gerhard F. Hasel, "Studies in Biblical Atonement: Continual Sacrifice, Defilement//Cleansing and Sanctuary," *The Sanctuary and the Atonment* (Washington, D. C., 1981), pp. 91-114; Alberto R. Treiyer, *The Day of Atonment and the Heavenly Judgment* (Siloam Springs, Arkansas, 1992), pp. 147-212.
10. Alberto R. Treiyer (note 9), p. 184.
11. Gerhard Hasel (note 9), p. 99.

12. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, California, 1943), p. 357.

13. See, T. K. Chayne, "Day of Atonment," *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, ed. T. K. Chayne and J. Southerland Black, (London, 1899), col. 385. F. Meyrick, *The Book of Leviticus* (New York, n.d.), p. 237; J. Milgrom, "Sacrifices and Offerings in the Old testament," *The Interpreter Dictionary of the Bible, Supplement* (Nashville, 1976), p. 766.

14. A. R. Fausset, "Day of Atonment, *Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids, 1975), p. 62.

15. See J. Milgrom (note 6), p. 118, S. G. Gayford, "Leviticus," *A New Commentary in the Holy Scripture* (London, 1937), pp.114-115.

16. Emphasis supplied.

17. For a study of the syntactical construction of the verb *kipper*, see Gerhard Hazel (note 9), pp.117-118.

18. Alberto R. Treiyer (note 9), p. 169.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 298.

20. Emphasis supplied.

21. J. Behm, "Nestis," *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids, 1967), vol. 4, p. 928.

22. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, California, 1943), p. 425.

23. Emphasis supplied.

24. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* (London, 1874), p. 266.

25. This protective function of the incense is suggested by J. H. Hertz, *The Pentateuch and Haftoraphs* (London, 1978), p. 482.

26. L. L. Morris, "Day of Atonment and the Work of Christ," *Reformed Theological Review* 14 (1955), p. 14.

27. Alberto R. Treiyer (note 9), p. 190.

28. Alberto R. Treiyer, "The Day of Atonment as Related to the Contamination and Purification of the Sanctuary," in *The Seventy Weeks, Leviticus, and the Nature of Prophecy* (Silver Spring, Maryland, 1988), p. 245.

29. B. A. Levine, *In the Presence of the Lord* (Leiden, 1974), p. 80.

30. Ibid.

31. Gerhard Hasel (note 9), pp. 121-122.

32. For a thorough analysis of the various interpretation of the meaning of Azazel, see Alberto R. Treiyer (note 9), pp. 231-265.

33. See, A. Clamer, *Le Levitique* (Paris, 1940), p. vol. 2, p. 125; G. Strano, "Capro Emissario," *Enciclopedia Cattolica* (Firenze, 1949), vol. 3, p. 727.

34. The Greek Septuagint reads *tou apompaiion*, "the one sent," and the Latin Vulgate reads *caprum emissarium*, "goat sent out."

35. See, *Yomah* 67b.

36. See, *Yomah* 63b.

37. Roland de Vaux, *Studies in Old Testament Sacrifice* (Cardiff, 1964), p. 509.

38. See, *God's Festivals and Holy Days* (Pasadena, California, 1992 edition), p. 299.; Greg R. Albrecht, one of the top administrators of the Worldwide Church of God, writes: "Both goats may be seen as representing facets of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. the shedding of blood is depicted in taking the life of the first goat. . . . Another important part of Jesus Christ's atonement can be understood by the placing of sin on the head of the second goat. Jesus was and is our sin bearer, the One who 'takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:29), . . . It is also possible to interpret Leviticus 16 as speaking of both the atoning work of Christ and the moral culpability of Satan the devil has for humanity's sins. While the additional view is supported by a number of scholars, it should not detract from or obscure the meaning of the atoning work of Jesus christ on our behalf" ("More Than Just a Day," *The Plain Truth* [September 1994], p. 6).

39. See, *Pagan Holidays or God's Holy Days, Which?* (Pasadena, California, 1986), p.36-37.

40. Ralph D. Levy, "The Symbolism of the Azazel Goat," A Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School of the Union Institute (1995), p. 25.

41. Ibid., p. 97.

42. Ibid.

43. Emphasis supplied.

44. Emphasis supplied.

45. Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, Michigan, 1996), p. 126.

46. See below note 50.

47. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1967), vol. 2, p. 225.

48. C. F. Keil, "The Third Book of Moses," *Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, 1949), p. 398.

49. See, H. Tawil, "Azazel, The Prince of the Steepe," *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentum* 82 (1980), p.47. For a listing and evaluation of the various attempted etymological derivations, see Alberto R. Treiyer (note 9), pp. 241-247.

50. See R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford, 1964), vol. 2, pp.193-196.

51. See, R. H. Charles (note 50), pp. 141-143; Lester L. Grabbe, "The Scapegoat Tradition: A Study in Early Jewish Interpretation," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 18:2 (1987), pp. 160-161; J. Massyngberde Forde, *Revelation* Anchor Bible (New York, 1975), p. 330.

52. Ralph D. Levy (note 40), p. 76.

53. B. A. Levine (note 29), p. 80.

54. Ibid.

55. Emphasis supplied.

56. Frank B. Holbrook (note 45), pp.130-131.

57. Ibid., p.132.

58. Ibid., p. 130.

59. C. L. Feinberg, "The Day of Atonment," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Merrill c. Tenny, ed., (Grand Rapids, 1978), vol. 1, p. 415.

60. Jerusalem Talmud, *Yoma* 5.

61. Ibid., *Yoma* 68a.

62. *Yoma* 35b, 41b, 66a.

63. *Yoma* 68b.

64. *Yoma* 19b.

65. S. M. Lehrman, *The Jewish Festivals* (London, 1956), p. 182.

66. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York, 1978), p. 34.

67. *PeiktaD'Rav Kahana* 25:165b. (Hos 14:2).

68. *Baba Batra* 10a

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Baba Batra* 10a.

71. *Shabbat* 139a.

72. Mitch and Zhava Glaser, *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (Chicago, 1987), p. 112.

73. *Yoma* 86a.

74. Moses Maimonides, *Mishnah Torah*, Laws of Repentance, 1:3; 2:9-10.

75. S. M. Lehrman (note 62), p.195.

76. Ben Zion Bokser, ed., *The High Holiday Prayer Book: Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur* (New York, 1959), pp. 258-259.

77. Irving Greenberg (note 2), p. 212.

78. *Ibid.*

79. Ben Zion Bokser (note 73), pp. 258-259.

80. See, Philip Goodman, *The Yom Kippur Anthology* (Philadelphia, 1971), p. 95; S. M. Lehrman (note 49), p. 192; Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York, 1980), p. 172.

81. S. M. Lehrman (note 62), p. 192.

82. Mitch and Zhava Glaser (note 69), p. 114 ; See also Philip Goodman (note 64), p. 95.

83. Abraham P. Bloch (note 77), p. 176.

84. Philipp Goodman (note 77), p. 121.

85. Julius H. Greenstone, *Jewish Feasts and Fasts* (New York, 1946), p. 47.

86. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

87. *Ibid.*

88. S. M. Lehrman (note 62), pp. 198-199.

Chapter V

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

Sometimes Christians wonder, What on earth is Jesus doing in Heaven? Almost two millennia have passed since He resurrected and ascended to heaven, and yet He has not returned. Has Christ, who loved us so much to give His life for us, forgotten us? Is Christ on vacation recovering from His exhaustive earthly redemptive mission? By no means! God has not abandoned the plan of salvation He carefully laid before the creation of this earth (1 Cor 2:7; Eph 3:9; 1 Pet 1:20).

One reason some Christians are confused about what Jesus is doing in heaven is their limited understanding of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary, which is illustrated especially by the annual Holy Days. The Springs Feasts of Passover and Pentecost typify, as we have seen, the inauguration of Christ's redemptive ministry, while the Fall Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles represent the consummation of His redemptive ministry. An understanding of the typological meaning of the annual Feasts can help us appreciate the fact that Christ is not on vacation. He is working intensively to bring to consummation the redemption obtained at the Cross (Heb 7:25).

The Spring Feasts inaugurate Christ's redemptive ministry with Passover, which is the Feast of our Redemption. The sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross as our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7) at Passover is the foundation and beginning of Christ's redemptive ministry. The crowning of Christ's Paschal sacrifice occurred at Pentecost when He was officially enthroned at the right hand of God (Acts 2:32; Rev 5:9-12) and began His intercessory ministry in the heavenly sanctuary on behalf of believers on earth: "God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). On that occasion, Christ "entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12).

Pentecost celebrates the official inauguration of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary which was made manifest on earth through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4). Since Pentecost, Christ has been ministering as our intercessor, sustaining the Church (Rev 1:13, 20), mediating repentance and forgiveness to believers (Acts 5:31; 1 John 2:1-2; 1:9), making our prayers acceptable to God (John 16:23-24; Rev 8:3), providing us with the invisible and yet real assistance of His angels (Heb 1:14; Rev 5:6; 1:16, 20), and bestowing upon believers the essential gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33).

The three Fall Feasts of Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles typify the three steps leading to the consummation of Christ's redemptive ministry: *repentance*, *cleansing*, and *rejoicing* for the final restoration. The Feast of Trumpets, as we have seen in chapters 2 and 3, represents God's last call to *repentance* while the destiny of God's people is being reviewed by the heavenly court during the antitypical ten days preceding the Day of Atonement. We refer to this period as the "Pre-Advent Judgment."

The Day of Atonement typifies Christ's final act of *cleansing* that will be accomplished at His coming when He will cleanse His people of their sins and will place all accountability on Satan (Azazel). The cleansing accomplished by Christ at His Return makes it possible to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles which foreshadows the *rejoicing* of the saints at the inauguration of a new life in the new earth.

Objectives of the Chapter. This chapter examines the New Testament understanding of the Day of Atonement in the light of its Old Testament typological meaning and function. We have found that in the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement was the climactic Holy Day that cleansed the earthly sanctuary from the accumulated sins of God's people. Our question now is: When and how does Christ accomplish the antitypical fulfillment of the cleansing of the sanctuary?

To answer this question, one must address several important related questions. Is there a *real* heavenly sanctuary that needs to be cleansed like the earthly one? What is the nature of the heavenly sanctuary? What causes the defilement of the heavenly sanctuary? Does the New Testament teach that the typological cleansing of the Day of Atonement was fulfilled at the Cross or is yet to be fulfilled at the Second Advent? What is the meaning and relevance of the Day of Atonement for today?

We endeavor to answer these questions by examining the relevant information provided especially by the books of Hebrews and Revelation. These books provide us with the largest number of allusions to the sanctuary

in general and the Day of Atonement in particular. We shall see that while Hebrews is concerned with the priestly functions of Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary, Revelation focuses on the divine activity in the heavenly sanctuary to the end of the world. We might say that while the major thrust of Hebrews is intercession, that of Revelation is judgment.

This chapter divides into four parts. The first part endeavors to establish whether the New Testament's references to the heavenly sanctuary should be taken metaphorically as symbolic of the spiritual presence of God, or literally as allusions to a real place where Christ ministers on our behalf. The second part considers the nature of the heavenly sanctuary by examining the vertical and horizontal correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The third part analyzes the allusions to the Day of Atonement in both Hebrews and Revelation. The aim is to ascertain the meaning and function of the Day of Atonement in the New Testament. The fourth part considers the relevance of the meaning and message of the Day of Atonement for the Christian life today.

PART I

THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY REAL OR SYMBOLIC?

The New Testament understanding of the Day of Atonement is closely related to its understanding of the heavenly sanctuary. The reason is that the cleansing of the Day of Atonement affected in a special way the sanctuary itself. What this means is that if the New Testament references to the heavenly sanctuary are taken to be metaphorical, that is, symbolic of the spiritual presence of God, then there is no actual heavenly sanctuary, no actual heavenly priesthood of Christ, and no actual Day of Atonement "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary. On the other hand, if the New Testament references to the heavenly sanctuary are taken to be literal, that is, allusions to a real, heavenly sanctuary, then there is in heaven an actual sanctuary with an actual priesthood of Christ, and an actual Day of Atonement "cleansing" of the heavenly sanctuary.

The Reality of the Heavenly Sanctuary. The existence and reality of the heavenly sanctuary is clearly affirmed in both the Old and New Testaments. In fact, the New Testament understanding of the heavenly sanctuary is dependent upon the Old Testament view of the same. The books of Hebrews and Revelation provide us with the clearest affirmation of the reality of the heavenly sanctuary.

In the book of Hebrews, Jesus is presented as "a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set not by man but by the Lord" (Heb 8:2).

The reality of the heavenly sanctuary is established in Hebrews by means of the typological correspondence that exists between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary. The author affirms that the earthly sanctuary was “a copy (*hupodeigma*) and shadow (*skia*) of the heavenly sanctuary” (Heb 8:5). He supports this assertion by quoting Exodus 25:40: “For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern (*tupos*) which was shown you on the mountain” (Heb 8:5).

It is evident that the author of Hebrews derives the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary from the original account of the construction of the tabernacle, where God instructs Moses, saying: “Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst. According to all that I show you concerning the *pattern* [*tabnit*] of the tabernacle, and all its furniture, so you shall make it. . . . And see that you make them after the *pattern* [*tabnit*] for them, which is being shown you on the mountain” (Ex 25:8-9, 40).¹

The Hebrews word *tabnit* (“pattern”) which is used three times in Exodus 25:9, 40, is derived from the verb *banah*, “to build.” The word occurs 23 times in the Hebrew Bible and conveys “the general meanings of ‘likeness’ (as in an image),² ‘form’ (as in an appearance),³ ‘model’ (as used to make a copy),⁴ and ‘plan’ (as in design or sketch).”⁵ From the usages of *tabnit* we may reasonably infer that Moses received not only verbal instructions, but also some kind of a model of the structure he was to build.

“The significance of the term *tabnit* (pattern),” as Frank Holbrook points out, “is not dependent on whether Moses was shown a model or simply architectural specifications, or both. The question rather is whether the term signifies only an idea in the mind of God or points to a higher reality with objective existence—namely, a heavenly sanctuary, a heavenly dwelling place of the Deity.”⁶

The Correspondence Between Earthly and Heavenly Sanctuaries.

Two major facts indicate that the “pattern” (*tabnit*) shown to Moses reflected in some ways an objective heavenly sanctuary. First, is the Biblical understanding of a vertical correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. In the Old Testament, this correspondence is expressed in a variety of ways.

At the establishment of the first temple, God promised Solomon: “Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in my statutes . . . I will dwell among the children of Israel” (1 King 6:12-13). However, in his dedicatory prayer Solomon acknowledges that the real dwelling place of God is in heaven. “Hearken thou to the supplication . . . of thy people Israel,

when they pray toward this place; yea, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place” (1 King 8:30). These texts suggest that there is a correspondence between the dwelling place of God in the heavenly temple, and His dwelling place in the earthly temple.

In the Psalms are numerous references where the heavenly sanctuary is placed in close parallelism with the earthly sanctuary. “The Lord is in his holy *temple*, the Lord’s throne is in *heaven*” (Ps 11:4).⁷ God’s sanctuary is located in Zion: “May he send you help from the sanctuary, and give you support from Zion” (Ps 20:2). Yet it is also located in heaven: “Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over Israel, and his power is in the skies [heaven]. Terrible is God in his sanctuary” (Ps 68:34-35).

On the basis of an extensive analysis of these and similar texts, Niels-Erik Andreasen concludes: “The relationship between the two sanctuaries is expressed through the idea of a pattern, according to which the earthly sanctuary is modeled upon the heavenly. The resultant correspondence between the two sanctuaries is not a strictly material and spatial one in the sense that the earthly could take the ‘place’ of the heavenly. The relationship between them is functional rather than spatial and material. The heavenly sanctuary extends into the earthly, assuring it of efficacy or standing before it in judgment upon any empty formalities or idolatrous practices. The earthly sanctuary merges into the heavenly, providing a ladder connecting man with God and binding earth to heaven.”⁸

A second line of evidence is the common, ancient Near Eastern belief that an earthly temple is built as a copy of a heavenly original. “Behind Exodus 25,” writes Leonhard Goppelt, “stands the ancient oriental idea of a mythical analogical relation between the two worlds, the heavenly and the earthly, the macrocosm and the microcosm, so that lands, rivers, cities, and especially temples have their originals.”⁹ On a similar vein, Frank Cross, Jr., writes, “Probably the conception of *tabnit* the ‘model’ (Ex 25:9), also goes back ultimately to the idea that the earthly sanctuary is the counterpart of the heavenly dwelling of a deity.”¹⁰ Though the Bible is often countercultural in its teachings, and practices,¹¹ in this area it agrees with ancient Near Eastern thought simply because there is a correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary.

The Heavenly Sanctuary in Hebrews. The book of Hebrews confirms the reality of the heavenly sanctuary which we found affirmed in the Old Testament. William G. Johnsson, who wrote his dissertation on the book of Hebrews, highlights the reality of the heavenly sanctuary in Hebrews, saying: “While he [the author] does not enter upon a description of the heavenly

sanctuary and liturgy, his language suggests several important conclusions. First, he holds to their *reality*. His concern throughout the sermon is to ground Christian confidence in objective *facts*, as we have seen. *Real* deity, *real* humanity, *real* priesthood—and we may add, a *real* ministry in a *real* sanctuary.”¹²

The reality of the heavenly sanctuary is affirmed in Hebrews in three statements (Heb 8:2-5; 9:11-12, 2-24) which compare and contrast the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. The *earthly sanctuary* was a human construction under the direction of Moses (Heb 8:5), while the *heavenly sanctuary*, is *not* set up “by man” (Heb 8:2), or “made with [human] hands” (Heb 9:11, 24).

The correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries is established in Hebrews by means of the relationship between *copy* and *original*, *shadow* and *substance*. The earthly sanctuary was a “*copy* [*hupodeigma*] and *shadow* [*skia*] of the *heavenly sanctuary*” (Heb 8:2-5). “Thus it was necessary for the *copies* [*hupodeigma*] of the *heavenly things* to be purified with these rites [animal sacrifices], but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not in a sanctuary made with hands, a *copy* [*antitupos*] of the *true one* [*alethinος*], but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God in our behalf” (Heb 9:23-24). Because of this “we have confidence to enter the [heavenly] sanctuary by the blood of Jesus” (Heb 10:19).

Being “a copy” and “a shadow” of the original heavenly sanctuary, the earthly sanctuary plays an important role in explaining to both ancient and modern believers the outworking of the plan of salvation. Furthermore, by defining the earthly sanctuary and its services as a “shadow,” it implies that these *foreshadowed* better things to come. In fact, the author speaks of the law with its ritual services as being “but a *shadow* [*skia*] of the *good things to come* instead of the true form of these realities” (Heb 10:1; cf. Col 2:17).

These statements concerning the reality of the heavenly sanctuary were intended to give assurance to the recipients of Hebrews. “Because of national and family opposition, the Jewish-Christian readers of Hebrews had suffered separation from the religious life of Judaism. And if, as seems likely, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was near, all the more would they need such assurances. These verses told them that they had access to a superior “temple”—an heavenly sanctuary where Jesus Christ ministered.”¹³

This message of reassurance is still relevant today. In an age of uncertainty and fear, when moral and religious values are largely rejected, we need the reassurance that “we have a great high priest who has passed through

the heavens” (Heb 4:14) and who “is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

The Heavenly Sanctuary in Revelation. The existence of the heavenly sanctuary is confirmed in the book of Revelation where the word *naos*, generally translated “temple,” occurs 15 times. With the exception of two instances where the word *naos* (temple) may be used metaphorically to refer to the Christian community (Rev 3:12; 21:22), in all the other instances the term refers to the heavenly sanctuary.

In Revelation 7:15, the heavenly temple is equated with the throne of God. Concerning the great multitude in white robes (Rev 7:9), John says: “Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple” (Rev 7:15). This text clearly indicates that the throne of God is located in the heavenly temple, which is the dwelling place of God.

In Revelation 11:19, the opening of the temple reveals the ark of the covenant. “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen *within the temple*.”¹⁴ Since the ark of the covenant was located in the Most Holy Place (Heb 9:3-4), it is evident that John saw the second apartment of the heavenly sanctuary. This does not necessary mean that the heavenly sanctuary consists of a bipartite structure with a Holy and Most Holy Place like the earthly sanctuary. After all, we have seen that the ark of the covenant typifies the throne of God which is established on mercy (mercy seat) and justice (Decalogue inside the ark). Presumably, what John saw was a representation of the heavenly sanctuary through the typology of the earthly sanctuary.

In one place, Revelation clearly ties the heavenly temple-sanctuary to the earthly tabernacle-sanctuary: “After this I [John] looked and *in heaven* [*en to ourano*] the temple, that is, *the tabernacle of Testimony*, was opened” (Rev 15:5, NIV).¹⁵ The phrase “the Tabernacle of Testimony” is used in the Old Testament to designate the earthly sanctuary (Num 1:50), because it enshrined within its walls the tables of the Decalogue, known as “The Testimony.” Within the heavenly temple, John also observed the seven-branched lampstand (*menorah*) of the earthly sanctuary (Rev 1:12-13; 4:5) and the golden altar [of incense] before the throne” (Rev 8:3; 9:13).

Conclusion. In light of the foregoing considerations, we conclude that there is abundant Biblical evidence for the reality of a heavenly sanctuary. The tabernacle built by Moses is seen in the Bible as reflecting the heavenly sanctuary, the dwelling place of God. The book of Hebrews defines the earthly tabernacle as a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary. The

apostle John testifies that he saw in vision the heavenly temple and some of its components. All of these indications point to the existence of a real sanctuary in heaven.

PART II THE NATURE OF THE HEAVENLY SANCTUARY

Having concluded that the Bible affirms the existence of a real heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers as our High Priest, we need to clarify the nature of such sanctuary. The question is: Should the Biblical references to the heavenly sanctuary-temple be interpreted *metaphorically*, that is, as figurative allusions to the presence of God, or *literalistically*, that is, as literal descriptions of a heavenly sanctuary which is a magnified and glorified version of the earthly sanctuary? Or should we avoid both extremes and interpret the references to the heavenly sanctuary-temple *realistically*, that is, as descriptive of a real heavenly sanctuary whose details, however, are not clear to us? The latter represents my view which I expound after commenting on the first two.

The Metaphorical Interpretation. Many modern authors deny any objective existence of a heavenly sanctuary. They believe that the heavenly sanctuary is simply a metaphor for the spiritual presence of God. Their view is based on the assumption that the conceptual world of Hebrews is that of Hellenistic Judaism, in particular the writings of the Jewish philosopher Philo (about 20 B. C. to A. D. 50). In an attempt to make the Jewish faith appealing to the Hellenistic world, Philo allegorized the Old Testament by using the dualistic and antithetical conception of the universe present in Platonic thought.

Philo allegorized the heavenly sanctuary and liturgy by making them symbols of the whole universe. He wrote: “The highest, and in the truest sense the holy temple of God is, as we must believe, the whole universe, having for its sanctuary the most sacred part of all existence, even heaven, for its votive ornaments the stars, for its priests the angels who are servitors to His powers, unbodied souls, not compounds of rational and irrational nature.”¹⁶

Allegedly, Hebrews shares this conceptual world because the terms it uses to describe the relation of the earthly to the heavenly sanctuary—“shadow—*skia*,” “image—*eikon*,” and “example—*hupodeigma*”—are used by Philo in a similar context.¹⁷ Moreover, Hebrews shares with Philo the cosmological dualism where the unseen is the real (“genuine” – Heb 8:2), while the seen the transient. To support this metaphorical interpretation,

appeal is made to several texts (Heb 9:2, 3, 11,; 10:19-20) which allegedly spiritualize the heavenly sanctuary.¹⁸

Evaluation of Metaphorical Interpretation. We cannot deny the presence of some resemblance between the conceptual world of Hebrews and that of Philo. Like Plato or Philo, Hebrews sees the heavenly and unseen realm as the genuine one (Heb 9:24). However, this is part of the Biblical view of reality. As stated in 2 Corinthians 4:18, “We look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

The superficial resemblance between Hebrews and Philo must not overshadow the radical differences between the two. In his doctoral dissertation, Ronald Williamson has shown that the heavenly world of Philo or of Plato has no room for the historical Jesus who enters a real *place* of heavenly ministry.¹⁹ Similarly, the *temporal* emphasis of Hebrews on Christ’s incarnation, sacrifice, followed by a heavenly ministry, runs contrary to the Philonic model of an eternal, and unchanging heavenly realm, far removed and untouched by earthly events.²⁰

Even more devastating to the Philonic interpretation is the thought that “heavenly things” need to be purified “with better sacrifices” (Heb 9:23). Such a thought is totally unacceptable to the Philonic or Platonic model, because the heavenly realm cannot be touched or contaminated by earthly beings.²¹ Furthermore, while Philo reasons allegorically, giving to the sacred text a hidden spiritual meaning that transcends its literal sense, Hebrews reasons typologically, seeing an analogical correspondence between the earthly type and the heavenly antitype. Sidney Sowers notes that “typological exegesis is totally absent from Philo’s writings.”²²

The author of Hebrews derives his understanding of the typological correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary from the Old Testament itself, rather than from Philonic or Platonic philosophy. For the latter, heavenly things are incorporeal and eternally existent, and the earthly things are a simple shadow of the heavenly realities. But for the former (Hebrews), the earthly things are a shadow of concrete realities in heaven. The earthly sanctuary is a copy of a tangible heavenly reality, and not a “shadow of a shadow”²³ or a “symbol of a symbol.”²⁴

The Literalistic Interpretation. According to the literalistic interpretation, there is a real sanctuary in heaven which corresponds to the earthly one not only in terms of services but also in terms of structural design. In other words, there is not only a *functional*, but also a *spatial* or *structural* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

In his monumental dissertation, Alberto Treiyer argues that the author of Hebrews sees not only a functional, “but also a spatial correspondence between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. Just as the earthly sanctuary had two apartments, the Holy and the Most Holy, wherein the priest performed his ministry of atonement by virtue of the sacrifice that was offered outside, so also the heavenly one corresponds with two apartments, wherein Jesus fulfils His priestly ministry by virtue of His earthly sacrifice.”²⁵

It must be granted that this view does enjoy some scholarly support even outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In his article on “*skene*—Tent or Tabernacle” in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Wilhelm Michaelis comments on Hebrews 9:11, saying: “It would seem that the heavenly sanctuary is also divided in two parts.”²⁶

In a similar vein, Richard Davidson concludes his study on the “Typology in the Book of Hebrews” suggesting that “(1) a basic continuity exists between the *essential contours* of the OT sanctuary type and the NT antitype; and therefore, (2) the earthly sanctuary may be regarded as instructive for clarifying *essential features* of the heavenly sanctuary, while at the same time recognizing the eschatological intensification that occurs between type and antitype.”²⁷

Davidson speaks not of “spatial correspondence” like Treiyer, but of continuity of “essential contours” between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. His wording is more guarded, but essentially expresses the same view, because he quotes the following statement from Ellen G. White: “I was also shown a sanctuary upon the earth containing two apartments. It resembled the one in heaven, and I was told that it was a figure of the heavenly.”²⁸

No attempt can be made in this study to examine Ellen White’s views regarding the nature of the heavenly sanctuary. It would seem, however, that the functional similarity between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries may have been more important in Ellen White’s mind, because she wrote: “The abiding place of the King of Kings, where thousand thousands minister unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousands stand before Him (Dan 7:10); that temple, filled with the glory of the eternal throne, where seraphim, its shining guardians, veil their faces in adoration, could find, in the most magnificent structure ever reared by human hands, but a faint reflection of its vastness and glory. Yet important truths concerning the heavenly sanctuary and the great work there carried forward for man’s redemption were taught by the earthly sanctuary and its services.”²⁹ In this statement Ellen White minimizes the spatial correspondence and maximizes the function of the earthly sanctuary to teach “*important truths*” about Christ’s redemptive ministry.

Evaluation of the Literalistic Interpretation. The literalistic interpretation rightly affirms the existence of a real heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers on our behalf. However, its attempt to establish a spatial or structural correspondence, even if only of “essential contours,” between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries, raises some concerns.

“Although,” as William Johnsson perceptively observes, “the argument [in Hebrews] does not necessarily exclude the possibility that the heavenly sanctuary is a glorified version of the earthly, we should note: (1) The *heavenly* is the genuine, the true, so we should see the earthly in the light of the heavenly, rather than vice versa. (2) In Hebrews 9:24 we read merely of ‘heaven,’ surely a very general sort of description [of the heavenly sanctuary]. (3) The lack of interest in drawing lines of comparison from the earthly to the heavenly is shown by the terse words in Hebrew 9:5. And (4) the emphasis in Hebrews 9:1–10:18 falls on the *work* Christ accomplishes; there seems to be no interest in giving details as to surroundings. It is therefore apparent that, while we may affirm the *reality* of the heavenly sanctuary in the book of Hebrews, we have comparatively little hard data about its appearance.”³⁰

Hebrews affirms the reality of the heavenly sanctuary, but it also suggests that there are crucial differences between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries. For example, the heavenly sanctuary was “set up not by man but by the Lord” (Heb 8:2). This suggests that the heavenly sanctuary does not have the limitations of an earthly structure.

“The words ‘copy’ (*hupodeigma*), ‘shadow’ (*skia*), and “pattern’ (*tupos*) in Hebrews 8:5 likewise indicate that the earthly sanctuary should not form the basis for attempting a detailed reconstruction of the heavenly sanctuary. The earthly sanctuary is but a shadowy representation of the heavenly reality. While some general conclusions about the heavenly sanctuary may be reached by studying the earthly, care should be taken not to press these points too far.”³¹

In Hebrews 9:24, we are told that “Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into *heaven* itself.” The contrast between “a handmade sanctuary” and “heaven” suggests that the heavenly sanctuary does not have the spatial limitations of the earthly sanctuary. This is supported by John’s vision of the countless multitude that stands “before the throne of God and serve him day and night within his temple” (Rev 7:15). Such a description of countless multitudes serving God *within the temple* hardly allows for a two-apartment division of the heavenly sanctuary. We should not forget that only the priest could officiate *within* the earthly temple.

Based on his study of the sanctuary in the Old Testament, Niels-Erik Andreassen rightly warns us that the “correspondence between heavenly and earthly sanctuaries should not be taken as a brick for brick, cubic for cubic, beam for beam correspondence. The Old Testament warns us against such a strict material, spatial parallel when it cautions on theological grounds that the God of heaven cannot ever be contained in an earthly structure (2 Sam 7:4-11; 1 King 8:27). What then is the function of the earthly sanctuary? One answer represented particularly by Deuteronomy and the historical books (Joshua–2 Kings) is that the earthly sanctuary/temple is the place where Yahweh makes his *name* to dwell (cf. Deut 12:5, 11; 1 King 8:29). An even stronger statement is made in Isaiah 66:1, ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house [temple] which you would build for me?’ A correspondence, involving a reality but not an identity of material and space, exists between the two sanctuaries.”³²

The Realistic Interpretation. According to the realistic interpretation, there is a *real* sanctuary in heaven, but its correspondence to the earthly sanctuary is more *functional* than *spatial* or *structural*. The earthly sanctuary with its daily and yearly services typifies important aspects of Christ’s heavenly ministry.

It is important for us to remember, as Frank Holbrook points out, that “When we speak about heaven and the heavenly sanctuary, we are talking about celestial things that are far beyond human comprehension. Hence, in order for God to communicate to us, He must do so by representing those heavenly realities in human terms and symbols familiar to us. The heavenly sanctuary-temple and its activities are, therefore, represented to the prophets (and thereby to us) in the forms of the earthly sanctuary and symbols.”³³

For example, Jesus is portrayed in Revelation as “a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Rev 5:6). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is represented by “seven torches of fire” burning before the throne (Rev 4:5). Christ’s intercession is depicted by an angel mingling incense with the prayers of God’s people at the golden altar of incense (Rev 8:3-4). The temple of God in heaven is shown through the symbol of the “tabernacle of the Testimony” (Rev 15:5, NIV). All of these symbols are effectively used to portray a reality that transcend the symbols themselves, namely, the existence in heaven of a *real* temple, with a *real* Savior who is engaged in a *real* intercessory ministry.

In a sense, the plan of salvation is an abstract truth. To help us conceptualize some of its vital aspects, God has provided us in the sanctuary

a *pictorial representation* of the redemptive ministry of Christ. For example, the altar of burnt offering portrayed the great atoning, substitutionary death of our Lord. The two-phase priestly ministration in the earthly sanctuary foreshadowed Christ's ministry of intercession and final cleansing of sin in the heavenly sanctuary.

"It is not the physical nature of either sanctuaries that is important," observes Frank Holdrook. "Both are real in their respective spheres (earth or heaven). As far as the Biblical doctrine of the sanctuary is concerned, it is what the structures represent or teach about the great controversy between Christ and Satan and about the plan of salvation that matters. The dwelling places of the Deity propose to teach us spiritual truths, and we must not miss those truths by undue attention to the medium, either earthly or heavenly."³⁴

Some of the spiritual truths of the heavenly sanctuary are taught in the book of Hebrews by means of *vertical* and *horizontal* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries. Vertically, the *heavenly* sanctuary is presented as the "true tent" (Heb 8:2), the "perfect tent" (Heb 9:11; cf. 9:24), of which the *earthly* one was a "symbolic" pattern (Heb 9:9; cf. 8:5; Act 7:44; Ex 25:40). Similarly, the priestly services and sacrifices of the earthly tabernacle are seen as a "copy and shadow" (Heb 8:5) of the "more excellent" (8:6) High Priestly ministry conducted by Christ in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb 7:24-25; 8:4, 11-13; 10:11-21).

Horizontally, the *past* (before Calvary) typological services of the earthly sanctuary (Heb 9:6-9) are viewed as fulfilled and superseded by the *present* heavenly intercession and mediation of Christ (Heb 9:9, 11-14). These provide to believers what the blood of animals could not do—a permanent and total purification from sin (Heb 10:1-4; 9:11-14).

PART III

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The meaning of the Day of Atonement in the New Testament can best be understood in the light of the typological correspondence that exists between the priestly ministry in the earthly sanctuary and Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. In the earthly sanctuary, the priestly ministry consisted of two phases: (1) a daily service of *intercession* in the Holy Place, and (2) an annual service of *cleansing* in the Most Holy on the Day of Atonement. These two phases of *intercession* and *cleansing* find their correspondence in Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

Intercession. The first phase of Christ's ministry of *intercession* began at the time of His ascension to heaven and installation at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33-34; 7:56; Heb 8:1-2). The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost is seen as the evidence of the official enthronement of Christ to His heavenly ministry (Acts 2:33). The installation of Christ to His heavenly ministry is reflected in those passages which speak of His sitting at the right hand of God (Acts 2:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2).

The meaning of "sitting" as intercessory ministry is explained especially in Hebrews 8:1-2, where Christ is presented as the "high priest, . . . seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent." Through His intercessory ministry, Christ sustains the Church (Rev 1:13, 20), mediates repentance and forgiveness to believers (Acts 5:31; 1 John 2:1-2; 1:9), makes prayers acceptable to God (John 16:23-24; Rev 8:3), and provides us with the invisible and yet real assistance of His angels (Heb 1:14; Rev 5:6; 1:16, 20).

Many fail to appreciate the importance of the intercessory ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary because they assume that Christ did it all on the Cross. Not surprisingly, they cannot figure out what on earth Christ is doing in heaven. Their problem is their failure to understand how sin was atoned in the earthly sanctuary. We noted in chapter 4 that in the Levitical system atonement for sin was accomplished during the daily service, not only through the sacrifice of an animal, but also through the blood ritual in the Holy Place. It is only when all the ritual of sacrifice in the court (the Cross) and blood manipulation in the Holy Place (mediation in the heavenly sanctuary) was concluded that the Bible says: "In this way the priest will make atonement for them, and they will be forgiven" (Lev 4:20, NIV).

Most Christians limit the expiatory ministry of Christ to His death on the Cross. This ignores the typological correspondence between the earthly priestly ministry performed by means of the blood ritual in the Holy Place, and the heavenly ministry carried out through "the better blood" of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary. Alberto Treiyer warns us that unless we read Hebrews "with authentic Biblical eyes, all of these details will continue to be ignored, and the correspondence that is made there between the systems will be limited arbitrarily to the Cross."³⁵

Christ's work of intercession at "the right hand of God" does not exclude the possibility of a two-phased heavenly ministry for Christ. The fact that Christ at the ascension entered within the immediate presence of God ("within the veil" – Heb 6:19), does not mean that He began the final phase of His redemptive ministry typified by the cleansing of Day of Atonement.

Those who reason in this way fail to understand the typological function of the Day of Atonement. We have found that this includes the final disposition of sin represented by the sending of the scapegoat into the wilderness and the final separation between the saved and unsaved. It is evident that these events did not occur at the Cross, but they will be realized at the Second Advent.

Cleansing. The second and final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry involves, as in the earthly Day of Atonement, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary by means of the removal and disposition of the sins of God's people. This final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry represents not a replacement of but an addition to the work of intercession. The special sacrifices of the Day of Atonement were offered in addition to the "continual [daily] burnt offering" (Num 29:11).

Intercession is intrinsically related to the final cleansing of sin typified by the Day of Atonement because the positive or negative response to the gift of salvation offered through Christ's intercession presupposes a final cleansing or retribution that reveals what each response has been. Both present intercession and future final cleansing are the work of the same High Priest. Intercession is Christ's work in actualizing His redemptive love manifested at the Cross. The final cleansing of sin is Christ's work in realizing His redemption in a final and conclusive way at His Second Advent which is the antitypical Day of Atonement. Thus the difference between the two is one of perspective: intercession is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His First Advent. The final cleansing of sin is the work of Christ viewed from the perspective of His Second Advent.

Views on the Cleansing of the Heavenly Sanctuary. The final phase of Christ's heavenly ministry typified by the Day of Atonement, is mentioned in a unique way in Hebrews 9:23: "Thus it was necessary for *the copies* of the heavenly things [the earthly tabernacle and its vessels— Heb 9:21-22] to be purified with these rites ["bulls and goats" – Heb 10:4], but *the heavenly things* themselves with better sacrifices than these" (9:23).³⁶ There is an unmistakable allusion to the Day of Atonement because the passage continues comparing Christ's entrance into "heaven itself" with "the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own" (Heb 9:24-25. NIV).

This passage boggles the mind of commentators on Hebrews. The notion of impurity in connection with the heavenly sanctuary is considered by many scholars as something "without sense,"³⁷ "fantastic,"³⁸ "an "unhappy comparison."³⁹ How is it possible, they argue, for things in heaven to require purification when heaven is a place of perfection? Some try to make sense of the passage by reasoning that "the author is speaking poetically or metaphorically."⁴⁰

Others try to link this passage to the preceding verses (Heb 9:15-22) which speak of the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant and of the tabernacle, thus concluding that the cleansing refers to the atoning death of Christ on the Cross.⁴¹ This linkage is not convincing, because while verses 19-22 describe the *inauguration* of the tabernacle, verses 24-28 deal with the *mediation* of Christ in the presence of God. “The strongest argument against this view,” writes William Johnsson, “is the author’s terminology. He uses *katharizein* (‘to purify’) not *egkainizein* (‘to inaugurate’). These terms are not equivalent; they are not to be collapsed together.”⁴²

Still other commentators suggest that the cleansing of heavenly things has to do with the cleansing of the “consciences” of the sinners mentioned earlier in Hebrews 9:13.⁴³ This hardly seems possible because the text says that “the heavenly things themselves” (Heb 9:23) must be purified, not the people. “The expression, ‘the copy of heavenly things,’ as used in connection with the old worship, *involves* the sanctuary and its ministry which have been established to resolve the problem of sin and impurity of the people, but not the very people (Heb 8:5). The purification of this *copy* happened only on the Day of Atonement because only then was the sanctuary and its ministry cleansed. For this reason, it is not possible to relate the cleansing of ‘the heavenly things’ with the cleansing of consciences and of the human heart.”⁴⁴

The Meaning of the Cleansing. What, then, is the meaning of the cleansing of “the heavenly things”? The answer is not difficult to find if the passage is read in the light of its typological correspondence. The cleansing of “the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices” is placed in a typological correspondence to the annual cleansing of the earthly sanctuary (“copies of the heavenly things”) with animal sacrifices (Heb 9:23). Just as the earthly sanctuary needed to be cleansed through the ritual of the blood on the Day of Atonement from the accumulated sins of God’s people that had been symbolically transferred into the sanctuary, so the heavenly sanctuary needs to be cleansed through the better blood of Christ from the sins that have been symbolically transferred there.

Commentators have generally backed away from this typological correspondence. Anglican Bishop Brooke Westcott, however, alludes to it in his classic commentary on Hebrews. “The whole structure of the sentence [Heb 9:23] requires that ‘cleansed’ should be supplied in the second clause from the first, and not any more general term as ‘inaugurated.’ In what sense, then, can it be said that heavenly things’ needed cleansing? The necessity for the purification of the earthly sanctuary and its vessels came from the fact that they were to be used by man and shared in his impurity (cf. Lev 16:16).

Agreeably with this view it may be said that even ‘heavenly things,’ so far as they embody the conditions of man’s future life, contracted by the Fall something which required cleansing.”⁴⁵

This statement needs clarification because what defiles the heavenly sanctuary is not the sinful human condition per se, but sinful acts which are symbolically transferred to the sanctuary by means of the ritual of the blood. We noted in chapter 4 that the blood of the substitutionary victim had an ambivalent function. On the one hand, it cleansed the sinner, while on the other hand, it defiled the sanctuary by transferring the atoned sin into the sanctuary where it was deposited until its removal on the Day of Atonement. We found that the reason for maintaining the records of forgiven sins in the sanctuary was to allow for their review by the heavenly court during the 10 days that preceded the Day of Atonement.

In the same way, through the better blood of Christ, sinners are purified from sin (Heb 9:13-14); but their forgiven sins are remitted to the heavenly sanctuary where they are kept until they are first judged by the heavenly court and then removed by Christ at His coming. This is why “the heavenly things themselves [need to be purified] with better sacrifices” (Heb 9:23), because the record of forgiven sins is kept there until the antitypical Day of Atonement, the Day of Christ’s Coming. George W. Buchanan notes this point when he observes that there is provision “to cleanse the heavenly things’ . . . since the heavenly archetype functions just as its earthly imitation.”⁴⁶

It should be pointed out, however, that the concern of the author of Hebrews is not to define the time and manner of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, but rather to emphasize the superiority of the cleansing power of Christ’s blood. William Johnsson rightly points out that the real issue in Hebrews 9:23-25 is not the Day of Atonement as such, but the superiority of Christ’s blood. “The argument is that the Old Testament services, *even at their high point* [the Day of Atonement], were inadequate. They provided woefully limited access to God (one man alone) and their very repetition showed their failure: ‘Otherwise, would they have not ceased to be offered?’ So even the annual Day of Atonement hammered home Israel’s need: limited access, no finality in purging sins.”⁴⁷

The fundamental problem with the Day of Atonement of the earthly sanctuary was that it did not eradicate the presence and consciousness of sin, simply because “it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb 10:4). Though the worshippers were symbolically “cleansed,” there still remained the “consciousness of sin” (Heb 10:3). By contrast, Jesus “by a single sacrifice has perfected for all time those who are sanctified” (Heb 10:14).

The Day of Atonement and the Cross. The importance that Hebrews places on the superiority of Christ's blood and ministry has led many to conclude that Jesus fulfilled the antitypical work of the Day of Atonement when He ascended to the heavenly sanctuary. According to this view, Hebrews teaches that the ministry typified by the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled by Christ in heaven at or since His ascension. Consequently, contrary to the Old Testament system which placed the Day of Atonement at the conclusion of the religious year, in the New Testament the typological function of the Day of Atonement has been fulfilled at the inauguration of Christ's heavenly ministry.

The implication is that for Christians the cleansing of the sanctuary accomplished on the Day of Atonement is a past event already fulfilled by Christ at His First Advent, and not a future event to be fulfilled by Christ at His Second Advent. If this were true, the typological meaning of the Day of Atonement would be essentially the same as that of Passover, because the latter also was fulfilled at the first Advent when Christ was sacrificed as our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7). Such a duplication of the antitypical fulfillment of Passover (Spring Feast) and Day of Atonement (Fall Feast) would destroy the progressive unfolding of the plan of redemption typified by the annual feasts.

Not surprisingly, the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is strewn with controversy over this issue. Early in this century Albion Foss Ballenger (1861-1921), a minister who left the church in 1905, published a book *Cast Out for the Cross of Christ*. In it he argues that the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement took place upon Christ's ascension, when He began His ministry "within the veil" (Heb 6:19), that is, within the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. To prove his thesis Ballenger made an extensive survey of the use of the term "veil" both in its Hebrew (*paroket*) and Greek (*katapetasma*) forms, concluding that the phrase "within the veil" can only refer to the Most Holy Place.⁴⁸

Recently, Desmond Ford, an Australian Bible teacher, produced a lengthy manuscript (about 1000 pages) arguing along the same lines of Ballenger that the typological function of the Day of the Atonement began at the ascension.⁴⁹ Outside the Seventh-day Adventist Church, this view is held by numerous scholars.⁵⁰ Support for this view is generally based on three main phrases found in Hebrews: "within the veil" (Heb 6:19; cf. 10:20), "throne of grace" (Heb 4:16), and "the right hand of God" (Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). These phrases, they argue, indicate that Christ has been officiating in the Most Holy Place since the ascension and, consequently, He has accomplished through His death and heavenly mediation the purification of sin typified by

the Day of Atonement. The implication is clear. There is no reason to look for an End-time cleansing of the Day of Atonement because it was already accomplished at Calvary or at least since then.

Evaluation of Interpretation. Two major problems exist with the above interpretation of the Day of Atonement. The first concerns the nature of Christ's ministry in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary. Ballenger saw in Christ's entrance "within the veil" of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement. His reasoning was based on the then prevailing Adventist view that in heaven there is a bipartite sanctuary and that Christ did not enter the Most Holy section until 1844. By arguing that Christ entered "within the veil," that is, in the Most Holy Place, at His ascension, Ballenger concluded that Christ fulfilled the antitypical Day of Atonement already at His ascension.

Unfortunately, Ballenger was right in his argument but wrong in his conclusion. His all-consuming concern to prove that Christ entered "within the veil" of the Most Holy Place prevented him from seeing the broader scope of Christ's heavenly ministry which includes, as we have seen, both intercession and final cleansing. Part of the problem with Ballenger is that he was reacting to a bipartite understanding of the heavenly sanctuary with Holy and Most Holy sections, a view that largely has been abandoned by Adventists today. We have seen earlier that most Adventist authors see a *functional* rather than *structural* correspondence between the earthly and heavenly sanctuaries.

The second problem relates to a misunderstanding of the typology of the Day of Atonement. Those who see the Day of Atonement fulfilled at Calvary fail to realize what the day stands for. The Day of Atonement typifies the consummation of Christ's redemptive ministry at His Second Advent, when He will dispose of sin by saving believers, punishing the unbelievers, and placing upon Satan (Azazel) the responsibility for all the sins he has instigated. The question is: Did Christ accomplish these closing acts of His redemptive ministry at the Cross or at His ascension when He entered "within the veil" to inaugurate His redemptive ministry? Or will Christ realize them at His Second Advent? The answer is self-evident. It is unfortunate that the failure to understand the typology of the Holy Days, such as the Day of Atonement, has resulted in needless controversy and gross misunderstanding of the unfolding of the Plan of Salvation.

An "Already" and a "Not-Yet" Fulfillment. In a sense, the Cross does represent an "*already*" fulfillment of the Levitical Day of Atonement, since through it Christ "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26). Moreover, with Christ's entrance into the presence of God "a new and living

way” (Heb 10:20) of access to God has been created. By virtue of Christ’s access into the presence of God, believers now can “enter into the inner shrine behind the curtain” (Heb 6:19). What this means is that the unique experience of coming into direct contact with the presence of God on the Day of Atonement can now be shared by all believers.

This partial fulfillment of the Day of Atonement does not lessen the “*not-yet*” future and final antitypical realization. The principle of a double fulfillment—“an already and not-yet”—is common in the New Testament. The author of Hebrews recognizes that the Cross does not exhaust Christ’s redemptive ministry, because he explains that Christ not only “appeared” in the past “to put away sin” but also appears now in the present before God’s presence and “will appear” in the future to save.

Hebrews recognizes a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect in Christ’s removal of sin represented by the Day of Atonement. In the *past*, Christ “*has appeared* once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). In the *present* (“now”), Christ “*appears* in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24). In the *future*, Christ “*will appear* a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28).⁵¹

The past, the present, and the future ministry of Christ are in Hebrews ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same “once for all” sacrifice on the Cross. It is the same atoning sacrifice that enables Christ to fulfill the two phases of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary: intercession and judgment.

The ministry of Christ “in the presence of God on our behalf” (9:24) includes both a work of intercession and a work of judgment and cleansing. Regarding the first, Hebrews says that Christ “always lives to make intercession for them” (7:25). Regarding the second, Hebrews suggests that the judgment and cleansing will occur in conjunction with Christ’s Return. This suggestion is made by means of the following comparison: “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:27-28).

In this passage, the author correlates human death which is followed by the final judgment (cf. Heb 10:26-27) with Christ’s atoning death which is followed by His Second Advent. In this correlation, the judgment is placed in correspondence with the Second Advent. Why? Presumably because at His coming Christ executes the judgment typified by the cleansing of the Day of Atonement. It is a judgment that brings salvation to believers and punishment to unbelievers. This explains why Christ “will appear a second time, not to

deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28). The reason Christ does not deal with sin at His Second Coming is because He comes, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sin but to execute the final judgment, which is to save believers and punish unbelievers.

The Day of Atonement and The Second Advent. The appearance of the High Priest out of the sanctuary at the end of the Day of Atonement revealed to the Israelites their verdict. Those who had repented of and confessed their sins, offering the specified sacrifices, saw their sins removed and figuratively placed on the Azazel goat which was led away to perish in the wilderness. Those who had not repented of their wrongs and refused to humble themselves before the Lord were “cut off” from God’s people and executed. So it will be at Christ’s appearance at the end of the antitypical Day of Atonement. Those “who are eagerly waiting for him” (9:28) will be saved, but those who “deliberately keep on sinning” will experience “a raging fire that will consume the enemies of God” (Heb 10:25, NIV).

In view of the prospect of the Advent judgment, the author of Hebrews admonishes believers to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, . . . encouraging one another, all the more as you see the Day drawing near” (Heb 10:23, 25). “The Day” that is drawing near could well refer to the antitypical Day of Atonement, because this was its common designation among the Jews, a designation which must have been familiar to the “Hebrew-minded” recipient of the book. Both in the Mishnah and Talmud, the treatise devoted to the Day of Atonement is simply called *Yoma*, which means “The Day.”

Alberto Treiyer perceptively observes that Christ’s priestly ministry in heaven will conclude as in earthly sanctuary “with an antitypical Day of Atonement, ‘the judgment’ (Heb 9:27; cf. v. 23). This is why the apostle, after dealing with the inauguration of the heavenly ministry of Jesus and his *tamid*-[daily] priestly ministry which was performed in the Levitical system during the year in the Holy Place (Heb 10:19-24), announces the approaching of the eschatological *Yomah* [Day] (Heb 10:25), making outstanding ‘the Day,’ as the Jews used to call the Day of Atonement at that time. On this Day, there remained ‘no further sacrifice for sin’ for those who ‘deliberately keep sinning,’ ‘but only a fearful expectation of judgment and a flaming fire to consume the adversary of God’ (Heb 10:25-31; cf. Lev 23:29-30). This Day also projected a positive scope. As the High Priest left the sanctuary after concluding its cleansing, with nothing more to do with the sin of the year but to bless His people (Lev 16:23-24), so also Jesus ‘will appear a second time, without [relation to] sin, to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him’ (Heb 9:28).”⁵²

Several authors link the Return of Christ with the exit of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.⁵³ F. F. Bruce, for example, writes: “The Israelites who watched their High Priest enter the sanctuary for them waited expectantly for his reappearance; that was a welcome sign that he and the sacrifice which he presented had been accepted by God. His reappearance from the holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement was a specially welcome sight. . . . So our author [of Hebrews] thinks of Jesus as going into the heavenly holy of holies, to reappear one day in order to confirm finally to His people the salvation which his perfect offering has procured for them. Meanwhile they wait expectantly for His parousia [Second Advent]. This presentation of the return of Christ in terms of the High Priest’s emergence from the sanctuary was in Frances Ridley Havergal’s mind when she wrote:

‘Coming! In the opening east
Herald brightness slowly swells;
Coming! O my glorious Priest,
Hear we not Thy golden bells?’⁵⁴

Conclusion. The allusions to the Day of Atonement in Hebrews presuppose that the “Hebrew-Christians” to whom the book is addressed were attracted to Jewish ceremonial observance of this important annual Holy Day. The main intent of the author is not to condemn its observance, or to define the time and manner of its observance, but rather to emphasize the superiority of Christ’s blood in cleansing God’s people from their sins. The work of cleansing and removing sins has a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect. The last of these is accomplished by Christ at His Second Advent when He will appear, like the High Priest at the close of the Day of Atonement, not to atone for sins but to save the believers and punish the unbelievers.

The certainty and the nearness of “the Day” provide added reasons (“all the more”— Heb 9:25) to “hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful” (Heb 10:23). The allusions in Hebrews to the Day of Atonement and its linkage to Second Advent reveal that the author saw the ultimate fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, not in the past when Christ atoned for our sins on the Cross, but in the future when Christ at His coming will remove permanently the “consciousness of sin” (Heb 10:2; 9:28). What this means is that for Christians, the Day of Atonement is a spring of hope and encouragement because it reassures us that “the Day [is] drawing near” (Heb 10:25) when Christ “will appear a second time [like the High Priest appeared at the close of the Day of Atonement], not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Heb 9:28).

The profound eschatological meaning of the Day of Atonement brought out by the author of Hebrews presupposes that the day was observed in the

Christian community, though, most probably in a ceremonial, Jewish way. As with the Sabbath (Heb 4:1-10), the concern of the author is not to argue in favor or against the observance of such days, but rather to show their proper meaning in the light of the Christ event.

A Comparison Between Hebrews and Revelation. The allusions to the Day of Atonement in Revelation differ from those in Hebrews in two significant ways. First, Hebrews bases its arguments principally on Moses' tabernacle; Revelation connects its visions mostly to Solomon's Temple. For example, while Hebrews speaks of the "curtain" or "veil" of the tabernacle (Heb 6:19; 9:3; 10:20), Revelation mentions the "door" of the temple (Rev 3:8; 4:1). Second, Hebrews focuses on Christ's ministry of intercession and cleansing in the heavenly sanctuary; Revelation describes especially Christ's judgment activity emanating from the heavenly temple, but manifested on this earth (Rev 11:19; 14:15; 15:6, 8; 16:1, 17).

The two perspectives are reflective of two different concerns. Hebrews is concerned to exhort Christians who were tempted to abandon the Christian faith and to return to the religious rituals of Judaism. The author deals with the problem by inviting his readers to focus on the living Christ who now ministers in the very presence of God in the heavenly sanctuary. He is the only One who can permanently purge away the sins of believers and provide free access to God.

The concern of Revelation is to reassure Christians who were persecuted for their faith and who were wondering how long they would have to suffer (Rev 6:9-10). John provides this needed reassurance through glorious visions of God in His holy temple, vindicating His people and punishing their adversaries. We shall see that the judgment language and theme of the Day of Atonement is pervasive, especially in the second half of Revelation.

The Day of Atonement in Revelation. In our study of the Feast of Trumpets in Revelation, we found that the blowing of the seven trumpet echoes (Rev 8:2 to 11:19) the Feast of Trumpets which announced the beginning of the heavenly judgment that led up to the Day of Atonement. As Jon Paulien points out, "The Feast of Trumpets itself, falling on the first day of the seventh month (corresponding to the seventh trumpet) ushered in the time of judgment that led up to the Day of Atonement (cf. Rev 11:18-19). There is an increasing focus on the concept of judgment from that point on in the book."⁵⁵

It is noteworthy that it is within the seventh trumpet that we find the first explicit use of judgment terminology in Revelation: "The time has come for the dead to be judged" (Rev 11:18). The outcome of the judgment is the

rewarding of the righteous and the destroying of the ungodly. “[The time has come] for rewarding thy servants, . . . and for destroying the destroyers of the earth” (Rev 11:18). This points to the executive phase of the final judgment accomplished by Christ at His Second Advent, which is the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement.

The announcement of the judgment in Revelation (Rev 11:18) is followed immediately by the opening of the most Holy Place of the heavenly temple where the ark of the covenant is seen. “Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of the covenant was seen within the temple” (Rev 11:19). This is the first and clearest allusion to the Day of Atonement because only on that day the door to the Most Holy Place was open and the High Priest could see “the ark of the covenant” while he officiated in front of it.

The opening of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly temple on the Day of Atonement is accompanied by the manifestation of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent. “There were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail” (Rev 11:19; cf. Rev 16:18; 6:12-14). The association of the cosmic signs of the Second Advent with the ritual of the Day of Atonement suggests that Christ’s coming is seen as the antitypical fulfillment of the disposition of sin typified by the Day of Atonement.

The Importance of the Day of Atonement. The vision of the Day of Atonement in Revelation 11:19 plays a pivotal role in the structure of Revelation. It functions as a dividing point between the first half of Revelation which reflects more the daily liturgy of the temple, and the second half of the book which mirrors more the annual ritual of the Day of Atonement. Jon Paulien perceptively observes that beginning with the vision of the Day of Atonement (Rev 11:19), “there is repeated focus on the *naos* or inner sanctum of the temple where the central activities of Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] took place. Judgment language and activity, a central theme of Yom Kippur, is also a major concern of the second half of the Apocalypse.

“The visions of the second half of Revelation, furthermore, portray a division of all humanity into two groups. There are those who serve the true God, represented in Revelation by the true trinity (introduced in Rev 1:4-5). The true God is portrayed as sending out three angels of proclamation to the whole world (Rev 14:6-12), calling for decision (Rev 14:7). On the other hand, there are those who serve a counterfeit trinity (the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; Rev 16:13), which are portrayed as sending out three demonic spirits to gather representatives of the entire inhabited world to the place called in Hebrew Har-Mageddon (Rev 16:13, 14, 16). A final battle between these worldwide forces results (Rev 17:14). The solemn appeals of Revelation 14:6-12; 16:15; and 18:4 also imply a spiritual division of humanity.

“Such a division along spiritual lines took place also in relation to the lots cast over the two male goats on Yom Kippur. On that day individuals chose between two types of atonement, the one offered by the service and the one represented by their own ultimate death. In the Apocalypse the entire world is represented as facing such a life-and-death decision (cf. Lev 23:29, 30). The above evidence suggests that the heaven/earth dyad [contrast] related to the Hebrew cultus in Revelation is accompanied by a daily/yearly dyad in which the first half of Apocalypse is subtly modeled on the daily liturgy of the *tamid* [daily service] while the latter portion of the book reflects the annual liturgy of Yom Kippur.”⁵⁶

The same division is proposed by Richard Davidson who writes: “In contrast to the focus upon the daily service in the first part of the book, Revelation 11 shifts the emphasis to the annual liturgy of the Day of Atonement. This Yom Kippur motif is sustained throughout the latter portion of the book as far as chapter 20. . . . The fourth sanctuary scene (Rev 11:19) explicitly portrays the opening of the ‘inner temple’ (*naos*) or Most Holy Place and focuses upon the ark of the covenant. The immediate judgment context of this scene (cf. Rev 11:18) supports the Day of Atonement setting, and also the larger context points in this direction.”⁵⁷

“The immediate judgment context” to which Davidson refers is the announcement of the time of judgment at the blowing of the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:18). We noted that this event corresponds to the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Trumpets which inaugurates the final judgment that culminated on the Day of Atonement with the salvation of believers and punishment of unbelievers. Thus, the sequential order in Revelation, namely, announcement of the judgment, opening of the Most Holy Place, and the Second Advent, corresponds to the progression from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets to that of the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement and Revelation 14. The thematic progression from the typology of the Feast of Trumpets to that of the Day of Atonement is present also in Revelation 14. We noted in chapter 3 that Revelation 14 contains three distinct visions, each introduced by the phrase: “Then I looked . . .” (Rev 14:1, 6, 14). The first vision presents the 144,000 singing the song of triumph before God’s throne (Rev 14:3). The second vision describes three angels flying in mid-heaven, proclaiming with “a loud voice” three judgment messages (Rev 14:7-11). The third vision portrays dramatically the execution of the final judgment by Christ at His coming by means of the imagery of the harvest (Rev 14:14-20).

It is noteworthy that the harvest of the earth is preceded by the announcement that “the hour of his judgment has come” (Rev 14:7). This sequential order corresponds to the Levitical system where the judgment was announced on the Feast of Trumpets and executed ten days later on the Day of Atonement. The harvest of the Second Advent stands in typological correspondence with the radical separation between the saved and unsaved that occurred on the Day of Atonement.

“The Second Advent of Christ,” writes Mario Veloso, “is for the execution of judgment. It will have two parts [like on the Day of Atonement]. Its *first part* will be accomplished by Christ who comes in a white cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand (Rev 14:14). He comes to reap the summer fruit, which represents those who accepted Christ’s mediation in the heavenly sanctuary (Rev 14:15). In the typical service the High Priest, having made atonement for Israel, came forth and blessed the congregation. So Christ, at the close of His work as mediator, will appear ‘not to deal with sin but to save’ (Heb 9:28) and to bless His waiting people with eternal life.

“The *second part* of the execution of the judgment is symbolized by the gathering of ‘the cluster of the vine’ (Rev 14:18) which was done in the autumn. This judgment falls upon the wicked who are cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God (Rev 14:19).”⁵⁸

In the typical service of the Day of Atonement, the wicked were “cut off” (Lev 23:29) when the High Priest came forth from the sanctuary. The radical separation between the saved and unsaved accomplished by Christ at His coming, stands in typological correspondence to the separation that occurred on the Day of Atonement.

The Day of Atonement and Revelation 19. The last and climactic judgment visions of Revelation 19 and 20 reflect in a unique way the typology of the Day of Atonement. Like in the previous judgment visions of Revelation 14 and 15, the redeemed sing praises to God “for his judgments are true and just” (Rev 19:2). This last vision, however, has a sense of finality because the announcement of the judgment and of the marriage of the Lamb are followed by a description of Christ’s coming to smite the wicked, to bind Satan, and to resurrect the saints. These events remind us of the outcome of the Day of Atonement.

Just as the High Priest wore a special white linen robe on the Day of Atonement, so Christ wears a special robe at His coming. “He is clad in a robe dipped in blood” (Rev 19:13), a reminder of the blood used by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement to cleanse the sanctuary. Christ does not carry blood

like the High Priest, but wears a robe dipped in blood because it is His own blood that cleanses the sins of His people. The latter is indicated by the fact that those who accompany Christ are “arrayed in fine linen, white and pure” (Rev 19:14).

The outcome of the coming of Christ is also similar to that of the Day of Atonement. Christ destroys the wicked by His “sword” (Rev 19:21), a reminder of the impenitent who were “cut off” on the Day of Atonement (Lev 23:29). Satan is bound and thrown into “the pit” (Rev 20:3), a reminder of the sending of Azazel into the desert (Lev 16:21). The righteous are resurrected and reign with Christ, a reminder of the cleansing of God’s people on the Day of Atonement which resulted in the jubilee celebration of new beginnings (Lev 25:9). This amazing correspondence between the typology of the Day of Atonement and its antitypical fulfillment at Christ’s Return, shows how important is the Day of Atonement in the New Testament for understanding the events associated with the coming of Christ.

The allusions to the annual feasts, and especially to the Day of Atonement, in Revelation suggests, as noted in chapter 3, the observance of a Christianized form of the feasts in the apostolic church. John could hardly have used profusely the typologies of the annual feasts in describing Christ’s redemptive ministry, if by the time of his writing at the end of the first century their observance were a thing of the past. If that were the case, the many allusions to the feasts would have been incomprehensible to the readers of Revelation. It is more reasonable to suppose that the many allusions to the annual feasts reflects, as several scholars recognize, a Christianized form of their observance.

The Day of Atonement and Acts 27:9. An incidental reference to the Day of Atonement is found in Acts 27:9 in the context of Luke’s description of Paul’s perilous voyage to Rome. The first part of the sea voyage along the coast of Asia Minor was delayed considerably by adverse winds. In fact, contrary winds forced them to seek shelter in the small bay of Fair Havens, in the south of Crete. As they waited there for a change of wind, it soon became clear that they would not complete the voyage to Italy before the onset of winter. The dangerous season for sailing began by the middle of September.

“As much time had been lost,” writes Luke, “and the voyage was already dangerous because the fast had already gone by, Paul advised them” (Acts 27:9) not to undertake the voyage. Translators and commentators agree that “the Fast” mentioned by Luke is the Day of Atonement because, as we noted in chapter 4, the day was commonly called “the Fast.” Some versions, like the NIV, provide this marginal explanation, “that is, the Day of Atone-

ment (Yom Kippur).” The name “the Fast” derives from the observance of the Day of Atonement as a day of rigorous fast. In fact, it was the only annual Holy Day that was observed by strict fasting.

In describing Pompey’s invasion of Jerusalem (63 B. C.), Josephus records that the event took place “on the day of the fast.”⁵⁹ The same is true of his description of the sack of Jerusalem by Herod and Sossius which occurred “on the solemnity of the fast.”⁶⁰ Abraham Bloch explains that “Due to the prominence of Yom Kippur, there was no need to identify it by name, and a mere reference to ‘the fast’ was sufficient. Even in Acts of the Apostles of the New Testament, most likely written by a contemporary of Josephus, Yom Kippur is referred to simply as ‘the fast.’”⁶¹

In a similar vein F. F. Bruce writes: “By the ‘Fast’ he [Luke] means, of course, the Great Day of Atonement, which falls on Tishri 10. Luke’s remark has point only if that date fell rather late in the solar calendar that year. In A. D. 59 it fell on October 5, but in all the neighboring years from A. D. 57 to 62 it fell earlier. A late date for the Day of Atonement is required also by the subsequent time notes of the journey to Italy.”⁶²

Our concern here is not to establish the date of the Day of Atonement but to consider the implications of Luke’s use of such a day as a time reference for Paul’s voyage. Does Luke use the “the Fast” as a time reference only because it was a well-known Jewish festival in the Roman world? Or also because the Day of Atonement was observed as “the Fast” among the Christians as well?

The latter appears to me to be the most plausible explanation for two reasons. First, we have seen in chapter 3 that Luke portrays Paul as eager to observe the law in general (Acts 21:24) and the annual Holy Days as Passover, Unleavened Bread, and Pentecost in particular. About the last feast, Luke says that Paul bade farewell to the believers in Ephesus, saying: “I must by all means keep this feast [Pentecost] that cometh in Jerusalem” (Acts 18:21; KJV). In the light of Luke’s aim to show the continuity in the Christian’s use of the Jewish religious calendar, it seems feasible to conclude that Luke’s incidental reference to “the Fast” presupposes that the Christians also observed the Day of Atonement as a day of fasting and prayer.

Second, if by the time of Luke’s writing (about A. D. 59), the Day of Atonement was no longer observed by Christians, the time reference to “the Fast” would hardly have been understood by the majority of Christians. Yet, Luke assumes that his Christian readers understood what he meant, because he refers to “the Fast,” incidentally, without a word of explanation. In the light of these considerations, it seems plausible to conclude that Luke’s incidental

reference to “the Fast,” presupposes the observance of this important Holy Day among Christians. Support for this conclusion is also provided by the allusions to the Day of Atonement that we have found in the Book of Hebrews and in Revelation. These allusions presuppose, as several scholars acknowledge, that Christians observed a Christianized form of the Hebrew calendar during the Apostolic Church.

PART IV THE MEANING OF THE DAY OF ATONEMENT FOR TODAY

In the light of the preceding survey of the Day of Atonement in the Old and New Testaments, let us ask What is the meaning and relevance of this important Holy Day for our Christian life today? Was the Day of Atonement meant to be observed only by the Jews? Has the typological meaning of the Day of Atonement already been fulfilled at the Cross? Do Christians need today, like the Jews, an annual day “to afflict” their souls (Lev 16:29) by praying, fasting, repenting and confessing their sins, individually and corporately? The answers to these questions are largely determined by one’s understanding of the typological meaning of the Day of Atonement and its antitypical fulfillment.

No Meaning for Dispensationalists. For Dispensationalists, who believe in a radical distinction between God’s plan of salvation for the Jews and that for the church, the Day of Atonement has no meaning for Christians today. Their reasoning is that “The seven annual feasts predicted the redemption of Israel as a nation and did not in any way contemplate the church.”⁶³ Consequently, Dispensationalists believe that “The Feast of the Day of Atonement is quite incongruous with the life of the church, for it foreshadows a national repentance by the Remnant of Israel.”⁶⁴ Such a national Jewish repentance will allegedly take place during the Tribulation when the church is already in heaven and consequently will not be affected by events taking place on this earth.⁶⁵

This interpretation of the Day of Atonement reflects the fundamental problem of Dispensationalism, namely, their arbitrary and radical distinction between God’s plan of salvation for the Jews and that for the church. Such an arbitrary distinction is foreign to the New Testament and destroys the very oneness of Jews and Gentiles that Christ has realized. Paul explains to the Ephesians that Christ “is our peace, who has made us both [Jews and Gentiles] one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph 2:14). Unfortunately, Dispensationalists choose to rebuild the dividing wall of separation that Christ has broken down.⁶⁶

Dispensationalists read the Old Testament as if Christ had never come and as if the New Testament had never been written. The promises concerning the people of Israel, the land of Palestine, the Davidic reign, the temple, and the animal sacrifices are taken to be literal and self-contained prophecies, applicable only to the Jews and not as an integral part of God's progressive revelation of His plan of salvation for mankind.

This literalistic interpretation ignores the witness of both the Old and the New Testaments. The former explains that the promise of the land was conditional to obedience (Gen 17:8, 9; 18:18; Lev 26: 40-42; Deut 4:25-31) and was historically fulfilled several times (Josh 21:43-45; 24:8-13; 1 Kings 8:56; Jer 32:21-23). The latter interprets God's promise of land and blessings to Abraham's posterity as fulfilled, not through a restoration of national Israel in a future millennium, but through the coming of Christ Who is the content and the intent of God's covenant with Abraham (Acts 3:25-26; Rom 4:13).

Dispensationalists ignore also the many allusions to the Day of Atonement which are present in the books of Hebrews and Revelation. Our study of these allusions has shown that the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement will be realized by Christ when He comes to save the believers, to punish the unbelievers, and to dispose of sin in a final and permanent way. These themes of the Day of Atonement have a universal import and cannot be limited to a national repentance of by a Remnant of Israel during the Tribulation.

The Day of Atonement and the Cross. For most Christians, the Day of Atonement has a relative importance because they believe that it was fulfilled and terminated at the Cross. For example, David Baron writes: "Every Christian who is at all instructed in the Word of God knows that the true Day of Atonement is the Day of Calvary."⁶⁷ This popular view is based on the assumption that the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross represents the antitypical fulfillment of the sacrifice of the bull and Lord's goat on the Day of Atonement.

We noted earlier that in a sense, the Cross does represent an "*already*" fulfillment of the Levitical Day of Atonement, since through it Christ did "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb 9:26). This partial fulfillment of the Day of Atonement, however, does not lessen the "*not-yet*" future and final antitypical realization. We have found that Hebrews recognizes a *past*, a *present*, and a *future* aspect in Christ's removal of sin represented by the Day of Atonement. The three are ideologically connected because they are all dependent upon the same "once for all" sacrifice on the Cross.

Those who identify the Day of Atonement with the Cross see no essential difference between Passover and the Day of Atonement, because for

them both feasts were fulfilled by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. Such a view violates the very design and purpose of the feasts and ignores their different typological functions. If the Day of Atonement foreshadowed the death of Christ, then its function would have been redundant, for this was already typified by Passover.

The Worldwide Church of God used to explain the difference between Passover and the Day of Atonement by making the former the symbol of *individual* forgiveness and the latter of *national* reconciliation with God. "Passover focuses on individual forgiveness and escape from death; Atonement focuses more on communal reconciliation with God."⁶⁸ This view is maintained by the United Church of God, the largest church newly formed from the recent split in the Worldwide Church of God. In the United Church of God booklet *What is Your Destiny*, the comment is made that in some respects the Day of Atonement is "similar to the Passover since Jesus Christ is our Passover and our Atonement. But its emphasis in ancient Israel was on cleansing the nation of its sins (Lev 16:32-34)."⁶⁹

The United Church of God interprets the cleansing of the Day of Atonement as the cleansing of humanity from sin that begins after Christ binds Satan for 1,000 years at His Second Advent. "To cleanse humanity from sin, God must first depose Satan, who constantly tempts us to sin (Matt 4:3). Then all men and women can receive the atonement of Jesus Christ to cleanse them from all their sins. For this reason, one of Christ's first acts at His second coming will be to bind Satan for 1,000 years (Rev 20:1-3). Then the reconciling of the world through the atoning sacrifice of Christ can begin in earnest. With Satan out of the way, all people will enjoy God's healing peace."⁷⁰

There are two fundamental problems with this interpretation. The first is the failure to distinguish the typological difference between Passover and the Day of Atonement. The two feasts are not redundant. Although each involved a sacrifice and application of blood, the similarity ended there. Not one of the features of the Day of Atonement noted above are to be found in the Feast of Passover. To confuse the two by blurring their distinctive characteristics and purposes means to completely misunderstand their distinctive function in foreshadowing the unfolding of the Plan of Salvation.

None of the eschatological features of the Day of Atonement (salvation of believers, punishment of unbelievers, and confinement of Satan) are found in the typology of Passover. The reason is simple. Passover typifies the inauguration of redemption accomplished by Christ's atoning sacrifice on the Cross, while the Day of Atonement represents the consummation of redemption realized by Christ's at His Return through the permanent removal and disposition of sin.

The second problem is the failure to recognize that the Day of Atonement typified, not the beginning of a new cleansing of humanity to take place during the millennium, but the completion of the cleansing process of God's people which resulted in the final disposition and removal of sins, represented by the sending of the scapegoat to the wilderness. Our study of the ritual of the Day of Atonement has clearly shown that the only sins that were cleansed, that is, removed from the sanctuary, were those which had been repented, confessed and atoned for. No second chance was offered to impenitent sinners. They were simply "cut off," that is, executed. They atoned for their own sins with their own death. The ritual of the Day of Atonement, as we have shown, typifies the drastic separation that takes place between the saved and the unsaved at Christ's Return.

To make the Day of Atonement the inauguration of a new redemptive ministry of Jesus designed to give a second chance during the millennium to those who did not accept salvation before His Return, means to destroy the finality of the consummation of redemption typified by the Day of Atonement. In chapter 4, we noted that twice Leviticus uses the phrase "all their sins" (Lev 16:16, 34) to describe the inclusive nature of the cleansing completed on the Day of Atonement. All the sins brought into the sanctuary during the daily services were removed from the sanctuary in a final and permanent way on the Day of Atonement.

The binding of Satan for 1,000 years represents not the beginning of the cleansing process for humanity, in general, but the final act of removal of the sins of God's people, in particular. Typologically, Azazel carried away into the wilderness the sins already forgiven as a punishment for his own guilt (Satan) in instigating them. The attempt to build a remedial plan of salvation to go into effect during the millennium for those who did not accept Christ before His Return cannot be supported by the typology of the Day of Atonement, nor by the general teachings of the Bible.

Good News of Final Cleansing and Restoration. The meaning of the Day of Atonement for today can be defined eschatologically and existentially, that is, in terms of its future fulfillment and of its present impact in our lives. Eschatologically, we have found that the Day of Atonement points to the glorious Day when Christ "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28).

Just as the Israelites eagerly waited for the appearance of the High Priest out of the sanctuary at the end of the Day of Atonement to hear the good news of their final cleansing and restoration, so we must eagerly wait for Christ's appearance at the antitypical Day of Atonement to receive final cleansing from sin and restoration to an harmonious relationship with Him.

The Day of Atonement's message of final cleansing and restoration is particularly relevant today when moral, social, and ecological pollution prevails. At a time when this world seems to be in the hands of some mad, blind forces bent on promoting evil and destruction, it is reassuring to know that the Day will soon come when Christ will appear to cleanse this world with fire (2 Pet 3:10), and "to consume the adversaries" (Heb 10: 27).

At a more personal level, the Day of Atonement reminds us that we cannot flaunt God's moral principles with impunity because the Day is coming when impenitent sinners, as in the typical service, will be "cut off" (Lev 23:29) and "shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (2 Thess 1:9). The reality of the executive judgment typified by the Day of Atonement and carried out by Christ at His coming makes all our actions and decisions significant because they have both immediate and ultimate consequences.

Like the Jews in Old Testament times, we Christians today need to hear the trumpet call that the Day of Atonement is coming, when our destiny will be revealed. On that Day, Christ, like a shepherd, will separate "the sheep from the goats" and will say to the former "Come, . . . inherit the kingdom . . ." and to the latter "Depart from me . . . into the eternal fire" (Matt 25:32, 33, 34, 41). The consciousness that "the Day [is] drawing near" (Heb 10:25) when our destiny will be revealed gives seriousness to our living. It constantly remind us that the life we live today, with all our thoughts, words, actions and attitudes, counts for eternity.

A Basis for Hope and Confidence. The Day of Atonement has a message of hope for Christians today because it stands for freedom and liberation from the crushing isolation of guilt and restoration to an harmonious relationship with God. "On this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord" (Lev 16:30). Rabbi Irving Greenberg observes that "Yom Kippur does more than lift the burden of evil. Forgiveness alone would leave the individual still alienated. This is the day of atonement, which means restoration to the wholeness of community and roots. It means a new reconciliation and a new unification of impulses and values, of individual and community, and of God and the human."⁷¹

For Christians, the promise of liberation, restoration, reconciliation of the Day of Atonement is based not on rituals but on the fact that Christ has already appeared "to bear the sins of many" and will appear a second time to save believers and to punish unbelievers (Heb 9:27-28; 10:26-27). The Day

of the second appearing of Christ is an event to be anticipated with solemnity and joy. Solemnity because on that Day our eternal destiny will be revealed. Joy because on that Day our fondest hopes and aspirations will be fulfilled.

The pain, the sorrow, the frustrations, the disillusionments, and the tensions of this life constantly tempt us to give up hope in a future divine solution to our present problems. The message of the Day of Atonement is not to give up hope but to hold fast, because soon Christ will appear to bring an end to sin and suffering. Satan himself, the originator and instigator of sin, will be bound for a thousand year while waiting for his eternal destruction. The author of Hebrews speaks specifically of the encouragement to be derived from the promise of Christ's soon coming: "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and *all the more as you see the Day drawing near*" (Heb 10:23-25).⁷²

It is noteworthy that the need to assemble together for worship and mutual encouragement is presented in this passage as all the more pressing "as you see the Day drawing near." We noted earlier that "the Day" most probably refers to the Day of Atonement, since it was commonly called "the Day." The approaching of the antitypical Day of Atonement calls for greater mutual encouragement because the nearer we draw to the Return of Christ, the more intense will be Satan's efforts to undermine the work of God in our lives and in this world. "Woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" (Rev 12:12). The inspiration and encouragement we receive from worshiping together with fellow believers can help us to hold fast to our faith and hope in the soon-coming Savior.

Free Access to God. In the New Testament, the Day of Atonement is a generator of hope and confidence because it reassures us that Christ has opened for us a free and direct access to God when He entered into the presence of God. In the Levitical Day of Atonement, only once a year the High Priest had access to the presence of God manifested in the Most Holy Place above the ark of the covenant. Now, all Christians have direct access to God because of Christ's entry into God's presence.

Hebrews assures Christians that on the strength of two unchangeable things—God's promise (Heb 6:15) and His oath (Heb 6:17)—they are guaranteed free approach to God through Jesus Christ. He calls this assurance "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Heb 6:19a). This anchor is "a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain where Jesus has gone as a

forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Heb 6:19b-20).

What all of this means is that for believers, the Day of Atonement embodies not only the hope of the future cleansing and restoration to be accomplished at the Second Advent, but also the assurance of the present free access to God because Christ has gone into the very presence of God as our forerunner. “Consequently, he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25).

Living with a Forward Look. The promise of cleansing, restoration, and final disposition of sin, typified by the Day of Atonement and realized by Christ at His second Advent, can and should motivate Christians to live looking forward to that glorious Day. Peter urges this forward look, saying: “Set your hope fully upon the grace that is coming to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 1:13).

To live looking forward to the antitypical Day of Atonement when Christ will appear to cleanse us from sin, means to view our present life as a pilgrimage, a journey to a better land. The writer of Hebrews notes that Abraham and all past true believers were pilgrims with no permanent home on this earth. “They admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them” (Heb 11:13-16, NIV).

To live with a forward look does not mean that Christians must have a world-denying attitude and live like hermits. Christ had a vivid sense of the imminence of the End, yet He enjoyed food and fellowship to the extent that His enemies characterized Him as “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” (Matt 11:19). Christ recognized that while His Kingdom was not of this world, yet this world is still God’s world. To live with a forward look means to enjoy the goodness of God’s creation still present in this world, without losing sight of the new world that Christ will establish at His coming. In chapter 7 we show how the Feast of Tabernacles is designed to remind us that we are pilgrims journeying to the Promised Land.

Christ-Centered Lives. To live looking forward to the Day when Christ will appear, like the High Priest at the close of the Day of Atonement, “to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him” (Heb 9:28), means to focus our attention on Christ rather than on ourselves. Often we tend to think mostly

about our own needs, desires, and problems. But the more we focus our attention on ourselves, the less we think of God and His Kingdom.

The message of the cleansing of the Day of Atonement challenges us to keep Christ at the center of our lives. When we think of His appearance, we are constantly reminded not only of what He has done in redeeming us from the penalty and power of sin but also of what He will do for us at His coming by cleansing us from sin and restoring us to a new relationship with Him. Faith anchored in Christ's past, present, and future accomplishments enables us to be "more than conquerors through him who loved us" (Rom 8:37).

Looking forward to the future cleansing of the Day of Atonement means to seek the cleansing power of Christ's grace in our daily life. This truth is clearly expressed by John: "Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3). This purification process is not a human achievement, but a divine outworking in our lives through the influence of the Holy Spirit: "We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

Becoming increasingly Christ-like in character used to be called "holiness," a concept which is no longer popular today. Some find this goal so out of reach that they choose to settle for lesser standards. To strive for a lesser goal means to doubt the power of the Holy Spirit to produce within us a character fit for the new earth. John Wesley remarks: "Repentance is the porch of religion, faith is the door of religion, holiness is religion itself. . . . None shall live with God but he that now *lives to* God; none shall enjoy the glory of God in heaven but he that bears the image of God on earth."⁷³ And we would add, none will experience the final cleansing of the Day of Atonement, but he who seeks now the forgiveness and cleansing from sin (1 John 1:9).

An Annual Call to Corporate Repentance. For the Jews, the Day of Atonement was and still is the annual call to corporate repentance. Although heart repentance was implied in the observance of the other feasts, on no other occasion is repentance so central as in the Day of Atonement. The Biblical basis for the emphasis on repentance and confession of sins is evident in the Biblical instructions: "And it shall be a statute to you for ever that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall afflict yourselves, and shall do no work" (Lev 16:29; cf. Lev 23:27, 29, 32).

The "affliction of soul" is generally understood to mean fasting. The emphasis, however, is on the correct attitude of the heart. Keil and Delitzsch

explain that “The fasting for this day, the only fasting prescribed in the law, is most intimately connected with the signification of the Feast of Atonement. If the general atonement made on this day was not to pass into a dead, formal service, the people must necessarily enter in spirit into the signification of the act of expiation, prepare their souls for it with penitential feelings, and manifest this penitential state by abstinence from ordinary enjoyments of life.”⁷⁴

Fasting is designed to curb bodily appetites to heighten the awareness of spiritual needs. Fasting is accompanied by prayer, self-examination, and confession of sins. On the Day of Atonement, devout Jews still take their annual inventory of their spiritual life. The high point of the liturgy is the corporate confession of sins. We noted in chapter 4 that the Jews confess their sins ten times during the day-long service and each time they confess their sins in the plural, “*we* have sinned.” The focus is not merely on the sins of society, but primarily on the changes needed in one’s personal life.

The challenge of the Day of Atonement to take an annual spiritual inventory of our lives and to acknowledge and forsake our sinful ways is most needed today when sin is excused, explained away, and relativized, rather than being acknowledged, confessed, and forsaken. “In a culture striving for permissiveness,” writes Irving Greenberg, “the self-critical mood of Yom Kippur strikes a note of jarring counterpoint. The tradition’s answer is that guilt in its right time and place is healthy; it is crucial to conscience. Moral maturity lies in a willingness to recognize one’s own sins . . . Concrete acts can be corrected; bad patterns can be overcome. Against the brokenness of guilt and the isolation of sin, Yom Kippur offers the wholeness of living, the oneness of community. To this end there is repeated confession of sins on Yom Kippur.”⁷⁵

Christians, like the Jews, need today the annual summon of the Day of Atonement to self-examination, repentance, and cleansing. We need to search our hearts and see if the sins we have confessed and asked to be forgiven have also been forsaken. If we sense the presence of sinful tendencies in lives, the Day of Atonement offers an annual opportunity to seek and experience divine forgiveness and cleansing.

In a sense, this is the message of the Day of Atonement for Christians today. It is the message of holy living in the present life in order to experience the final cleansing and renewal in the future Day of Christ’s coming. Only those Jews who had repented, confessed, and forsaken their sins experienced the final cleansing and renewal of the Day of Atonement. In the same way, only those Christians who repent, confess, and forsake their sins now will experience the final cleansing and removal of the “consciousness of sin” (Heb 10:2) when Christ will appear on the antitypical Day of Atonement.

Conclusion. The Day of Atonement in the Old and New Testaments embodies the Good News of God's provision for the cleansing of sins and restoration to fellowship with Him. "On this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins you shall be clean before the Lord" (Lev 16:30). What a marvelous provision God has made for His people to experience an annual cleansing and a new beginning through His atonement!

The cleansing and new beginning of the Day of Atonement is made possible through Christ's atoning sacrifice. "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (2 Co 5:17). The ultimate fulfilment of the precious promise will be realized at the antitypical Day of Atonement when Christ will dispose permanently of our sins and make all things new.

The promise of cleansing of the Day of Atonement has both a present and future phase. In the present, the Day of Atonement summons us to search our hearts and forsake our sinful ways by the power of Christ's blood which can purify our lives (Heb 9:14). The moral cleansing we experience in the present reassures us of the future and final cleansing from the presence and consciousness of sin that will be accomplished on the antitypical Day of Atonement, when Christ "will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb 9:28).

At a time when many are experiencing the crushing isolation of sin, the Day of Atonement has a message of hope. It reassures Christians that Christ will soon appear the second time, like the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, to punish unbelievers, to bind Satan, to cleanse believers and restore them to an harmonious relationship with Him. Such a hope gives us reasons to encourage "one another, and all the more as . . . [we] see the Day drawing near" (Heb 10:25).

NOTES TO CHAPTER V

1. Emphasis supplied.

2. Deut 4:16-18; Ps 106:20; 144:12; Is 44:13; Ez 8:10; Hos 13:2.

3. Ez 8:3; 10:8.

4. Jos 22:28; 2 King 16:10.

5. 1 Chron 28:12, 18. The quote is taken from Niels-Erik Andreasen, "The Heavenly Sanctuary in the Old Testament," *The Sanctuary and the Atonement. Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies*, eds., Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner (Washington, DC, 1981), p. 69.

6. Frank B. Holbrook, *The Atoning Priesthood of Jesus Christ* (Berrien Springs, MI, 1996), p. 18.

7. Emphasis supplied.

8. Niels-Erik Andreasen (note 5), pp.78-79.

9. Leonhard Goppelt, "Tupos as the Heavenly Original according to Exodus 25:40," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids, MI, 1974), vol 8, pp. 256-257.

10. Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Priestly tabernacle," *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* (Missoula, MT, 1975), vol. 1, p. 220. For a detailed analysis of *tabnit*, see Richard M. Davidson, "Typology in the Book of Hebrews," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), pp. 156-169.

11. An example is the exclusion of women from the priesthood, a practice that was very common in pagan religions.

12. William G. Johnsson, *In Absolute Confidence: The Book of Hebrews Speaks to Our Day* (Nashville, TN, 1979), p. 91.

13. Alwyn P. Salom, "Sanctuary Theology," *Issues in the Book of Hebrews*, ed., Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD, 1989), p. 206.

14. Emphasis supplied.

15. Emphasis supplied.

16. *De specialibus legibus*, I, 12, 66, in *Loeb Classical Library, Philo*, vol.7, p. 139.

17. See W. F. Howard, *The Fourth Gospel in Recent Criticism and Interpretation* (London, 1955), p. 115; James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (New York, 1924), pp. 104-106.

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32. Niels-Erik Andreasen (note 5), pp. 69-70.
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Chapter VI

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

IN THE

OLD TESTAMENT

Christianity, like Judaism, is a religion of hope for human redemption and final cosmic restoration. The Christian hope differs from ordinary human wishes or desires. Ordinary wishes or desires are not accompanied by a concrete expectation of fulfillment and, consequently, they have a limited impact upon one's living. On the contrary, the Christian hope is grounded in God and in His eternal purpose for mankind. For the believer to hope does not mean merely to think about what may or may not materialize in the future, but primarily to live the future intensively in the present. It means to live in the eager anticipation not only of personal redemption, but also of an end-time cosmic restoration.

In many ways, the annual feasts we have been studying were designed to nourish the hope and strengthen the faith of believers in the outworking of God's redemptive plan for human and subhuman life. The feasts are anchored to the commemoration of two historical acts which typify the inauguration and consummation of redemption. The first feast, Passover, commemorates the *event of liberation* from Egyptian bondage. The last feast, Tabernacles or Booths, celebrates divine protection across the desert on the *way to freedom* and the Promised Land. "Sukkot [the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles] is more than an encore of Passover," writes Irving Greenberg. "On Passover, Jews restage the great *event* of liberation. Sukkot celebrates the *way* of liberation—the march across a barren desert to freedom and the Promised Land."¹

It is noteworthy that both feasts are a week-long celebration spaced six months apart. Passover is followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread which begins on Nisan 15. Six months later comes the Feast of Tabernacles which is also a week-long celebration beginning from Tishri 15. The fact that the distance between the two feasts was only six months, suggests that God did not want His people to wait a full year between the celebration of redemption (Passover) and that of the final restoration (Tabernacles). A long waiting time between the two experiences would diminish the consciousness of these redemptive acts and lessen their impact on behavior.

The theological connection between the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles is aptly expressed by Abraham P. Bloch. In commenting on Leviticus 23:43 which enjoins the Israelites to dwell in booths to remember their wilderness experience, Bloch says: “Passover and Sukkot are accordingly related to the exodus from Egypt, and both are observed on the fifteenth day of the month, the anniversary of the exodus. Passover marks the attainment of the end of bondage and religious freedom (Ex 5:1). Sukkot marks the attainment of national and territorial independence, the essential ingredients of sovereignty.”²

For Christians, the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles go beyond their historical origins, pointing to a greater Christological and eschatological fulfillment. They commemorate not only the beginning and end of the historical journey of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan, but also the inauguration and consummation of our spiritual journey from Calvary to the world to come. Passover commemorates our liberation from the bondage of sin through the sacrifice of Christ, our Paschal Lamb (1 Cor 5:7); Tabernacles celebrates the completion of our earthly pilgrimage into the Promised Land (Rev 21:1-4). We shall see how the apocalyptic vision of the new world is couched in the imagery of the Feast of Tabernacles.

These two feasts embody the essence of the Christian Hope, which is based on what God has already done by delivering us from the bondage of sin at the Cross, and upon what God is doing and will do by providentially leading us through the hardships of this world into the blessedness of the world to come. Before examining the New Testament understanding of the Christological and eschatological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, we need to look at the meaning and observance of the feast in Old Testament times.

Objectives of the Chapter. This chapter divides into two parts according to its two major objectives. The first part surveys the meaning and observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in Old Testament times. Attention is given to the meaning of the rituals of the feast and their eschatological implications. The second part examines the development of the Feast of Booths in Jewish history by considering some of the customs adopted by the Jews to celebrate the feast. In the course of the study we reflect upon the implications of the feast for our Christian life today.

PART I
THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES
IN OLD TESTAMENT TIMES

The Feast of Tabernacles completes the sacred festivals of the seven month. In contrast to the somber mood of the feasts of Trumpets and Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles is a season of rejoicing. After the experience of repentance and cleansing of the Feasts of Trumpets and Atonement, the Lord wants His people to enjoy the benefits of a renewed relationship with Him at the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Two Most Common Names. The Feast of Tabernacles is known by different names in the Old Testament (“the feast”—1 Kings 8:2; “the feast of the Lord”—Lev 23:39). This is indicative of its prominent role and of its rich meanings. The two most common names are “the Feast of Ingathering—*asif*” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) and “the Feast of Booths—*sukkot*” (Deut 16:13, 16; Lev 23:34). The Hebrew *sukkot*, which literally means “booths” or “huts,” is rendered in the Latin Vulgate as *tabernacula*, from which we derive the English designation of the “Feast of Tabernacles.” Personally, I find the term “Tabernacles” misleading because it conveys the idea of “tent structures” like the Tabernacle in the wilderness. In reality, *sukkot* refers to temporary “booths” or “huts” made especially for the feast, not of canvas, but of branches of leafy trees. To be consistent with the meaning of the name in the Old Testament, in this chapter I refer to the feast as “the Feast of Booths.”

The two names of the feast reflect its dual meaning and function. With reference to the harvest, it is called “the Feast of Ingathering” (Ex 23:16; 34:22) because it is a thanksgiving celebration for the blessings harvest. With reference to the history of Israel, it is called “the Feast of Booths” (Lev 23:34, 43; Deut 16:13, 16; 31:10; Ezra 3:4) because it commemorated God’s protection of the people as they dwelt in booths during their sojourn in the wilderness. Both of these features are preserved in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The blending of agricultural and historical themes is common to all the three pilgrimage feasts. Passover, which commemorated the historical Egyptian deliverance, was to be observed when at least some of the barley was ready to be harvested and waved before the Lord. Pentecost, which became linked to the historical giving of the law at Sinai, was joyfully celebrated at the completion of Spring wheat harvest. Similarly, the Feast of Ingathering, which commemorated the historical divine protection during the wilderness sojourning, was joyfully celebrated at the completed of the Fall fruit harvests. God placed the celebration of the inauguration (Passover) and consummation

(Booths) of redemption in conjunction with the Spring and Fall harvests because these seasonal settings could help His people to better conceptualize and internalize the spiritual realities typified by these feasts.

The capacity to transform a nature festival into a historical holy day is a unique characteristic of the Biblical faith. The shift from nature to history represents a movement from a passive acceptance of nature-as-destiny into a drive for liberation. Most pagan religions see nature as god. In the Bible, nature is *not* God but points to God's creative and redemptive activity. In the Feast of Booths, the appreciation for the bounties of nature is linked to the commemoration for divine protection and freedom. Nature is seen not as an end in itself but as a means to acknowledge God's creative and redemptive activities.

The Dual Character of the Feast. The dual character of the Feast of Booths is evident in Leviticus 23:33-44 where the feast is listed twice. The first description of the feast is found in Leviticus 23:33-36 where the basic information is given regarding the date, the duration, and the character of the feast ("it is a solemn assembly; you shall do no laborious work" (Lev 23:36). This first description is followed by a summary statement which is a repetition of the introductory sentence: "These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation" (Lev 23:37). Surprisingly, this verse does not end the instruction regarding the Feast of Booths because it is followed by a new description of the feast.

The second description of the feast found in Leviticus 23:39-43, repeats much of the information already given in verses 34-36 about the date and duration of the Feast of Booths. Why the repetition? Abraham P. Bloch explains the reasons, saying: "The repetition and sequence of the portion becomes clear if we bear in mind the dual character of Sukkot [Feast of Booths]. Verse 34 introduces the name Sukkot. The postscript [verses 39-43] was added to supply the background and to point out that Sukkot does not supersede Asif [Feast of Ingathering] but coexists with it. This is indicated by the restatement of the date. The fifteenth of Tishri, which is the date of Sukkot (Lev 23:34), is also the date 'when you have gathered in the fruits of the land' and, therefore, 'you shall keep the feast of the Lord seven days" (Lev 23:39). In other words, there is a concurrent date for both holidays, the agricultural and the historical.

"The postscript continues to list the rituals of each holiday. Asif [the Feast of Ingathering] is celebrated for seven days with lulav [palm branches] and etrog [citron branches]. Sukkot [Feast of Booths] is celebrated for seven days by dwelling in booths. The link of Sukkot to the exodus is explained in

verse 43: ‘That your generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt . . .’

“While the harvest festival of Asif and the exodus festival of Sukkot have separate identities, they are linked to each other in substance as well as in time. Just as Passover must always occur in the spring season, so Sukkot must always occur in the harvest season (Deut 16:13).”³ The observance of the Feast of Booths at the close of the Fall harvest made it possible for the Israelites to have a double thanksgiving celebration: thanksgiving for the blessing of the harvest and for God’s protection through the sojourning in the wilderness. We see that these dual themes of *past* and *present* divine protection and blessings served to nourish the hope for a *future* Messianic restoration.

The Timing of the Feast of Booths. The Feast of Booths fell in a time of year when the hearts of people would naturally be full of thankfulness and gladness. All the crops had been harvested, all the fruits were gathered, and the land was now waiting for the softening of the “latter rain” to prepare it for a new crop. This was an appropriate time for a thanksgiving celebration. Just as the commencement of the harvest was consecrated by the offering of the first ripe sheaf of barley and the full ingathering of the wheat crop was commemorated by offering the two wave-loaves, so the completion of the harvest season was celebrated by a harvest feast of thankfulness and gladness.

The blessings of the harvest reminded the people of the providential way in which the Lord had brought them to their Promised Land, for the land was connected with the history and mission of God’s people. The beginning of the harvest in the Spring served to commemorate at Passover the birth of Israel in their Exodus from Egypt. Seven weeks later the completion of the wheat-harvest invited the people to commemorate at Pentecost the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai. The conclusion of the fruit harvest in the Fall provided the setting to thank God, not only for the blessings of the harvest but also for His providential protection through their journeying to the Promised land.

The timing of the Feast of Booth on the fifteenth day of the seventh month is significant. In his classic study *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services*, Alfred Edersheim keenly observes that “What the seventh day, or Sabbath, was in reference to the week, the seventh month seems to have been in reference to the year. It closed not only the sacred cycle, but also the agricultural or working year. It also marked the change of season, the approach of rain and of the winter equinox, and determined alike the commencement and close of a sabbatical year (Deut 31:10). Coming on the 15th of this seventh month—that is, at full moon, when the ‘sacred’ month

had, so to speak, attained its full strength—the Feast of Tabernacles appropriately followed five days after the Day of Atonement, in which the sin of Israel had been removed, and its covenant relation to God restored. Thus a sanctified nation could keep a holy feast of harvest joy unto the Lord, just as in the truest sense it will be ‘in that day’ (Zech 14:20) when the meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles shall be really fulfilled.”⁴

Prescriptions for the Feast. The instructions regarding the observance of the Feast of Booths are found in Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43, Numbers 29:12-39, and Deuteronomy 16:13-15. To these must be added the particular instructions of Deuteronomy 31:9-13 for the celebration of the feast every seven years. Taking all these texts together, we find the following the main instructions for the celebration of the feast.

The observance of the Feast of Booths was to begin on the 15th day of the seventh month, after the harvest had been gathered, and was to last for seven more days (Lev 23:33, 39). The celebration was to begin and end with a special Sabbath day in which the Israelites were to cease working and gather for worship (Lev 23:39; Num 29:12, 35). An eighth day was added to the feast on which people came together for worship and sacrifice (Lev 23:39). This day was set apart from the seven days of festivities; apparently it served to help people make the transition back to normal life.

The three major characteristics of the Feast of Booths were (1) the dwelling in booths, (2) the unusual number of sacrifices, (3) the joyous festivities. Let us look briefly at each of them.

Dwelling in Booths. The first characteristic was the dwelling in booths for the duration of the feast. “And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willow of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. . . . You shall dwell in booths for seven days; all that are native in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your generations may know that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.” (Lev 23:40, 42-43). Various branches of leafy trees were used to build booths that would house the people for the duration of the feast. The people erected these huts on their roofs, in their courtyards, in the courts of the temple, and in the different squares in Jerusalem (Nem 8:16). Native Israelites were enjoined to live in those temporary booths (*sukkah*) for the duration of the feast. They were to eat, sleep, pray, study, in short, live entirely in the booths. Exceptions were made in case of rain or for the sick, women, and infants who depended on their mothers.

Living in booths served as a reminder of God's protection during the forty years of wandering in the desert (Lev 23:42). The temporary booths symbolized the human need to depend upon God for His provision of food, water, and shelter. This applies to our spiritual life as well, for without the life-giving provisions of divine grace our spiritual life would be a scorching desert.

Temporary booths commonly were used in ancient Israel. They were built by weaving together branches and leaves to shelter watchers in the vineyard (Is 1:8), to protect people from the merciless heat of the sun, and to provide resting places for soldiers during battle (2 Sam 11:11). During harvest time, the countryside was dotted with such booths woven hastily together to provide temporary shelter for the harvesters.

The building of temporary booths must have been a necessity at the time of the festival because Jerusalem could scarcely have housed the many pilgrims for the entire length of the feast. However, the reason given in Leviticus for building the booths is not to provide emergency shelter to overflow crowds, but to remind the people of the divine protection during their desert wanderings (Lev 23:42-43). This commemoration would be especially meaningful because during the desert wanderings ("wandering Arameans") the people could scarcely have enjoyed the abundance of agricultural produce they now could enjoy during the feast.

The Symbolism of the Booths. Living in booths for seven days served as a reminder, not of the unsettled conditions of the wilderness sojourning, but of God's sustenance and protection given by God in the desert. Keil and Delitzsch emphasize this point, saying: "Their dwelling in booths was by no means intended to bring before the minds of the people the unsettled wandering life of the desert, and remind them of the trouble endured there, for recollection of privation and want can never be an occasion of joy; but it was to place vividly before the eyes of the future generations of Israel a memorial of grace, care, and protection which God afforded to His people in the great and terrible wilderness (Deut 8:15)."⁵

The prophet Isaiah describes how God will protect the faithful remnant during the time of trouble by sheltering them with the cloud by day and the flaming fire by night: "It will be for a shade [*sakkath*] by day from the heat, and for a refuge and shelter from the storm and the rain" (Is 4:6). In this context, the cloud and fire of God's presence function as a protecting booth over His people.

"The foliage of the booth reminded the Israelites of their humble origins in the desert; of the way God cared for them, teaching them to appreciate the fruitful heritage they were to receive in the land. The booth was a reminder

that God would shelter His people and give them food as long as they were obedient to Him.”⁶

The imagery of the “booths—sukkot” is used in the Bible as the symbol of God’s protection. “The Bible speaks of the Sukkah [singular form of ‘booth’ in Hebrews],” writes Abraham P. Bloch, “as a reminder of God’s protection when He provided Sukkot [booths] for the Jews who had come out of Egypt (Lev 23:43). In times of distress, one prayed to the Almighty to be enveloped in a protective Sukkah [booth] (Ps 27:5; 31:20). The inhabitants of a Sukkah are as secure as a lion in his den. Hence the application of the term Sukkah to a lion’s den (Ps 10:9). A king who enjoys divine protection has his seat in a Sukkah. When he loses that protection, his Sukkah collapses (Amos 9:11). As a symbol of protection, the sukka is also a symbol of peace—*Sukkat Shalom*.”⁷

In Talmudic times, the Feast of Booths assumed also the symbolism of joy, beauty, and of the protection of the Messianic age. We are told that one of the seven joyous elements of the Harvest Festival is the booth—*Sukkat*.⁸ People are beautiful when they dwell in booths.⁹ One should decorate the booths in order to make them beautiful.¹⁰ In the age to come, God will build a booth for all the pious people.¹¹ One of the missions of the Messiah will be to teach to the nations of the world the observance of the Feast of Booths.¹² These sampling of examples suffice to illustrate how the imagery of the booth became widely used to express joy, beauty, and hope in divine protection.

The Sacrifices. During the seven days, a considerable number of sacrifices were offered in addition to the regular offerings (Lev 23:36; Num 29:12-39). The instructions regarding sacrifices are spelled out in detail in Numbers 29:12-39. On no other occasion were so many sacrifices required of Israel to be offered on a single day. Presumably, the vast number of sacrifices were to reflect Israel’s depth of thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest.

Each day the sacrifices consisted of two rams and fourteen lambs which were to be offered with their respective grain offerings and a male goat as a sin offering. Bulls were also sacrificed each day, although their numbers decreased from thirteen on the first day (Num 29:13) to seven on the seventh day of the feast (Num 29:32).

A closer look at the endless list of sacrifices reveals a fascinating septenary pattern. Edersheim keenly observes that “the number of the burnt-sacrifices, whether taking each kind by itself or all of them together, is always divisible by the sacred number *seven*. We have for the week 70 bullock, 14 rams, and 98 lambs, or altogether 182 sacrifices (26x7), to which must be added 336 (48x7) tenths of ephahs of flour for the meat offering. We will not

pursue the tempting subject of this symbolism of numbers further than to point out that, whereas the sacred number 7 appeared at the Feast of Unleavened Bread only in the number of its days, and at Pentecost in the period of its observance (7x7 days after Passover), the Feast of Tabernacles lasted seven days, took place when the seventh month was at its full height, and had the number seven impressed on its characteristic sacrifices.”¹³

A Season to Rejoice. A third characteristic of the Feast of Booths is that it was a season of rejoicing. The emphasis on the joyfulness of the feast is found in the instructions given in Deuteronomy 16:13-14: “You shall keep the feast of booths seven days, when you make your ingathering from your threshing floor and your wine press. *You shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns.*”¹⁴

In contrast to the Feasts of Trumpets and Atonement which were a time of introspection and repentance, the Feast of Booths was a time of rejoicing. The festive atmosphere reflected the Israelites’ thankfulness for both material and spiritual blessings. The explicit reason for rejoicing is given in Deuteronomy 16:15: “because the Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that *you will be altogether joyful.*”¹⁵ It is not surprising that the rabbis called the feast “The Season of our Joy” (*Zeman Simhatenu*).

The joyous nature of the feast is derived from the fact that it commemorated both the material and spiritual blessings received. The material blessings were evident in the products of the orchard, the olive grove, and the vineyard which had been gathered into storehouses. The joy that was unleashed by the completion of the harvest and the end of all the hard labor found a perfect outlet in the celebration of the Feast of Ingathering. The celebration, however, was to be not an occasion for self-indulgence, but an opportunity to share the blessings of the harvest with the less fortunate (Deut 16:13-14).

The spiritual reason for the command to rejoice is the fact that the feast commemorated how providentially the Lord had led the people through the wilderness into the Promised Land. Furthermore, the repentance of the Feast of Trumpets and the cleansing of the Day of Atonement leads to the extraordinary outburst of joy of the Feast of Booths. Forgiveness and reconciliation with God always leads to joy.

Ellen White notes that the reason for rejoicing was more than just the bounties of the harvest. She writes: “The feast was to be preeminently an

occasion for rejoicing. It occurred just after the great Day of Atonement, when the assurance had been given that their iniquity should be remembered no more. At peace with God, they now came before Him to acknowledge His goodness and praise Him for His mercy. The labor of harvest being ended, and the toils of the new year not yet begun, the people were free from care, and could give themselves up to the sacred, joyous influences of the hour.”¹⁶ What this means is that spiritual and material blessings combined to make the Feast of Booths a real thanksgiving celebration.

The Eighth Day. A question arises over the nature of the Eighth Day, known as *atzeret*, which was to be observed in addition to the seven days: “you shall keep the feast of the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest” (Lev 23: 39; cf. 23:36; Num 29:35). Some scholars think that the Eighth Day is a separate feast which does not belong to the Feast of Tabernacles. This appears to be true, since the celebration of the latter was to last only seven days.

Does this mean, however, that the Eighth Day has a special typological meaning and antitypical fulfillment? Some people think so. The United Church of God, for example, teaches that the Eighth Day “depicts the Great White Throne Judgment, described in Revelation 20:11-13. . . . This is the time when the vast majority of human beings will be raised from the dead to receive their opportunity for salvation. Thousand of millions will receive the gift of everlasting life, finally achieving their destiny.”¹⁷ The same view was held in the past by the Worldwide Church of God.¹⁸

The attempt to interpret the Eighth Day as representing “the vast majority” of human beings who will be resurrected during the millennium to be given the opportunity of salvation, cannot be supported by the typology of the day nor by the teaching of Scripture regarding the resurrection of the saved and unsaved. There was nothing in the ritual of the Eighth Day that can foreshadow a second opportunity of salvation to be granted to most of mankind during the millennium. The radically reduced number of sacrifices (one bull on the eight day contrary to thirteen bulls on the first day—Num 29:36, 13), hardly suggests a massive atonement for the alleged masses of people to be converted during the millennium. Moreover, the Bible knows only the resurrection of the saved and unsaved (John 5:28-29). People are resurrected already judged, not to be judged (2 Tim 4:1). To try on the basis of Revelation 20 to build a doctrine about a special resurrection to take place during the millennium to give a second chance to most of mankind, poses serious problems which we cannot discuss in this context.

If, as it is shown in chapter 7, the themes of the Feast of Booths find their antitypical fulfillment in the earth made new (Zech 14:16; Rev 21-22) when

the saints are gathered “in their harvest home” and “the tabernacle of God is with men” (Rev 21:3, KJV), then the Eighth Day could hardly represent events that precede the establishment of the new earth. Such an interpretation breaks the progressive unfolding of the plan of salvation as foreshadowed by the annual feasts. If the Eighth Day were to foreshadow events that precede the antitypical fulfillment of the Feast of Booths, then there would be a regression rather than progression in the typological unfolding of the plan of salvation.

The Eighth Day did not belong strictly to the Feast of Booths which lasted only seven days. Edersheim correctly observes that “the Eighth Day, though closely connected with the Feast of Tabernacles, formed no part of that feast, as clearly shown by the differences in the sacrifices and the ritual, and by the circumstances that the people no longer lived in ‘booths.’”¹⁹ Elsewhere, Edersheim mentions six major differences between the two feasts.²⁰

The function of this Eighth Day, however, was not to typify events preceding the Feast of Booths but, presumably, to bring to a close the annual cycle of feasts. Keil and Delitzsch emphasize this point: “The *atzeret* as the eighth day did not strictly belong to the Feast of Tabernacles, which was only to last seven days; and it was distinguished, moreover from these seven days by a smaller number of offerings (Num 29:35ff). The eighth day was rather the solemn close of the whole circle of yearly feasts, and therefore was appended to the close of the last of these feasts as the eighth day of the feast itself.”²¹ This appears a plausible explanation. Most probably, the Eighth Day was set apart from the seven days of festivities to conclude the three feasts of the seventh month or the whole annual cycle of the feasts. Presumably, the day helped people make the transition back to normal life.

The Annual “Feast of the Lord” at Shiloh. Very few examples exist in the Old Testament of the observance of the annual feasts, including the Feast of Booths. The reason seems to be the religious apostasy of the people which led to the neglect of their religious practices. Reflecting upon Jewish history, Nehemiah wrote that “from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so [observed the Feast of Booths]” (Neh 8:17).

The oldest possible allusion to the Feast of Booths is found in Judges 21:19-23. There we are told that the inhabitants of Shiloh celebrated “the yearly feast of the Lord” (Jud 21:19). Most scholars identify it with the Feast of Booths because it is mentioned in conjunction with vineyards and dancing (Judg 21:21).²² According to the narrative, the men of Benjamin carried away the girls who joined in dancing and made them their wives (Judg 21:21-23). Since dancing and marriage were activities that became associated with the celebration of the Feast of Booths, it is possible that the passage refer to this feast.

The same festival is probably the context of the story of Hannah (1 Sam 1-2). The text says that Elkanah, Hannah's husband, went up with his family annually to worship and sacrifice at Shiloh (1 Sam 1:3; cf. 2:19). If the setting is the Feast of the Booths, Hannah's request for a child is in tune with the theme of the harvest festival which celebrated the *fertility* of the land, a fertility that Hannah's body lacked (1 Sam 1:11-12). Her offering of a three-year old bull (1 Sam 1:24) instead of a lamb and a young pigeon, as required by the levitical law at the birth of a child (Lev 12:6), may have been motivated by the Feast of Booths, during which 70 bulls were sacrifices. The passage suggests that the annual pilgrimage was a family affair, for Hannah brought Samuel new clothing "each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice" (1 Sam 2:19).

The Dedication of the Solomonic Temple. Though there are several incidents during David's reign that seem to have connections with the Feast of Booths (2 Sam 6:1-23; 1 Chr 13:1 to 16:43), the only actual description of the celebration of the feast during the monarchy is the dedication of the Solomonic temple (1 Kings 8:1-66; 2 Chr 5:2 to 7:22). Solomon may have chosen the feast as the grand occasion for the dedication of the temple for two possible reasons: first because of the great number of pilgrims that came to Jerusalem for the feast, and second, because the themes of thanksgiving and protection of the Feast of Booths were most appropriate for the occasion.

For many years the people had labored with intricate plans to fulfill David's dream to build a house for the Lord. Solomon's heart must have overflowed with gratitude when he gazed upon the magnificent symbol of God's presence. What more fitting time to express gratitude and delight than at the Feast of Booths, the special feast of joy and thanksgiving? People came for this special occasion from all corners of the land. No one had ever seen a festival of this magnitude. So many animals were sacrificed that they could not be counted (1 Kings 8:62-65).

The celebration was unusual, lasting 14 days in honor of the dedication of the temple (1 Kings 8:65). The narrative places great emphasis upon the procession of the ark of the covenant to its final resting place. Once in place, singers joined the sound of trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments, praising the Lord: "For he is good, for his steadfast love endures for ever." (2 Chron 5:13). Then the text says that "the house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priest could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God" (2 Chr 5:14; cf. 1 Kings 8:10-11).

The reference to the "cloud" of glory is significant because God's presence in the camp during the wilderness was symbolized by a cloud (Ex

13:21-22; Num 9:15-23). In this case, the cloud symbolizes the transference of God's presence into a more permanent dwelling (1 Kings 8:12-13; 2 Chr 6:1-2). "The link to Israelites dwelling in or near the presence of God in their *sukkoth* during the festival is clear. The cloud was the 'tent' in which the presence of God 'dwelled.'"²³

Solomon's dedicatory prayer, as Timothy Jenny points out, "reads like an index of the themes that would come to characterize the celebration of Sukkoth in later years. . . . The prayer includes a plea for six different things:

- 1) judgment (1 Kings 8:31-32; 2 Chr 6:22-23)
- 2) deliverance of Israel from her enemies (1 Kings 8:33-34, 44-45; 2 Chr 6:24-25, 34-35)
- 3) rain in times of drought (1 Kings 8:35-36; 2 Chr 6:26-27)
- 4) deliverance from various plagues (1 Kings 8:37-40; 2 Chr 6:28-31)
- 5) restoration from captivity (1 Kings 8:46-53; 2 Chr 6:36-39)
- 6) answers for Gentiles' prayers (1 Kings 8:41-43; 2 Chr 6:32-33)."²⁴

These themes assumed strong eschatological and Messianic overtones in the future interpretation of the Feast of Booths. In his prayer, Solomon recognized that God is omnipresent and cannot be contained in a mere human structure. Thus he exclaims: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven, and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27). The Temple was a temporary dwelling place of God's presence like the booths were temporary shelters to remind the people of the divine presence and protection in their midst. Solomon may have had in mind the Feast of Booths when he mentions in his prayer that the blessings of the harvest would come only if Israel obeyed the covenant (1 Kings 8:35-36). At the end of his prayer, Solomon reflected on the completion of the final harvest, a time of rest and thanksgiving when God would give "rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised" (1 King 8:56).

The joy and gratitude of the occasion compelled Solomon and the people to extend the celebration of the Feast of Booths yet another week (1 Kings 8:65). When at last the people were dismissed, they "went to their homes joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the Lord had shown to David his servant and to Israel his people" (1 Kings 8:66).

The Feast of Booths in the Psalms. The singing of Psalms was part of the formal worship of ancient Israel. "We should be surprised," writes George MacRae, "not to find one or more Psalms composed for the celebration of a given feast, especially a feast as ancient and as popular as Tabernacles. A great

many Psalms in fact are thought to have been composed for or at least sung at this feast [of Booths].”²⁵

The synagogue ritual today assigns Psalms 42-43 to the Feast of Booths. Psalm 42 pictures a crowd led “in procession to the house of God, with glad shouts and songs of thanksgiving, a multitude keeping festival” (Ps 42:4). As we learn from Jewish literature, this is a most fitting description of the celebration of the Feast of Booths.

Psalm 81 is commonly thought to have been originally composed for the Feast of Booths.²⁶ The Psalm mentions blowing “the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our feast day” (Ps 81:3). “Our feast day” is most probably a reference to the Feast of Booths which was often called “The Feast Day.” The remainder of the Psalm makes several allusions to the journey through the wilderness which the feast commemorates.

Psalm 118 deserves special mention because of its explicit mention of the themes of light and the branches: “The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar” (Ps 118:27). We note that these themes of light, festal procession with branches, and bind branches on the altar, dominate the Temple ritual of the Feast of Booths.

The Feast of Booths in Zechariah. The prophet Zechariah offers a unique eschatological interpretation of the Feast of Booths (Zech 14:1-21). The prophet introduces the feast in the context of the approaching day of the Lord: “Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, when the spoil taken from you will be divided” (Zech 14:1). Like other prophets, Zechariah sees the accomplishment of the Day of the Lord from both a historical and an eschatological perspective or, we might say, as a political and messianic restoration.

Historically, the Day of the Lord is the time of the vindication and restoration of God’s people. It is the time when “the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations” (Zech 14:3) that have plundered and destroyed God’s people. The Lord will restore peace and prosperity to the land. “And it shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security” (Zech 14:11). Zechariah envisions that Jerusalem would become the worship center of the world and all the surviving nations would go up annually to the city to observe the Feast of Booths: “Then everyone that survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of host, and to keep the feast of booths. And if any of the family of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain upon them” (Zech 14:16-17).²⁷

In this prophetic vision of the restoration of Jerusalem, the Feast of Booths plays an important role as the annual call to all the surviving nations to come to Jerusalem to worship the true God. Those who refuse to go up “upon them shall come the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:18).

Unfortunately, this prophetic vision of the restoration of Jerusalem and his people was never realized because of the people’s constant rebellion and apostasy. But the prophets could see that God’s promised restoration would ultimately be fulfilled at the eschatological coming of the Lord.

The Eschatological Feast of Booths. Zechariah sees the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Booths on the day when “the Lord your God will come and all the holy ones with him” (Zech 14:5). “On that day,” the prophet explains, “there shall be neither cold nor frost. And there shall be continuous day . . . not day or night, for at evening time there shall be light” (Zech 14:6-7). Here we have a clear allusion to the light ceremony of the Feast of Booths. We shall see that during the feast four tall, golden candlesticks were set up in the Court of Women. At the top of each candlestick, which could be reached only by ladders, were golden bowls holding oil with floating wicks that when lit would illuminate the whole temple area. This made it possible for the worshipers to continue their celebration into the night.

In the prophetic vision, the unusual night illumination of the Feast of Booths finds its ultimate fulfillment in the new earth where “there shall be continuous day . . . for at evening time there shall be light” (Zech 14:7). A clear description of this fulfillment is found in Revelation where we are told that “the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). In chapter 7 we shall see how the major themes of the Feast of Booths, namely, light, water, and booths, are extensively used in Revelation 21-22 to describe the conditions of the new earth.

Zechariah links the theme of water to that of light in his description of the eschatological Feast of Booths: “On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, . . . it shall continue in summer as in winter” (Zech 14:8). The water flowing out from Jerusalem is a clear allusion to the water processions that took place each day of the Feast of Booths from the pool of Siloam to the Temple. A priest would pour a golden flagon of water into one of the two silver bowls that had been positioned on the altar. On the second bowl, the priest would pour a libation of wine. Zechariah explicitly mentions “the bowls before the altar” (Zech 14:20). Spouts in each of the two bowls allowed the water and wine to flow out onto the altar.

The water ceremony was very meaningful. First, it was connected with the petitions for rain during the upcoming rainy season. Zechariah clearly speaks of “no rain” for those who do not keep the feast (Zech 14:17). The Jews came to believe that the annual rain fall was determined by God at the Feast of Booths. Second, the rain and the water-drawing ceremony pointed to the day when God would rain His Spirit upon the Israelites. “The prayer of every worshiper was, ‘May God send His Spirit *now*.’”²⁸ “The Talmud says distinctly: ‘Why is the name of it called, The drawing out of water? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said: ‘With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation’ (Is 12:3).”²⁹

The Prophetic Perspective. Zechariah’s vision of all nations coming to Jerusalem “year after year to worship the King and to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16) reminds us of Isaiah’s vision of “all flesh” coming to worship before God “from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath” (Is 66:23). Surprisingly, while Isaiah 66:23 is commonly used to prove the continuity of the Sabbath, Zechariah 14:16 is seldom cited to support the continuity of the Feast of Booths. Yet the two passages are strikingly similar.

Like Zechariah, Isaiah blends together the political restoration of Jerusalem (Is 66:20) with the End-time messianic restoration of this earth. This capacity of the prophets to intermingle the historical with the eschatological is commonly known as “the prophetic perspective.” The failure to understand the prophetic perspective, that is, the capacity of the prophets to see the ultimate restoration of God’s Kingdom through the transparency of historical events, leads some to incredible conclusions. For example, some argue on the basis of the two mentioned passages that “following the establishment of the Kingdom on earth, . . . Yahweh’s Feasts will eventually be kept by all nations, including the heathen.”³⁰ One wonders, how the heathen could be present in the future Kingdom of God in the first place? Moreover, what benefit would the heathen derive from observing a feast that is unknown to them?

To avoid reaching such bizarre conclusions, it is important to recognize that both the descriptions of all flesh coming to worship “from new moon to new moon and from sabbath to sabbath” (Is 66:23) and of all nations going up annually to Jerusalem “to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14”16), have a dual application. First, they refer to the hoped-for political restoration of Jerusalem and its religious services, and second, to the End-time restoration of this earth, of which the former was a type.

Isaiah speaks of the monthly new-moon day and the weekly Sabbath day because these were essential to the stability of the religious life in a future

restoration of Jerusalem. This assurance of stability is conveyed also in the preceding verse which says that “the new earth . . . shall remain . . . so shall your descendants and your name remain” (Is 66:22). In other words, Isaiah reassures the people of the permanence (“shall remain”) and stability of both the social and religious life in the new restored Jerusalem.

The day of the new moon is specifically mentioned because of the vital role it played in the Jewish society in determining not only the beginning of each month but also the time to celebrate key festivals such as Passover and Booths. Since the dates of the new moon were determined in ancient Israel by actual observation, the appearance of the new moon was essential to the stability of the civil and religious calendar. It signified worship regularity in the observance of the annual feasts which were dependent upon appearance of the new moon.

The Feast of Booths fulfills a similar function in the vision of Zechariah. It serves to reassure God’s people of the stability, prosperity, and security in their Promised Land. “The whole land . . . shall be inhabited, for there shall be no more curse; Jerusalem shall dwell in security” (Zech 14:11).

In view of the fact that their hoped-for stability, prosperity, and security, typified by the Sabbath and the Feast of Booths, never materialized because of the people’s unfaithfulness, the prophets project the fulfillment of these conditions to the future new world the Lord will establish at His coming. The faithlessness of human beings can never thwart the faithfulness of God. The fact that the blessings typified by the Sabbath and the Feast of Booths find their ultimate antitypical fulfillment in the world to come, indicates that their meaning and function transcend the Cross and continue in the present to the End of time.

The Mission of Israel. One wonders why the prophet Zechariah envisioned a day when “all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of host, and to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16)? The meaning of this mysterious observance of the Feast of Booths by the nations of the world can be understood in the light of Israel’s calling and mission.

God’s plan for the mission of His chosen people reaches back to His covenant with Abraham. In that covenant, God promised: “I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). God promised to raise up a people from Abraham’s loins who would be *a blessing to all the families of the earth*. The fulfillment of this promise began when God delivered Abraham’s descendants from the Egyptian bondage: “It is because the Lord loves you,

and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt” (Deut 7:8).

God’s loving choice of Israel was for *service*. Israel’s mission was to bring the knowledge of the true God and of His plan of salvation to all the nations of the world. “All the people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the Lord” (Deut 28:10). Israel was to become “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6) that would intercede with a holy God for a sinful world so that ultimately God’s Temple “shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Is 56:7).

The prophet Zechariah envisions the fulfillment of God’s plan when the faithful among the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem “year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16). Why did the prophet mention specifically the Feast of Booths and not one of the other major festivals, as the sign of obedience of the Gentiles? Presumably, because the Feast of Booths, being the Feast of Ingathering, fittingly represents the ingathering of the redeemed from all the nations of the earth. Another possibility suggested by Keil and Delitzsch, is that the Gentiles who, through the wanderings of this present life, have been brought out of darkness into the blessedness of God’s Kingdom, will celebrate the Feast of Thanksgiving out of their overflowing gratitude to God for His salvation.³¹

It is noteworthy that in Jewish literature, a major theme of the Feast of Booths is Israel’s role in the redemption of the world. The Talmud explains that the seventy bulls sacrificed during the seven days of the Feast of Booths were offered on “behalf of the seventy nations of the world.”³² The same thought is found in the commentary (Midrash) on Psalm 109:4: “At the festival of Tabernacles we offer up seventy bullocks (as an atonement) for the seventy nations, and we pray that rain will come down for them.”³³

Seventy nations was the traditional number of all the nations of the world. In the prophetic perspective, the Feast of Booths came to represent the final ingathering of all the nations to worship and praise the true God. This explains why the feast was also called “The Feast of the Nations.” In chapter 7 we see that John the Revelator depicts the day when the whole earth will become the booth of God who will dwell among His people (Rev 21:3). This prophetic perspective of the Feast of Booths explains why the feast is called the season of our rejoicing. What greater joy can there be than to live for ever in the presence of God?

After the Exile. The Feast of Booths was the first feast celebrated by the exiles returning from the Babylonian captivity (Neh 8:1-18; Ezra 3:1-4). Ezra informs us that the feast was observed immediately after the rebuilding of the altar. “When the seventh month came, and the sons of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered as one man to Jerusalem. Then arose Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, with his fellow priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shaltiel with his kinsmen, and they built the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings upon it, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God. They set the altar in its place, for fear was upon them because of the people of the lands, and they offered burnt offerings upon it to the Lord, burn offerings morning and evening. And they kept the feast of booths, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt offerings by number according to the ordinance, as each day required” (Ez 3:1-4).

According to Nehemiah, the people rediscovered the Feast of Booths while listening to the reading of the law done by Ezra, with the help of the Levites who interpreted him (Neh 8:3-8). Nehemiah recounts: “And they found it written in the law that the Lord had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month, and that they should publish and proclaim in all their towns and in Jerusalem, ‘Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written’” (Neh 8:14-15).

During the Babylonian captivity, the people had forgotten the annual feasts, including the Feast of Booths. When they learned about the latter from the reading of the Law, they responded enthusiastically. They went out by the thousands to gather myrtle, palm, and olive branches, and “made booths for themselves, each one his roof, and in their courts and in the courts of the house of God, and in the square at the Water Gate, and in the square at the Gate of Ephraim. And all the assembly of those who had returned from captivity made booths and dwelt in the booths; for from the days of Jeshua the son of Nun to that day the people of Israel had not done so” (Neh 8:16-17).

The entire celebration, including the holy convocation, the building of tents, and the intricate number of sacrifices, was done in accordance to the regulations of the Mosaic Law. The people were eager to thank God for having brought them back to their homeland. They did so by celebrating the Feast of Booths, the very feast that represented the providential protection God had granted to their forefathers during their journeying through the wilderness into the Promised Land.

The celebration of the Feast of Booths is mentioned on two high points of the history of Israel: the dedication of the Temple and the return from the

Babylonian captivity. The neglect of the observance of the feasts during most of Biblical times is indicative of the spiritual apostasy of Israel. To observe God's Holy Days means to be challenged constantly to be a Holy People. To ignore God on His Holy Days can result in ignoring God every day. Israel's history is marked by disobedience and punishments rather than by the enjoyment of material and spiritual harvest of blessings. The joy of the Feast of Booths was dependent upon Israel's faithfulness to God, but their unfaithfulness prevented them from enjoying God's blessing and celebrating this feast.

After the return from the Babylonian exile, the Feast of Booths began to be observed more regularly, as attested by the book of Maccabees and the writings of Josephus.³⁴ By the time of Christ, the feast was widely observed and formed the backdrop for the prophetic vision of the world to come (Rev 7:9-17; 21-22) and for some of the most profound statements of Jesus about His Messiahship (John 7:37-39).

PART II SOME JEWISH CUSTOMS OF THE FEAST OF BOOTHS

Let us now take a brief look at how the Jews conceptualized and experienced the Feast of Booths, especially in the post-exilic period. This will serve as a background for the next chapter where we study the themes of the Feast of Booths in the New Testament.

A Pilgrimage Festival. The Feast of Booths was the last of the three pilgrimage festivals and it attracted the largest number of pilgrims. The Jewish people were not required to go up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Trumpets or the Day of Atonement, but they were required to do so for the Feast of Booths. These annual pilgrimages to the Sanctuary were essential for the survival of Judaism. In the absence of schools and influential local religious leaders, it was important for the people to maintain physical contact with the religious leadership of the Temple. Jerusalem was the religious, cultural, and political capital. The pilgrimages to Jerusalem helped to keep ancient traditions alive and to strengthen national solidarity.

One wonders why the three annual festivals were timed to coincide with the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Booths. If the reason had been purely theological, then a pilgrimage to Jerusalem for the Day of Atonement would have better served the goal of a religious national cleansing and commitment. The reason must be sought, as Abraham Bloch suggests, "in the context of the unremitting struggle of monotheism against pervasive paganism."³⁵

Bloch notes that “The celebration of Passover was central to that context. The paschal lamb was an annual reminder of an ancient decisive triumph over idolatry (Ex 12:12). The reenactment of Passover pageantry also served as a reaffirmation of the ancient covenant which God had concluded with the exodus generation (Lev 26:45). The paschal lamb, like all sacrificial offerings, could not be slaughtered beyond the precincts of the Temple (Deut 16:5). For this reason alone, it was necessary to proclaim Passover a pilgrimage festival.”³⁶

The choice of the Feasts of Pentecost and Booths as pilgrimage festivals was determined apparently by the same need to counteract the influence of pagan practices. The Spring harvest and the Fall ingathering were often characterized among neighboring nations by orgies, pagan rites, and excessive feasting. An indirect allusion to one of these repulsive custom is found in Exodus 23:19 where the following admonition is given in the context of the pilgrimage festivals: “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk” (cf. Ex 34:26). Apparently this admonition was motivated by the need to uproot the pagan custom of serving kids boiled in their mother’s milk at harvest feasts.

To raise the moral tone of the folk harvest festivals and to endow them with religious meaning and social significance, the place of celebration was shifted to Jerusalem. There, the spontaneous exuberance of the people could be controlled and channelled to support the upkeeping of the Temple and the relief of the widows and orphans. The socio-ethical aspect of the Feasts of Weeks and Booths is clearly stated in Deuteronomy: “You shall keep the feast of weeks to the Lord your God . . . and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you. . . . You shall keep the feast of booths seven days . . . you shall rejoice in your feast, you and your son and your daughter, your manservant and your maidservant, the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are within your towns” (Deut 16:10-11, 13-14).

The long list of persons to be remembered at the annual harvest celebrations reveals God’s concern to impress upon His people that thankfulness to Him must be expressed in compassionate outreach toward the less fortunate. The rejoicing of the Feast of Booths was to be not self-centered but God-centered and others-centered.

Building the Booth. The two major rituals of the Feast of Booths were the dwelling in a booth and the waving of a *lulav*, a bundle of willow, myrtle, and palm branches tied together (Lev 23:40, 42). To this very day, they are still the major features of the feast for the Jews. We briefly consider each of these rituals.

The building of the booth was one of the most exciting parts of the celebration of the Feast of Booths. It began right after the close of the Day of Atonement. All the family members participated in it, including the children. The booth was to be high enough for a tall person to comfortably stand and wide enough for the whole family with guests to sit in comfort around the table. The booth was built outdoors. It could be attached to the house or, even erected on the roof if no yard space was available—but not under a tree, for that would have been a violation of rabbinic laws.

Usually, the booth had three walls, the fourth being a wall of the house. Instead of a door, a curtain hung over one of the sides. The roof was built with great care with palm branches or other leafy branches. The branches were spaced so they would screen out the sunlight without blocking the visibility of the stars. The people watched for the stars at night during the feast because of the prophecy “a star shall come out of Jacob” (Num 24:17). It is possible that it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, the special season of star watching, that the wise men saw the Messianic star and “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt 2:10). The shade provided by the covering was to exceed the sunshine. Once the booth was erected, smaller children joined in beautifying it by hanging various kinds of fruits along the walls. The fruits that were hung for decoration could not be eaten until the end of the festival.

The Talmud discusses at great length how to beautify the booth. Over the centuries, Jewish communities around the world have developed their own embellishments. The festival ornaments have been expanded to include tapestries, rugs for the floors, stuffed birds, ornamental lanterns, and paper flowers. In fact, an entire folk art of booth decorations has developed over the centuries.

The normal functions performed in a home, such as eating, drinking, and sleeping, were to take place in the booth. To give to the booth the appearance of a home, people were to move some of their fine furniture and dishes into it. The wall of the booths were often beautified with fruits. The booths were not to have the appearance of a permanent home.

Dwelling in Booths. Once the booth was completed, the family lived in it for the seven-day duration of the feast. Living in booths served to commemorate the shelter and protection from the heat of the sun that God provided to the people while journeying through the desert to the Promised Land. Only people who have experienced the broiling desert sun can appreciate the lifesaving qualities of shade. It is not surprising that in Scripture “shadow” and “shade” are often synonymous with protection. The Psalmist often expresses his gratitude for being able to take refuge in the shadow of

God's wings: "In thee my soul takes refuge; in the shadow of thy wings I will take refuge, till the storms of destruction pass by" (Ps 57:1; cf. 17:8; 36:7; 91:1). "In the shadow of thy wings I sing for joy" (Ps 63:7).

In describing the future restoration of Jerusalem, Isaiah speaks of God manifesting His glory as a canopy over the city that "will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain" (Is 4:6). In a similar vein, in Hosea, God promises that "They shall return and dwell beneath my shadow, they shall flourish as a garden" (Hos 14:7).

Dwelling in booths became a popular ritual. "To avoid obstructing narrow streets, ancient Jews used to build their sukkot on flat roofs of their homes (Neh 9:16; *Sukkah* 26b). This provided good ventilation and exposure to cooling breezes. The combination of gourmet menus, lavish decorations, and the fragrance of woods and streams created a sense of exhilaration intimately bound up with the sukkah."³⁷

The Meaning of Dwelling in Booths. Besides commemorating divine protection during the wilderness sojourning and the blessing of the harvest, the Feast of Booths offered to the Jews living strategies to deal with some basic human dilemmas. By deliberately giving up living in a solid construction for a week, the Jews were taught to place the ultimate trust in God's protection.

"The booth," writes Irving Greenberg, "is the central symbol of the ancient Israelites' trust and hope for forty years in the desert. The Hebrews left the protection of man-made thick walls to place themselves under the protection of God. Exposed to the dangerous natural conditions and hostile roving bands, they placed their confidence in the divine concern, which is the only true source of security. . . . By eating, learning, and sleeping in the booth so that the sukkah become's one's home for a week, we reenact their original act of faith."³⁸

There is a powerful tendency to become attached to one's home and rooted in a particular culture or community. Many people idolize their home, land, and culture. Living in booths for a week taught the Jews that life is a pilgrimage to a better land. We cannot afford to become overly attached to the material things of this world because ultimately this present world is not our permanent home. Living in a booth served not only to reenact the journey from bondage to liberation, but also to foreshadow the journey from the present world to the world to come.

Living in booths taught the Jews that the ultimate protection is to be found not in building solid walls of security but in trusting the Lord. "By

moving into the sukkah for a week,” Greenberg explains, “Jews demythologize solid walls and controllable security. It is not a renunciation of self-protection but a recognition of its limits. . . . The sukkah does not deny the value of a solid home or of human effort; fifty-one weeks a year Jews are allowed to live in homes and are encouraged to build up the world and increase security and well-being. But the sukkah teaches that builders of homes should be able to give them up or move out if necessary. Renunciation is the secret of mastery. ‘Who loves money (absolutely) will never have his fill of money’ (Ecc 5:9). People become masters rather than slaves of their achievements when they develop the capacity to let go of their accomplishments, even if only for the moment.”³⁹

Christians, like Jews, need to learn to give up the false security of power and wealth. All too often people heap up wealth, power, and status symbols hoping to protect themselves from disasters, sickness, or even death. This search for “solid” security often leads to idolatry, the worship of things rather than the worship of God. As Christians, we need to hear the message of the Feast of Booths that our ultimate safety comes by being sheltered in the shadow of God’s wings (Ps 57:1).

Until this world is restored by the coming of the Lord, we are on an Exodus journey to the Promised Land. We live in this world; yet we are not totally part of the society and culture in which we live. The message of the Feast of Booths is not to become so assimilated in the culture of this world that we lose sight of the world to come. We constantly must look forward to that grand Feast of Booths celebration when God Himself will build His booth among us: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people” (Rev 21:3, KJV).

Booth’s Hospitality. According to an ancient tradition, the booth commemorates the shelter Abraham built for the three angels who visited him.⁴⁰ “The Children of Israel were divinely protected in the wilderness by the shelter of the tabernacles solely because the patriarch Abraham had given shelter to three strangers beneath the tree on his property.”⁴¹

The story of Abraham’s hospitality appears to be at the root of the Jewish belief that seven heavenly guests (*ushpizin*) visit the booth at mealtime during the feast. This belief first appears in the *Zohar*, a compilation of Jewish mystical writings. “When the Jews leave their home to enter sukkah, in accordance with the command of the Almighty, they are worthy of receiving the holy presence. The seven faithful shepherds come down from paradise and enter the sukkah as guests of the host.”⁴² The leadership of the heavenly guests changes from day to day. Abraham, of course, is the first guest. On subsequent nights, come Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph, and finally King David.

The notion of an open door to “holy guests” is fundamental to the celebration of the Feast of Booths and finds expression in the custom still prevailing today among the Jews, to invite the poor and the needy to share in the special “booth” meal. “Holy guests” only deign to enter a booth where the poor are welcome.

The Waving of the *Lulav* and *Etrog*. The second major ritual of the Feast of Booths is the waving of special branches, known as *lulav* and *etrog*. These terms are not found in the Bible, though the rabbis derived their use from Leviticus 23:40: “And you shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of leafy trees, and willow of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” The rabbis concluded that this passage refers not only to the actual building of booths but also to specific branches and leaves to be waved to express rejoicing in the Lord.

The term *lulav*, which originally meant “a sprout,” came to refer to bundle of willow, myrtle, and palm branches, which were tied together and waved in rejoicing during the Feast of Booths. *Etrog*, an Aramaic word meaning “something which shines,” refers to a citrus fruit, the citron, which is carried along with the *lulav*. The citron is an oblong, fragrant fruit, somewhat larger than a lemon, with a stem at the base and a small knobby projection at the head. Since the *etrog* is not mentioned in the Bible, the rabbis derived its use from the Biblical phrase “the fruit of goodly trees” (Lev 23:40). To the rabbis, this phrase implied that *both* the tree and the fruit had to be goodly, which meant that the fruit and the wood must have a similar taste. In their view, only the *etrog*, the citron, fulfilled both of these requirements.

The *lulav* was made with a palm branch to which was attached two willow branches to its left and three myrtle branches to its right. Rings were placed on the center and upper part of the *lulav* to keep the branches together during the waving ritual. This cluster was held in the right hand while the *etrog*, or citron, was held in the left. They were to be held in the upright position in the manner in which they grow.

The principal time for waving the *lulav* and the *etrog* was during the chanting of the *Hallel* (the Psalms).⁴³ During the days of the Temple, it was customary to form a procession to circle the altar with a *lulav* in hand waved at certain specific points of the liturgy. Today the *lulav* and *etrog* are waved in the synagogue at the conclusion of the morning service. An individual stands on a lectern (*bimah*) with a Torah (Mosaic Law) in his arm. Every person who owns a *lulav* joins a procession and marches around the lectern. The waving occurs while a blessing is said: “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments and has commanded us concerning the waving of the *lulav*.”

On the seventh and last day of the Feast of Booths (known as *Hoshana Rabba*, The Great Hosanna), the whole congregation marches around the sanctuary *seven times* with *lulav* and *etrog*. These seven times are a memorial of the circuits made in ancient times by the people around the Temple's altar. The wavings served to express joy, thanksgiving, and praise to God for the material blessings of the harvest and the spiritual blessing of His past and present protection. Besides waving, the custom developed of beating a bundle of willow branches at the foot of the altar on the last day of the feast. This custom, as we now see, was viewed as a ritual intercession for water.

Prayers for Water. Praying for rain was an important part of the ritual of the Feast of Booths. The rabbinical perception was that God determines the amount of water for the coming year during the Feast of Booths.⁴⁴ The only hint in the Biblical text of a link between the Feast of Booths and the promise for rain is the inclusion of the willow branches among the four species of branches that comprised the *lulav* bundle that was waved during the feast. The willow branches are called "willow of the brook" (Lev 23:40), implying a connection with water.

Palestine is not rich in water resources. Its fertility depends largely on the amount of rainfall it receives from year to year and not on a river like the Nile which is the major source of irrigation for Egypt. Since the rainy season starts in Palestine at about the time of the Feast of Booths, it was the appropriate time to pray for rain.

Prayers for rain were offered in conjunction with the popular water-drawing ceremony which is described more fully in the following chapter. The ceremony was conducted daily beginning with the second night of the Feast of Booths. Torchlight parades, public dancing, jugglers, and music took place as the water drawn from the spring of Siloam was carried into the Temple. The revelry continued through the night and culminated with the pouring of the water on the altar at the time of the morning sacrifice. These nightly festivities were given the name of *Simchat Bet HaShoavah* ("the rejoicing of the drawing of the water").⁴⁵

"The Talmud describes the event as follows: Jerusalem was lit up by the light of gigantic menorahs [seven-branch candelabra]. The lyres, cymbals, horns, and drums played. The Rabbis entertained and clowned to add to the joy. Rabbi Simeon ben Gamaliel (the head of the community!) did various gymnastic feats culminating in an incredible headstand. He also entertained by juggling flaming torches."⁴⁶ The revelry lasted until the morning sacrifice when the water which had been drawn at the spring of Siloam was poured on

the altar as a symbolic prayer for rain. The meaning of this practice is explained in the Talmud when it says: “The Almighty said: ‘Pour the water [on the altar] on the holiday so that the rains of the year may be blessed.’”⁴⁷

An interesting custom developed of beating a bundle of willow branches, known as *aravot*, at the foot of altar on the last day of the feast as an intercessory ritual for water. Abraham Bloch explains that “the significance of the beating of *aravot* [willow branches], which the Bible called ‘willow of the brook’ (Lev 23:40), may be best understood if it is viewed in the context of a ritual intercession for water. As we have pointed out, the willow was included in the *lulav* set in thanksgiving for the water of the brook. The additional willows, which were placed at the side of the altar every Sukkot morning, symbolized an ongoing prayer for a plentiful supply of water. The entire week of Sukkot was considered a period of judgment with regard to water. *Hoshana Rabba*, the last day of the period, naturally assumed special importance. The altar was circled seven times and a corresponding number of prayers were recited.

“The final ritual was the beating of the *aravot* [willow branches]. The *aravah* [willow tree], which uses up much water to sustain its life and growth, became a symbol of the abundance of water. However, it is essentially a useless plant which bears no fruit, a squanderer of water resources. The destruction of the *aravot* was a symbolic gesture of water preservation as one was about to pray for rain.”⁴⁸

The beating of the willow branches at the foot of the altar also had a deeper significance. It represented the miracle of water that gushed forth from the smiting of the rock at Horeb (Ex 17:1-7; Num 20:8-13).⁴⁹ The rock was described like the silver bowls from which the water drawn from Siloam flowed on the altar during the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. Moreover, rabbis gave messianic significance to the water from the rock: “As the former redeemer [Moses] made a well to rise, so will the latter Redeemer bring up water, as it is stated, ‘And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim’ (Joel 4:18).”⁵⁰ In chapter 7 we note that this messianic understanding of the water ceremony offered to Christ the perfect setting to proclaim Himself the source of living water.

The coincidence of the Feast of Booths with the beginning of the rainy season explains the reason for the prominence given to the water ceremony during the festival. Invoking God to provide an ample supply of water for the next season was in keeping with the promise that God “will give the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the later rain, that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil” (Deut 11:14). The rejoicing for a

bountiful harvest at the Feast of Ingathering was largely dependent upon the reception of an abundant rainfall. We shall see that Jesus capitalized on the water ceremony of the Feast of the Booths, which had a rich, messianic symbolism, to reveal Himself as the true source of living water.

The Eighth Day of Assembly. At the completion of the seven-day celebration of the Feast of Booths, the Bible prescribes yet another day, known *Shemini Atzaret*, “the Eighth Day of Assembly” (Num 29:35; Lev 23:26). It was a day of “solemn assembly” (Num 29:35), but, as we noted earlier, it was entirely distinct from the Feast of Booths which lasted seven days (Deut 16:13). The number of sacrifices were considerably reduced, people left the booths and resumed enjoying the comforts of their homes, and the *lulav* and *etrog* were put aside.

The Bible does not spell out the rationale for observing an additional day following the Feast of Booths. The rabbis offered an interesting homiletical explanation. After the intense seven-day celebration of the Feast of Booths, as the Jewish people are about to leave and return to their homes, “God grows nostalgic, as it were, and pensive. The people of Israel will not come together again in such numbers until Passover six months hence. God will soon miss the sounds of music and pleasure and unity of the people. The Torah [Law of Moses] decreed, therefore, an eighth day of assembly, a final feast/holy day. On this day Jews leave the sukkah [booths] to resume enjoying the comfort of solid, well-built, well-insulated homes. The *lulav* and *etrog* are put aside; this day *Shemini Atzeret* [“Eighth Day of Assembly”] is a reprise of the celebration of Sukkot but without any of the rituals. The message is that all the rituals and symbolic language are important but ultimately they remain just symbols.”⁵¹

A more realistic explanation is that the Eighth Day presumably served to conclude the cycle of the three feasts of the seventh month and to provide a transition back to normal life. In time, this day evolved into the day of the rejoicing of the Torah (*Simchat Torah*). In Israel, the Eighth Day and the rejoicing of the Torah are celebrated on the same day, but in other parts of the world the Jews add an extra day (making a ninth day) for the *Simchat Torah* celebration.

Rejoicing for the Law. The festival of *Simchat Torah* commemorates the closing of the annual Torah-reading cycle at the congregational Sabbath services and the beginning of the new reading cycle. The entire five books of Moses are read during a one-year cycle. Many elaborate ceremonies have developed in connection with *Simchat Torah* celebration. The most popular of these ceremonies is known as the *akafot*. This consists of marching seven

times around the synagogue with the scrolls of the Law. The children lead in the procession, waving flags, or carrying apples and candles on tall sticks. The congregation sings and marches with the scrolls of the Law. After they have circled the synagogue seven times, they read the last passage of the book of Deuteronomy (33:27 to 34:12) and the scrolls are placed back into the ark. This ritual is an adaptation of the ancient encircling of the Temple's altar with the *lulav*.

The next morning, the family returns to the synagogue for another happy parade. They circle the synagogue again seven times. Then the last portion of Deuteronomy is read again, but this time it is followed immediately by the reading of the opening portion of Genesis (1:1 to 2:3). The two individuals who are granted the privilege to read the last passage from Deuteronomy and the first portion of Genesis are honored officially by being called respectively "the Groom of the Torah" (*Chatan Torah*) and "the Groom of Genesis" (*Chatan Bereshit*). The purpose of this practice is to show the people's love for the Law. As soon as the congregation finishes the reading of the Pentateuch, it immediately begins reading it all over again.

The notion of rejoicing over the Law may be difficult to understand for Christians accustomed to think of the Law as an alienating imposition done away with Christ at the Cross. But, contrary to the prevailing assumption that for the Jews the Law was not an oppressive straight-jacket, devout Jews delighted in the Law (Ps 1:2) because they viewed it as a revelation of God's concern for the well-being of His people. "Whatever the law denies to Jews," writes Irving Greenberg, "whatever suffering the people have undergone for upholding the covenant cannot obscure this basic truth: The Torah affirms and enriches life. At the end of this week [Feast of Booths] of fulfillment, on this day of delight [the eighth Day], all the scrolls are taken out of the ark, and the Torah becomes the focus of rejoicing."⁵²

At the conclusion of the *Simchat Torah* celebration, the Jewish family goes home to dismantle their booth, possibly saving some portions for the following year. This sad occasion has its bright spot. Now the fruits and vegetable used for the decoration of the booth finally can be enjoyed. The family returns to the comforts of their home until the next Feast of Booths when they will be summoned again to celebrate the blessings of the harvest and of the protection God gave to their forefathers in the wilderness so long ago.

Conclusion. The Feast of Booths fulfilled a vital role in the religious experience of God's people in Old Testament times. It summoned them annually to rejoice for a whole week over the material blessings of a bountiful harvest and over the spiritual blessings of the protection God had granted

them in their past history. Being a memorial of the providential way God led their forefathers in the past into the Promised Land, the feast served to typify fittingly the future ingathering of all nations into God's Kingdom. The rich typology of the Feast of Booths we found in the Old Testament enables us to appreciate its antitypical fulfillment in the New Testament. The latter is the object of our investigation in the next chapter.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VI

1. Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way: Living the Holidays* (New York, 1988), p. 97.

2. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of the Jewish Holy Days* (New York, 1978), p. 42.

3. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York, 1980), p. 182.

4. Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple, Its Ministry and Services* (London, 1984), p. 235.

5. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament: The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1959), vol. 2, p. 449.

6. Mitch laser and Zhava Glaser, *The Fall Feasts of Israel* (Chicago, 1987), pp. 161-162.

7. Abraham P. Bloch (note 2), p. 39.

8. *Vayikra Rabba* 30.

9. *Shir HaShirim Rabba* 4:1.

10. *Sukkah* 28b.

11. *Yalkut Job* 927.

12. *Shochar Tov*, Psalm 21.

13. Alfred Edersheim (note 4), p. 240.

14. Emphasis supplied.

15. Emphasis supplied.

16. Ellen G. White, *The Story of Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, CA, 1958), p. 540.

17. *What Is Your Destiny?* United Church of God (Arcadia, CA, 1966), p. 14.

18. *God's Festivals and Holy Days*, Worldwide Church of God (Pasadena, CA, 1992), p. 35. This view is no longer held by the Worldwide Church of God.

19. Alfred Edersheim (note 4), p. 234.

20. Alfred Edersheim writes: "The six points of difference which mark the Octave as a separate feast are indicated by the memorial words and letters *pozor qoshob* and are as follows: (1) During the seven days of Tabernacles the Priests of all the 'courses' officiated, while on the Octave the sacrificial services were appointed, as usual by *lot*. (2) The benediction at the *beginning* of a *feast* was spoken again at the Octave. (3) The Octave was designated in prayer, and by special ordinances, as a separate *feast*. (4) Differences in sacrifices. (5) Difference in the *Psalms*—on the Octave (Soph 19:2) probably Ps 12. (6) According to 1 Kings 8:66, difference as to the *blessing*" (*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* [Grand Rapids, MI, 1959], p. 176).

21. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch (note 4), pp. 446-447. A similar view is expressed by Theodore Gaster who notes that the word *atzeret* comes from a root that means "retrained." Thus he suggests that possibly *atzeret* denoted a day of abstinence and austerity that "marked the end of the reaping and the real beginning of the new agricultural cycle" (*Festivals of the Jewish Year* [New York, 1953], p. 98).

22. See D. P. Burrows, "The Feast of Sukkoth in Rabbinic and Related Literature" (Ph. D. dissertation, Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1974), p. 44; C. Widengren, "Israelite-Jewish Religion," in *Religions of the Past* (Leiden, Brill, 1969), p. 242; Timothy Paul Jenney, "The Harvest of the Earth: The Feast of Sukkoth in the Book of Revelation," (Ph D. dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI, 1993), p. 88.

23. Timothy Paul Jenney (note 22), p. 94.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

25. George W. MacRae, "The Meaning and Evolution of the Feast of Tabernacles," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 22 (July 1960), p. 263.

26. See H. St. J. Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship* (London, 1923), pp. 67-70.

27. Emphasis supplied.

28. Mitch Glaser and Zhava Glaser (note 6), p. 176.

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29. Alfred Edersheim (note 4), p. 243.
 30. *Biblical Holy Days*, Yahweh's New Covenant Assembly (Kingdom City, MO, 1991), p. 37.
 31. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament. The Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI, 1959), vol. 6, p. 1499.
 32. Philip Goodman, *The Sukkot and Simbat Torah Anthology* (Philadelphia, PA, 1973), p. 135.
 33. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 34. See 2 Maccabees 1:1-18; 1 Maccabees 10:21; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 13, 8, 2; 15, 3, 3.
 35. Abraham P. Bloch, *The Biblical and Historical Background of Jewish Customs and Ceremonies* (New York, 1980), p. 184.
 36. *Ibid.*
 37. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-191.
 38. Irving Greenberg (note 1), p. 99.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 100.
 40. *Numbers Rabbah* 14.
 41. *Genesis Rabbah* 48:10.
 42. Abraham P. Bloch (note 35), p. 196.
 43. *Sukkah* 37b.
 44. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a.
 45. *Sukkah* 51a.
 46. Irving Greenberg (note 1), p. 109.
 47. *Rosh Hashanah* 16a
 48. Abraham P. Bloch (note 35), p. 202.
 49. See, Talmud, *Sukkah* 3, 11-12.
 50. *Ecclesiastes Rabbath* 1:8.
 51. Irving Greenberg (note 1), p. 115.
 52. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

Chapter VII

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

Some readers may be surprised that this is the longest chapter of this book, though the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned explicitly only once in the New Testament (John 7:2) in conjunction with an event of Christ's life. The event is Christ's self-proclamation as the Living Water (John 7:37-38) and the Light of the World (John 8:12) in the context of the water and light ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles. Though the Feast of Tabernacles is mentioned explicitly only once in the New Testament, a closer look at the frequent use of the themes of the feast shows that the feast plays an important role in portraying not only the nature and mission of Christ but also the consummation of redemption.

In his doctoral dissertation, Harald Riesenfeld has shown that several episodes reported in the Gospels "signify that the eschatological and Messianic hopes connected with the Feast of Tabernacles are in the course of being realized."¹ When we go from the Gospels to the book of Revelation, we find that the Feast of Tabernacles points not only to the inauguration of redemption by Christ's First Advent but also to its consummation at the Second Advent.

This chapter shows that several episodes in the Gospels reveal the Christological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles while the book of Revelation points to its eschatological consummation. To put it differently, our study shows how the Feast of Tabernacles serves to reveal in the Gospels what Christ has already done for us at the incarnation, and in Revelation, what He will do for us at the final restoration of this world.

To be consistent with most English versions of the New Testament, in this chapter we refer to the Feast of Booths as the Feast of Tabernacles. We noted in the previous chapter that the latter designation is misleading because it conveys the idea of "tent structures" like that of the Tabernacle in the wilderness. But the Feast of *Sukkot* was observed by dwelling not in tents, but

in temporary “booths” or “huts” made of branches of leafy trees. Thus, technically speaking, it would be more accurate to speak of the Feast of “Booths.” The English translation “tabernacles” derives from the Latin Vulgate translation *tabernacula* and the Greek Septuagint translation *skene*, both of which means “a tent, tabernacle” and are used to translate the Hebrew *sukkot*, which means “a booth.”

Objectives of this Chapter. This chapter looks at the Feast of Tabernacles from three different perspectives, Christologically, eschatologically, and existentially or practically. The first part of the chapter examines some of the episodes of the life of Christ which are seen in the Gospels as the Christological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles. We find that some of the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used in the Gospels to reveal the incarnation and mission of Christ.

The second part of the chapter analyzes the eschatological interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles in the book of Revelation. Our aim is to explore how the major themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used in Revelation 7 and 21-22 to portray the consummation of redemption.

The study of the christological and eschatological aspects of the Feast of Tabernacles in the New Testament provide the basis for reflecting in the third part of this chapter on the actual observance of the feast in early Christianity. The chapter closes with some reflections on the relevance of the feast for our Christian life today.

PART I

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THE GOSPELS

The Feast of Tabernacles played such an important role in the religious experience of God’s people that, as Timothy Jenney points out in his dissertation, its themes “grew to a point where they burst beyond the confines of the feast. These themes arrived at a point where they could be ‘exported’ from the feast to another setting, without diminishing them as a result.”²

Jenney examines five specific themes “exported” by Jews and Christians from the Feast of Tabernacles. First there is the theme of the dedication of the Temple and altar that was “transferred by the Hasmoneans to the Feast of Hanukkah,” that is, the feast of the purification and rededication of the altar after its profanation by Antiochus Epiphanes in 164 B. C. The ritual of Hanukkah is largely borrowed from the Feast of Tabernacles. Second there is the theme of the resurrection of the dead that was “exported by Jews and

Christians to funerary symbols and art.” The motifs of the *lulav* [palm] branches are used in the catacombs to express the hope of life after death. Third, there is the theme of Jewish independence that was “exported by Jewish loyalists to the first and second revolts against Rome,” as indicated by coins with the *lulav* symbol. Fourth, there is the theme of the Messianic banquet that was “exported by the Qumran Covenanters to the community meal.” Lastly, there is the theme of a Messianic Deliverer that was exported by Christians to Jesus of Nazareth.³ It is the last of these themes that we wish to explore in the first half of this chapter.

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Incarnation. To introduce the nature and mission of Christ, John in his Gospel employs the metaphor of the “booth” of the Feast of Tabernacles. He explains that Christ, the Word who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1), manifested Himself in this world in a most tangible way, by pitching His tent in our midst: “And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, as of the only Son from the Father” (John 1:14).⁴

The Greek verb *skenoo* used by John means “to pitch tent, encamp, tabernacle, dwell in a tent.” The allusion is clearly to the Feast of Tabernacles when the people dwelt in temporary booths. In his article “The Feast of Tents: Jesus’ Self-Revelation,” published in *Worship* (1960), David Stanley notes that this passage sets the stage for the later self-revelation of Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7 and 8. Stanley writes: “The most basic clue to the mystery pervading this entire narrative [John 7 and 8] is provided by the symbolic action that gives this feast its name: the ceremonial erection of little bowers, made with branches of trees, in which every Jew was expected to live during the festival. These shelters were commemorative of the forty years’ wandering in the desert when Israel had lived as a nomad in such intimate union with her God. For John this dwelling in tents is a primordial symbol of the Incarnation: ‘Thus the Word became a mortal man: he pitched his tent in the midst of us’ (John 1:14). It is this insight which presides over the composition of John’s narrative which we are considering [John 7-8]. All that happened, all that Jesus said on this occasion has some reference to the Incarnation.”⁵

In seeking to describe the Messiah’s first coming to His people, John chose the imagery of the Feast of Booths since the feast celebrates the dwelling of God among His people. This raises an interesting question on whether or not John intended to link the birth of Jesus with the Feast of Tabernacles.

The Birth of Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles. The connection between Christ’s birth and the Feast of Tabernacles may at first appear

astonishing, but it has been proposed not only by modern authors⁶ but also by early Christian Fathers. In his classic study *The Bible and Liturgy*, Jean Daniélou discusses the connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Nativity in the writings of some Church Fathers.⁷ He notes, for example, that in his *Sermon on the Nativity*, Gregory of Nazianzus (A. D. 329-389) connects the Feast of the Nativity of December 25th with the Feast of Tabernacle: “The subject of today’s feast (25th December) is the true Feast of Tabernacles. Indeed, in this feast, the human tabernacle was built up by Him who put on human nature because of us. Our tabernacles, which were struck down by death, are raised up again by Him Who built our dwelling from the beginning. Therefore, harmonizing our voices with that of David, let us also sing the Psalm: ‘Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord’ [Ps 118:26. This verse was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles]. How does He come? Not in a boat or in a chariot. But He comes into human existence by the immaculate Virgin. It is He, Our Lord, who has appeared to make the solemn feast day in thick branches of foliage up to the horns of the altar.”⁸

In the last sentence, Gregory alludes to the ancient Jewish custom of erecting a canopy over the altar during the Feast of Tabernacles by tying branches to the four horns of the altar. For Gregory, this ceremony finds its fulfillment in the Incarnation. Commenting on this text, Daniélou writes: “The coming of Christ, His birth, thus is seen to be the inauguration of the true Feast of Tabernacles. Here appears a new harmony: the *scenai* [the tent], the human dwelling at the beginning, have been struck by sin. . . . Christ comes to raise them up, to restore human nature, to inaugurate the true Feast of Tabernacles prefigured in Jewish liturgy. And the beginning of this *Scenopegia* [Feast of Tabernacles] is the Incarnation itself in which, according to St. John, Christ built the tabernacles of His own Body (John 1:14). It does indeed seem as if it were this term of St. John which makes the connection between the feast of the *scenai* [Tabernacles] and the feast of the Birth of Christ.”⁹

What contributed to make the connection between the birth of Jesus and the Feast of Tabernacles, was not only John’s representation of the Incarnation as Christ pitching His tent among us, but also the Messianic understanding of Psalm 118:26-27, a psalm that was sung by the Jews during the processions of the Feast of Tabernacles and that was used by the Fathers to link the two feasts. The Psalm announces “He who comes in the name of the Lord” (Ps 118:26)—a clear allusion to the coming of the Messiah—in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles: “The Lord is God, and he has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches, up to the horns of the altar!” (Ps 118:27).

Church Fathers saw in these passages a representation of the coming of the Messiah through the typology of the Feast of Tabernacles. Gregory of Nissa (about A. D. 330-395) remarks that “The prophet David tells us that the God of the universe, the Lord of the world has appeared to us to constitute the solemn Feast in the thick branches of foliage.”¹⁰ “The thick branches of foliage” refer to the Feast of Tabernacles which was celebrated in booths made of leafy branches. The booths are seen as foreshadowing the Incarnation which made it possible for Christ to dwell among us.

Daniélou finds that traces of the patristic connection between the Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Nativity still survive in the current use of the Messianic verses 23, 28, 29 of Psalm 118 during “the Gradual of the Second Mass of Christmas” celebrated in the Catholic Church. He concludes: “It is indeed at Christmas that the eschatological tabernacle was built for the first time, when the Word ‘established His dwelling amongst us’ and the unity of men and angels was restored when the angels visited the shepherds.”¹¹

The Date of Christ’s Birth. Unfortunately, the connection between Christ’s birth and the Feast of Tabernacles was gradually lost as the pagan symbology of the sun displaced the Biblical typology of the Feast of Tabernacles. The attempt of the Fathers to connect the Feast of Tabernacles with Christmas was not successful because the two feasts differ in origin, meaning, and authority. By adopting the date of December 25th, which was the pagan feast of the birthday of the Invincible Sun (*dies natalis Solis Invicti*),¹² the Christological meaning of the Feast of Tabernacles was gradually lost—as indicated by the fact that today nobody thinks of Christmas as being the Christian Feast of Tabernacles.

It is a recognized fact that the adoption of the date of December 25th by the Western Church to commemorate the incarnation of the Messiah, was influenced by the pagan celebration of the return of the sun after the winter solstice. Such a date is not only devoid of Biblical meaning but also inaccurate as far as the actual time of Christ’s birth.

If, as it is generally agreed, Christ’s ministry began when He was about thirty years of age (Luke 3:23) and lasted three and one-half years until His death at Passover (March/April), then by backtracking we arrive much closer to the Feast of Tabernacles (September/October) than to December 25.¹³ Indirect support for a September/October dating of Christ’s birth is provided also by the fact that from November to February shepherds did not watch their flocks at night in the fields. They brought them into a protective corral called a “sheepfold.” Hence, December 25 is a most unlikely date for the birth of Christ.¹⁴

The overcrowded conditions at the time of Christ's birth ("there was no place for them in the inn"—Luke 2:7) could be related not only to the census taken by the Romans at that time, but also to the many pilgrims that overrun the area especially during the Feast of Tabernacles—the last and most important pilgrimage of the year. Bethlehem is only four miles from Jerusalem. "The Romans," notes Barney Kasdan, "were known to take their censuses according to the prevailing custom of the occupied territories. Hence, in the case of Israel, they would opt to have the people report to their provinces at a time that would be convenient for them. There is no apparent logic to calling the census in the middle of winter. The more logical time of taxation would be after the harvest, in the fall,"¹⁵ when people had in their hands the revenue of their harvest.

The only festival pilgrimage in the Fall was the Feast of Tabernacle. In view of the Messianic themes of the Feast of Tabernacles, it would have been logical for Christ's birth to coincide with this feast. Important events of the plan of salvation are consistently fulfilled on the Holy Days that prefigured them. Christ died on the Cross at the time when the Passover lamb was sacrificed (John 19:14). Christ arose at the time of the waving of the sheaf of barley as the first fruits of the coming harvest (1 Cor 15:23). The outpouring of the first fruits of God's Holy Spirit took place "when the day of Passover was fully come" (Acts 2:1, KJV). By the same token, Christ could well have been born at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, since the feast typifies God's coming to dwell among us through the incarnation of His Son.

It is noteworthy also that the Feast of Tabernacles was called, as we noted in chapter 6, "the season of our joy" and "the feast of the nations." Such themes relate perfectly to the terminology used by the angel to announce Christ's birth: "Behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people" (Luke 2:10). As "the season of our joy," the Feast of Tabernacles provided the ideal settings for breaking "the good news of a great joy" for all the people, since, as we have seen, the feast was also a celebration for all the nations (Zech 14:16).

A final interesting sideline supporting the possibility that Christ was born at the very time of the Feast of Tabernacles, is the reference to the wise men that came from the East to visit Christ (Matt 2:1). The land of the East is most likely Babylon, where many Jews still lived at the time of Christ's birth. Only a remnant of the Jews returned from the Babylonian exile to Palestine during the Persian period. The wise men, most likely, were rabbis known in Hebrew as *chakamin*, which means wise men.

We are told that the wise men made their journey from the East to Bethlehem because they had seen “the star in the East” (Matt 2:1). Watching the stars was associated especially with the Feast of Tabernacles. In fact, the roof of the booth, as note in chapter 6, was built with leafy branches carefully spaced so that they would screen out the sunlight without blocking the visibility of the stars. The people watched for the stars at night during the feast because of the prophecy “a star shall come out of Jacob” (Num 24:17). It is possible that it was during the Feast of Tabernacles, the special season of star watching, that the wise men saw the Messianic star and “rejoiced exceedingly with great joy” (Matt 2:10).

In the light of the foregoing considerations, most likely Christ’s birth coincided with the Feast of Tabernacles. Being the feast of thanksgiving for God’s willingness to protect His people with the tabernacle of His presence during the wilderness sojourning, it could serve fittingly to celebrate Christ’s willingness to become a human being and pitch His tent among us in order to become our Savior.

The implications of this conclusion are self-evident. The Feast of Tabernacles in September/October provides Christians today with much more accurate Biblical timing and typology for celebrating Christ’s birth, than the pagan dating of December 25th. The latter date not only is removed from the actual time of Christ’s birth, but is also derived from the pagan celebration of the return of the sun after the winter solstice. Why celebrate the birth of Jesus at the wrong time of December 25th,—a date derived from pagan sun-worship—when the Feast of Tabernacles provides us with Biblical timing and typology for commemorating such an important event?

The Feast of Tabernacles and the Transfiguration. The accounts of Jesus’ Transfiguration which are given by the three evangelists (Mark 9:2-8; Matt 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36), contain several explicit allusions to the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles. A detailed study of the motifs of the Transfiguration that relate to the Feast of Tabernacles has been made by Harald Riesenfeld in his doctoral dissertation.¹⁶ His work suggests many connections between these two events.

A first possible connection between the Transfiguration and the Feast of Tabernacles is the chronological detail given at the beginning of the narrative. Mark and Matthew tell us that the Transfiguration took place “six days later” (Matt 17:1; Mark 9:2) while Luke says: “About eight days after” (Luke 9:28). “The difference itself indicates,” as Daniélou points out, “that there is a question of a yearly event in which the interval of six to eight days has a special meaning. This would be particularly fitting for the Feast of

Tabernacle which lasts for seven days and in which the eighth day has a particular importance.”¹⁷

Peter saw in the dazzling appearance of Christ and in the apparition of Moses and Elijah, the inauguration of the Messianic times prefigured by the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus, without hesitation, he exclaimed: “Let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah” (Mark 9:5; Matt 17:4; Luke 9:33). We noted in chapter 6 that a principal feature of the Feast of Tabernacles was the erection of booths with leafy branches under which every Israelite was to live during the seven days (Lev 23:42-43). These booths commemorated the protection God granted the Israelites during their wandering through the wilderness and symbolized the mansions of the just in the Messianic kingdom. Thus, Peter’s offer to erect three booths seems a clear allusion to the Feast of Tabernacles.

“The manifestation of the glory of Jesus appears to Peter to be a sign that the times of the Messiah have arrived. And one of the qualities of these Messianic times was to be the dwelling of the just in the tents signified by the huts of the Feast of Tabernacles. This detail is explained still more clearly if the Transfiguration actually took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles. It would show that the realities prefigured by the Feast were accomplished: the Transfiguration represents the true Feast of Tabernacles. This eschatological significance is still clearer if we admit with Riesenfeld that the exclamation of St. Peter: ‘It is good for us to be here’ is the expression of the rest, of the eschatological *anapausis* [rest]. The Feast of Tabernacles prefigures in this way the rest of the life to come.”¹⁸

The notion of the righteous dwelling in tabernacles in the future life is found not only in Judaism but also in the New Testament. In Revelation, we are told that God “will shelter them [the redeemed] with his presence” (Rev 7:15; cf. 21:3). The Greek verb used *skenosei*, literally means that God “will build a tabernacle” over the redeemed. Thus, Peter’s offer to build three booths must be seen not as an isolated incident in the life of Christ, but as an expression of Messianic significance. The scene of the Transfiguration represented for Peter the realization of the Messianic times foreshadowed by the Feast of Booths.

Another connection between the Transfiguration and the Feast of Tabernacles can be seen in the metaphors used to describe the brilliance of Jesus’ countenance and the brightness of his clothing: “His face shone like the sun, and his garments became white as light” (Matt 17:2). The cloud also that overshadowed the disciples is described as a “*bright* cloud” (Matt 17:5). This appears to be an allusion to the nightly illumination of the Temple during the

Feast of Tabernacles to commemorate the blazing pillar that accompanied Israel during their nocturnal flight from Egypt (Ex 13:21).

“When we consider,” David Stanley keenly observes, “that Luke implies (by his remark, ‘Peter and his companions had been overcome by sleep’ Luke 9:32) that the event took place at night, we have a further connection with the fiery cloud of the Exodus and the nightly illumination of Tabernacles. The Messianic expectations which this feast aroused in late Judaism, are reflected in the presence of Elijah at the Transfiguration, since he was believed to return as precursor of Christ (cf. Mal 3:1, 3; 4:5-6; Sirach 48:10). The appearance of Moses recalls the feast of the ‘Joy of the Law’ celebrated at the close of the seven-day festival of Tabernacles. It marked the termination of the liturgical reading of the five books of Moses. Thus the evangelists’ accounts of the Transfiguration seem to indicate that, in their eyes and that of the apostolic Church, this mystery was the fulfillment of the liturgical symbolism of the greatest of all Israelites feasts, that of Tabernacles.”¹⁹

The Transfiguration, however, is only a preliminary Messianic fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles which points to a future glorious fulfillment at the Parousia. The transformation of Christ’s garments into “glistening white,” the “cloud,” and the “voice” are all elements suggestive of the glory of the Parousia. It would seem that the Transfiguration offered a glimpse to the three disciples of the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles which will take place at the Parousia when Christ’s glorious presence will be manifested.

Jesus’ Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem. The episode of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem also contains several motifs which are “exported” from the Feast of Tabernacles. The palm branches carried by Jesus’ disciples, the chanting of the Hosanna (Psalm 118 which was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles) suggest a connection with the liturgy of the feast. The waving of the *lulav* to the singing of the Hosanna from Psalm 118 generally occurred during the procession around the altar on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This ritual served to express the hope of the soon-coming Messianic king.

Similarly, the crowd accompanying Jesus as He entered Jerusalem riding on an ass reflects Zechariah’s description of the Messianic king, coming “triumphant and victorious, . . . humble and riding on an ass” (Zech 9:9). The waving of the palm branches at the singing of “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (John 12:13)—a Messianic song taken from Psalm 118:26—are all features of the Feast of Tabernacles ritual. As Daniélou points out, “The meaning of the scene is clear. It signifies that

the coming of the Messiah, prefigured by the solemn procession of the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles, is fulfilled in the person of Jesus.”²⁰

Although John places Christ’s triumphant entry into Jerusalem during the Passover season, it is clear that the people make use of two significant features of the Feast of Tabernacles to acclaim Jesus as their Messiah. The reason is simple. Since the waving of palm branches and the chanting of the Hosanna in procession were seen as two most effective ways to express their hope in the coming of the Messiah, the people took the liberty of using them, not only at the Feast of Tabernacles, but whenever occasion called for it.

We should note, however, that as in the case of the Transfiguration, so in the case of Christ’s triumphant entry, we have in these episodes only a preliminary fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles which foreshadows its future glorious fulfillment at the Parousia. Jesus Himself explained that the true Feast of Tabernacles, in which the people sang Psalm 118, will find its ultimate fulfillment at His coming: “For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’” (Matt 23:39). Here Jesus is referring to the Messianic song of Psalm 118:26 that was sung during the procession of the Feast of Tabernacles. Later we see that the whole liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles is used in Revelation to describe the procession of the redeemed around the heavenly throne.

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Time of Christ. The allusions to the Feast of Tabernacles that we have found in the Transfiguration and in Jesus’ triumphal entry in Jerusalem, set the stage for the greater self-disclosure of Christ at the Feast of Tabernacles reported in John 7 and 8. It was in the context of this feast that Christ proclaimed Himself to be the source of living water (John 7:37-39) and the light of the world (John 8:12). Since these proclamations were made in the setting of the two important ceremonies of the water drawing and of the illumination of the Temple, I attempt a graphic description of these ceremonies which by the first century A. D. had been recognized for their Messianic import. This should help us to appreciate more fully how Christ used the Feast of Tabernacles to reveal His nature and mission.

Jerusalem was more crowded at the Feast of Tabernacles than at any other time of the year. Pilgrims arrived from different parts of the empire for this festive celebration. They erected booths on the roofs, in the courtyards, in the streets and squares, as well as in the gardens. The city and neighboring hillsides had a most picturesque appearance. When the evening of Tishri 15th arrived, the priests blasted their trumpets on the Temple Mount to announce to Israel the opening of the Feast of Tabernacles.

During the first night-watch, explains Alfred Edersheim, “the altar of burnt-offering was cleansed and the gates of the Temple were thrown open immediately after midnight. The time till the beginning of the ordinary morning sacrifice was occupied in examining the various sacrifices and offerings that were to be brought during the day.”²¹

The Water-Drawing Ceremony. While the morning sacrifice was being prepared, a special procession was organized for the joyous water-drawing ceremony which was rich in symbolism and high drama. The procession of faithful worshippers began at the Temple, led by a priest who carried a golden pitcher. A band of liturgical flutists enhanced the wonder of the ceremony with their cheerful music. When the Temple procession reached the pool of Siloam, the priest filled his golden pitcher with water. Journeying back to the Temple, the cortege would pass through the Water Gate (its name being derived from the ceremony). The Water Gate had special eschatological significance because it was identified by some rabbis as the south gate of Ezekiel’s Temple through which the water of life would flow to all the land (Ex 47:1-5).²²

The procession was timed to arrive back at the Temple just in time for the morning sacrifice on the altar of burnt-offering. A threefold blast of trumpets welcomed the arrival of the priest who was joined by another priest who carried the wine for the drink-offering. The two priests ascended together the ‘rise’ of the altar and placed two magnificent silver basins on the southwest corner of the altar. One of the bowls was used for pouring the water from the pool of Siloam and the other for pouring the wine. Both bowls had a hole which allowed the water and wine to flow to the base of the altar.

As soon as the priests began pouring the water and the wine, the Temple music began. The people chanted “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Is 12:3). Then the ‘great Hallel,’ consisting of Psalms 113 to 118, was chanted antiphonally to the accompaniment of flutes. Edersheim explains that “As the Levites intoned the first line of each Psalm, the people repeated it; while to each of the other lines they responded by *Hallelu Yah* (Praise ye the Lord’). But in Psalm 118 the people not only repeated the first line, ‘O give thanks to the Lord,’ but also ‘O then, work now salvation, Jehovah’ (Ps 118:25), ‘O Lord, send now prosperity’ (Ps 118:25); and again at the close of the Psalm, ‘O give thanks to the Lord.’ As they repeated these lines, they shook toward the altar the *Lulavs* which they held in their hands—as if with this token of the past to express the reality and cause of their praise, and to remind God of His promises.”²³

The morning service closed with a procession around the altar by the priests, who chanted ‘O then, work now salvation, Jehovah! O Jehovah, send now prosperity’ (Ps 118:25). On the seventh and last day of the Feast, the priests made the circuit of the altar seven times, each time chanting the Psalm and crying *Hosheanah* (save now”). This is why the last day was called “the Great Hosannah.”

The Last Great Day of the Feast. The drama of the water-drawing ceremony took on new meaning when Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles and offered His living water: “On the last day of the feast [of Tabernacles], the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, ‘If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:37-38). There is some discussion on whether Jesus made this statement on the seventh day of the feast or on the eighth day, known as the *Atzeret*.

The debate hinges on two matters. First, there is the question of the relationship of the Eighth Day, known as *Atzeret*, to the Feast of Tabernacles—a question we discussed already in chapter 6. If the Eighth Day was an intrinsic part of the feast, rather than the culmination and conclusion of the feasts of the seventh month, then it is most likely that “the last day of the feast” was the Eighth Day. Though some ancient sources support this view,²⁴ it cannot be defended from the Old Testament where the Feast of Tabernacles is said to last *seven* days (Lev 23:39; Num 29:2; Neh 8:18). Since John depends more on the Old Testament than on apocryphal sources, it seems more likely that the “last day of the feast” (John 7:37) is the seventh day.

“The great day” of the feast (John 7:37) is an appropriate description for the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles because on that day there were seven processions around the altar during each of which the priests chanted “O then, work now salvation, Jehovah!” (Ps 118:25). Hence, the seventh day on which the plea for salvation was chanted seven times was called *The Great Hosannah*. On the afternoon of this day, the booths were dismantled and the feast itself ended.

Second, there is the question as to whether or not the water-drawing ceremony continued on the eighth day of the Feast. According to the Mishnah, our major source of information, the water-drawing ceremony was not performed on the eighth day because it was to continue only “seven days.”²⁵ Thus, it seems more likely that Jesus would offer His living water in the context of the water ceremony of the seventh day, than on the following day which had no water ceremony.

Christ's Offer of Living Water. Most probably it was right after the symbolic rite of the water-pouring ceremony at the altar, after the people had chanted some of the verses of Psalm 118 praying for the Lord to send salvation, that the voice of Jesus was heard loud and clear throughout the Temple: "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink" (John 7:37).

Christ's offer of His living water takes on added significance when we realize that His words were uttered most probably when the deeply stirring rites had just concluded and the song of praise and the prayers for salvation had scarcely died out. The previous days, the people had been sharply divided about Christ and the authorities had attempted to capture Him. On that day, however, as Edersheim keenly observes, "He is not only in the Temple, but, at the close of the most solemn rites of the Feast, asserting, within the hearing of all, His claim to be regarded as the fulfillment of all, and the true Messiah! And yet there is neither harshness of command or violence of threat in His proclamation. It is the King, meek, gentle, and loving; the Messiah, Who will not break the bruised reed, Who will not lift up His voice in tone of anger, but speaks in accents of loving, condescending compassion, Who now bids, whosoever thirstiest, come unto Him and drink. And so the words have to all time remained the call of Christ to all that thirst."²⁶

In a similar vein Ellen White notes the connection between the Messianic meaning of the water ceremony and Christ's offer of the water of life. "The priest had that morning performed the ceremony which commemorated the smiting of the rock in the wilderness. That rock was a symbol of Him who by His death would cause living streams of salvation to flow to all who are athirst. There in the presence of the assembled multitude He set Himself apart to be smitten, that the water of life might flow to the world.

"The cry of Christ to the thirsty soul is still going forth, and it appeals to us with even greater power than to those who heard it in the Temple on that last day of the feast. The fountain is open for all . . . Jesus is still crying, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink.'²⁷

To appreciate the Messianic significance of Christ's offer of His living water, it is important to remember Zechariah's vision of the coming of the Lord when "living waters will flow out of Jerusalem." On that day, all the nations will come to Jerusalem "to keep the feast of booths" (Zech 14:8, 16). Similarly, Ezekiel sees the coming of a Messianic "Prince" who will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (Ez 45: 25) and then water will flow from the threshold of the Temple to all the land (Ex 47:1-11). We noted earlier that the rabbis saw in the water-libation of the Feast of Tabernacles a representation of the wilderness miracle of the water from the rock, a ceremony which

pointed to the coming of a redeemer like Moses who would bring forth new water from the rock. This theme of the water is present in the closing visions of Revelation where the Temple is identified with Christ Himself (Rev 21:3) from whose throne flows the river of life (Rev 22:1). In the light of this Messianic understanding of the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles, Christ's offer of His living water at the conclusion of the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles represents a most impressive self-revelation of His Messiahship.

"Their prayers for water," writes Raymond Brown, "had been answered in a way they did not expect; the feast that contained within itself the promise of the Messiah had been fulfilled. Zechariah 14:8 had predicted that living waters would flow out of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel 47:1 had seen a river flow from the rock underneath the Temple. But now Jesus says that these rivers of living water will flow from His own body, that body which is the new Temple (John 2:21)."²⁸

In the context of the rich prophetic background of the Feast of Tabernacles as a celebration of faith in the Messiah to come, Christ's self-revelation as the source of living water has enormous significance. Gale Yee observes, "Jesus becomes the new temple from which the waters of life will burst forth. Jesus becomes the new rock in the wilderness that quenches the people's thirst. Jesus invites those who believe in Him to satisfy their thirst now with the water he provides. The outpouring of water signals that the Messianic age has arrived in His own person as the new Moses. John will symbolize this living water from Jesus' pierced side (John 19:34). It is only after Jesus is glorified in his death and resurrection that the Spirit (which the water represents) will be dispatched."²⁹

Water Theology. In a land as arid as Israel, it is easy to see why water became the symbol of the life to be offered by the expected Messiah. This in turn helps us to understand why in the Gospel of John water is one of the major themes that reveals the nature and mission of Christ. The connection between water and Spirit first appears in John 1:33 where the Spirit descends upon Christ when John the Baptist baptizes Him with water. The same link is forged in John 3:5 where Jesus explains to Nicodemus that "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

In John 4:14, Jesus offers the living water to the Samaritan woman, saying: "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." In John 5, the limited power of the water of the pool of Bethzatha is contrasted with the life-giving power of Christ, the Water of Life

(John 5:7-8). In chapter 6 Jesus explains that it is by believing in Him that one receives His living water: “He who believes in me shall never thirst” (John 6:35). Jesus also makes a link between the living water and His blood, by saying: “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54).

In John 7:37-39, we find the major “water theology” passage of the New Testament. We have seen that Christ offers living waters to those who believe in Him (John 7:38) in the context of the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. Water also is used literally by Christ in John 13 symbolically to cleanse the hearts of His disciples: “If I do not wash you, you have no part in me” (John 13:8). Finally, water and blood flow from the wound in Christ’s side on the Cross (John 19:34). This suggests that ultimately the living water flows from Christ Himself who is the source of life to all who believe in Him.

The rich water imagery that we find in the Gospel of John was inspired by the water libation service that took place daily during the Feast of Tabernacles. We noted that while the priests poured water and wine in two silver bowls placed on the altar, the people chanted “With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Is 12:3). “This liturgical act,” Frederick Powers points out, “was both a commemorative symbol and a dramatized hope. It recalled the miraculous water that gushed forth from the rock of Horeb beneath the rod of Moses, and it was a figure of the outpouring of graces proper to Messianic times.”³⁰

The water of the rock of Horeb, commemorated by the water libation of the Feast of Tabernacles, pointed to Christ. “For they all drank the same supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ” (1 Cor 10:4). As the rock of Horeb was struck for water, Christ, too, as the Rock would be struck so that living waters might flow from Him to anyone who believes. God has always provided *for* the life to His people, but now He provided His own Son *as* the Life of His people.

“By sacrificing Himself the redeemer would cause the Spirit to flow and to open up the ‘fountain of living water.’ And this would happen when at the death of the Messiah His heart would be pierced with a lance. The life-giving power of the living waters would find its source in the Blood of Christ as it gushed forth from the wounded Heart of Christ.”³¹

In Gethsemane, Jesus spoke of the “cup” He must drink (Matt 26:39) in the context of the Paschal Supper He had partaken only a few hours before. But now it was the “cup” of the crucifixion that He must drink so that life might flow for all believers. Thus, in a sense when we partake of the cup of wine at the Lord’s Supper we receive the living water that flows from Christ.

“Drinking of Christ’s cup is not a preservation of this life so much as it is a *reservation* of the life to come.”³²

Drinking the Living Water. The meaning of Christ’s invitation to come to Him and drink His living water is explained by the Lord Himself as representing believing in Him. “He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38). To drink Christ’s living water means to believe in Him as our Savior and source of eternal life. The ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believers causes the living water to flow as they become channels through which the blessings of salvation flow unto others.

John explains that Christ’s reference to “rivers of living water” was to the ministry of the Spirit that was to be manifested fully after Christ’s glorification. “Now this he said about the Spirit, which those who believed in him were to receive; for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not glorified” (John 7:39). Through His sacrifice, Christ made it possible for the Holy Spirit to be poured out so that the fruits of the Spirits (Gal 5:22-24) could be manifested in the lives of believers.

Jesus’ teaching reflects the belief that the Holy Spirit would be poured out like water at the coming of the Messiah. Several prophets link together or allude to a relationship between water and the pouring out of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2:23; Zech 13:1). Ezekiel predicted that God would cleanse the people with water from all their filthiness and would pour out His Spirit so that they would walk in His statutes (Ezek 36:24-27). “Indeed,” writer Edersheim, “this is expressly stated in the Targum which thus paraphrases Isaias 44:3: ‘Behold, as the waters are poured on arid ground and spread over the dry soil, so I will give the spirit of My Holiness on my sons, and My blessing on thy children’s children.’”³³

Jesus, then, offered to the pilgrims at the Feast of Tabernacles the promised blessings of the Messianic age—the cleansing and restoration through the outpouring of the living water of His Spirit. Some of the people recognized and accepted the Messianic implications of Christ’s invitation, and said: “This is the Christ” (John 7:40). Others, however, wanted to seize Him (John 7:44), because in their view the Messiah could not possibly come from Galilee (John 7:41).

The controversy grew so severe that the Pharisees started arguing among themselves. At great personal risk, Nicodemus, who probably at this time was a secret believer, put a stop to the debate by saying: “Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?” (John 7:51). This statement had the desired effect of temporarily bringing to an end the controversy.

The Illumination of the Temple. The two major ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles were the water procession and the illumination of the Temple. We have just considered how Jesus capitalized on the water-pouring ceremony to proclaim Himself the source of living water. Now we wish to look at how Jesus revealed Himself to be the Light of the world (John 8:12) in the context of the illumination of the Temple. “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Most commentators maintain that the setting of Jesus’ self-proclamation as the Light of the World is the nightly illumination of the Court of Women that took place during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Mishnah offers us this graphic description of the ceremony. “There were there golden candlesticks [in the Court of Women] with four golden bowls on the top of them and four ladders to each candlestick, and four youths of the priestly stock and in their hands jars of oil holding a hundred and twenty logs which they poured into all the bowls. They made wicks from the worn out drawers and girdles of the priests and with them they set the candlesticks alight, and there was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of the Beth ha-She’ubah [Court of women].”³⁴

The festivities lasted all night with singing and playing of harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets. The climactic moment came at sunrise when two priests reached the gate that led to the east (the beautiful gate) while blowing their trumpets. Once through the gate with a multitude of worshippers, the priests turned their faces toward the west and chanted this ancient prayer: “Our fathers when they were in this place turned with their backs toward the Temple of the Lord and their faces toward the east, and they worshiped the sun toward the east; but, as for us, our eyes are turned toward the Lord.”³⁵

The meaning of the illumination of the Temple was similar to that of the pouring of the water. The light shining out of the Temple into the darkness around, was seen “as a symbol not only of the Shekinah [God’s glory manifested in the Most Holy above the ark] which once filled the Temple, but also of the ‘great light’ which ‘the people that walked in darkness’ were to see, and which was to shine ‘upon them that dwell in the land of the shadow of death’ (Is 9:2).”³⁶ It seems most probable that it was in the context of this illumination ceremony that Jesus said: “I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Christ the Light of the World. By proclaiming Himself as the light of the world, Christ revealed Himself to be the fulfillment of the Messianic pillar of fire that guided the Israelites through the wilderness. The enormous candelabra burning in the Court of Women reminded the people of the light which had guided their ancestors. Jesus had spoken of Himself as “the bread of life” (John 6:25) and “the rivers of living water” (John 7:38), now He reveals Himself as “the light of the world” (John 8:12). Whereas the light of the candelabra placed in the Court of Women brightened all of Jerusalem, the light emanating from Christ enlightens the whole world.

The symbols of light and water serve to reveal a twofold aspect of Christ’s mission. The figure of living water typifies Christ as the Savior, while that of the Light represents Jesus as the Revealer of God’s will for mankind. As the Light, Christ “enlightens every man . . . coming into the world” (John 1:9) by revealing the way they should walk (1 John 2:9-11). Jesus said: “I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness” (John 12:46).

Growth in the Christian life occurs through the progressive illumination by the Holy Spirit (John 6:40; 12:44-46; 14:7-9) which enables the believer to understand and follow the will of God (John 14:26). As the Light of the world, Jesus imparts through the Holy Spirit wisdom to the ignorant, holiness to the impure, gladness to the sad. Moreover, to those who follow His light, He grants the privilege to become “sons of light” (John 12:36).

To follow the light of Christ means to trust and obey Him. In the wilderness, the Israelites followed the pillar of light. Now as Christians we follow the light of Christ. “The symbolism of the Feast of Tabernacles (now in progress or just ended),” writes William Hendriksen, “reminded the audience of this light which the ancestors had enjoyed as a guide. Those who had followed it and had not rebelled against its guidance had reached Canaan. The others had died in the desert. So it is here: the true followers not only will not walk in the darkness of moral and spiritual ignorance, of impurity, and of gloom, but will reach the land of light. Nay more: they will *have* the light! The Antitype is ever richer than the type. Physical light—for example, that of the pillar of light in the desert or that of the candelabra in the Court of Women—imparts *outwards* illumination. *This* light, Jesus Christ as the object of our faith, becomes our *inner* possession: we *have* him, and this abidingly (cf. John 4:14).”³⁷

The brilliance of the gloriously lit Temple paled in the presence of Christ. He was more glorious than Herod’s Temple for He embodied the fullness of God’s glory (Col 1:19). In Jesus people saw the Father, for God had come to tabernacle with mankind through the person of His Son.

Christ's self-proclamation as the Light of the World caused another controversy with the Pharisees who argued that Christ's witness was false simply because He was bearing witness of Himself (John 8: 13). Jesus responded, "The Father who sent me bears witness to me" (John 8:18). The truth of Christ's statement is proven dramatically in the healing of the blinded man reported in John 9 where we find allusions to the water and light ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Before healing the blind man, Jesus explained the divine rationale for what He was about to do. He told the people that neither the man nor his parents were guilty of specific causative transgressions, "but that the works of God might be manifest in him" (John 9:3). Then Jesus stated: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" (John 9:5). This statement is a possible reference to the ceremony of the illumination of the Temple during the Feast of Tabernacles, especially since Jesus made a similar statement in John 8:12 in the context of the feast. After this, Jesus spat on the ground, made clay, and applied it to the eyes of the blind man, saying, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (John 9:7). The blind man obeyed and was healed. This action reminds us of the ceremony of water drawing from the pool of Siloam which the people had witnessed earlier during the Feast of Tabernacles. The two remarkable claims that Jesus made at the Feast of Tabernacles were validated by the healing of the blind man.

In his discussion of this passage, Elwood McQuaid notes that "the theme of the Feast of Tabernacles was to become the foundation for what Jesus was to do. After he had made clay from saliva and applied it to the beggar's eyes, He sent the blind man away with specific instructions. 'And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing' (John 9:7). Siloam was, you will recall, the place where the priest bearing the golden pitcher dipped up the water that so significantly portrayed God's spiritual and physical supply for His land and people. The pool was now to be crowned with the distinction of being associated with Jehovah's Sent One as an affirming sign to Israel. The themes of water and light would coalesce in a pointedly literal fashion as the blind beggar groped to the water's edge, knelt, and applied the cool liquid to his sightless eyes. Slowly, he lifted his head, tiny droplets beading on brows and beard. He opened his eyes and a torrent of light flooded his being. Water and light mingled together as the man blinked away the watery mist and light began to clarify objects, faces, reflections. Jubilantly, he rose to his feet as curious onlookers marvelled at what they had witnessed—a man came to the pool blind, had washed, and walked away seeing!"³⁸

Conclusion. The preceding study of the Transfiguration, Jesus' triumphal entry in Jerusalem, and the Messianic claims Jesus made at the Feast of Tabernacles, have shown how the feast serves to reveal the Incarnation and mission of Christ. "And the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Jesus is God tabernacling among His people. The verb *dwelt* in Greek (*eskenosen*) implies a temporary dwelling, like a booth. Jesus is God's ultimate booth for in Him God tabernacled among men. As the Temple was a temporary dwelling for God's glory (Shekinah), so Jesus tabernacling among mankind during the Incarnation served to manifest temporarily God's glory. He is the source of light and life to all who believe in Him. The Christological fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacle in Christ's earthly mission points to a greater eschatological fulfillment in the world to come when God will tabernacle with the redeemed for all eternity. This important eschatological meaning of the feast is brought out in the book of Revelation. To this we now turn our attention in the second part of this chapter.

PART II THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Research into the liturgical setting of the book of Revelation has led numerous scholars to recognize in the book the presence of various themes of the Feast of Tabernacles. Already in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, C. Vitranga,³⁹ J. G. Eichhorn,⁴⁰ and E. W. Hengsternberg⁴¹ suggested that the Feast of Tabernacles lies behind the description of heavenly worship in Revelation 7. The most recent and comprehensive analysis of this view is by Hakan Ulfgard.⁴² In his dissertation, Ulfgard argues that the focus of Revelation 7:9-17 is not the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles as such, but what the feast represents in terms of past and future salvation. Similar views are expressed by H. Kraft,⁴³ J. Sweet,⁴⁴ and J. A. Draper,⁴⁵ all of whom claim that the Feast of Tabernacles lies behind the description of the heavenly worship in Revelation 7. Some scholars, including J. Comblin⁴⁶ and P. Burrows,⁴⁷ have recognized the Feast of Tabernacles as the setting of Revelation 21 and 22 as well.

Few scholars argue that the Feast of Tabernacles is the liturgical setting of the whole book of Revelation. This is the thesis of V. Burch's *Anthropology in the Apocalypse*⁴⁸ which has been repropounded by Timothy Paul Jenny in his dissertation on "The Harvest of the Earth: The Feast of Sukkoth in the Book of Revelation."⁴⁹

It is not the purpose of this study to examine the various scholarly views regarding the role of the Feast of Tabernacles in the book of Revelation. I listed some of the significant studies simply to show the broad scholarly support for the presence of the feast in Revelation, though some disagreements exist on the number and meaning of its themes found in the book. Our aim is to consider how the major themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used in Revelation 7 and 21-22 to portray the consummation of redemption. This provides a basis for reflecting on the meaning and the actual observance of the feast in early Christianity.

The Setting of Revelation. To appreciate the references to the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation, it is important to remind ourselves of the setting of the book. John tells us that he wrote the book from the island of Patmos where he was, not vacationing on a Paradise Island, but exiled “on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev 1:9). Apparently, he was exiled for his refusal to worship at the emperor’s shrine. We know that the emperor of the time, Domitian, zealously sought to establish his claim to deity by forcing his subjects to worship him as “Dominus et Deus—Lord and God.”⁵⁰

The situation of the Church was analogous to his own, for John identifies himself as “your brother, who shares with you in Christ the tribulation” (Rev 1:9). By identifying his situation as a “share” in their persecution, John suggests that the members of the seven churches were also suffering for their faith. He cautions the church of Smyrna that “the devil is about to throw some of you into prison” (Rev 2:10). In Pergamum, a Christian named Antipas had been killed (Rev 2:13). Other Christians also had suffered martyrdom, for John saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar calling out for vindication ((Rev 6:9). The references to those who were “enduring patiently and bearing up for my *name*’s sake” (Rev 2:3), and those who had “not denied my name” (Rev 3:8) suggests that Christians were exposed to persecution for their refusal to worship the emperor as “Lord—*kurios*,” a name which Christians could rightfully apply only to Christ.

In view of this situation and of a greater persecution looming on the horizon, John warns, comforts, and exhorts the members of the seven churches to persevere. The visions given to John were designed to meet a specific need of that time. Through them, heaven was open to suffering Christians who were given reassurance of divine protection and vindication.

The vision of the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation 7 fulfills this important function. The countless multitude of the redeemed standing before the throne with palm branches and celebrating how the Lord

led them out of “great tribulation” (Rev 7:14) provided Christians with the needed reassurance that God would see them through their tribulation to a glorious destiny. John and his Christian readers experienced the tension of living in tribulation while at the same time rejoicing for the eschatological salvation which had already been won. The booths, which once symbolized how the Lord providentially protected the Israelites through their wandering into the promised land, now served to portray how the Lord was leading His followers to the heavenly Promised Land where God would shelter them eternally with His glorious presence.

The Title of the Feast. None of the titles used to designate the Feast of Tabernacles appear in the book of Revelation. The reason, as suggested earlier, is that the focus in Revelation is not on how the feast should be observed in the churches, but on what the feast represents for Christians who, like the Israelites of old, are journeying to the heavenly Canaan.

The title “Feast of the Lord” appears in a passage found in 4 Ezra 2:38 where the context is strikingly similar to that in Revelation 7:1-17. Ezra is an apocalyptic book, the bulk of which is dated between A. D. 100-120.⁵¹ “The similarities between the two passages include much that is uniquely related to Sukkoth [Feast of Tabernacles]: palms (4 Ezra 2:46 cf. Rev 7:9), white garments (4 Ezra 2:39-40 cf. Rev 7:9, 13), enumeration (4 Ezra 2:40-41 cf. Rev 7:4ff; 21:27), sealing (at least in the Christian tradition of the feast) (4 Ezra 2:38 cf. Rev 7:2-4), joy (4 Ezra 2:26 cf. Rev 7:16-17), and crowns (4 Ezra 2:43, 46 cf. other passages in Revelation, 2:10; 3:11; 4:4, 10).”⁵² The similarity of 4 Ezra 2 to Revelation 7, plus its reference to the “Feast of the Lord” in 4 Ezra 2:38, indicates that early Christians *understood* the setting of Revelation 7:1-17 to be the Feast of Tabernacles.

Support for this conclusion is provided by the use of the Greek noun *skene* (English “tent”) and verb *skenoō* (English “to live in a tent,” and by extension “to dwell”) in Revelation (7:15; 12:12; 13:6; 15:5; 21:2-3). In the heavenly vision of the redeemed standing before the throne of God, we read that “The One seated upon the throne *will erect a booth over them—skensei*” (Rev 7:15). This personal translation, while slightly wooden, reflects the meaning of the Greek *skenoō* “to pitch a tent,” or “to erect a temporary shelter.”⁵²

These terms are used in Revelation to indicate that Christians are only “sojourners” upon the earth, in contrast to the “inhabitants of the earth” (Rev 8:13; 11:10; 13:14; 17:2, 8) who have made this earth their home. As the booth became the symbol for the Jews of the protection God accorded to their forefathers during their journeying through the wilderness, so the booth that

God erects in heaven over the redeemed is now for Christians a symbol of His present and future protection.

God Himself has a booth (Greek *skene*) in heaven (Rev 13:6) and at the end, after the descent of the New Jerusalem, “*the booth of God is with people. He will dwell in the booth with them*” (Rev 21:3). It is evident that God does not dwell in a temporary booth in heaven now nor that He ultimately will dwell in a booth in the New Jerusalem. The reason for the use of *skeno*—“to dwell in a booth” is to be found in the setting of the Feast of Tabernacles where the booths represent the divine protection and presence among the people in their journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Thus, the imagery of God dwelling in a booth among His people, conveys the reassurance of permanent divine protection to believers on their journey between the first (and decisive) act of redemption and the consummation of their hope.

The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles. The vision in Revelation 7 of the countless multitude standing before the throne of God has been called “the Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles” by many scholars as The reason, as we shall see, is that the vision contains several significant themes of the feast which we examine shortly.

The vision is inserted as an interlude between the sixth seal which describes the day of Christ’s coming (Rev 6:12-17) and the seventh seal which introduces a series of events leading to the actual end. John interrupts the flow of the narrative to insert a vision of the church in heaven, because this vision has an important message of reassurance for believers who stand on the threshold of the great tribulation. It reassures believers that God will see them through the terrible ordeal.

This interlude contains a vision of two multitudes. The first consists of 12,000 of each of the 12 tribes of Israel. The second is an innumerable multitude representing all the ethnic groups of the earth. Angels seal the 144,000 before the release of the final winds of strife to protect them from the ensuing evils (Rev 7:1-4).

Then the scene shifts from the earth to heaven where John sees the countless multitude “standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Rev 7:9-10). One of the elders explains to John that the innumerable multitude represents those “who have come out of the great tribulation . . . they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within the temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any

scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear of their eyes” (Rev 7:14-17).

The Two Multitudes. This vision contains several significant themes of the Feast of Tabernacles which we briefly examine. First, let us look at the significance of the two multitudes. At the end of the fifth seal, the martyrs were told to wait until the number of God’s servants is complete (Rev 6:11). These servants come into focus in the sixth seal after the question is asked, Who can stand the great day of God’s wrath? (Rev 6:17). The answer is a countless multitude of believers who are characterized in two ways: first as the 144,000 from the 12 tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4-8) and then as a multitude from all nations (Rev 7:9).

Considerable discussion has ensued about the relationship between the two groups. Some scholars maintain that they represent two different categories of people. The 144,000 symbolize the faithful remnant of Israel, while the multitude represents the redeemed Gentiles. Ezekiel 9:4-6 provides a suitable background for interpreting the sealing of the 144,000 as representing the faithful remnant of Israel which will be protected from the wrath of God. In vision, Ezekiel saw God instructing a man clothed in linen, saying: “Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark upon the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it” (Ez 9:4). Those who were not marked were killed.

The distinction between the two groups of people in Revelation 7 is explained by J. Draper on the basis of the prophecy of Zechariah 14 where the remnant of Israel (Zech 14:5, 11) and the survivors of all the nations “shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of host, and to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16). Draper maintains that “The 144,000 who are sealed represents the fullness of Israel, the reunited tribes who have been dispersed by the destruction of Israel and Jerusalem,” while “the great multitude ‘which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and people and tongue’ represents the ‘survivors’ of the Gentiles, who come up to the heavenly Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.”⁵³ According to this interpretation the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles represents the final gathering of Jews and Gentiles coming together to worship God in the glorified Zion.

The connection between the prophecy of Zechariah 14 and the vision of Revelation 7 appears plausible, especially because in both instances we have two groups participating in a festal celebration which Zechariah identifies as the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech 14:16). But to see a racial distinction between the two groups described in Revelation 7 is questionable in my view.

First, because the sealing of Revelation 7:4-8 is intended for the whole Christian people of God and not only for converted Jews. Second, because only *one* people of God appears in Revelation which includes both Jews and Gentiles.

The sealing of “God’s servants” (Rev 7:3) is a description, not only of the 144,000 but of all who belong to God. If the sealing of the 144,000 was meant to represent God’s protection accorded only to Jewish converts in the final tribulation, then the vision hardly could have encouraged Gentile Christians facing the same ordeal. We would conclude, then, that the difference between the two groups is one of *perspective* and not of racial distinction. The 144,000 represents God’s people sealed and protected in the midst of the final tribulation (Rev 7:4-8), while the countless multitude signifies God’s people celebrating their deliverance after the tribulation is over (Rev 7:9-17).

The first scene of the 144,000 (Rev 7:4-8) is an audition from an *earthly perspective* of those who will be saved through God’s protective seal. The second scene of the countless multitude (Rev 7:9-17) is an audition from a *heavenly perspective* of those who enjoy their security and comfort with God. “The apparent contradiction between a limited number from the tribes of Israel and an unlimited number coming from all nations, does not mean that John makes a distinction between Jews and non-Jews within the people of God. The two ‘scenes’ are complementary depictions in John’s dramatic narrative, utilizing biblical concepts and imagery which assures the readers/listeners of the salvation of God’s people.”⁵⁴

In terms of our study, it is significant that the eschatological celebration of the redeemed is depicted as the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when, according to Zechariah 14, all nations would go up to Jerusalem “to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16). Being the feast that celebrated the harvest ingathering and the divine protection through the wilderness journeying to the Promised Land, it could be used fittingly by John to represent the harvest ingathering of the redeemed and their grand celebration of the divine protection received through the final tribulation into the heavenly Promised Land.

The Waving of Palm Branches. The great multitude standing before God’s throne is described as “clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands” (Rev 7:9). The palm branches of this vision are usually interpreted as being symbols of victory. In support of this view, reference is made to the fact that in classical antiquity the palm branch was a symbol of victory. Furthermore, the palm branch became the emblem of the martyrs in the

Christian tradition. Thus, the redeemed waving the palm branches are supposedly showing that they are conquerors.

There is no question that the redeemed frequently are portrayed as conquerors in Revelation (Rev 15:2-4; 2:7, 11, 17; 3:5). But it would be most unusual if Revelation depended primarily upon an Hellenistic symbol to describe the people of God before His throne. Since Revelation draws heavily upon Old Testament and Jewish background, it makes more sense to identify the palm branches with the Feast of Tabernacles.

A strong argument in favor of this interpretation is the portrayal of God's people in Exodus-related terms. In his dissertation, Hakan Ulfgard observes that "the redeemed people of God is standing by the sea of glass, singing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev 15:2), it is called 'a kingdom and priest' (Rev 1:6), and God 'will shelter them with his presence' (Rev 7:15; 21:3). The palm branches should be interpreted according to the general pattern in the description of God's people. As liturgical elements they are associated with the Feast of Tabernacles which celebrates God's protective presence among the people of Israel during the wandering in the wilderness, and in the Christian reinterpretation of the Bible they tell the readers/listeners that they share the same experience in Christ."⁵⁵

In a similar vein, Paul Jenney concludes in his dissertation that the palm branches waved by the redeemed "are certainly the *lulavs* of the Sukkoth festival [Feast of Tabernacles] (Lev 23:40; Neh 8:15; Sukk 3:1-4:7). Made of the same (or similar) materials as the booths themselves, one may consider them even more 'portable' and 'personal' reminders of these 'temporary shelters' which mark the feast. These *lulavs* were carried and shaken by the Sukkoth celebrants throughout the festivities of the seven-day feast. They were shaken at the beginning and end of the daily reading of Psalm 118, at 'O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his steadfast love endures forever' (vv.1, 29), as well as at 'Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success' (v. 25).

"The multitude which waves palms in Revelation does not do so to draw God's attention to their plea for salvation. Instead, they praise God with palms because He has already accomplished it! They cry out, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb' (Rev 7:10), not 'Save us, we beseech thee, Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success' (Ps 118:25)."⁵⁶ It is noteworthy, then, that the cry of the triumphant pilgrims to the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles is no longer a plea for salvation, but praise for the salvation already provided by the Lamb. The palm branches serve to express gratitude for the salvation and protection received.

The White Robes. The acceptance of the salvation provided by the Lamb is reflected also in the white robes worn by the multitude, robes that “have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb” (Rev 7:14). The paradoxical metaphor of white robes that have been washed and whitened in the blood of the Lamb points to the atoning and cleansing aspects of Christ’s death and to the believer’s appropriation of salvation.

The white robes are given to the martyrs under the altar (Rev 6:9-11) as a sign of comfort and reassurance of salvation while they are waiting for the number of God’s servants to be completed. The faithful of the church of Sardis are given the reassurance that “they shall walk with me [Christ] in white” (Rev 3:4). The Laodicean church is advised to buy “gold,” “white garments,” and “salve” (Rev 3:18). The white garments are thus an earthly possession which qualifies the believers for a heavenly existence (cf. Rev 16:15; 22:14).

Some interpreters understand the white robes to refer to the martyr’s own blood,⁵⁷ or to the white baptismal robe, or to certain characteristics of purity and holiness.⁵⁸ These meanings are not to be excluded because Revelation’s imagery seldom has only *one* fixed, absolute meaning. The fact, however, that the robes are made white by the blood of the Lamb, suggests that the “whiteness” refers especially to the cleansing provided by the atoning sacrifice of Christ.

This interpretation does not exhaust the rich symbolic meaning of the “white robes.” In the light of the Exodus theme that underlies the visions of judgment and salvation in Revelation, the reference to the white-washed robes of the redeemed recalls also Exodus 19:10, 14 where the Israelites were summoned to “wash their garments” in order to be ready to stand before God’s presence at Mount Sinai. This Biblical background may explain why the redeemed stand in white robes before the throne of God. Like the congregation of Israel at Sinai, the redeemed have been made into “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6 cf. Rev 5:10; 1:6; 20:6). The white robes reflect this priestly status of serving before the Lord.

The fact that the white robes are given already in this present life to those who have already demonstrated their faithfulness (Rev 6:11) suggests that there is a linkage between the worshipping multitude in the heavenly temple, and the worshipping believers in the church on earth. The vision of the redeemed in white robes, worshipping in heaven before God, praising Him and the Lamb for salvation, offers to believers on earth the incentive to experience a foretaste of the future heavenly condition already in the present worship experience on earth.

White garments, as we have seen, were worn in occasion of the feasts. This was particularly true at the Feast of Tabernacles which was celebrated just five days after the great day of cleansing of the Day of Atonement.⁵⁹ The cleansing of the Day of Atonement was reflected in the white garments worn at the Feast of Tabernacles. Thus the presence of white robes together with palm branches in Revelation underscores the setting of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The reference to white robes takes on added significance when we note that the adjective “white” (Greek *leukos*) occurs sixteen times in the New Testament in association with attire. Nine of the occurrences are in Revelation and the other seven are all associated either with the transfiguration of Christ (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29)—an event connected with the Feast of Tabernacles by the reference to the building of three tabernacles—the resurrection (Matt 28:3; Mark 16:5; John 20:12) or the ascension (Acts 1:10). This suggests that the color white is especially related to the heavenly world, which means that the white robes of the multitude must represent the “heavenly” character of the redeemed. It is the robe of Christ’s righteousness offered to believers on earth.

The Heavenly Booth. A distinguishing characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles was the dwelling in booths, a practice that gave the name to the feast. Yet there are no allusions in Revelation about human beings erecting booths in which to celebrate the feast. The reason is that in the heavenly vision of the Feast of Tabernacles God Himself erects the booths for the redeemed by covering them with His presence. Literally translated Revelation 7:15 reads: “The One seated upon the throne *will erect a booth* over them with his presence.”

The booths were symbols of God’s protection in the wilderness when people dwelt in temporary shelters (Lev 23:43). They also served as a reminders of the cloud of God’s presence which sheltered them from the sun during the day while sojourning in the wilderness (Ex 13:20; Num 14:14). We have noted that Revelation communicates very similar ideas through the use of the Greek verb *skenoo* and related words, which literally mean “to pitch a tent” or “to erect a temporary shelter.”

The first place where this Greek verb appears in Revelation is in the vision of the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles where the redeemed—dressed in white and waving palm branches—are privileged to serve God day and night within His Temple and to be sheltered with the booth of God’s presence (Rev 7:15).

This description is a clear allusion to Isaiah 4:4-5, a passage whose setting in the Feast of Tabernacles is clearly established in rabbinical literature.⁶⁰ “Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion. It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and shelter from the storm and rain” (Is 4:5-6).

The image of God sheltering His people in the wilderness with His glory manifested in the cloud and pillar of fire, serves as the background to the sheltering of the redeemed by God’s glorious presence in heaven (Rev 7:15). The key that unites both events is the exodus experience. God’s sheltering of the Israelites through the wilderness serves to typify His sheltering of His people through the final tribulation. Owing to God’s sheltering presence, the multitude is protected and nourished just as Israel was fed and led on its way to the Promised land. Both events are represented and celebrated by the Feast of Booths.

The palm branches, by referring the readers/listeners to the Feast of Booths, contribute to identify the multitude as celebrating God’s miraculous protection during their new exodus. This whole vision of the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles should be seen not only as a description of what will happen after the consummation of redemption, but also as an anticipation in the present of that glorious end. This vision gave meaning and reassurance to those who with John shared in the “tribulation” of the present life (Rev 1:9).

Eating and Drinking. Ancient Israel was commanded to “rejoice before the Lord” (Lev 23:40) at the Feast of Tabernacle. In actual practice, this meant waving palm branches, singing, playing musical instruments, and feasting. In the vision of the heavenly Feast of Tabernacles, we have noted already the waving of palm branches and singing (Rev 7:9-10). Another theme mentioned in the vision is God’s provision of food, water, and comfort. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Rev 7:16-17). Many of the same elements appear again later in Revelation’s description of the new earth. God dwells among His people, and provides them with shelter, a river of water of life, and a tree of life yielding fruits monthly. (Rev 21:3-4; 22:1).

This vision of the future state of the redeemed abundantly provided with food, water, and shelter was most likely inspired by the earthly celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. After all, the feast celebrated both the

provision of the harvest and the protection through the wilderness. The celebration was characterized by feasting and rejoicing. Biblical and extra-biblical⁶¹ apocalyptic literature prophesies a great time of feasting at the future Feast of Tabernacles.

The picture of the multitude being protected, led, fed, and comforted by the Lamb finds a striking parallel in Isaiah 25 where the prophets announced the day when the Lord “will make a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow” (Is 25:6). The allusion is most likely to the Feast of Tabernacles which was characterized by feasting to celebrate the bounties of the harvest. At this time, God “will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces” (Is 25:8).

It is interesting that Revelation 7:17 quotes the last statement almost verbatim, “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,” but omits the reference about death being “swallowed up.” The two phrases appear together later in Revelation 21:4: “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more.” The reason for the omission of the reference about death in Revelation 7:17 is to be found in the immediate purpose of the vision, which is to provide comfort and reassurance to believers facing tribulation in this present life. By contrast, Revelation 21:4 focuses on the situation of the believers after the future resurrection when death no longer exists. In John’s visions, there is a progression where images used previously recur with increasing completeness.

An interesting sideline is that symbols of the Feast of Tabernacles have been found on coins minted during the two Jewish revolts against Rome as well as in the catacombs. In the first instance, the *lulav* that appears on many coins minted during the Bar Kokhba revolt (A. D. 132-135) expresses the hope of God’s intervention on behalf of His people in its fight against pagan oppression.⁶² In the second instance, the Tabernacles motifs in the funerary art of the Roman catacombs represents the hope of the resurrection and life in the age to come.⁶³ The latter provides archeological support for the eschatological use of the themes of the Feasts of Tabernacles in Revelation to portray life in the new earth..

Water and Light. We noted earlier that the two impressive ceremonies of the Feast of Tabernacles were (1) “the water outpouring” which symbolized the water from the rock that sustained the Israelites in the wilderness; and (2) the “light ceremony” which commemorated the pillar of fire that had guided them through the desert. Both of these ceremonies came to typify the mission of the Messiah. Jesus, as we saw, capitalized on these ceremonies to reveal their Messianic fulfillment in Himself as the Light of the world and the Water of Life (John 7:37; 8:12).

In the apocalyptic fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, we find again both the water and the light. The water is presented not as a goblet from the pool of Siloam, but as “the springs of living water” (Rev 7:17), and a “river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22:1). This description finds its most interesting parallel in Zechariah 14 which predicts a future Feast of Tabernacles when “living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem” to the Dead Sea and to the Mediterranean (Zech 14:8, 16). This means that the river of living water flowing from the throne of God in the new Jerusalem represents the antitypical fulfillment of the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. Christ’s final appeal in Revelation may also contain an allusion to the water ceremony of the feast: “Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price” (Rev 22:17). The water of life offered by Christ represents the ultimate fulfillment of the water typology of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Similarly, the light ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles finds its apocalyptic fulfillment, not in enormous lampstands, nor even in the dazzling sun, but in the glory of God that outshines the sun: “The city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb” (Rev 21:23). The reference to the Lamb as “the Lamp,” is an obvious allusion to the enormous candelabra that illuminated the court of the Temple at night during the seven days of the feast.

Isaiah pictures the glorious restoration of Jerusalem in much the same terms: “The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory” (Is 60:19). In a similar vein Zechariah says that “there shall be continuous day . . . not day and not night, for at evening time there shall be light” (Zech 14:6). This description is significant because it is given in the context of the annual observance of the Feast of Booths by all the surviving nations of the earth (Zech 14:16-18).

These prophetic descriptions of the glory of God outshining the sun and turning the night into day were not intended to inform the readers about astronomical changes that will take place in the world to come. Rather they set forth by means of the accepted imagery of the light ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles how God’s glorious presence ultimately will fulfill all that the feast stood for.

The Temple in Revelation 7:15 and 21:22. The celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles revolved to a large extent around the Temple. During the day, as we noted earlier, a water procession came from the pool of Siloam to the Temple; during the night singing and revelling took place in the Court of

Women which was illuminated with several huge candelabra. On the Sabbath, the procession encircled the altar seven times.

Since the Temple was the focal point of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is not surprising that the multitude of the redeemed are pictured as standing before the throne of God and serving Him “day and night within his temple” (Rev 7:15). Service in the “Temple” is parallel to “standing before the throne of God.” Both expressions emphasize the privilege of living in the proximity of God’s presence. This privilege is granted at the End to all the redeemed, and not only to one tribe like in ancient Israel.

The vision of God’s people celebrating in heaven the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation 7:9-17 is strikingly similar to the vision of the new Jerusalem of Revelation 21:1 to 22:5. In both places we find references to the tabernacle of God over His people (Rev 7:15 cf. 21:3), the wiping away of every tear (Rev 7:17 cf. 21:4), and the spring or river of living water (Rev 7:17 cf. 21:6; 22:1-2, 17). A noticeable difference between the two visions is the Temple, since in Revelation 7:15 the multitude serves God “day and night within his temple,” but in Revelation 21:22 it clearly states: “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the almighty and the Lamb.” How can this apparent contradiction be best explained?

The context can help us to solve the problem. In Revelation 21, there is no Temple because the vision describes the future condition of perfect communion between God and the redeemed where no Temple, altar, and intercessory ministry is needed. In Revelation 7, however, the Temple appears in heaven because the vision focuses on the security and comfort God’s people need in the present in view of the impending tribulation.

The shift in emphasis from chapter 7 to chapter 21 does not imply that the Temple will disappear after the final consummation, but rather that God and Christ will be the Temple, just as the people of God will become the holy city Jerusalem (Rev 21:9-10). In a sense, Revelation 21:1 to 22:5 represent the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when God will tabernacle over His people with His presence (Rev 21:3). At that time, no material Temple or booths will be needed because the reality to which these pointed has come.

Conclusion. The foregoing analysis of Revelation 7:9-17 and 21:1 to 22:5, shows that the major themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are effectively used by John to portray the final ingathering of God’s people in their harvest home. The redeemed are described as bearing palm branches which is a feature of Tabernacles (Rev 7:9). Their song “Salvation belongs to our God” (Rev 7:10) recalls the cry of *hosanna* of Psalm 118:25 which was used at the

feast. The reference to God erecting a booth over His people with His presence (Rev 7:15) is a clear allusion to God's protection over Israel in the wilderness. The promise of "springs of living water" (Rev 7:17; 22:1) and of the continuous light of God's glory (Rev 21:23), are allusions to the two central ceremonies of the feast, water-pouring and the night illumination, both of which from the time of Zechariah had assumed a Messianic significance.

All these references to the Feast of Tabernacles in Revelation presuppose more than an antiquarian interest on the part of John. Since the Temple of Jerusalem no longer stood at the time of John's writings, the meaning of the feast must have been kept alive by its observance in the synagogue and Christian churches. John hardly could have used so effectively the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles to portray the consummation of redemption if the feast was unknown in the Christian churches of Asia Minor.

In his book *The Primitive Christian Calendar*, Philip Carrington reaches the same conclusion. He writes: "The Revelation lives and moves in the color and order of the Temple liturgy glorified and transformed by the Christian gospel and by the superlative imagination of the author; it reflects the Christian worship of the ecclesia of the time and became the storehouse of liturgy and hymnology for the future. It is clear from both the Gospel and Revelation that the Feast of Tabernacles was a living tradition in Johannine circles; it provided a language which Christian prophecy and evangelism could use."⁶⁴

This conclusion raises the question of what happened to the feast in the early church? Was it totally abandoned, or reinterpreted, or connected to other ecclesiastical feasts? Has any trace of the Feast of Tabernacles survived in Christian churches? To these questions we address our attention in the final part of this chapter.

PART III

THE OBSERVANCE OF THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

During the course of this study, we already have discussed at some length the observance of the annual Holy Days in early Christianity. We have addressed this question in chapter 3 of the first volume of *God's Festivals in Scripture and History* and again in chapter 3 of this second volume. We have found that recent scholarly studies show a new appreciation for the continuity between Judaism and Christianity, especially in the continued observance of the Sabbath and annual Holy Days.

It is not my intent to open up this question again at this juncture. A thorough study of this question would require far more space and time than is available to me at the present time. Sometime in the near future I intend to undertake an investigation into the observance of the Sabbath and Holy Days during the first five centuries of the Christian era. At this point, I limit myself to a few comments on the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles in the early church.

Eschatological Interpretation of the Feast. The Feast of Tabernacle was the most popular of the pilgrimage feasts, especially among the Jews of the Diaspora (dispersion). “When a Jew said ‘the feast,’ he meant Tabernacles. It was the greatest festival of the year.”⁶⁵ Josephus speaks of it as “a most holy and most eminent feast”⁶⁶ and “a festival very much observed among us.”⁶⁷ In view of its popularity, it is most likely that the Feast of Tabernacles was well known among Christians, especially in Asia Minor where the Jewish influence upon Christianity was more deeply felt. The frequent allusions to the feast that we have found in Revelation presuppose familiarity with it on the part of the Christian churches of Asia Minor.

Indirect support for the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles is provided by the Passover controversy that erupted in the second half of the second century. We noted that Asiatic Christianity was deeply committed to retain the biblical dating and typology of Passover and refused to adopt the Easter-Sunday custom promoted by the Bishop of Rome. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus and representative of the Asian Churches, strongly advocated the biblical Passover dating of Nisan 14 by appealing to the apostolic tradition transmitted to him by the apostles Philip and John.⁶⁸ The commitment shown toward the observance of Passover was most likely reflected also in the observance of the Feast of Tabernacles. Some testimonies from the Fathers to be considered shortly support this assumption.

In his study of the liturgical year among the Jewish Christians, Jean Daniélou concludes that “before being displaced, for reasons which will be explained presently, the Feast of Tabernacles was certainly kept in the month of September by Jewish Christianity as by the Jews.”⁶⁹ Daniélou finds that the influence of the Feast of Tabernacles is particularly evident in the eschatological interpretation of the feast as the millennial reign of Christ during which the earth will produce abundant harvests and the righteous will enjoy unparalleled prosperity and pleasure.

In his book *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, Daniélou discusses a number of early Christian writers who held to this doctrine.⁷⁰ According to Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyon (about A. D. 130-200), the Elders received this

tradition from the apostle John, who had received it from Jesus.⁷¹ One of these Elders was Papias, a disciple of John, who describes the millennium as a period of unprecedented fertility, prosperity, and material enjoyment.⁷²

This view of the millennium can hardly be attributed to John the Revelator because he describes the millennium, not as a time of prosperity and pleasure, but as a time of close fellowship with God. It will be a time when the redeemed “shall be priest of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years” (Rev 20:6). Moreover, John does not use the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles to describe the millennium. Instead, he uses them to describe the blessedness of the redeemed sheltered by God’s presence in the new earth. The creation of “a new heaven and a new earth” and the descent of the new Jerusalem are placed by John after the millennium (Rev 21:1-3).

Tabernacles as the Millennium. Unfortunately, some early Christian writers misunderstood the typology of the Feast of Tabernacles by claiming that the feast was a type of the millennium during which the saints will be resurrected with an earthly body (that is, an earthly tent) to enjoy material prosperity and pleasures. At the end of the millennium, the saints will allegedly cast off their material bodies and receive spiritual and incorruptible bodies instead. Though such a view was widely held in early Christianity, it is foreign to the teachings of the Bible.

Methodius of Olympus (died A. D. 311) articulates this view saying: “Just as the Jews, after the repose of the Feast of Tabernacles, arrived at the promised Land, so I too, following Jesus who has passed into heavens, shall attain to Heaven, no longer living in tabernacles, or rather my own tabernacle no longer remaining as it was, but being transformed after the millennium from a human and corruptible form into angelic greatness and beauty.”⁷³

This attempt to explain away the Feast of Tabernacles as the casting off the material body and appetites during the millennium in order to receive a spiritual and incorruptible nature, reminds us of the similar attempt made to explain away the Sabbath as representing a future millennium of peace and rest.⁷⁴ In both instances, the eschatological interpretations were used to negate the present observance of the Sabbath and of the Feast of Tabernacles, since both of them were seen as types of future spiritual realities.

It is noteworthy that Methodius himself associates the Feast of Tabernacles with the Sabbath, making them both symbols of the millennial rest. “I celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with Christ during the millennium of rest, called the seven days [of the feast], the true Sabbath. Then, following Jesus Who has crossed the heavens, I start on my journey again, as they [the

Jews], after the rest of the Feast of Tabernacles, journeyed toward the land of promise, the heavens, not waiting any longer in tabernacles, that is to say, my tabernacle not remaining any longer the same, but, after the millennium, having passed from a corruptible human form to an angelic grandeur and beauty.”⁷⁵

This interpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles as representing an intermediate state during which the body is gradually transformed from a material into a spiritual nature, was influenced by Platonic dualism rather than by the biblical typology of the feast. In the book of Revelation, as we have seen, the themes of the Feast of Tabernacles are used to depict, not an intermediate corruptible condition of the human body during the millennium, but the celebration of the consummation of redemption in the new world.

The misinterpretation of the Feast of Tabernacles paved the way for connecting the feast to other ecclesiastical holy days. We find an indication of this process in the work of Didynus the Blind (A. D. 313-398) who viewed the Feast of Tabernacles as being fulfilled in all the feasts days of the Catholic church, including the martyrs’ days. He wrote: “The Jews, by the grace of the *Scenopegia* [Feast of Tabernacle], announced in figure in advance the synaxes [feasts] of the Holy Church and the *Martyria* [martyrs’ days] which by faith and good works, lead us to the heavenly tabernacles.”⁷⁶

The Feast of Tabernacles is here connected with all the ecclesiastical feasts which allegedly lead people to heaven. Earlier in this chapter, we noted that some writers connected the feast with Christmas. These attempts to connect the Feast of Tabernacles to other ecclesiastical Holy Days were influenced not only by a misinterpretation of the true Christological and eschatological meaning of the feast, but also, as we shall soon see, by a deep hate for the Jews and their Holy Days.

A Vestige of the Feast of Tabernacles. In discussing the adoption of January 6 (Epiphany) as “a festival of the Baptism of Jesus” and December 25 as “a festival of the Nativity,” Philip Carrington notes that “the change meant that the Feast of Tabernacles was abandoned as a major feature of the liturgical year, leaving only vestigial traces in the autumnal Ember Days and the Advent season; in the Eastern Church the ancient occasion for the New Year is still an important point in the Calendar, and is marked by the festival of the Elevation of the Cross.”⁷⁷

The Feast of Elevation of the Cross, known also as ‘Holy Cross Day,’ is observed on September 14 in both the Catholic and Eastern churches. This is the approximate date of the Feast of Tabernacles which occurs in September/October. The civil new year began for the Jews in September, known as

the month of Tishri. The Ember Days are three fasting days (Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday) observed in September in conjunction with the Feast of the Holy Cross.

The surviving vestige of the Feast of Tabernacle to which Carrington refers is the reading of the account of the feast found in Leviticus 23:29-43 during the mass of the Holy Cross Day. Daniélou clarifies this point when he comments in a similar vein that “a vestige of this feast [of Tabernacles] is to be found in the Roman liturgy, consisting of the reading of the text of Leviticus concerning this feast (Lev 23:29-43) on the Saturday of the September Ember-days.”⁷⁸

It is sad to think that all that is left of the important Feast of Tabernacles in the liturgies of the Western and Eastern churches is the reading of the account of its institution at a mass celebrated in honor of the superstitious feast of the Holy Cross. This feast commemorates the exposition of the alleged true Cross at Jerusalem in A. D. 629 by Emperor Heraclius who recovered it from the Persians in 614. What is given in Scripture as a joyful harvest celebration of the material blessings and the protection God accorded to His people became attached to a superstitious, ecclesiastical feast that commemorates the alleged finding of the Cross.

The Feast of Tabernacles in the Early Church. The surviving vestige of the Feast of Tabernacles as well as the attempts made to connect it to other ecclesiastical holy days, suggests that the feast was an important celebration in the early church, at least among some Christians. This appears to have been true as late as the fourth century because the famous “golden mouth” preacher John Chrysostom, Bishop of Antioch, interrupted a sermon series in A. D. 386 to preach against the observance of the Fall Feasts among some of his members. In his sermon, Chrysostom said: “The festivals of the pitiful and miserable Jews are soon to march upon us one after the other and in quick succession: the Feast of Trumpets, the Feast of Tabernacles, the fasts [Day of Atonement]. There are some in our ranks who say they think as we do. Yet some of these are going to keep the festivals and others will join the Jews in keeping their feasts and observing their fasts. I wish to drive this custom from the Church right now.”⁷⁹

Chrysostom’s determination to drive the observance of the Fall Feasts out of the church clearly shows that they were still observed by some of his parishioners in Antioch toward the end of the fourth century. Note that the reason Chrysostom wanted to drive these feasts out of the church is sociological, not theological. To put it bluntly, it was more about hate for the Jews than love for Jesus Christ. It was simply because the Fall Feasts were observed by the “pitiful and miserable Jews” whom he hated from the depth of his heart.

Reading the eight sermons Chrysostom preached against the Jews in the autumn of A. D. 386 in Antioch can be a shocking experience to anyone who accepts Jesus' summon: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). Chrysostom is not satisfied to deride the various sacred rituals of the Jews. He tries to convince his hearers that it is the duty of all Christians to hate the Jews for they are "impious, cruel, inhuman, guilty of sacrificing their children to demons, . . . thieves, greedy, traitors."⁸⁰ The synagogues as well as the souls of the Jews are the dwelling place of demons.⁸¹

Anti-Judaism and the Rejection of the Holy Days. The strong anti-Judaic reason for rejecting the observance of the annual Holy Days is not surprising. I found this to be the fundamental reason given by early Christian writers for condemning the observance of the Sabbath. Interested readers can find an analysis of the relevant documents in the seventh chapter of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* where I examine the role of anti-Judaism in the abandonment of the Sabbath.

It is unfortunate that the scholarly community has largely ignored the role that the "Christian" theology of contempt against the Jews has played in the adoption of new Christian doctrines and practices. This theology of hate runs like a red thread through the centuries, beginning from Barnabas (about A. D. 135) to our time. The negative impact of such a theology cannot be measured. Socially, it has perpetrated a historic hate toward the Jews manifested in numerous discriminatory measures taken by church councils against the Jews. The Holocaust represents the most concrete expression of this historic anti-semitism.

Theologically, the "Christian" theology of contempt against the Jews has contributed, among other things, to the development of the Dispensational theology which is widely accepted in the evangelical community today. Dispensationalism makes the Jews second class citizens in God's Kingdom, not only during the present dispensation but for all eternity. It teaches that the church will be raptured to heaven before the seven years tribulation, so that God can lash out on the Jews as He has never done before in human history. If this were true, such a God deserves our condemnation rather than our worship and praise.

Liturgically, the "Christian" theology of contempt against the Jews has influenced the repudiation of biblical institutions such as the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days. These have been interpreted to be temporary Mosaic institutions, enjoined exclusively on the Jews on account of their unfaithfulness. This historic view can be traced back all the way to Justin Martyr (about A. D. 100-165), a saint for the Catholic Church. In his *Dialogue with Trypho*,

Justin wrote: “We, too, would observe your circumcision of the flesh, your Sabbath days, and in a word, all your festivals, if we were not aware of the reason why they were imposed upon you, namely, because of your sins and hardness of heart.”⁸²

To believe that God “imposed” the Sabbath and the annual Holy Days solely on the Jews on account of their wickedness, makes God guilty, to say the least, of discriminatory practices. It would imply that God gave ordinances with the sole negative purpose to show that the Jews are more wicked than any other people. Can that be true? How a rational Christian thinker (saint ?) such as Justin Martyr could so grossly misrepresent God, boggles my mind. Does not the Scriptures teach us that in God’s sight there is no difference between “Jew or Greek” (Gal 3:28) because we are all sinners (Rom 3:23) in need of His redeeming grace? The truth is that God gave the weekly Sabbath and the annual Holy Days, not as trademark of Jewish depravity, but as signs of His saving plan for the whole human family.

The Theological Development of the Feast of Tabernacles. Our study of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old and New Testament has shown how the feast has grown in its meaning and function during the course of redemptive history. It began in the Old Testament as the Fall Feast of the Harvest Ingathering to express thanksgiving to God for the bounties of the fruit harvest. It became the Feast of Booths to commemorate the way God sheltered the Israelites with the “booth” of His presence during their sojourning in the wilderness. The celebration of the material blessings of the harvest and of the spiritual blessings of the divine sheltering during the exodus experience, served to foreshadow the blessings of the Messianic age when “there shall be neither cold nor frost . . . continuous day . . . living water, and . . . security (Zech 14:6, 7, 11). A highlight of the Messianic age would be the annual gathering of all the surviving nations “to keep the feast of booths” (Zech 14:16) in order to celebrate the establishment of God’s universal Kingdom.

The rich typology of the Feast of Tabernacles finds in the New Testament both a Christological and an eschatological fulfillment. Christologically, we have found that the feast serves to reveal the Incarnation and mission of Christ. Jesus is God’s ultimate tabernacle for in Him God tabernacled among men (John 1:14). He is the living water (John 7:37-38) typified by the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles. He is also the Light of the World (John 8:12) typified by the night illumination of the Temple during the feast. Indeed, through Christ the blessings typified by the Feast of Tabernacles have become a reality for every believer.

Eschatologically, the Feast of Tabernacles serves to represent God's protection of His people through the trials and tribulation of this present life until they reach the heavenly Promised Land. There God will shelter the redeemed with the booth of His protective presence (Rev 7:15) and dwell with them for all eternity (Rev 21:3). As the ancient Israelites "rejoiced before the Lord" (Lev 23:40) at the Feast of Tabernacles by waving palm branches, singing, playing instruments, and feasting, so the countless multitude of the redeemed will rejoice before the throne of God, by waving palm branches (Rev 7:9), singing anthems of praise (Rev 7:10; 14:3; 15:2-4; 19:1-3), playing harps (Rev 14:2), and participating in the great marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Profound Meanings for Christians. Our survey of the theological development of the Feast of Tabernacles in the Old and New Testaments has shown that the feast has profound historical, Christological, and eschatological meanings for Christians today. Historically, the Feast of Tabernacles serves as a constant reminder and reassurance of God's providential leading and protection of His people. As the Israelites celebrated at the feast, the providential way the Lord delivered them from Egyptian bondage and protected them through their wilderness journey to the Promised Land, so today the feast affords us the opportunity to celebrate the way the Lord has delivered us from the bondage of sin and is protecting us through the trials of our earthly pilgrimage as we journey to His Kingdom.

In reflecting upon spiritual value of the annual feasts, Ellen White alludes to the commemorative value of the Feast of Tabernacles for our Christian life today. She writes: "Well would it be for the people of God at the present time to have a Feast of Tabernacles—a joyous commemoration of the blessings of God to them. As the children of Israel celebrated the deliverance that God had wrought for their fathers, and His miraculous preservation of them during their journeying from Egypt, so should we gratefully call to mind the various ways He has devised for bringing us out from the world, and from the darkness of error, into the precious light of His grace and truth."⁸³

Christologically, the Feast of Tabernacles affords us the opportunity to express our gratitude for Christ's willingness to become flesh and to tabernacle with the human family (John 1:14). Furthermore, it reminds us that Christ came to this earth to quench the thirst of our souls with His living water (John 7:37-38) and to dispel the darkness of sin and death with His glorious light (John 8:12) which reveals to us the way we should walk (1 John 2:9-11). In a world that is sinking in moral darkness, the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us that Christ is the Light of the World (John 8:12) and the light of our life. When we follow Him we will "not remain in darkness" (John 12:46).

Eschatologically, the Feast of Tabernacles reminds us that we are pilgrims journeying to the Promised Land. As God protected the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness to Canaan, He will protect us through the tribulations of this present life as we journey on our way to the Kingdom. The feast challenges us to look forward to the final ingathering of God's people in their harvest home. At that time God will shelter His people with the "booth" of His presence for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

As the people of Israel rejoiced at the Feast of Tabernacles "in the consciousness of pardon and acceptance, through the service of the day of atonement, just ended," so, Ellen White reminds us "the redeemed will rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Christ's great work of atonement for men will then have been completed, and their sins will have been forever blotted out."⁸⁴

Is the Feast of Tabernacles Relevant Today? Is the Feast of Tabernacles relevant for twentieth-century Christians? Can Christians today benefit from observing a feast that was given to ancient Israel to commemorate the providential way the Lord led the people from the bondage of Egypt to the freedom of the Promised Land? The foregoing considerations give us reasons to answer these questions positively.

We have found that the typology of the feast transcends the historical exodus experience of the Israelites and reaches down to the consummation of redemption in the world to come. The feast, as Ellen White keenly observes, has both a "commemorative" and a "typical" function.⁸⁵ On the one hand, it commemorates the providential way the Lord led ancient Israel through the wilderness into the land of Canaan, but on the other hand, it typifies the way the Lord is leading His people today through the trials and tribulations of the present life into the blessedness of the world to come.

The spiritual needs of the Israelites were essentially the same as the spiritual needs of Christians today. If the Israelites needed the Feast of Tabernacles to be reminded and reassured annually of the way the Lord had led them in the past and was leading them toward the glorious future Messianic age, do we not also need today the same reminder and reassurance? To paraphrase the words of Ellen White, Would it not be well for us today to observe the Feast of Tabernacles as a joyous celebration of the way the Lord has led us in the past out of darkness into His marvellous light and is leading us in the present towards the glorious new world where He will tabernacle with us for all eternity?

The very fact that the New Testament extensively uses the themes of the First of Tabernacles to portray not only the nature and mission of Jesus,

but also the consummation of redemption, shows that the feast has a rich spiritual meaning for Christians. First, it reminds us of what Christ has already done for us by becoming flesh and tabernacling with us (John 1:14) during His earthly ministry. Second, it reassures us that Christ will shelter us through the trials of this present life (Rev 3:10) as we journey to the promised Land. Third, it challenges us to look forward in faith to that glorious day when we will celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles with the great multitude around the throne of God, waving palm branches, “and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne and to the lamb’” (Rev 7:9-10). That final celebration will last not just seven days, but for all eternity because “The One seated upon the throne *will erect a booth* over them [the redeemed] with his presence” (Rev 7:15). In a sense, that will be the ultimate fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles when God will tabernacle with His people for all eternity (Rev 21:3).

Pilgrims or Permanent Residents of this World? One practical lesson the Feast of Tabernacles can teach us is to remind us that we are pilgrims journeying to the Promised Land and not permanent residents of this world. The Jews were taught this lesson by living in booths for a week. By deliberately giving up living in a solid construction for a week, they were taught to place their ultimate trust in God’s protection and not to become overly attached to the things of this world. They had left the protection of man-made thick walls in Egypt in order to place themselves under God’s protection.

The Feast of Tabernacles taught the Jews that they could not afford to become overly attached to the material things of this world because their ultimate security was God’s protection. Rabbi Irving Greenberg notes that many Jews living in Germany just prior to World War II forgot this important lesson. They became so deeply attached to that country that they chose to stay on in spite of the impending signs of doom. Many Jews could have saved their lives if they had left Germany in the early stage of the anti-semitic Nazi propaganda. Unfortunately, they mistakenly believed that their wealth, power, and influence would protect them.⁸⁶

Christians, like Jews, need to learn to give up the false security of power and wealth. All too often people heap up wealth, power, and status symbols hoping to protect themselves from disasters, sickness, or even death. This search for “solid” security often leads to idolatry, the worship of things rather than the worship of God. As Christians, we need to hear the message of the Feast of Booths that our ultimate safety comes by being sheltered in the shadow of God’s wings (Ps 57:1).

The Feast of Tabernacles challenges us not to invest present religious or political institutions with permanent value and functions because they are not the method by which the Kingdom of God is to be established. It challenges us to recognize that when Jesus comes, all our human institutions, including our Christian ones, will come to an end. We must build for future generations while recognizing that the future does not belong by right to what we build. The ultimate effect of living looking forward to the eschatological Feast of Tabernacles is to view all our institutions and personal decisions in the light of the glorious appearing of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

There is a powerful tendency today to become so attached to one's home and rooted in a particular culture or community that we lose sight of the fact that we are pilgrims journeying to the World to come. Do we view ourselves as pilgrims or as permanent residents of this earth? Someone has said that twentieth-century Christians are "the best-disguised set of pilgrims this world has ever seen." Most Christians hardly give the impression that they are just "passing through" when they are working intensely to make this world their ultimate reality. For these the present world is not *the waiting room* to the world to come, but a *living room* in which to live as though Christ may never come.

The Feast of Tabernacles reminds us that we are on an exodus journey to the Promised Land. We cannot afford to become so assimilated with the culture of this world that we lose sight of the world to come. We must constantly look forward to that grand Feast of Tabernacles when God Himself will build His booth among us and dwell with us for all eternity: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people" (Rev 21:3, KJV).

Conclusion. The Feast of Tabernacle has fulfilled vital commemorative and typical functions in the religious experience of God's people during redemptive history. In the Old Testament, it summoned God's people annually to rejoice for a whole week over the material blessings of a bountiful harvest and over the spiritual blessings of the protection God had granted them in their past history. Being commemorative of the past providential protection, the feast served also to fittingly typify the future Messianic ingathering of all nations into God's Kingdom.

The rich Old Testament typology of the Feast of Tabernacles finds a Christological and eschatological fulfillment in the New Testament. Christologically, Jesus is the fulfillment of the "booth" which typifies God's protective presence. By becoming flesh, Christ became God's ultimate "Booth," for in Him and through Him, God tabernacled among men (John

1:14). Christ is also the Living Water (John 7:37-38) typified by the water ceremony of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Light of the World (John 8:12) typified by the night illumination of the Temple during the feast. The blessings typified by the Feast of Tabernacles become a reality through Christ for every believer.

Eschatologically, the Feast of Tabernacles finds its ultimate fulfillment in the new earth when the saints are gathered in their harvest home and God will shelter them with the “booth” of His presence for all eternity (Rev 21:3). Summing up, we can say that the Feast of Tabernacles commemorates the redemption already accomplished through Christ’s first Advent and typifies the final restoration that will be realized at the second Advent. The feast, then, unites the past redemption to the future restoration. It affords the opportunity to celebrate in the present the salvation and protection Christ has already provided us, while we look forward to the future consummation of our redemption that awaits us in God’s eternal Kingdom.

NOTES TO CHAPTER VII

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3. *Ibid.*, p. 197.
4. Author's translation.
5. David M. Stanley, "The Feast of Tents: Jesus' Self-Revelation," *Worship* 34 (1959-60), p. 20.
6. See, for example, Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah* (Shippensburg, PA, 1994), pp. 178-184; Barney Kasdan, *God's Appointed Times* (Baltimore, MD, 1993), pp. 95-99.
7. Jean Daniélou, *The Bible and Liturgy* (South Bend, IN, 1956), pp. 343-347.
8. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Sermon on the Nativity*, *Patrologia Graeca* 46, 1129 B-C, translated by Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 345.
9. Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 345.
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11. Jean Daniélou (note 7), p. 347.
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13. See A. T. Robertson, *A Harmony of the Gospels* (New York, 1992), p. 267.
14. See, Adam Clark, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (New York, 1956), vol. 5, p. 370.
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25. Mishna, *Sukkath* 4,1.
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27. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA, 1948), p. 454.
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60. See Tosephta *Sukkah* 3,15.

61. See, for example, 2 Baruch 29:5-8; 1 Enoch 60:24; 25:5; 4 Ezra 7:123; 8:52.

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