

THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS

“And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do’” (Luke 23:33-34).

“And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, ‘KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS’” (Revelation 19:11-16).

Many Christians cannot reconcile these contrasting images of Jesus. They'd prefer to worship a Jesus who, while on the stake, asks His Father to forgive His murderers, accusers, and mockers. They'd prefer not to dwell on a returning, angry Jesus who “judges and wages war,” whose “robe is dipped in blood,” and whose teeth clenches a very “sharp sword.”

Every year at Christmas these same Christians celebrate the bucolic scene of the Nativity, in which the baby Jesus is wrapped in cloths and laid in a manger (Luke 2:7). Perhaps they don't realize that Jesus is prophesied to return with an army to execute justice on evildoers and on the armies and nations who are persecuting His Church and people (the modern-day nations of Israel, including the United States and Great Britain). “Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south” (Zechariah 14:1-4).

Indeed, this day of the Lord will not be pleasant to everyone: “Behold, the LORD makes the earth empty and makes it waste.... It shall come to pass in that day that the LORD will punish on high the host of exalted ones, and on the earth the kings of the earth. They will be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and will be shut up in the prison; after many days they will be punished. Then the moon will be disgraced and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously”

(Isaiah 24:1, 21-23). And, “The LORD gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” (Joel 2:11).

Many Christians recoil from this violent, angry image of a vengeful Christ who “will arise and make the earth tremble” (Isaiah 2:21). But they shouldn’t be surprised. After all, in several places the Bible states that “vengeance” belongs to the Lord: “For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion” (Isaiah 34:8).

Jesus personifies love and mercy. These attributes are epitomized by Jesus forgiving men from the stake, commonly referred to as the cross. But Jesus will return as an angry warrior. He’s unhappy and will “punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud and abase the haughtiness of the ruthless” (Isaiah 13:11). Indeed, on that day, “those slain by the Lord will be many” (Isaiah 66:16).

Many people subconsciously consider Jesus as one-dimensional. “Since the evangelical century of the 1800s, America’s Protestant majority has gravitated toward a Mister Rogers Jesus, a neighborly fellow they could know and love and imitate” (Stephen Prothero, *The Personal Jesus*, an op-ed article in the *New York Times*, 2/29/04). The contrasting images of Jesus – a babe in swaddling clothes, a severely beaten man forgiving men with his dying breaths; and a vengeful warrior who will return to execute justice and retribution, and to rule the nations with a rod of iron (Revelation 19:15) – are thus confusing. This begs the question, who was Jesus, why did He come here, and what did He say?

Before we answer those questions, we must first realize that Satan is God’s archenemy, who has distorted both the biblical image of Jesus and His message.

The god of this world

“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the *god of this world* has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God” (II Corinthians 4:4).

Paul refers to Satan as the “prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2), and as the “god of this world” (II Corinthians 4:4). Satan is a master at deception: “And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9).

Since Satan is God’s archenemy, then it’s safe to assume he has distorted God’s truth. For example, many Christians believe that Jesus came to save the world, then and there. Jesus said otherwise: “And a Canaanite woman from that region came out and began to cry out, saying, ‘Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is cruelly demon-possessed.’ But He did not answer her a word. And His disciples came and implored Him, saying, ‘Send her away, because she keeps shouting at us.’ But He answered and said, ‘I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel’” (Matthew 15:23-26). At that time Jesus was not extending God’s grace to the Gentiles; that came later.

Moreover, God is not revealing His truth to everyone, at least not yet. “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables?’ Jesus answered them, ‘To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted’” (Matthew 13:10-11).

God has not revealed His truth to everyone. And Satan is the “god of this world” who has deceived the nations. Satan has distorted the truth of God, and Jesus’ message. His lies begin with Christmas.

The real birthday of Jesus: during the Feast of Tabernacles, in the fall

Any discussion of Jesus must begin with His birth, and then proceed to His ministry, death and resurrection.

Satan would have us believe that Jesus was born in December; hence the Christmas celebration. However, if you strip Christ from Christmas, you’re left with the pagan Roman celebration of Saturnalia. “Historians are unsure exactly when Christians first began celebrating the Nativity of Christ. However, most scholars believe that *Christmas originated in the 4th century as a Christian substitute for pagan celebrations of the winter solstice. Before the introduction of Christmas, each year beginning on December 17 Romans honored Saturn, the ancient god of agriculture, in a festival called Saturnalia. This festival lasted for seven days and included the winter solstice, which usually occurred around December 25 on the ancient Julian calendar.* During Saturnalia the Romans feasted, postponed all business and warfare, exchanged gifts, and temporarily freed their slaves. Many Romans also celebrated the lengthening of daylight following the winter solstice by participating in rituals to glorify Mithra, the ancient Persian god of light. These and other winter festivities continued through January 1, the festival of Kalends, when Romans marked the day of the new moon and the first day of the month and year” (*MSN Encarta Encyclopedia*, web edition, emphasis mine). Aside from the pagan roots of Christmas, Jesus was not born in winter. He was born in the fall.

Mary and Joseph were forced, by a decree from Caesar Augustus, to travel to Joseph’s hometown of Bethlehem to register for a worldwide census (Luke 2:1-7). It’s apparent that God inspired Caesar to decree a census in which people had to register in their hometowns. Bethlehem was the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah (Micah 5:2). And Mary was in her ninth month of pregnancy when they traveled to Bethlehem. The pieces of this puzzle were falling in place.

Many Christians nonchalantly assume that this trip to Bethlehem occurred in the winter. However, Caesar Augustus would not jeopardize this census by calling for arduous travel during the harsh winter months. And winter travel wasn’t easy in Judea. In His Olivet prophecy of end-time events, Jesus said, “But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! *And pray that your flight may not be in winter or on the Sabbath*” (Matthew 24:19-20). Even Jesus concluded that the Judean winter was not the ideal time for travel, especially for pregnant women.

“So it was that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:6-7). Jesus was born during that trip to Joseph’s hometown of Bethlehem.

During Jesus’ birth, shepherds were tending their flock in the field, at night (Luke 2:8). Because of the cold (remember Jesus’ warning about flight in the winter), shepherds did not tend their flock by night in the winter. Therefore, Jesus could not have been born in December.

When was He born? In the fall, probably on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Apostle John provides a significant clue: “And the Word became flesh and *dwelt* among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). John’s book was written in Greek, and the Greek word for “dwelt” is tabernacle. The symbolism is unmistakable: Jesus was “made flesh” and *tabernacled* among us on the first day of the *Feast of Tabernacles*, which occurs in September or October.

The Bible states that Jesus was born in the reign of Herod the Great, who died in 4 BC. Many scholars believe that Jesus was born in that year. If He was born during the Feast of Tabernacles, as the apostle John suggests, and if He was born in 4 BC, Jesus was therefore born on September 29th (the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles in that year). Thirty-three and one-half years later Jesus died on the stake, on the day of Passover. This brings us to the spring of 31 AD.

Jesus’ birthday in the fall can be logically deduced by subtracting seven months from the date of His death. Jesus’ ministry lasted three years and six months. It began around His thirtieth birthday (Luke 3:23 – Jesus was “about” 30 years old), and expired three years and six months later, at His death on Passover. Therefore, Jesus’ ministry began not on His birthday but shortly thereafter; probably no more than a month later. If we subtract six months from Passover in 31 AD (April 25th of that year), we are brought to late October. However, because Jesus’ ministry started not on His birthday but shortly thereafter, we must deduct another few weeks to a month. This brings us to late September. As stated in the foregoing paragraph, if Jesus was born in September of 4 BC, and realizing that the Feast of Tabernacles began on September 29th in that year, then it’s difficult to escape from the conclusion that Jesus was born during the Feast of Tabernacles, in the early fall.

Considering that (i) the shepherds did not tend their flocks by night in the cold winter; (ii) the census probably did not occur in the winter; (iii) John’s allusion to Jesus’ birth during the Feast of Tabernacles; and by (iv) subtracting seven months from the expiry of Jesus’ ministry at Passover (in the early Spring) - we can only conclude that Jesus was born not on December 25th but in the early fall, probably in late September, during the Feast of Tabernacles. (Even if the foregoing timetables are off by some weeks, there is anecdotal evidence – in the first chapter of John, shepherds *not* tending their flocks at night in the winter, etc. – to suggest that Jesus was born in the early fall, probably during the Feast of Tabernacles.)

Some Christians may ask, “So what?” Well, God’s truth is important and relevant, and we should realize that Satan has subverted it by inspiring nominal Christians to adopt December

25th as Jesus' birthday. "The Roman Catholic Church chose December 25 as the day for the Feast of the Nativity in order to give Christian meaning to existing pagan rituals. For example, the Church replaced festivities honoring the birth of Mithra, the god of light, with festivities to commemorate the birth of Jesus, whom the Bible calls the light of the world. The Catholic Church hoped to draw pagans into its religion by allowing them to continue their revelry while simultaneously honoring the birthday of Jesus" (*MSN Encarta Encyclopedia*, web edition). The early Roman Catholic Church might have had good intentions in trying to convert the gentiles by Christianizing pagan rituals. But in doing so, they undermined the truth of God.

Why is it important to realize that Jesus was born not on December 25th but during the Feast of Tabernacles? ***Because Satan does not want us to learn about the Feast of Tabernacles!*** Once we realize that Jesus was born during this Feast, our next logical question is, "What is the Feast of Tabernacles?"

The Feast of Tabernacles is one of the seven festivals of God. "The feasts of the LORD, which you shall proclaim to be holy convocations, ***these are My feasts***" (Leviticus 23:1). Therefore, these Festivals and Holy Days (including the seventh-day Sabbath) do not belong solely to the Jewish people. Jesus will dispel this misconception when He decrees that everyone must keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the Millennium: "And it shall come to pass that *everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles*" (Zechariah 14:16).

Satan has deceived nominal Christians into believing that Jesus was born on December 25th, thus concealing His real birth in the early fall (probably September 29th), on the first day of God's Feast of Tabernacles. This Feast and the other Festivals and Holy Days reveal God's seven-step plan for man:

1. **Passover:** Acceptance of Jesus as our atoning sacrificial Lamb that was foreshadowed by the ancient Passover sacrifice;
2. **Feast of Unleavened Bread:** In accepting the sacrifice of the unleavened "bread from heaven," that is, Jesus (John 6:41), and understanding that, biblically, leaven represents sin (I Corinthians 5:7), Paul thus urges us to "***keep the feast*** (of Unleavened Bread), not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (I Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. **Pentecost**, anciently the *Feast of Firstfruits*: Those who have God's Spirit are called firstfruits (I Corinthians 15:23), and Jesus was the First of the firstfruits (same verse). Pentecost is also the birthday of God's Church, which is the collection of God's saints or firstfruits.
4. **Feast of the Memorial of the Blowing of Trumpets:** The plan of God unfolds in these Festivals. Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread point back to Christ, as does Pentecost in pointing us back to the birthday of the Church. Sequentially, the Feast of the Memorial of Blowing of Trumpets looks forward to the return of Jesus

and the first resurrection: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the ***trumpet of God***, and the dead in Christ will rise first” (I Thessalonians 4:16).

5. **Day of Atonement:** What happens after Jesus returns? The banishment of Satan, itself symbolized in an ancient Israelite ceremony conducted on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The ceremony foreshadowed Jesus’ sacrifice in the first century and Satan’s banishment during the Millennium. Only at that time will man be “at one” with God.
6. **Feast of Tabernacles:** After Satan has been banished, Jesus will establish His Kingdom. We shall be kings and priests in that Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). Since this Feast follows the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles then represents the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.
7. **The Last Great Day** immediately follows the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles. This Day represents the second resurrection for everyone not resurrected one thousand years earlier, and the ensuing 100-year judgment period in which everyone will have an opportunity for salvation.

By convincing man that Jesus was born on December 25th, and not on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, Satan has diverted Christians from inquiring about God’s Holy Days and Festivals, which reveal His plan for mankind. By diverting people from inquiring about these Holy Days and Festivals, Satan has concealed the plan of God. And Jesus came to inaugurate this plan.

Who was Jesus?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ***He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.*** In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There came a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light. There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. ***He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.*** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to ***become children of God***, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:1-13).

These thirteen scriptures reveal so much about Jesus and His mission:

1. **“He was in the beginning with God...”** Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. He identified Himself as the Lord God who spoke to Moses: “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I AM’” (John 8:58). By stating “I AM,” Jesus identified Himself as the Lord God who spoke to Moses through the burning bush:

“Then Moses said to God, ‘Behold, I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you.’ Now they may say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say to them? God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM’; and He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:13-14).

2. **“He was in the beginning with God.”** The Godhead consists of God the Father and Jesus Christ: “yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and we exist for Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we exist through Him” (I Corinthians 8:6). Realizing that the Godhead consists of only God the Father and Jesus, we can then identify “Us” in Genesis 1:26 - “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.’”
3. **“The Word”** is translated from the Greek word *Logos*, which means “speaking, a message, or words” (The Bible Knowledge Commentary, volume II, pg. 271). In other words, Jesus was the spokesman for the Godhead. Jesus spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He identified Himself as “I AM” to Moses. He delivered the Ten Commandments.
4. **The world was made through Him.”** Jesus created the world. He said to God the Father, “Let Us make man in Our image,” and then proceeded to form Adam from the clay of the earth.
5. **“He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.”** When confronted by a Canaanite woman, Jesus responded, “I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 15:24). Indeed, the Israelites are lost – “My people have been a lost sheep” (Jeremiah 50:6) – and Jesus was sent to reclaim them. However, “those who were His own did not receive Him.”
6. **“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”** This scripture answers the eternal question, “Why were we born?” Simple: to become the children of God.

The meaning of life

“For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:15-17).

God is creating children. His Spirit interacts with our spirit (the “spirit in man” – Job 32:8, I Corinthians 2:11) to create a new creature in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17). We are then begotten, or conceived, by God. This is analogous to human creation. When our fathers’ sperm united with our mothers’ egg, we were conceived and born nine months later. Likewise, God’s

Spirit unites with our spirit to create a new spiritual creature in Christ. We are spiritually conceived but not yet born. The nine months we spend in our mothers' womb is analogous to the lifetime we spend nurturing this new creature in Christ. We feed it through Bible study, prayer, fasting, and obedience to God.

Although our temporal bodies decay daily, this new creature in Christ is renewed: "Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Corinthians 4:16-18).

Paul contrasts our fleshy bodies, which he calls "tabernacles" or "tents," with the spiritual new creature in Christ. "For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life" (II Corinthians 5:1-4). We "groan" in our temporal bodies, forever yearning for the day when our spiritual bodies will emerge. The difference between our physical and spiritual bodies is almost indescribable. "There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (I Corinthians 15:40-44).

We cannot inherit the Kingdom of God in our temporal bodies. But the new creature in Christ will: "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed" (I Corinthians 15:50-52).

At the resurrection, this new creature in Christ is born. If we're living when Jesus returns, we'll be changed. If not, God will resurrect us, or rather, the new creature in Christ. We'll shed our temporal bodies and be clothed with immortality. This will occur in the "twinkling of an eye." At one moment, we're flesh; at another, spirit beings. Jesus described the spirit body to Nicodemus: "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit" (John 3:7-8).

The meaning of life is that God is creating a family who are conceived at baptism, through the receipt of His Spirit when hands are laid on them, and born when Jesus returns.

Jesus became the *firstborn from the dead* – “and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead” (Revelation 1:15) – and thus the *firstborn of God’s family*.

Jesus, His life and message

Jesus came to earth to become the firstborn from the dead, and the firstborn into God’s family. “Firstborn” implies that others will be born from the dead and into God’s family. When will this occur? “But now *Christ has been raised from the dead*, the *first fruits of those who are asleep*. For since by a man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own order: *Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming*, then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. *For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet*” (I Corinthians 15:20-25).

As with the first chapter of John, these scriptures reveal so much about Jesus’ mission:

- a) “*Christ has been raised from the dead....*” On several occasions Jesus predicted His death and resurrection: “From that time Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day” (Matthew 16:21). But His disciples “did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:9). This begs the question: why did Jesus die?

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Jesus died so that we may “not perish.” He became our sin offering: “God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a *sin offering*” (Romans 8:3). Jesus’ sacrifice removed the penalty, or curse, of the Law from us: “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). Because sin is defined as the transgression of God’s Law (I John 3:4), and because everyone has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), then we’re doomed without the sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf.

- b) “*The first fruits of those who are asleep.*” Jesus became the firstborn from the dead, and the firstborn of God’s family. This implies that there are others, who are collectively known as the Church. Jesus built His Church, and sent them (and those who have followed them) to “make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). However, His disciples – the Church – will not succeed in converting the entire world before Jesus returns. They will not have finished “going through the *cities of Israel* until the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23).

People who have God’s Spirit are called *firstfruits*. In other words, they’ve received God’s Spirit, and are thus His children who will be raised or changed when Jesus returns (I Thessalonians 4, I Corinthians 15, John 6). People who died (“asleep in Jesus”) will

be raised in the first resurrection, but the “rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years (of Christ’s Millennial Kingdom) were completed” (Revelation 20:5). This implies that Jesus inaugurated God’s plan that began with His death at Passover, and continued in the creation of His Church at Pentecost, and continues in the begetting of new sons and daughters of God (at baptism), and that will culminate in the establishment of the millennial Kingdom of God and the eventual transfer of God the Father’s throne to a transformed earth.

- c) ***“Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ’s at His coming.”*** Jesus inaugurated God’s Plan when He died for us on that stake. And He became the First of the first fruits from the dead and of God’s family. The rest of God’s *firstfruits* – Paul, Peter, hopefully you and I – will be resurrected into God’s family when Jesus returns. What will we do for eternity? We’ll rule as kings and priests in God’s Kingdom (Revelation 5:10). This is why Jesus continuously preached the gospel (literally, “good news”) of the future Kingdom of God (Mark 1:15, Mark 4:11, etc.) In response to the imploring and clingy crowds, Jesus said, ***“I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose”*** (Luke 4:42-43).

Jesus will establish that Kingdom upon His return, and shortly after the banishment of Satan: “Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he threw him into the abyss, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he would not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time” (Revelation 20:1-3).

Right now Satan is the god of this world (II Corinthians 4:4). The greatest struggle that ever occurred was between Satan and Jesus. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil....Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, ‘All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Go, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve him only’’ (Matthew 4:1, 8-10). A lot was riding on this encounter. Satan appeared as the ruler of this world. Jesus disqualified Satan by overcoming his temptations. By doing so, Jesus qualified to become King of kings in the future Kingdom of God. And we, as *firstfruits*, will rule with Him.

- d) ***“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”*** Jesus did not establish His Kingdom in the first century. He continuously preached a gospel about the future Kingdom of God. He and His saints will reign for a thousand years, and they will enforce God’s laws: “And many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into

plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war” (Isaiah 2:3-4).

“The law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” This is the Law of God: the Ten Commandments, the dietary laws, God’s Holy Days and Festivals, etc. Paul said, “So then, the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Romans 7:12). Jesus magnified the Law of God: “The LORD is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake; He will exalt the law and make it honorable” (Isaiah 42:21).

Not only did He make God’s law honorable but Jesus also qualified to become our High Priest. As High Priest, Jesus intercedes daily on our behalf. Jesus is empathetic: “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). As High Priest, and sitting on the right hand of God the Father, Jesus acts as our Counselor who pleads for mercy when we repent of sin. Conversely, Satan is like the vengeful, unfair and malevolent prosecutor who “accuses” us “before our God day and night” (Revelation 12:10).

A short summary of Jesus

Jesus was the Lord God of the Old Testament (John 1:1), the second deity in the Godhead (I Corinthians 8:6), who became our sin offering (Romans 8:3). While here He taught a gospel about the future Kingdom of God on earth, and referred to our roles as kings and priests in it. He commissioned a Church (Greek: *Ekklesia*, an assembly of called out people) to preach this gospel to the world. However, His disciples – then and now – won’t be able to convert the entire world before He returns; indeed, they will not “finish going through the *cities of Israel* until the Son of Man comes” (Matthew 10:23). Jesus will return to establish His Kingdom. As kings and priests (Revelation 5:10), we’ll help enforce God’s laws, and the observance of His Holy days and Festivals (Zechariah 14:16).

Jesus magnified the Law of God (Matthew 5,6 & 7; Isaiah 42:21). He has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Galatians 3:13), that is, death and eternal separation from God. In essence, He spiritualized the law. And in no way did He abolish it.

Jesus did not nail the Law of God to the stake

“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:17-19).

Jesus did not abolish God’s law; they weren’t nailed to His stake. Just the opposite: He magnified the law, as foretold by Isaiah the prophet: “The LORD is well pleased for His

righteousness' sake; ***He will exalt the law and make it honorable***" (Isaiah 42:21). In fact, Jesus spiritualized the Law of God. Keeping the letter of the Law was no longer enough; we must keep both the letter **and** spirit of the Law. For example, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment" (Matthew 5:21-22). In other words, in God's eyes, unjustifiable and extreme anger is a sin. Lust is also a sin: "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Jesus kept the Law of God, including the seventh-day Sabbath and the Holy Days and Festivals (e.g. Passover, John 2:13 & 23; Feast of Tabernacles and the Last Great Day, John 7:10-14 & 37). Why should we be any different?

Jesus validated the Law of God (including the seventh-day Sabbath and Holy Days and Festivals). Yet nominal Christians believe they were nailed to the stake. Who is right: Jesus or the nominal Christian? Satan has deceived the entire world, including Christendom; it doesn't require a huge leap to conclude that he has deceived nominal Christians into believing that the Law of God was nailed to the stake.

The definition of sin is the transgression of God's law: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (I John 3:4). In other words, whenever we break God's commandments, we commit sin. And by realizing we are sinners in need of God's mercy, we thus realize the monumental importance of accepting Jesus as our sin offering: "For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a ***sin offering***" (Romans 8:3).

By convincing many Christians that God's laws were nailed to the stake, Satan has concealed the definition of sin. By not knowing the definition of sin, we can never fully appreciate Jesus' sacrifice as our sin offering. And we cannot love God if we don't obey His laws: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome" (I John 5:3).

The Truth about Jesus

"Therefore the Law (of God) has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). The Law defines sin. Recognizing that we're sinners is the first step in our path to Jesus and salvation. Satan wants to conceal the Law primarily because it leads us to Christ and hence salvation. Thus Jesus did not abolish the Law of God. Nor did He replace God's Holy days and Festivals (Leviticus 23, Deuteronomy 16, etc.). They are Christ-centered, and reveal God's plan for us.

The truth about Jesus is found everywhere in the Bible. Jesus as the conquering Messiah is revealed in Genesis 3:15. Jesus and His plan are revealed in the ancient Passover celebration, and in the other Holy Days and Festivals. He is found in the Psalms and in the Prophets. Jesus'

gospel is therefore a message that is conveyed by the entire Bible. This message is largely futuristic. It points to the future Kingdom of God, the resurrections, and ultimately to the transfer of God the Father's throne to a transformed earth.

It's impossible to understand the entirety of Jesus' message and the significance of His birth, life, ministry, death, and resurrection by reading only the New Testament, or the Gospels. For complete comprehension, you must first pray for understanding, and then read the Bible from beginning to end. As you dig deeper and deeper into the living word of God, you'll discover the relevancy of God's Holy Days and Feasts. You'll discover the plan and Law of God. You'll meet interesting people, some of them ordinary, some of them great, some of them evil. And after you finish the Bible, if God has opened your mind, you will have discovered the truth about Jesus!

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