



# *Forerunner*

Preparing Christians for the Kingdom of God

Volume 26, Number 3

May-June 2017

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AND  
SCATTERED  
PEOPLE

# May-June 2017

Volume 26, Number 3

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According to our Savior, the Great Tribulation will be a time like no other in the history of the world. Major elements of that prophesied period are the defeat, enslavement, and scattering of God's people over the face of the earth. As Jesus suggests, the modern fulfillment of the Bible's prophecies will be like and yet unlike—and worse than—its ancient counterparts.

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# Leadership and Covenants

## Part Nine

With overwhelming evidence, the Bible shows that the relationships between God and His covenant people, with a few exceptions, did not result in good leadership in Israelite communities. Underlying their rather obvious lack of leadership is that the majority of Israelite leaders could not sustain belief in God, setting extremely poor examples before the people throughout their existence as a nation. This idea has strongly motivated me to search into the various covenants God has proposed and made with mankind.

Ezekiel and Hosea portray Israel as an unfaithful wife, a whorish woman married to a patient, faithful, well-providing, and loving Husband. By contrast, Israel wanders all over the place, holding no serious or responsible thoughts of duty and loyalty to her commitments. In Israel's history, for every Abel or Abraham who believed God and was faithful to Him, there were ten thousand others who were as reliable as a cracked crutch, threatening to split and dash the relationship at any moment.

Godly leadership should arise from the relationship the covenants afford to those who make them with God. They must be entered with careful consideration because duty and loyalty do not appear of their own accord by nature. If

the purposes of a covenant are to be achieved, dedication and sacrificial love must be present. Participation in them must be active and growing through faithful submission to produce what God has formulated them to achieve.

Those who enter a covenant with God must understand that godly leadership is not merely what is expected of others, that is, those serving in public leadership positions. Godly leadership contains qualities everybody—male and female, moms and dads, school teachers and mechanics, ministers and the police—must exhibit. It is needed everywhere all the time, or the community begins to break down. Everyone must see himself as vital to the well-being of all. The most critical area of all is right in the home.

Perhaps all along, in each covenant the problem of mankind's irresponsibility may have been that some do not perceive their responsibility as essential to the covenant's success. Rather than seeking God for the spiritual help to succeed in faithfully glorifying Him, the carnal nature is allowed to focus on the self and its immediate desires rather than on its responsibilities to the whole of God's purpose. Human nature is expert at convincing us that we are unimportant to the "Big Picture" of what God is working out. It

is also, therefore, impatient for results for which we may feel some enthusiasm.

It is at this critical juncture that our lack of faith leads to failure. We fail to appreciate the magnificent greatness of God Himself. He did not make a mistake in calling us. We fail to understand that we are needed within His purpose, or He would have extended His invitation to someone else. He is fully aware of what is happening in our lives. He is preparing us for a place in His Family Kingdom, as He knows exactly where He is heading with His purposes. We are not “nothing” to Him. Therefore, it is our responsibility to give of ourselves within His purpose to ensure we are conforming to His will.

Our entering the New Covenant has instituted a unique relationship with Him that not many people on earth possess. The relationship establishes responsibilities we must faithfully perform, which the Bible calls “works of faith.” We implement these things as significant parts of our lives, showing everyone what we believe. Meeting the terms of this covenant with God is a responsibility no different in principle than meeting the terms of a home mortgage contract—with the sure exception that the covenant with God is considerably more important!

In this area, mankind has its greatest problem in remaining faithful. Unless a person truly has faith in God, it is easy for him to fail to uphold his part of the agreement through sheer neglect driven by his desires to please himself. It remains extremely easy for the carnal nature to break its promises to the loving and merciful but invisible God. An individual must strive to keep Him in mind constantly through seeking Him for His glory, or the carnal nature will blur our vision of Him, leading us to neglect Him.

### **No Neglect on God’s Part**

Last time, we saw that God’s sanctification of people for a specific purpose begins the salvation process. Nothing in His operations allows for any individual’s calling to be random. God is not only faithful, but He is also thoughtfully purposeful. Our calling was specific.

The period between Creation and the Flood lasted around 1,650 years. Though that is indeed a long time for us, it is a short time for God, who was busy preparing for the next step in fulfilling His purpose. We cannot fully appreciate His motivation for making what researchers call the Noachian Covenant unless we are prepared by grasping the significant changes that took place after the end of Genesis 3. Comparing Genesis 1–3 with Genesis 6 helps do to this.

As we begin, comparing two verses will refresh our memories. II Peter 3:8-9 provides us with an

overview of God’s intention for humanity:

But, beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

No matter how men may interpret what God is doing, His intent is to save. On the other hand, Genesis 6:5-6 reveals what mankind was doing during this early time in earth’s history:

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

Just like its spiritual father, Satan, mankind uses God’s beautiful creation self-centeredly and destroys.

In Genesis 1–3, we see God graciously giving mankind wonderful gifts to enjoy life. He provided them with long lives and brilliant minds to make use of earth’s resources. In Genesis 6, though, we see humanity destroying virtually every good gift in its savage disrespect for Him and what He had made. An ever-increasing population was living nearly without restraint. Perhaps the most astounding detail in this whole mess is what all this did to God: He was grieved in His heart that He had created humanity.

To appreciate the Flood and the covenant that resulted, we need to grasp a major factor that directly led to it. God does not judge impatiently or carelessly; He is merciful and gracious, His actions always motivated by love. Everything He does is in the best interest of His purpose and with the well-being of others at heart. Even considering those two factors, what God did in using an overwhelming Flood to wipe out the entire human population in a matter of a few days is sobering. Undoubtedly, God had good cause.

We have no figures at hand to show how many lives perished, but in 1,600-plus years, combined with their brilliant minds and long lives, not only the population could have been abundant, but the development of the earth’s material resources may also have been extensive and advanced. We look forward to having those details revealed.

These considerations indicate that two factors made Him decide to destroy nearly all life and begin all over again: 1) a profound change in the quality of life combined with 2) what was developing in people's minds. God did not have an attitude of defeat or failure. Instead, He primarily considered the result of what was occurring in people's minds. It was a sobering judgment but not nearly as bad as what would have been produced had He allowed events to continue. His judgment provides us a clear understanding of His loving character.

## God Looks on the Heart

God's reaction was guided by what He saw regarding mankind's sins. In His experience with humanity at this point, He concluded that sin should not be understood as a mere imperfection in character but as a hostile, infecting, poisonous, and destructive force relentlessly driving people to even greater excesses. Added to this reality is an element that significantly raises the level of seriousness: Sin is not merely murder, lying, coveting, thievery, etc., but a vicious motivation buried deeply in men's hearts that generates evil almost incessantly.

Truly, Jesus made a clear statement to the disciples in Matthew 15:16-20:

So Jesus said, "Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man."

Does not Genesis 6:5 say, "Every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"? God's statement is not an exaggeration. The heart is a generator of evil by nature. In Ecclesiastes 7:29, Solomon reminds us, "Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes." How far mankind had fallen from the pinnacle of purity and righteousness Adam and Eve contained when created by this same God! How radically that beautiful creation had changed!

Sin, then, is not merely what one sees on the outside. Far more challenging to understand and deal with is the reality that it is an internal matter; sin is generated from within. This is all the more interest-

ing because Jesus later admonishes us not to look on the outward appearance in making judgments (John 7:24). Yet, we must do this because we lack the godly powers to judge as God does.

I Samuel 16:7 says that in His judgments God looks on the heart. From this incident, the wisest of all Beings, God Himself, teaches us a valuable principle of judgment: When the heart becomes so consistently wicked that evil is its natural course of action, nothing can be done to change it.

We can judge the actions of a person and conclude, "He is a liar because he lies." In other words, we judge so because we literally witness the person lie. God can look into a person's heart and pronounce with perfect judgment, "He lies because he is a liar." His discernment is far more penetrating, right to the roots of the practice. He perceives that the person lies because it is part of his nature. He observes that the person is enslaved to the practice. When humans reach that stage of evil, their course is set; they will go into the Lake of Fire. What we see recorded in the story of the Flood is a type of what is coming, only then fire will be His agent and the consequences eternal.

With the Flood, God intervened for all humanity to stop the process so that men did not become totally enslaved by a heart with a permanently set nature. They were on the verge of becoming irreparably depraved. Jesus makes clear in His Olivet Prophecy that the time just before His return will be similar to the times just before the Flood (Matthew 24:37). Also, Jeremiah 30:7 alerts us to be aware, declaring, "Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it; and it is the time of Jacob's trouble." Except for the few who truly have faith, as compared to how many people populate this earth, humanity is headed in that direction, and it appears that nothing will stop it from continuing in that direction.

## Grace Enters the Picture

God says in Genesis 6:7-8, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping things and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD." Here is the first use of the term "grace" in the Old Testament.

Others like Adam and Eve certainly received a measure of grace from God because He could have killed them on the spot for their disloyalty in submitting to Satan, since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Abel, Seth, Enoch, and others undoubtedly also received grace. These men appear to have been converted (see Hebrews 11), and their

sins forgiven.

Notice it says, “Noah found grace.” It is stated this way so we understand that he did not earn it by his conduct; it was given as a gift, which happens to every converted person. This is not all it says regarding Noah. Regarding his conduct, Genesis 6:9 states: “This is the genealogy of Noah. Noah was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” The word “perfect” does not refer to his ancestry but to his habitual, daily conduct.

The terms “just,” “perfect,” and “walked with God” all signify his conduct among those in his family and community. Noah was a righteous man who could be trusted because people knew he kept the laws of God. “Walking with God” denotes one so close to God in his manner of life that He would keep company with him because he was obedient despite all the corruption surrounding him on every side. That he was perfect (“blameless,” KJV) among his contemporaries suggests he had no major flaws in his character. In addition, II Peter 2:5 calls him “a preacher of righteousness.”

We need to make sure we are correct regarding Noah and grace because we want to be consistent and accurate about receiving grace. Scripture always shows grace as something given by God; it is never earned. Genesis 6:8, then, does not say Noah received grace because his life already reflected all those good attributes, but that he was conducting his life righteously because God had given him grace. His conduct was proof that he found favor with God. God gave grace, and Noah then began living his life in a godly manner. The favor—grace—empowered him to behave as is recorded here.

An additional result of finding grace was to separate or sanctify him from all others on earth whom God had not sanctified for the purpose the Bible goes on to show. The grace, the favor, the gifts of God, always precede anything produced within His purpose and calling.

We can see this principle in the original creation leading up to Adam and Eve. God’s gift, His grace, His favor, of creating the earth with all its powers and beauty to support life preceded the actual creation of Adam and Eve. Then, after their creation, God gifted them with life, a spirit, and intellect. He then gave them more gifts: instruction in how to use His gifts. These elements were available to empower them to live as God intended.

However, they did not use them properly and failed. Noah stood out because he responded correctly to the grace, the gifts, the favor, God gave him, and so God called him righteous. Likewise, we have found favor, grace, and gifts in God’s calling of

us, so we need to evaluate whether we are responding as Noah did to the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by His Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5).

### God’s Overwhelming Love for Us

But why us? The answer may be unsatisfying or unfulfilling because, being so broad and unspecific, it does not really answer the question. The answer is because He loves us.

Deuteronomy 7:6-8, a statement made by God to Israel, says something about God’s love and grace that appears illogical:

For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Did we catch what He says? Verse 7 introduces a denial, which can be paraphrased as, “You should not think I gave you this grace because of anything in you, anything you have done, or anything you have been part of.” Yet, in verse 8, He says, “But I have given it to you because I love you.” Putting these two thoughts together, He essentially says, “I love you because I love you.” That seems illogical to us, but it is the logic of grace.

If God acted on our good qualities, it would remove grace entirely from the picture because the gift or gifts would be earned. They would no longer be freely given gifts of His love. We must understand that we are not merely undeserving. Because of our sins, we deserve death for any sin we may commit along the way with Him to salvation, regardless of how slight or unintentional we may think it is. He gifts us because He loves us no matter how He chooses to state His reasons for giving them to us.

Isaiah 66:1-2 may provide us with a possible reason He does it this way:

Thus says the LORD: “Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all these things My hand has

*(continued on page 14)*

# Who Fulfills the Azazel Goat— Satan or Christ?

## Part Three

As we have seen, the unique offering on the Day of Atonement for the sins of Israel consisted of two goats (Leviticus 16:5). The first goat was killed, and the high priest cleansed the sanctuary and the holy objects with its blood. The second goat—the *azazel*, the goat of departure—had all the sins of the people laid on its head, bearing them to an uninhabited land, a land “cut off.”

Jesus Christ fulfilled the roles of both sacrificial animals: He died to provide a covering of blood and open the way to the Father, and He also bore the sins of many, taking them to the land of forgetfulness—the grave. Isaiah 53 prophesied that the Messiah would accomplish this. Scripture is silent about sins being placed on Satan’s head or his bearing sins in any way.

The name of this holy day derives from the Hebrew *yom kippur*. *Kippur* means “expiation,” while its root, *kaphar*, can be translated as “cleanse,” “disannul,” “forgive,” “pardon,” “purge,” “put off,” and “cover.” It is “the Day of Atonement [*kippur*], to make atonement [*kaphar*] for you before the LORD your God” (Leviticus 23:28). Leviticus 16:30 summarizes: “For on that day the priest shall make atonement [*kaphar*] for you, to cleanse you, that you may be clean from all your sins before the LORD.” The holy day deals with providing a solution to the people’s defilement—and, therefore, separation from God—through cleansing and removal of sins. As Leviticus 16:21-22 makes plain, the ceremony involves the sins of the people, not of Satan.

These articles have explored how the part of the ritual involving the “goat of departure” is fulfilled. Even without poring over the ritual’s details, we can see that the name of the day indicates only one logical way this can take place. The expiation

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of mankind's sins—the atoning, cleansing, disannulling, purging, and putting away of sins—is what the *Savior* does, by the very definition of the word, rather than what the Adversary does.

### A Problematic Linkage

The releasing of the *azazel* into the wilderness is commonly—but incongruously—linked with the binding of Satan (Revelation 20:1-3). This linkage is problematic because the account in Revelation makes no mention of sins—whether mankind's or Satan's—being placed on Satan's head. Instead, the express purpose for his binding is “so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished” (verse 3). He is bound to cut off his influence, not to provide any sort of expiation.

In addition, since the book of Revelation is generally dated around AD 90-100, John's vision did not occur until the very end of the apostolic generation. Earlier, Jude had written to exhort the beleaguered first-century church “to contend earnestly for *the faith* which was *once for all* delivered to the saints” (Jude 3; emphasis ours throughout). “The faith” is a specific faith, indicating a well-defined body of beliefs. However, when Jude wrote his epistle, Satan's binding had not yet been foretold. It was not revealed to John until *after* “the faith” had *already* been delivered to the saints.

Similarly, Paul writes to Timothy that the “Holy Scriptures”—which, at that point, would have consisted of what is generally called the Old Testament—“are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (II Timothy 3:15). Even without the book of Revelation, the first generation of Christians had all they needed to understand God's plan.

The matter of how sin is atoned for is at the very core of being “wise for salvation,” and Paul's words indicate that “wisdom” was already available from 1) what had been written before, and 2) God-given faith in Jesus Christ. In other words, the apostolic generation understood salvation—including the Day of Atonement and how sins are expiated—without the revelation that Satan will be bound. The former is not dependent on the latter.

In Colossians 2, Paul warns the churches at Colossae and Laodicea against any philosophy or system of beliefs—specifically mentioning “the tradition of men”—that detracts from Christ's sovereign position and role under the Father (verses 4, 8-9). He points out that the brethren there were already “complete in Him” (verse 10). This does not mean that they had already achieved spiritual perfection or that their salvation was assured, but

that they had no need of anything supplementary to what was already available in Christ. If they were still awaiting Satan's binding—after having been resurrected to glory, no less!—before their sins were completely removed from view, how could the apostle write that they were already “complete” in Christ? On the contrary, those who come under Christ's blood are not awaiting the final resolution of their transgressions; their previous sins have *already* been completely taken care of.

Paul continues:

And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)

Notice the definitive wording. There is no hint here—or anywhere else—that God's people are awaiting Satan's binding so their sins can finally be expiated. “The wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and those wages have already been paid in full. Therefore, we are alive in Christ *now*, and not waiting for an imagined final payment on the debt when Satan is bound.

The phrase “having wiped out the handwriting of requirements” in Colossians 2:14 is often misinterpreted as meaning that God's law has been done away, yet in the Greek sentence structure, it is parallel with “having forgiven you all trespasses.” The “handwriting of requirements” is the written record of violations against God's ordinances. Paul says that this “handwriting”—the record of sins, not the laws—was expunged, reiterating that our sins have been forgiven. Other translations say He “erased,” “blotted out,” or “destroyed” it. The record is completely obliterated, in God's reckoning.

Verse 14 says that Christ has “taken it out of the way.” *Strong's Concordance* states that the Greek word for “taken,” *airo*, means “to lift up; by implication, to take up or away; . . . by Hebraism to expiate sin.” It means the same as the Hebrew word used for “bearing,” *nasa'* (Strong's #5375). In addition, *airo* is in the perfect tense, indicating action completed in the past. The live goat lifts up, carries, and takes away the sins placed on its head by the high priest (Leviticus 16:21-22). In Colossians, Christ is declared to have lifted up, taken away, and expiated the record that was against us—an exact match to what is said about the goat of departure.

## Hebrews and Atonement

While this should suffice to prove who fulfills the *azazel*—especially in the absence of *any* verses pointing to Satan—even stronger evidence exists. More than any other New Testament book, Hebrews gives the

most complete explanation of the sacrificial law, and chapters 9 and 10 specifically cover the Day of Atonement. If the Bible were to contain any support for Satan playing a vital role in man's becoming one with God, we would expect to find it here.

However, Satan is absent. If the author understood

## Can the *Azazel* Be Fulfilled Only After Christ's Resurrection?

The entire sacrificial system pointed to Jesus Christ in some way; it was a “tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith” (Galatians 3:24). This certainly includes all the instructions in Leviticus 16. There is a pitfall, however, in trying to make the sequence of the ritual precisely fit the timing of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. This is crucial to understand because some identify the *azazel* as Satan on the assumption that the role of the *azazel* can only be fulfilled *after* Jesus was resurrected.

The assumption is this: In Leviticus 16, the Lord's goat is slain to make payment for sin, understood to be a type of Christ's sacrifice. After His resurrection, He ascended to heaven to take on the role of High Priest. This line of reason leads to the conclusion that, since the first goat represented the slain Christ, and the high priest represented the resurrected Christ, then the *azazel* must represent someone entirely different from Christ.

Yet, even though the entire sacrificial system pointed to Christ, the order in which He fulfilled things did not match the instructions given to Israel. He completely fulfilled the essence of those instructions, but it is impossible—and unnecessary—to fit the timeline of the reality into that of the shadow, the type. We will follow a brief tangent to see this, taking as our example God's instruction concerning the consecration of the Aaronic priesthood.

Exodus 29 provides a specific order in which the various sacrifices for dedicating priests to their office were to be carried out. Performed first, the sin offering acknowledged sin and made symbolic atonement before anything else was done. Next came the whole burnt offering, representing a life given in complete service to God (different from a life sacrificed in payment for sin). Offered with the burnt offering was a grain offering, which similarly represents a life given—lived—in complete devotion to fellow man.

Though this is not a complete expounding of Exodus 29, the order of these elements teaches that we cannot approach God until payment for sin has been made (sin offering), and that our highest priority after our justification is wholehearted devotion to God (burnt offering). Only after that can we truly love our fellow man and be devoted to him (grain offering).

In contrast, Jesus' fulfillment of these sacrifices occurred in a different order. He did not become the sin offering until *after* He had lived a life of complete devotion to God and man—that is, after He had already fulfilled the burnt and grain offerings. Similarly, He did not qualify to be our High Priest until *after* He had fulfilled the burnt offering, grain offering, sin offering, and other offerings like the Wavesheaf and the Passover. What we see is that the actual sequence in which Christ fulfilled all these things was not identical to the sequence given to Israel in Exodus 29. However, He fulfilled their spiritual essence, which the Father accepted.

Returning to the Atonement ritual, we observe the same thing. The instructions *begin* with the high priest entering the Holy Place (Leviticus 16:3-4). If, in interpreting the ritual's symbols, we require this chapter to follow the sequence that took place in Christ's fulfillment, we are immediately faced with an impossibility: He did not qualify to be High Priest until *after* His earthly work was completely finished—after His crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension (see Hebrews 5:9-10). Therefore, trying to match the Leviticus 16 instructions with what actually happened leaves us starting out with Christ's earthly work already complete and after His installation as High Priest.

It is not necessary to match up the order of these things, nor is it required that the *azazel's* antitype be fulfilled only after Christ's resurrection. Forcing a rigid, sequential fulfillment of Leviticus 16 results only in tying ourselves in symbolic knots.

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that the *azazel* was a type of the Devil, leaving him out of these chapters would be an incredible oversight. But the only mention of Satan appears in Hebrews 2:14, where it simply says that the Devil has the power of death. Conversely, chapters 9 and 10 resound with the work of Jesus Christ, and it is there that we find even more evidence of His fulfillment of the *azazel*.

Before examining these chapters, it is worth considering what comes before. The author wrote Hebrews to an unnamed group of people who were apparently neglecting their salvation (Hebrews 2:3) and “turn[ing] away from Him who speaks from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25). The epistle does not correct specific sins but admonishes them to shake off their apathy and remember how superior Christ is to every other personality, system, or spiritual factor, allowing the Hebrews to return to a focused and steadfast walk with Him.

As this unique treatise opens, the author points out Christ’s finished work regarding our sins: “. . . who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by *Himself* purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). Even as Jesus “*Himself* bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (I Peter 2:24) and “*He Himself* is the propitiation for our sins” (I John 2:2), so He also purged our sins by *Himself*. This threefold witness shatters the possibility that any other being is involved in the resolution of human sin. That He “sat down” also shows His work of purging our sins is complete. It does not depend on a future act involving Satan.

Hebrews 1:4 speaks of Christ, “having become so much better than the angels.” The first two chapters demonstrate Christ’s superiority over angels, which would certainly include the fallen ones. How could a fallen angel possibly play a part in the divine solution to sin? Is the work of Jesus Christ somehow deficient? As Paul would say, God forbid!

### Hebrews 9

Hebrews 9 opens with a description of the earthly sanctuary and its contents. Instructions from Leviticus 16 begin in verse 7: “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance.” Verses 11-15 show Christ’s fulfillment of the cleansing ritual and how He entered the Most Holy Place in heaven with His own blood. Verse 15 points out that our promise of eternal inheritance is based on *His* mediation; neither

He nor we are awaiting Satan to fulfill any part of the sin offering. Verses 22-25 also explain Christ’s cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood, once for all, in contrast to the yearly purification of the physical sanctuary.

Comparing these explanations with the instruction in Leviticus 16, we see that both passages follow the same general order. Leviticus 16 begins with the instructions for the high priest on Atonement, just as Hebrews 2-9 presents Christ’s superior High Priesthood. Next, Leviticus 16 proceeds to the slaughter of the first goat and the use of its blood to cleanse the sanctuary and holy objects. The bulk of Hebrews 9 explains Christ’s role in fulfilling that.

The next step in Leviticus 16 is the placing of the people’s sins onto the *azazel*, coinciding with what follows in Hebrews:

. . . but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to *put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to *bear the sins* of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Hebrews 9:26-28)

After the purification of the sanctuary, the very next theme is that Christ *put away* sin. His sacrifice *alone* is sufficient for this; Satan has nothing to add to Christ’s work of salvation! We denigrate His name by suggesting that His work is somehow insufficient and that a “counterpart” is needed to fulfill half the sin offering.

The Greek word translated “put away,” *athetesis*, means “to cancel,” and it can also be translated as “disannul.” The root of this word, *atheteo*, means “to neutralize,” and can be translated as “cast off,” “despise,” and “bring to nothing.” Thus, in addition to cleansing the sanctuary, Christ’s sacrifice *put away* sin—it cancelled the sin, bringing it to nothing, for those who repent and come under His blood.

Verse 28 says that Christ’s sacrifice was for the sake of bearing the sins of many, precisely what the *azazel* did in type. In addition, He will appear a second time, apart from sin. An ancient Israelite would be horrified to see the young goat wander back into the camp because it would signify that all his sins had come back into view. Spiritual Israelites, however, have confidence that their sins have been completely removed. So, when our Savior appears again, it is not to bring those sins back into view, but to bring salvation.

*(continued on page 17)*

# Scattering and Gathering— *Images of History and Prophecy*

## PART TWO:

### THE FUGITIVES OF JACOB'S TROUBLE

Jesus Christ described the tribulation to come as a time “such as has not been from the beginning of the world” (Matthew 24:21, *English Standard Version* [ESV] throughout unless otherwise noted). It follows, then, that the scriptural types of that period, the period of Jacob’s Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7), will be in some important ways *different* from the affliction soon to befall the nations of modern Israel. For example, the burning of the Temple and “the great homes” by the Babylonians, their tearing down of Jerusalem’s walls, will be unlike the distress modern-day Israel will soon experience. The types are similar, yet different in some ways.

This similar-but-different aspect is certainly true of the various scatterings of Israel. The Assyrian-instigated deportation of the House of Israel will resemble the imminent scattering of modern-day Israel at the hand of the Beast power; even so, it will be different. The Babylonian-led deportation of the House of Judah and the exiling of the Judeans

by the Romans are like the scattering to come, yet different.

What characteristic of the impending scattering will set it apart from its predecessors, make it so unique that Christ labeled it as unlike any other time of exile in history? The images evoked by various Hebrew verbs that mean “scatter” suggest that the answer lies in something other than the intensity or the length of the distress. A study of five Hebrew verbs meaning “scatter” will allow us to identify this unique—and horrifying—trait of the scattering that is just around the corner.

### BREAKING ROCKS

#### AND SMASHING POTTERY

The verb most commonly rendered “scatter” in the Old Testament is *puwts*.<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 28:64: “And the LORD will *scatter* you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other” (emphasis ours throughout).<sup>2</sup>

While *puwts* can mean “disperse” or “scatter” in

*“The time is coming when the Lord will shake the land between the Euphrates River and the border of Egypt, and one by one He will bring all of His people together.”*

—Isaiah 27:12, *Contemporary English Version*

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a non-violent sense (see I Samuel 14:34), it can also refer to a violent dashing to pieces, as in Jeremiah 23:29: “Is not My word like fire, declares the LORD, and like a hammer that breaks [*puwts*] the rock in pieces?” Here, God likens His Word to a sledgehammer capable of crushing rocks. After a few blows, many types of rocks, once perhaps monolithic monuments, can become highly fragmented. Quarry-grade rock crushing equipment is capable of virtually disintegrating even igneous rock, like granite. *Puwts* can refer to a severe fracturing.<sup>3</sup>

The prophet Daniel’s use of *naphats*,<sup>4</sup> another verb for “scatter,” is instructive. In Daniel 12:7, the angel dressed in linen refers to a time when the “power of God’s people has been crushed [King James Version (KJV): *scatter*]” (*The Living Bible*). Other translators modify *naphats* with the adverb “completely,” as “completely shattered.”<sup>5</sup> In other places, the translators of the KJV render *naphats* as “scatter,” “break in pieces,”<sup>6</sup> and “dash in pieces.” *Naphats*’ first use, in Genesis 9, speaks of widespread dispersion, a usage it shares with *puwts*: “These were the three sons of Noah, and from them came the people who were scattered over the whole earth” (Genesis 9:19, *New International Version*).

The second psalm contains a poetic use of *naphats* that fuses this notion of widespread geographic dispersion with two other elements: disintegration and violence:<sup>7</sup>

Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession. You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware. (Psalm 2:8-9, *New American Standard Bible* [NASB])

Break a vase with a hammer, and you will have some idea of the fragmentation connoted by *naphats*.

## SIFTING GRAIN AND PURSUING LIONS

*Nuwa*,<sup>8</sup> the verb translated as “sift” and “sifted” in Amos 9:9, is even stronger:

For behold, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations and cause it to move to and fro as grain is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least kernel fall upon the earth and be lost [from My sight]. (*The Amplified Bible, Classic Edition* [AMPC])

The first use of *nuwa*, in Genesis 4:12, refers to Cain, the translators rendering it with the noun “fugitive”: “When you work the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer

on the earth.”<sup>9</sup> This is an important use of *nuwa*, evoking an image of a wanderer, a person alone, on the run, pursued, never secure. This is an image of more than fragmentation, but of isolation and alienation.

Another passage that models this use of *nuwa* is Psalm 109:10, where David sings of the sons of the wicked: “Let his children wander about and beg; and let them seek sustenance far from their ruined homes” (*NASB*). *Nuwa* appears here as “wander about and beg.” In context, the children of the wicked are dispossessed of their forefathers’ homes, begging for food far away in foreign territory. The image of the forlorn and fatigued fugitive is not far from David’s description of the fate of the sons of the wicked.

*Pazar* is yet another Hebrew verb translated “scatter.”<sup>10</sup> The imagery behind the use of this word in Jeremiah 50:17 is surely germane:

The LORD says, “The people of Israel are like sheep, chased and scattered by lions. First, they were attacked by the emperor of Assyria, and then King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylonia gnawed on their bones. (*Good News Translation* [GNT])

God depicts Israel like a flock of sheep totally broken up as predators chase its individual members in every direction, evoking still another image of the fugitive. Each individual is alone, separated, pursued, and endangered. The sheep are still there, but the flock is gone. Thus, the individual animals become easy prey.

This passage illustrates the degree of fragmentation yet to take place in Israel. Importantly, its audience is *modern* Israelites, not ancient ones, as verses 4-5 indicate. Here, Jeremiah establishes the timeframe of his comments as the regathering of Israel at the end of the Day of the Lord:

In those days and in that time, declares the LORD, the people of Israel and the people of Judah shall come together, weeping as they come, and they shall seek the LORD their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with faces turned toward it, saying, “Come, let us join ourselves to the LORD in an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten.”

None of that happened in the days of the Assyrians, Babylonians, or Romans.

## THE FUGITIVE

### AND END OF CHUNKY SCATTERING

*Zarah*<sup>11</sup> is another of the many Hebrew verbs carrying the general meaning of “scatter.” It carries much the same undertones as *nuwa* (“sift”), as it can mean

“to winnow” or “to spread widely.”<sup>12</sup> Its first use, Exodus 32:20, stresses the high granularity of what is scattered: Moses “ground to power” (that is, pulverized) the Golden Calf and scattered the dust on the water for the Israelites to drink. This is a clear image of pulverization.

Note how the prophet Ezekiel uses *zarah* in Ezekiel 5:12:

One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. (NASB)<sup>13</sup>

He predicts a time of extensive dying, as well as the scattering of a third of the Israelites “to every wind,” that is, north, south, east, and west, a widespread scattering.<sup>14</sup> Finally, he sees the violent pursuit of those so dispersed, another image of fugitive folk.

Ezekiel 1:1 gives the lie to the argument that the thrust of the prophet’s comments is historical, writing about the recent exiling of the Jews at the hands of the Babylonians. There, we learn that he was a captive, a deportee, living “among the exiles by the Chebar canal.”<sup>15</sup> He was undoubtedly in some sort of Babylonian concentration camp where captives were held while being screened for work assignments. The Babylonians had not then—and did not later—disperse their captives to all winds. Ezekiel was not isolated. Nor were his captors seeking to kill him.

Historically, none of the various scatterings of God’s people were accompanied by genocide. Though removed from the Promised Land, they ordinarily remained “chunked,” that is, in relatively large groups. (There were certainly exceptions, of course.)

- All of the children of Israel—all seventy of them—migrated *en masse* to Egypt during the time of Jacob (Genesis 26:1-27).
- More than two million of their descendants migrated as a group out of Egypt some 215 years later “with a high hand” (Exodus 12:37; 14:8). The Egyptian Pharaoh briefly, though not effectively, pursued them.
- The Assyrians deported virtually all the folk of the house of Israel to the same general area, from where they later migrated (II Kings 17:18b).
- In the three principal deportations of Judah by the Babylonians, “none remained, except the poorest people of the land” (II Kings 24:14).

While some families were certainly torn apart because of these typical scatterings, and although there were at times high death rates, the surviving deportees did not typically become permanently isolated from kith and kin. This “chunky scattering” is characteristic of the historical exiles and describes to this day the scattered Israelites.

How are they “scattered” today? In big chunks, in enclaves the size of the State of Israel, the metropolis of New York City, or on another level, Australia. Undeniably, God did broadcast Israel in many directions, far from Jerusalem. But, *as a rule*, He did so in good-sized chunks.<sup>16</sup> Ezekiel’s prophecy of scattering “to every wind” (verse 12), fleeing a pursuing sword, awaits fulfilment.

### GRANULAR REGATHERING:

#### THE RESULT OF A GRANULAR SCATTERING

As one might expect, some of the scriptures dealing with Israel’s prophesied *regathering* support the notion that her final scattering will entail a high degree of fragmentation. For example, Isaiah 27:12 describes God gathering (or gleaning) His people *individually*, one by one. It is no leap of logic to understand that He gathers them one by one because He had earlier scattered them one by one: “At that time the LORD will begin gathering his people one by one from the Euphrates River to the brook of Egypt. He will separate them from others as grain is separated from chaff” (*New Century Version*).

As a second example, Jeremiah alludes to God’s finding people in isolated situations as He works to return them to Zion: “Return, O faithless children, declares the LORD; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion” (Jeremiah 3:14). In context, this passage refers to God’s picking individuals out to return them to Zion.<sup>17</sup>

### GOD’S CHURCH AS BELLWETHER

If we look carefully, what we see in the scriptural images describing the scattering to come is this: powder, not chunks. That is, the future scattering is gross fragmentation and high levels of granularity: pulverization, atomization, isolation. In the final scattering, we are looking at images of grains of wheat, lone fugitives, wandering vagabonds, fragments of pottery, and crushed rock—people not only having lost their homes, not only widely dispersed, but also on the run, alone, or at least almost so. The degree of fragmentation in Israel’s final scattering, the one hovering over her today, will be far more significant

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than in the typical scatterings of her history. The chunks will be much smaller. The Israelites will be spread very thin.

If we look for this extreme level of fragmentation in Israel's historical scattering, we will find it only as an exception. For example, the Nazis penned the Jews of the holocaust in concentration camps. Atomization was the exception, not the rule. We do not see widespread pulverization in history; it awaits the time of Jacob's Trouble, *a time without precedent*. This level of pulverization, an intense level of fragmentation, may well be the *new* thing on the earth, the *unique and definitive* characteristic of the future scattering.<sup>18</sup>

A new thing, yet, for all that, a thing existing right now in silhouette. For we in God's true church are today witnessing—indeed, undergoing—this horrific atomization. In the closing years of the twentieth century, God pulverized the church of God. Like God's folk captive in Babylon twenty-two centuries ago, remembering Zion's heady days, we too remember what we fondly call “the old church,” with its congregations of more than 200 people, often 300 or 400. We recall the exhilaration of choosing from a plethora of feast sites, many of which had more than 3,000 attendees. Those days are gone. Our children today cannot even conceive of the church we knew then.

Today, congregations are small, many of only a handful of people. Feast sites of even 2,000 people are few and far between. If it were not for technology, communication would be exceedingly difficult. Yes, God has indeed pulverized His church.

This situation is only deteriorating; we in the church face continued and worsening isolation. What church members are now suffering, the people of national Israel will eventually experience on a vastly magnified scale. National Israel can look forward to suffering the pulverization, the pounding, of her secular civilization, as survivors of war, famine, and disease are forced into highly isolated situations, alienated from kinfolk, hated by everyone, fugitives, vagabonds, starving, sick, and apparently abandoned. If the ghetto or the concentration camp is the emblem of Israel's typical scatterings, the isolation chamber will be the emblem of her impending one.

It will be truly amazing to behold how God brings unifying order out of this soon-to-come *tohu* and *bohu*, collecting each scattered and lonely grain, “one by one and one to another,”<sup>19</sup> restoring each grain to His fold. No wonder those participating in that restoration will no longer speak of the first exodus, the second being so much more astonishing!<sup>20</sup>

—Charles F. Whitaker  
(Endnotes on page 19)

## Personal

*Leadership and Covenants*

(continued from page 6)

made, and all those things exist,” says the LORD. “But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word.”

Perhaps humility stands above all character qualities He desires to be created in us. The humble submit to Him in love. Their submission is love expressed in their actions.

Maybe His desire for humility in us is a response to Satan's pride, which destroyed him and will destroy all who follow him. Ezekiel 28:17 says of Satan, “Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor; I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings that they might gaze at you.”

The arch-rebel does not choose to be humble and submit, but being humble is clearly a choice, as I Peter 5:5-7 admonishes:

Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Those who are humble will deliberately and willingly submit to His gifts.

What have we learned from the record of Noah's experiences to this point? We must not just rush by this first mention of grace in the Bible, which God purposely and deliberately inserted here. He also intentionally used the term “found” so we will understand that Noah's conduct was a fruit of God's grace, not something inherent that made God call and use him. It was as if Noah was walking a path and came upon a great treasure that changed his entire life from then on. The Creator God put the treasure there

for him to find.

What true conclusions can we reach? Grace is a gift of God to enable us to reach our goals within His purposes. Like Adam and Eve and like Noah, we play essential roles in what is going on—but not until after God gives His gifts. Adam and Eve failed. Noah succeeded. We can see from Noah's record that grace leads to righteous conduct, walking with God, blamelessness, and making the right witness. In addition, grace provides salvation from the destruction to come. Without grace, there is no new creation.

## The Noahic Covenant Proposed

Genesis 6:13, 18-22 contains instruction from God to Noah and his response:

And God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth. . . . But I will establish My covenant with you; and you shall go into the ark—you, your sons, your wife, and your sons' wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive. And you shall take for yourself of all food that is eaten, and you shall gather it to yourself; and it shall be food for you and for them." This Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.

It is not until Genesis 8:18 that the challenging ordeal of the Flood itself is over, the ark comes to rest, and the eight survivors disembark. It is tempting to expound on this material because it is so intriguing. The evidence regarding sightings of remnants of the ark is impressive as well as controversial. Records of sightings of these remnants date from before the time of Christ and have been preserved to our time. Even Josephus testifies of it in his *Antiquities of the Jews*, which he penned for Romans to read.

However, consider Hebrews 11:6-7 in this light:

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly

fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

Men have twisted Egyptian history to make it appear that Israel could not have had contact with Egypt at the time the Bible records. Trusting in the truth of God's Word, we can conclude that God has not permitted the evidence to be confirmed because His is a work of faith, which we must exercise in our lives. The same could be said for "proof" of Noah's ark. We must answer this question to our satisfaction: Is our trust in Him and His Word or in a scrap of ancient wood some man says comes from Noah's ark?

Genesis 6:18 is notable partly because it contains the first use of the term "covenant" in Scripture, falling under the unwritten "Law of First Mention." In the remainder of the Bible, it appears 252 more times. It is a significant term because of what "covenant" means to our relationship with God.

Theologians attach many definitions to it, such as the simple "a promise." Theologian Charles Hodge defines it as "a promise suspended upon a condition, and [to which God] attached to disobedience a certain penalty." Another termed it as "a bond sovereignly administered." Modern legal terminology is adequate: "A covenant is a legal document establishing the terms of a relationship between parties involved together in the accomplishment of a purpose."

Despite Genesis 6:18 being the first time "covenant" is used, it is not the first time the sense of a covenant appears in the Bible—and definitely not the last. It is but one of many to come as God's purpose unfolds. What does a covenant accomplish that assists both God's purpose and mankind's understanding of the life the Creator has given him? Humans need a clear understanding of this question if they are to have a good relationship with God. Deuteronomy 29:29 gives the answer: "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law."

Covenants, sometimes specifically and sometimes broadly, spell out each party's responsibilities within a relationship the parties have formed to accomplish a purpose. Biblically, a covenant may not be formally proposed and executed by God with man, as the sense of a covenant within a given context may be apparent to a thoughtful reader. Thus, what researchers call the Edenic Covenant is indeed a covenant even though it is not formally proposed, as the terms of the relationship between the Creator and

those He created in Genesis 1 are easily discerned. Adam and Eve were to obey the Creator's rules as He personally revealed them and to do so without sin.

In like manner, some researchers perceive a second covenant, which they call the Adamic Covenant. Again, it is not formally proposed by God to Adam and Eve because their sins and the judgments God imposed so obviously altered life and the relationship between God and humanity. A formal declaration of a new covenant was not necessary. It appears after our first parents' sins and God's judgments, since those factors so seriously and obviously altered the relationships among all concerned.

Mark this truth well: The sins and their judgments altered not only the lives of Adam and Eve but also all who came after. Thus, their effects touch us too because those sins and God's judgments dramatically changed the world we live in (see Romans 8 for an expansion on this thought). Each covenant reveals God's purpose more explicitly to meet the demands of His purposes, but overall, as the "Big Picture" unfolds through the course of the Bible, it also reveals that His central purpose has never changed from the beginning. God declares in Malachi 3:6, "I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob."

The "Big Picture" reveals that God's purpose from the beginning has been to make man in His image and likeness. God did not cause us to sin; we have deliberately chosen to sin. We must live by faith and keep His commandments. We are saved by grace through faith, which is a gift of God. We must repent of sin and accept Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the earth, as our personal Savior. We must grow to love God with all our soul, mind, and might, and love our neighbor as ourselves.

The motivation for our submission to God has always been the wonderful mixture of trust in His Word—faith—combined with deep, personal love for Him for what He is in His character. New elements are introduced with each covenant, as God's purpose is progressively developed for mankind's clearer understanding. Each distinguishing mark of His purpose unfolds as humanity needs to understand its place in what is happening within God's creative process.

### A Few Points to Consider

The Noahic Covenant, like the Edenic Covenant, is also a universal covenant. Though it is made with Noah, its purpose is to redefine the relationship between God and all mankind in the world that arises after the Flood. Only eight people remained. At least

partly, this covenant was given so that Noah and ultimately all humanity could come to know that the Flood did not abolish the covenant following Adam's and Eve's sins and the application of God's judgments. Though the Flood was devastating, mankind is still bound to obey what was previously ordained. The Noahic covenant announces that the Flood did not change God's purpose. It did not wipe away man's original responsibilities, just the lawbreakers.

- In Genesis 9:1, God reaffirms the responsibility to repopulate the earth.
- Genesis 9:2 confirms that humanity retains dominion over animal life as in the Edenic Covenant but adds a new twist: Now animals will fear man from this time forward.
- Genesis 9:3-4 provides the first clear indication that people are permitted to eat the flesh of animals, but at the same time, they are admonished not to eat the flesh with the blood still in it. This stipulation is out of respect for the animal, as its life has been sacrificed for our benefit.
- Genesis 9:5-6 affirms the sacredness of human life with a penalty added when life is taken through murder or an animal attack. Some scholars contend that it is unthinkable to believe that there was not some form of human government before the Flood, but in any case, this provision officially and formally establishes or reestablishes it.

Genesis 9:9-10 presents us with a first regarding covenants: The covenant is directly confirmed to Noah, and not just to him but also to all his descendants and even to every living creature, both domestic and wild, beginning with those who shared the ark with Noah and left it as he did.

Genesis 9:11-17 declares God's solemn promise never to destroy all life through a flood. His guarantee—the rainbow—is something every sighted person can see, a constant reminder to all of mankind that such an overwhelming flood will never happen again. In its own way, the rainbow is also a confirmation to us that all of His covenants and all of His laws continue in force as our guides and the revelation of His way of life. We are still to use them as needed for abundant life.

In Christian love,



(continued from page 10)

## Hebrews 10

In Hebrews 10:1-4, the author continues explaining the completeness of Christ's sacrifice:

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

Part of the problem with animal sacrifices is that a consciousness of sins remains. The Israelites went through the ceremony, but spiritually, nothing happened. Christ's sacrifice, though, includes the removal of sins from consciousness, which is implied in the role of the *azazel* but not actually accomplished. Along these lines, the author of Hebrews notes three times that Christ's sacrifice cleanses the conscience (Hebrews 9:9, 14; and 10:22).

Hebrews 10:4 uses significant wording when speaking of taking away sins. The Greek word, *aphaireo*, has familiar meanings and implications. Its basic meaning is "to remove," while it can also be translated as "cut off." The author uses terminology that exactly describes the *azazel*, the goat of "complete removal" (as *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* renders it) that bears the sins to a land that is "cut off."

Certainly, nothing involving animals can do that. But Christ's sacrifice was both necessary and entirely sufficient to deal with sin. He became sin for us (II Corinthians 5:21) and was cut off. He paid the death penalty, giving us access to the Father, as well as bearing the sin into forgetfulness and cleansing the consciences of those who accept Him.

Hebrews 10:10 reads, "By that will we *have been sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ *once for all*." The sanctification to which this refers has already been performed by Christ; we are not still waiting for Satan to bear sins in the future. If we are still awaiting the final resolution for sin, how can we say that we will "put on incorruption, and . . . immortality" at the first resurrection (I Corinthians 15:53-54), given that Satan is not bound until *after* Christ returns and not cast into the Lake of Fire until after the Great White Throne Judgment? In type, we

would still be waiting all that time for our sins to be completely removed!

Hebrews 10:12-14 declares that Christ, "after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified." As mentioned, the fact that He "sat down" shows that the entire work (regarding sacrifice, atonement, bearing the sins, removing transgression, etc.) is already complete. It is not dependent on "Act II"—something involving Satan in the future.

Hebrews 10:17-18 completes the explanation: "then He adds, 'Their sins and their lawless deeds *I will remember no more*.' Now where there is remission of these, there is *no longer an offering for sin*."

Jeremiah 31:34 foretells that under the New Covenant, God would not remember sins and lawless deeds. Simply put, sins are not remembered because they have been borne to the "land of forgetfulness." The author then takes the explanation a step farther, showing that once remission of sin has been accomplished, there is "no longer an offering for sin." That is, the role of the *azazel*—the second part of the compound offering for sin (Leviticus 16:5)—has *already* been fulfilled! We *already* have remission of sins; there is not a future fulfillment of any sin offering that those who are already under Christ's blood should be waiting for.

## Deafening Silence

Reading through Hebrews 9-10 should impress us with all that Christ has accomplished for us. It also helps us to recognize the astounding incongruity of allowing Satan to be inserted anywhere in God's solution to sin.

To summarize, we have no biblical justification for blaming Satan for our sins. There is no reason to have our sins placed on his head, nor for his sins—which Leviticus 16 does not even contemplate—to separate us from God (see Isaiah 59:1-2). Scripture is deafeningly silent about the Devil bearing human sins in any way—not even a whisper as to why such a task would be given to a sinning angel. The only reason Satan has even a toehold in Leviticus 16 is the extra-biblical tradition that names *azazel* as a fallen angel.

The inspired Scriptures are completely devoid of any support for Satan being part of the atonement for sin, while they give abundant, unimpeachable witnesses of Jesus Christ's final and efficacious atonement. As Hebrews 12:2 declares, He is "the author and finisher of our faith."

—David C. Grabbe

# Is Wide-Open Abortion Coming?

Recently, a handful of medical associations in the United Kingdom (UK) have gone on record in support of extreme abortion policies that push the legal limits of abortion far beyond what is allowed in the United States. LifeNews.com, the website of an American pro-life organization, carried an article on September 22, 2017, titled, “In Shocking Vote, British Doctors Endorse Legalizing Unlimited Abortions Up to Birth,” reporting:

The [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists’ (RCOG)] General Council voted to support the removal of all criminal sanctions associated with abortion in the UK. Only 33 council members were allowed to vote on this important issue, despite the RCOG having 14,000 members, fellows, and associates.

Currently abortion on demand is only legal in Britain up to 24 weeks and late-term abortions on unborn babies after that point are limited. The vote endorses opening up abortion throughout pregnancy for any reason.

This move comes as no surprise to those familiar with this organization. The RCOG and the British abortion industry have been allies for decades. Moreover, in a national newspaper interview, RCOG President Lesley Regan, a professor and a practicing obstetrician and gynecologist for 33 years, has compared a woman getting an abortion to the removal of a bunion, calling for abortion to be decriminalized.

This vote comes on the heels of the Royal College of Midwives and the British Medical Association both deciding within the last year-and-a-half to adopt similar abortion policies. Members of these groups support extending the legal period of abortion to seven months, beyond the point of a fetus’ ability to survive outside the womb. Many abortion advocates in these groups have said that they would go even further. The article continues:

Decriminalization would mean abortions basically would be legal for any reason up to birth in the UK. Currently, abortions are illegal after 24 weeks, except in cases of rape, fetal anomalies, or risks to the woman’s life. Women also must receive the permission of two doctors before undergoing an abortion.

In other words, the RCOG and other medical groups are pushing for the removal of all legal restrictions on abortion. In doing so, they are advocating for the repeal of Britain’s 1967 Abortion Act, saying that the decision to have an abortion should be a medical decision—not a criminal matter—between a woman and her doctor.

When this decision is made within the gestation period is, to them, not a matter of deep concern. Indeed, depending on how the law is interpreted, as legal experts and abortion opponents have noted, abortion could become legal

throughout all nine months of pregnancy. If such a repeal were to pass Parliament, these horrific acts would become possible:

- Legalize the killing of a healthy and fully-formed baby in the womb the day before its birth.
- Make forced abortions easier to perform and more difficult to prosecute.
- Make sex-selection, a developing crisis in the UK, legal.

Only the 33 RCOG council members participated in this vote. As the LifeNews.com article states, the general membership of the college was not consulted on this vital issue, nor was the public. However, a group of 650 British doctors immediately objected to RCOG President Regan’s position on the matter, writing that it essentially endorses infanticide since it supports aborting viable, late-term unborn babies for any reason. They continue:

We represent a variety of positions on the issue of abortion, but believe this motion is out of keeping with both our duties as responsible professionals and the expressed wishes of British women with regards to the legality and regulation of abortion.

Recent polls of the British public show that only 1% of British women support extending the period during which abortions are permitted. In addition, 70% of British women want the current limits for abortion to remain as they are, and 59% of them would like the limit lowered to 16 weeks or fewer. More than nine in ten want an explicit sex-selection ban.

Thankfully, these tragic standards have not been made into law; they are proposals. But it is horrific to contemplate that the leadership of these three medical organizations are pushing outright murder! They are expressing and promoting unthinkably callous, murderous standards. To them, human life in the image of God means nothing!

These leaders are descending into the debased standards of ancient Rome, under which the father had complete control over whether a newborn lived or died, and he suffered no fear of intervention by the authorities. The baby’s life meant nothing unless the father deemed it was worthy to live. Israel sank to the same basic standards when they sacrificed children to Molech (II Kings 17:17; II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35; etc.).

These attitudes are moving humanity yet another slimy step into the swamp. We agonize, “How much worse can it get?” But apparently, we have a way to go before we are completely sucked under.

—John W. Ritenbaugh

ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Puwts* is *Strong's Concordance* #6327 and appears 67 times in the Old Testament. The translators of the KJV render it "scatter" (48x), "scatter abroad" (6x), "disperse" (3x), "spread abroad," "cast abroad" (2x each), "drive," "break to pieces," "shake to pieces," "dash to pieces, and "retired" (1x each). Its first use is in Genesis 10:18. It is also the word rendered "scatter" or "disperse" in Genesis 11:9, referring to God's scattering about the earth of the people building Babel.

<sup>2</sup> Another example is at Ezekiel 20:23. There, two verbs meaning "scatter" appear in close proximity: *Puwts* (rendered "scatter" in the ESV) and *zarah* (rendered "dispersed" in the same version). Regarding *zarah*, see xiii, below, for details.

<sup>3</sup> As another example, see Job's comments in Job 16:12.

<sup>4</sup> The verb *naphats* (*Strong's* #5310) appears 22 times in the Old Testament. The KJV translators render it "break in pieces" (9x), "scatter," "break" (3x each), "dash" (2x), "discharged," "dispersed," "overspread," "dash in pieces," and "sunder" (each 1x). Often, *naphats* carries a strong notion of pulverization, as in Isaiah 27:9b (*International Standard Version*): "... when he [Israel] makes all the altar stones like pulverized chalkstones."

<sup>5</sup> Examples include the *New King James Version*, the *Names of God Bible*, and the *GOD'S WORD Translation* (GWT).

<sup>6</sup> Examples include the *World English Bible* and the *American Standard Version*.

<sup>7</sup> Another well-known place this verb appears is the incident where Gideon's men broke the pitchers in their attack on the Midianites (Judges 7:19).

<sup>8</sup> *Nuwa* (*Strong's* #5128) appears 42 times in the Old Testament. The KJV translators render it "shake," "move," "wander" (each 6x), "promoted" (3x), "fugitive" (2x), "sift," "stagger," and "wag (each 1x), with 13 miscellaneous translations.

<sup>9</sup> The noun "wanderer" is related to the Hebrew verb, *nud* (*Strong's* #5110), which appears 24 times in the Old Testament. The KJV translators render it "bemoan" (7x), "remove" (5x), "vagabond" (2x), "flee," "get," "mourn," "move," "pity," "shaken," "skippedst," "sorry," "wag," and "wandering" (each 1x).

<sup>10</sup> *Pazar* (*Strong's* #6340) appears ten times in the Old Testament, where the KJV translators render it "scattered" (9x) and "dispersed" (1x). In its first use in Esther 3:8, the Agagite Haman, talking to the Persian king, describes the Jews as "scattered."

<sup>11</sup> *Zarah* is *Strong's* #2219. It appears 39 times in the Old Testament. The KJV translators render it "scatter" (19x), "disperse" (8x), "fan" (4x), "spread," "winnowed" (2x each), "cast away," "scatter away," "compass," and "strawed" (1x each).

<sup>12</sup> The New Testament equivalent of *nuwa* seems to be *diaskorpizō* (*Strong's* #1287), meaning "to scatter," "to disperse," and "to winnow." This verb appears nine times in the New Testament, where its first use is in Matthew 25:24. The KJV translators render it as "straw," "scatter abroad," "scatter," "waste" (2x each), and "disperse" (1x).

Another Greek verb often translated "scatter" is *skorpizō* (*Strong's* #4650, obviously related to *diaskorpizo*). It appears five times in the New Testament; its first use is at Matthew 12:30. "Whoever is not with Me is against me, and

whoever does not gather with Me scatters." The KJV translators render *skorpizō* as "scatter" (2x), "scattered abroad," and "disperse abroad" (1x each).

Finally, the use of *skorpizo* in John 16:32, is noteworthy. There, Christ refers to the scattering of His disciples, "each one looking out for himself" (*Complete Jewish Bible*), or "Each of you will go your own way and leave me all alone" (GWT). *The Voice* conveys the concept of total fragmentation, to the point of isolation: "Be aware that a time is coming when you will be scattered like seeds. You will return to your own way, and I will be left alone."

<sup>13</sup> Additionally, the second use of *zarah* in the Old Testament (Leviticus 26:33) reflects the Ezekiel 5 passage: "And I will scatter you among the nations, and I will unsheathe the sword after you . . ."

<sup>14</sup> In this passage, the Hebrew noun for "wind" is *ruwach* (*Strong's* #7307). This word, often rendered "spirit" in the Old Testament, appears 378 times, first in Genesis 1:2, where the KJV translators render it "Spirit": "and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." They render *ruwach* as "spirit" (232x), "wind" (92x), "breath" (27x), "side" (6x), "mind" (5x), "blast" (4x), "vain" (2x), "air," "anger," "cool," and "courage" (1x each), with six miscellaneous translations.

"Every" in Ezekiel 5:12 (*NASB*, often "all" in other versions) is *kol* (*Strong's* #3605), meaning "all," "every," "the whole." Its first use is at Genesis 1:21: "... and every living creature that moves." *Ruwach* modified by *kol* occurs only four times in the Old Testament, once in Jeremiah and three times in Ezekiel.

<sup>15</sup> The Hebrew noun *tavek* (*Strong's* #8432, appearing 415 times in the Old Testament) is the word generally translated "among," "in the midst of," or "with." The KJV translators render it "midst" (209x), "among" (140x), "within" (20x), "middle" (7x), "in" (6x), "between" (3x), "through," and "into" (2x each), with 23 miscellaneous translations. It first appears in Genesis 1:6: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters."

<sup>16</sup> A good example is the scattering of Israel into the North American continent. Notable cases aside, of course, migrants came to these coasts with their families, not as individuals.

<sup>17</sup> As a matter of fact, God plays on the verb *pazar* ("to scatter") in verse 13, referring to the idolatry of apostate Israel. For more information about *pazar*, see note x. The verb in the clause "I will take you" of Jeremiah 3:14 is *laqach* ("fetch"), discussed in Part One of this series.

<sup>18</sup> None of this is to deny that the Time of Jacob's Trouble will be one of vast economic duress and financial displacement. Notice Deuteronomy 28:68:

The LORD will send you back to Egypt in ships, even though he said that you would never have to go there again. There you will try to sell yourselves to your enemies as slaves, but no one will want to buy you. (GNT)

The scattering to come will involve geographical spread, as it always has, but more than that, employers will be unable (or willing) to provide work for migrant Israelites.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 27:12 (AMPC).

<sup>20</sup> See Jeremiah 16:14-15; 23:7-8.

## The Book of Life

For centuries, humanity has recognized the need for keeping written records in the administration of government. In fact, within the United States, each city, county, and state is tasked with cataloging copious records of significant events and legal transactions within its respective purview. Every law passed is recorded. Voting requires registration. Each birth, death, marriage, divorce, real estate transaction, traffic offense, and property tax bill makes it into an official registry.

However, despite man's long history of record-keeping, the Bible teaches us that the first registry belongs to God. It is known as the Book of Life. Here, we consider its purpose and significance to the professing Christian.



### 1. What is the Book of Life?

**COMMENT:** Numerous biblical passages reference one or more books that God uses to record the names and significant details of each living person (Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23; Daniel 12:1; Malachi 3:16; Revelation 21:27). Apparently, God will use these records in each person's judgment:

And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. . . . And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of Fire. (Revelation 20:12, 15)

In Psalm 69:27-28, the psalmist entreats God, "Add iniquity to their iniquity, and let them not come into Your righteousness. Let them be blotted out of the book of the living."

In naming this book, the passage in Revelation 20 uses the Greek words *biblion zoe* (*Strong's* #975 and #2222): literally, "book life." Psalm 69 contains the Hebrew words *sepher* (*Strong's* #5612) and *chay* (*Strong's* #2416), which can be translated as a "book, register, or scroll of living things."

By implication, then, God records every thought and action of every person who has ever lived. From this record, He will enact His final judgment, determining those attaining eternal life or eternal death. Those receiving the reward of eternal life will have their names entered into the Book of Life.

While many Bible scholars teach that there are two different books, the Book of Life and the Book of the Living, it is difficult to delineate between the two, as they would seem to share the same purpose and function.

2. Is the Book of Life a real book, or is it just a metaphor for God's mind and judgment?

**COMMENT:** In Revelation 20:12, the apostle John declares that he "saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life." Although John was experiencing a vision (Revelation 1:10), the text does not indicate that we should consider this verse as figurative. In fact, Christ's instructions were for John to write "*what you see*" (emphasis ours throughout). Perhaps we can say that the Book of Life represents a broad metaphor for God's ultimate will and judgment for all men, but we should understand it to be a literal book. John explicitly expresses that he witnessed books being opened.

### 3. Why does God need a Book of Life?

**COMMENT:** While no scripture answers this question directly, we can infer from our knowledge of God's nature (I John 4:8) that such a book exists for the benefit of His children—and not to jog His memory! It helps to reveal that our great God is a God of order (I Corinthians 14:33, 40) and that He keeps meticulous records of our lives (Hebrews 6:10). Moreover, since mankind has long dealt with governmental record-keeping, the very idea that such a registry exists adds a touch of real-life urgency to our goal of overcoming.

4. How does a person get his name placed into the Book of Life, and once in, can a name be removed?

**COMMENT:** In His message to each of the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3, Christ emphasizes that we must overcome our sinful natures to have our names written in the Book of Life (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21).

In Revelation 3:5, however, our Creator indicates that there is no eternal security: "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, *and I will not blot out his name* from the Book of Life." Add to this Revelation 22:19, Exodus 32:33, and Deuteronomy 29:20 (among others), and it is clear that God would remove a name written in the Book of Life should its owner turn away from his commitment to Him.

—Martin G. Collins