

Beauties of the Truth

A Forum for the Publication of Scriptural Viewpoints
Thought to be Harmonious with God's Plan of the Ages
Volume 23, Number 4, November 2012

The Stars Cry Out

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world” (Psalms 19:1-4 NIV).

In this text, notice David's use of verbs to describe how the heavens communicate to us. They proclaim. They pour forth speech. They display knowledge. They have a voice. If they are communicating so profusely what exactly are they saying?

There are many areas that we could consider in this study. However, we would like to focus our attention on the Star of Bethlehem which led the Magi to Jesus. In the book of Matthew we find eight facts regarding this star. To understand what the star really was, we must find an answer that conforms to all eight of these Biblical facts.

The first three facts are given in Matthew 2:2. After the Magi came to Israel they went before Herod and asked, “Where is the one who has been born King of the Jews? We saw his star in the east and have come to worship him.” To these traveling men the star that they followed suggested three things — birth, kingship, and the Jewish nation.

A proper rendering of the Greek text gives us a further detail regarding the star. It should read, “We saw his star **rising in the east.**” Because of the earth's rotation all visible stars, except polar stars, appear to rise in the east. This particular star then must rise in the east.

The Magi described their motive in coming to Jerusalem when they said, “we have come to worship him.” They came to worship a **Jewish King**. This may suggest that the wise men were of Jewish descent. We recall that not all Jews returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity. That would explain why they would make the arduous journey of 700 miles on camel back to Jerusalem.

In contrast to the joy of the Magi, when Herod heard them “he was disturbed” (Matthew 2:3). He called the chief priests and teachers of the law and asked them where Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet [Micah] has written” (Matthew 2:4-6).

“Then Herod called the Magi secretly and found out from them the **exact time** the star appeared” (Matthew 2:7). Notice from this passage that Herod did not know when the star appeared. Here we have another clue to the identity of the star. Apparently the star appeared in the normal night sky, something that a casual observer would not notice.

In speaking to the Magi we are told that Herod “sent them to Bethlehem and said, go and make a careful search for the child. As soon as you find him, report to me, so I too may go and worship him. After they had heard the King, they went on their way, and the star they had seen in the east went **ahead of them** until it **stopped** over the place where the child was” (Matthew 2:8, 9).

These verses contain two additional clues. First, the star went ahead of them as they went from Jerusalem to Bethlehem. So the star, whatever it was, continued from when they first saw it rising in the east on to Bethlehem. And second, the star stopped over the place where the child was.

The natural question comes to mind, “can a star stop its travel?” We will examine this more closely and see that it is the last clue that will lead us to the identity of the guiding star.

From the Biblical account then we have eight characteristics about the star of Bethlehem.

IN THIS ISSUE

<i>The Stars Cry Out</i>	1
<i>The Precious Fruit of the Earth</i>	4
<i>Ten Glorious Days</i>	7
<i>70 Bullocks</i>	8

BEAUTIES OF THE TRUTH is published as a service to the brethren to stimulate their appreciation of the riches of God's Word. It is published free of charge. Subscriptions will be entered for all requestors. Address: Beauties of the Truth, 6748 Breckenridge, Lisle, IL 60532. Editorial Board: Brothers Richard Doctor (Managing Editor), O. B. Elbert, Adam Kopczyk, David Rice, Tom Ruggirello, and David Stein. Online at www.BeautiesoftheTruth.org

- (1) It signified birth.
- (2) It signified kingship.
- (3) It had a connection with the Jewish nation.
- (4) It rose in the east.
- (5) It appeared at a precise time.
- (6) Herod did not know that it had appeared.
- (7) It endured over time.
- (8) It stopped over Bethlehem.

Modern astronomy and computers make it possible to simulate what our sky appeared like at any given time and place in history. When we incorporate these tools and simulate the skies as they appeared in the Middle East in 3 BC and 2 BC we find some amazing events.

Most stars in the heavens are what astronomers call “Fixed Stars.” Their relationship to one another does not change. They rise in the east and set in the west, moving very slowly across the night sky. In reality their apparent movement is caused by the earth’s rotation. As the earth rotates from west to east, the stars appear to be traveling from east to west.

However, there are other celestial bodies that appear to be stars, but in reality are planets. Astronomers call these “Wandering Stars.” They are so named because they do not have the same fixed movements across the sky. They appear to wander aimlessly before a field of fixed stars.

The largest planet in our solar system is Jupiter. It was named after the highest god in the Roman Pantheon. It is also known as the “King Planet.” Being hundreds of times more massive than earth the ancients attributed kingly qualities to this giant wanderer. As the Magi watched the skies in 3 BC and 2 BC, the unusual movement of Jupiter would have caught their attention.

As we peer back to the Jewish New Year Day of September 11, 3 BC we see that the planet Jupiter rose in the east, fulfilling one of the scriptural qualifications. Upon closer examination however, what appeared to be the single planet Jupiter was actually a conjunction of Jupiter and a star named Regulus. This name has the same derivation as our English word “regal.” The Babylonians called Regulus, “Sharu,” which means King. The Romans called it “Rex,” which also means King. Jupiter then is the King Planet while Regulus is the King Star.

This conjunction of the Planet of Kings with the Star of Kings may have indicated kingship in a forceful way to the Babylonian Magi. However, this alone would not have been enough to raise the expectations of these knowledgeable men. This conjunction occurs about every 12 years. But there is more that points to Jupiter as the heavenly body which guided the Magi.

As seen from the earth the course of Jupiter, as well as other planets, seems to change course and actually go backwards making a loop in the night sky. Astronomers call this “retrograde motion.” The reason for this apparent change in course is simply because, as we observe the planets from earth, we are watching from a moving platform. This is

similar to speeding past a moving car. The car we are passing appears to be going backwards. As the earth makes its orbit around the sun it is traveling at a different rate of speed than the other planets. As earth’s orbit approaches theirs, they appear to be moving in one direction. As the earth passes them they appear to change directions.

Jupiter’s retrograde is very shallow, more like a halo. After the September 11, 3 BC meeting of Jupiter and Regulus, Jupiter followed a very interesting course. After their initial conjunction Jupiter went past Regulus and then stopped. It then entered retrograde and went back towards Regulus for a second conjunction. Jupiter then progressed again and stopped a second time. Entering retrograde again it reversed course for a third conjunction with Regulus. This triple conjunction was a rare occurrence and would have caught the Magi’s full attention. They witnessed the King Planet draw what appeared to be **three halos** over the King Star. This transpired over a period of several months. The heavens were speaking to them, suggesting, “KING! KING! KING!”

In addition to this we note that Regulus is the brightest star in the constellation of Leo the Lion. We recall the text in Genesis 49:9. “You are a **lion’s cub**, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a **lion** he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his” (see also Revelation 5:5).



Herod questions the wise men

This means that Messiah would come from Judah. Judah was given the designation of the lion. Messiah would be the Lion of the Tribe of Judah. If these learned men were of Jewish descent, these words would have been very significant. As they studied the heavens, they saw the King

Planet crown the King Star in the constellation of the Lion.

This celestial demonstration began on September 11, 3 BC, the Jewish New Year’s Day — Tishri 1. This day was also the Feast of Trumpets. But rather than simply being the customary New Year proclamation, in this cosmic display we see the proclamation of something far greater, a new beginning, a new age. This may have been the indicator for the conception of Jesus within Mary.

Nine months later another interesting celestial demonstration occurred. After completing the triple crowning of Regulus, Jupiter moved on to another spectacular conjunction, this time with the brightest of all the planets, Venus, known as the mother planet. Venus is named after the Roman goddess of love. The Babylonians named the planet Ishtar, the personification of womanhood, and goddess of love. Thus, when Jupiter, the King Planet, came in conjunction with the Mother Planet, Venus, it produced the most spectacular starlight seen in centuries. With a telescope one could see that Jupiter and Venus were actually stacked together like a figure 8. In this formation neither blocked



Wise men following the star

the other, each contributed light, creating a brighter display. To the Magi, looking without a telescope, the sight appeared as a single bright star. No celestial light had appeared so bright for centuries, nor would it be seen again for centuries to come. The king and mother planets thus joined together, silently proclaiming the birth of our king, destined to become “The Light of the World” (John 8:12). As the wise men studied God’s starry canvas it is little wonder that they came searching for the new born king.

This conjunction between Jupiter and Venus occurred on June 17, 2 BC. This suggests that the birth of Jesus may have been on that very date. God’s silent testimony became the backdrop for the angelic hosts as they sang “Peace on earth, good will toward men.”

This suggestion for the birth of Jesus on June 17, 2 BC, may seem foreign to Bible Students.¹ We are accustomed to saying that he was likely born around October 1st. The testimony that we are examining seems to indicate that his birth was some 3 months earlier. Can this new date be harmonized with scripture?

We know that Jesus died on Passover, in the spring of 33 AD. The 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel showed us that his ministry was 3½ years long. That would make his baptism, when he became the anointed Messiah, 3½ years earlier, about October 1st, 29 AD.

We then assumed that October 1st would have been his 30th birthday. This is based on the fact that the earliest a Levite could begin to serve in the Tabernacle was at the age of 30. Even though Jesus was not a Levite we reason that he would want to begin his ministry as soon as possible, on his 30th birthday. However, the scriptures do not demand this interpretation. Jesus may have been baptized three months after his 30th birthday. Luke 3:23 tells us he began his ministry when he was **about** thirty years of age. If Jesus was 30 years old plus 3 months at his baptism, it would meet this scriptural requirement. If Jesus was exactly 30 years of age, the word “about” would be unnecessary.

But we might wonder why Jesus would wait 3 months after his birthday before being baptized. One possible explanation may have been because he wanted to become the anointed Messiah exactly on the Day of Atonement, which occurred some three months later. When we examine the

time of Jesus’ death we see that he very specifically fulfilled the Passover type by dying at the same time as the Pascal Lamb was being slain. If the timing of his death was so precise, then it may be reasonable to believe that Jesus would want to be baptized exactly on the Day of Atonement, thereby becoming the anointed Messiah. On this day the bullock was sacrificed as a picture of Jesus’ perfect humanity being offered in consecration to God. In the year 29 AD the Day of Atonement was on October 7th.

There are several other aspects about the Star of Bethlehem that need to be answered. When Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem we are told that the star went ahead of them until it stopped over the place where the child was. We have seen that a planet can appear to stop and reverse directions in the night sky.

As mentioned earlier, computer simulations now make it possible to see exactly where every star and planet appeared in the sky at any possible date. When these simulations are run for the year 2 BC we get a startling result. On November 5th, 2 BC Jupiter began to reverse its path and on December 27, 2 BC it stopped its retrograde movement over the town of Bethlehem, and then reversed its direction.

With excitement the Magi rode down to Bethlehem to find Jesus, the new born king. But they did not find him in a manger as most people believe. Notice the wording of Matthew 2:11. “On coming to the **house** (Strong’s 3614, a residence) they saw the **child** (Strong’s 3813, an infant) with his mother.” Jesus and his parents were no longer in a stable but were residing in a house. The Greek word translated “child” means a toddler or “a half grown child.” According to this celestial scenario Jesus was no longer an infant, but some 6 months old. God used the silent movement of stars and planets to proclaim the birth of our Savior.

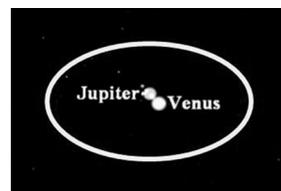
THE STARS CRY OUT AGAIN

We have seen the marvelous works of God as He set His testimony in the stars regarding the birth of our Lord. But that great heavenly witness continued as we travel to the end of Jesus’ life.

We know the exact date of Jesus’ death. It was on Friday, April 3, 33 AD (See Volume 2 page 54). This corresponds to the 14th of Nisan. Since Israel followed a lunar calendar, the 14th of Nisan was always a full moon.

We also know that Jesus died at 3:00 PM (see Mark 15:25-37). Computer simulation reveals that as the moon rose the night ending Nisan 14, it was coming out of an eclipse. Running our simulation to an earlier time of day shows what was happening with the moon at the exact time of Jesus’ death. The result tells us that the eclipse of the moon **began** at 3:00 PM, the exact time of our Lord’s death.

The eclipse however was not a total eclipse. There was a sliver of moon that had not been totally obscured. We



Venus / Jupiter conjunction

know that the moon is a symbol of the Mosaic Law. It was a lesser light than the sun, which pictures the Gospel message. This remaining sliver of moon may be telling us that, although the greater part of Israel had been cast off, there was still a remnant of faithful ones that came into Christ.

ONE MORE CRY FROM HEAVEN

A lunar eclipse occurs when the earth is positioned between the sun and the moon, thus blocking sunlight from shining on the moon. If we were able to stand on the moon during a lunar eclipse we would see the earth blocking out the sun. We would see a solar eclipse.

If we could view Earth from the moon at 3:00 PM on Nisan 14 we would witness another fascinating event. At that moment we would see behind the sun the constellation Aries, the Pascal Lamb. Just as Jesus died at 3:00 PM, the sun was eclipsed in the constellation of the lamb. This cannot be coincidence. It was God's design that illustrated how the light of the world was extinguished at that precise moment. Jesus died for the sin of the world, as our Passover Lamb.

Only God could implement such monumental movements of His astronomic creation to immortalize the death of His beloved son Jesus, the savior of all mankind. Just as Jesus was "slain before the foundations of the world," we are now beginning to glimpse the extent to which God would go in designing His celestial witness. It causes us again to reverently bow before our great Creator!²

— Br. George Tabac

(1) Please see "What did the Magi See?" *Beauties of the Truth*, Nov. 2011, for an interpretation suggesting the autumnal equinox 2 BC.

(2) To watch a video of the Power Point discourse that includes computer animations of the actual star movements and positions, please visit <http://chicagobible.org/public/videos/TheStarsCryOut>

The Precious Fruit of the Earth

"Wait patiently therefore, brethren, till the coming of the Lord. Behold! the husbandman expects the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it, till he receive the early and latter harvest" (James 5:7, Wilson Diaglott).

In the Old Testament God appointed special times for the nation of Israel to celebrate and remember certain important events. In Leviticus 23 He commanded Israel to observe seven special holy convocations. The word "convocation" means a gathering of people. In this case these were holy gatherings for special religious purposes. Five were one day observances while two lasted for seven days. These were grouped together in the spring and fall of the year.

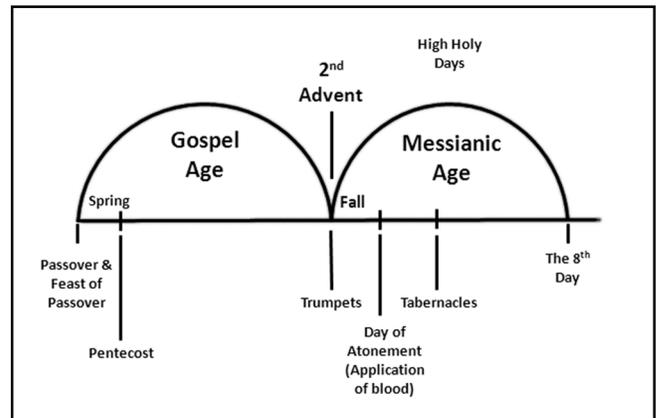
Spring Observances

- (1) Passover (Nisan 14, First month of religious year)
- (2) Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15-21)

- (3) Feasts of Weeks (Later called Pentecost, 50 days after Passover Sabbath)

Fall Observances

- (4) Blowing of Trumpets (Tishri 1, Seventh month of religious year)
- (5) Day of Atonement (Tishri 10)
- (6) Feast of Tabernacles (Tishri 15-21)
- (7) 8th Day (Tishri 22), following immediately after the Feast of Tabernacles



The Observances of Israel

God gave these seven special observances to illustrate His plan for the blessing of the world. Both the spring and fall celebrations included offering of the first-fruits of the seasonal harvests. This is significant and illustrates what James mentions in the above text. In antitype we see a celebration of the precious fruit of the earth, harvested at different times in God's plan.

THE SPRING OBSERVANCES

In order for God's blessings to come in all their fullness, justice must first be satisfied. That is why this picture begins with the Passover. The 14th of Nisan became a pivotal point in human history, as it was the day that Jesus died on the cross. It was the day that began the process of harvesting the fruitage that the earth would eventually produce. Mankind, in one form or another, would be that fruitage.

As Leviticus 23 gives instructions for the Passover we see a lovely detail that points to the very first harvest fruitage, the raising of Jesus himself. "When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD for you to be accepted; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it" (Leviticus 23:10, 11 NASB).

In the spring, the first grain that was harvested in Israel was barley. The above passage is referring to the offering of the first-fruits of barley to God on the day after the Sabbath. What makes this so interesting is on what day this occurred in the year AD 33. From year to year the Sabbath falls on different days of the month. But in AD 33

it was on the 15th of Nisan. This was the day after the Passover. So the day after this Sabbath would have been the 16th of Nisan. On that day the barley first fruit was waved before God.

God designed this beautiful little picture to illustrate the resurrection of our Lord. He died on the 14th of Nisan as the antitypical Passover Lamb. After being in the tomb for parts of three days he was raised from the dead on the 16th of Nisan. He was pictured by the first-fruits of the spring harvest to be offered to the Lord, perfect, unblemished, without leaven.

According to the law of grain offerings found in Leviticus 2:12, 13, this offering was to be seasoned with salt. In addition, it was not burned on the altar but waved before God. Subsequently, it was given to the priest for his use.

Because salt is associated with the making of a covenant, this wave offering, seasoned with salt, tells us that the raising of Jesus was in preparation for fulfilling the great Abrahamic Covenant. We also see that the resurrection of Jesus was not a sacrifice to be burned on the altar. By giving the barley to the priest for his use the raising of Jesus was the first act of assembling the priesthood. It was to strengthen and nourish the priesthood. We will see this same picture in another wave offering yet to come.

This offering of barley was done during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That week was a time of rejoicing over the special deliverance of the first-born. Although the entire nation of Israel was also delivered and is a picture of the greater deliverance of mankind, in this particular application we see a focus on the Gospel Age.

The deliverance of the world is celebrated later, during the Feast of Tabernacles. And so, the seven days connected with the saving of the first-born highlights the Gospel Age, comprised of seven stages. Here is a picture of the time period that the first-born would rejoice in their salvation, appreciating the antitypical Passover Lamb and his resurrection.

From the Feast of Unleavened Bread we then count to the next feast, the Feast of Weeks. It counts seven weeks beginning from the 16th of Nisan. Then on the next day, the 50th, the Israelites presented to the Lord an offering of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest (Leviticus 23:15-17). Two loaves of wheat bread were baked with leaven and waved before the Lord. Like the barley wave offering these were also given to the priest for his own use.

The antitype is clear. The Feast of Weeks, later called Pentecost, saw a very significant event transpire. It was on this very day that the early disciples were given the holy spirit by God. This was a sign that they were now accepted, in spite of the fact that the wheat was baked with leaven, a symbol of sin.

The act of giving the baked bread to the priest for his use illustrates the same lesson we saw with the barley. This too was an act of building up the priesthood as the two Gospel Age classes, the Church and Great Company, are presented to the Lord.

THE FALL OBSERVANCES

From Pentecost, we journey to the fall of the year. The Blowing of Trumpets brought in the fall observances. However, the events of this day are not clearly described in scripture. "Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, 'In the seventh month on the first of the month you shall have a rest, a reminder by blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall



Silver Trumpets announced a new month

not do any laborious work, but you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD'" (Leviticus 23:23-25).

This day was to be a reminder by blowing trumpets, but a reminder of what? We are not specifically told. The first day of the 7th month was

the beginning of the civil New Year. When Israel was led out of Egypt the Lord directed that they should change their reckoning and begin observing the New Year in the spring, at Passover time (Exodus 12:2). Spring time then became the beginning of the religious year. So, to an observant Jew, there are two New Year days, the civil year in the fall, and the religious year, in the spring.

But why would God want the New Year to be observed in the spring rather than the fall? He likely did this to connect the celebration of a new year with the most important event in human history, the giving of the ransom, pictured in the Passover Lamb. This fits well the events of nature, as spring is the season of rebirth and new life, while fall begins a time of dormancy. The offering of the antitypical Passover Lamb marked a new beginning for the world, a time that promised life. The apostle Paul says that Jesus has "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10).

Following 10 days after the Blowing of Trumpets was the Day of Atonement, which is followed 5 days later by the Feast of Tabernacles. When we examined the spring observances we saw that the antitype of those events occurred at the beginning of the Gospel Age. Now after the summer months, the Blowing of Trumpets begins the high holy days of the fall observances. There appears to be significance in the timing of these events.

In them we see a lovely picture of the two ages of salvation. The spring observances begin the Gospel Age. The fall observances correspond to the work of the Messianic Age. The trumpets blew on the first day of the civil year. This may correspond to the words of Paul when he wrote, "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" (2 Thessalonians 4:16). So, in the antitype we see that the blowing of trumpets, proclaiming the new civil year, pictures our Lord's return as he came to begin the kingdom work of restitution.

On the first day of the month there was a crescent moon, just a sliver of white. Watchfulness then was a critical ingredient of this feast. If there was a cloud cover it could be easily missed. In order to ensure that this event would not be missed, Jews later added a second day to this observance.

This need for watchfulness seems significant. Our Lord's second advent also calls for watchfulness. Jesus said, "Watch, therefore; for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come" (Matthew 24:42). It also reminds us of the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, a parable about watching for the Lord's return (Matthew 25:5-7).

The Lord has returned to begin the work of restitution. But before that task can be fully accomplished another important work must be done. We see this in the sequence of the fall observances. Following 10 days after the Blowing of Trumpets was the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement is traditionally a picture of the entire Gospel Age. The reason for this conclusion is that the Church presents her sin-offering, pictured in the Lord's goat. This is a work that encompasses the Gospel Age.

In this picture however, because the Day of Atonement follows the Blowing of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement pictures the time when the blood of Christ will be applied on behalf of the world of mankind. After all, that is the goal of the Atonement Day sacrifices.

Also interesting is the date the jubilee trumpet sounded. "You shall then sound a ram's horn abroad on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement you shall sound a horn all through your land" (Leviticus 25:9).

The Jubilee is here connected to the application of blood. This indicates that there are important aspects of restitution that cannot happen until the atoning blood is applied. When the blood is applied the general resurrection can begin and the kingdom swing into full operation.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES

This then leads to the Feast of Tabernacles on the 15th day of the 7th month, just a few short days after the Day of Atonement. During the seven days of this feast the Israelites were commanded to live in makeshift booths as a remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt and their time of wandering in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:42, 43).

These booths, or tabernacles, were erected next to people's homes, in their yards, on rooftops, in the public squares, and even in the court of the temple. All people, both rich and poor, would dwell in these booths covered with tree branches. It pictured the great leveling of society that will take place in the next age. No one will be allowed in any way to lord it over another.

In Zechariah, the Feast of Tabernacles will be part of mankind's worship. "Every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles" (Zechariah 14:16).

That is the appropriate feast for mankind to observe, because the Feast of Tabernacles was instituted to celebrate

Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage as well as from the perils of the wilderness. The first-born celebrated their deliverance during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a picture of the Church's deliverance during the Gospel Age. The Feast of Tabernacles will be expanded to commemorate mankind's deliverance from the bondage of sin and death. They will remember how God will have delivered them from their 6000 years of wilderness experience.

This feast of Tabernacles was also called the "Festival of Ingathering" because it celebrated the large fall harvest (Exodus 23:16). In this we see that mankind will be the final precious harvest of the earth.

THREE HARVESTS

In these special observances of Israel then we see three harvests: the harvest of the barley, the wheat, and the large multi-crop harvest in the fall. These depict the harvesting of Jesus, the Church and Great Company, and the world of mankind; the wonderful fruitage of the Plan of God.

One Jewish tradition of interest is that during the Feast of Tabernacles the Book of Ecclesiastes is read on the Sabbath of the week. The reason for this seems insightful. The theme of Ecclesiastes is how everything in this world is vanity. Solomon says that he studied and searched out everything in this world and found nothing new and nothing good. The book ends with a powerful conclusion. The last two verses say, "The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14 NAS).

We may someday hear Father Adam reciting those very words as he remembers how he hid himself from God because he was naked. He knew he had done wrong and was afraid of God's response. Along with Adam, mankind will learn to appreciate the sentiments of Solomon's words, honor God, keep his commandments and understand his righteous principles. Those principles will be validated by the experience with sin and death. Mankind will finally learn that everything outside of God is vain and empty, and no unrighteousness can be hid from our righteous judge.

Jesus said that there is joy in heaven when one sinner repents (Luke 15:7, 10). Imagine the joy when one world of sinners repents. The law of God will be planted in man's heart through the difficult lessons of personal experience, and then through the wise instruction of the kingdom. As a result, the spiritual fruitage that Adam and Eve were lacking will be developed in all the willing and obedient. This is shown in the abundance of the great fall harvest.

THE 8TH DAY

The day following the seven day Feast of Tabernacles was called the 8th Day. It too was a holy convocation. No laborious work was to be done. It was the last celebration given by God (Leviticus 23:36). We see, by its designation as the 8th day, that this observance is linked to the Feast of Tabernacles. And so we also see a vital connection in the antitype.

In scripture, the 8th day pictures what comes after the Messianic Kingdom. As a result of kingdom work, pictured by the 7 day Feast of Tabernacles, mankind will finally enter into God's 8th day rest. They will rest safely from the threat of death. They will rest from the anxiety of sin and imperfection, and their previous alienation from God.

As a holy convocation, or sacred gathering, the 8th day observance may indicate that once the kingdom work is finished, a grand public meeting will be convened where every heart will bow in thanksgiving. This convocation may coincide with the time that Jesus makes a formal presentation to God. "Then the son himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

THREE PILGRIMAGE FEASTS

In the 7 "appointed times" that we have reviewed we observe that three are termed "Feasts" (Exodus 23:14-17). They are the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles. During these three feasts all males were required to appear before the Lord, either at the tabernacle or later the temple. For many, this required a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This obligation served many purposes. This unique religious practice often formed a bond between the journeying pilgrims as they came to pay homage to their great Lord. It was a recognition of where their blessings came from as they celebrated God's goodness.

Consecrated Christians likewise share a common bond as they worship God. We gather in fellowship as we share the treasures that the Lord has "lavished upon us" (Ephesians 1:8 Weymouth). It is our privilege to celebrate God's goodness as we journey together in the Narrow Way.

As the Israelites came to worship they were also instructed not to appear before God "empty-handed" (Exodus 23:15 NASB). They were to bring some free-will offering as a token of their respect and gratitude to their great benefactor. In this we see another wonderful lesson for the Christian. In our worship our hands should be filled with acts of service to the Lord. This shows the genuineness of our worship. This is part of the way we convey our heart-felt dedication. With such sacrifices God is well-pleased.

SUMMARY

These special appointed times and feasts of Israel picture the two ages of salvation. Passover illustrates the sacrifice of Jesus and the benefit the saints receive from the blood. The Feast of Weeks shows the special place held by the spirit begotten, presented to God at Pentecost.

The Blowing of Trumpets heralded the high holy days of the fall observances. It pictures the Lord's return and the preparation of all the elements of society for the work of the kingdom. This was then followed by the great Day of Atonement, picturing the actual application of atoning blood.

The Feast of Tabernacles shows the conversion and re-joining of the world that has been wandering in a difficult wilderness condition. As the last observance, the 8th Day sees a race at peace in their renewed relationship with God.

We thank God for designing this amazing sequence of pictures. How wonderful it will be to see the world come to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. Billions of individual memories will recall their personal experiences through the wilderness of sin and pour out their heart appreciation for the Lord's deliverance. And finally, the precious fruit of the earth will be fully developed and harvested.

— Br. Tom Ruggirello

Ten Glorious Days

After Jesus' resurrection, on Nisan 16, he was on earth for 40 days teaching and encouraging his disciples. They needed his post resurrection appearances to establish their faith that Jesus was alive and that his death had been essential to God's plan. The Day of Pentecost followed 50 days after his resurrection. On the day of Pentecost the holy spirit was sent to the early church. It was manifested with tongues of fire resting on each of the disciples (see Acts 2).

When Jesus made his final post resurrection appearance he gave the disciples specific instruction "not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for what the Father had promised" (see Acts 1:4, 5). This time of waiting was the 10 days between his ascension and the day of Pentecost.

The question comes up regarding why the disciples had to wait for those intervening 10 days? Was it simply to fulfill the Old Testament picture of the Feast of Pentecost (Weeks)?



A Grand Reunion

As we consider various possibilities we recognize that the Scriptures are silent, so our thoughts here are conjectures. But conjectures can be edifying if kept within that category. Here is one possibility of what may have transpired during these 10 days.

Jesus had left the courts of heaven 33½ years earlier. Previously, he had been the archangel of God. In that position, he must have had a sense of brotherhood and family ties with his fellow angels. Imagine the joy that every angel felt in seeing Jesus raised back to life. Jesus, a returning hero, had demonstrated such faith and devotion to the will of God. Through the most grueling ordeal imaginable, he displayed great courage and strength. What anticipation must have filled the heavenly family as he prepared to return to his heavenly home.

We often see wonderful images of soldiers coming home from war. Their families greet them with boundless joy and excitement. Would the heavenly hosts be any less glad to see their Lord and friend come back to them? Maybe those 10 days were reserved for Jesus to spend personal time with all his heavenly family. For a brief time no other obligations would come before this personal time of fellowship.

He was, of course, most cherished by the Father. Many warm and intimate moments were spent between father and son. As we study the Scriptures, we see that God uses and

appreciates certain formalities and ceremonies. Thus, it is also possible that sometime during those 10 days there was some type of formal ceremony to welcome him to his rightful place, seated at the right hand of God.

In Jesus' parable of the Nobleman, we are told that "A certain man well-born went into a country distant, to receive for himself royal dignity, and to return" (Luke 19:12, Wilson Diaglott). Here Jesus told his disciples that he had to go to heaven and that someday he would come back to them. Notice that once he ascended to heaven he would receive "Royal Dignity." Yes, royal dignity, given to one so worthy, so faithful, so good.

Thus it would not surprise us that these 10 glorious days were used to celebrate the greatest created life ever lived, giving the angels an opportunity to fall down before him as he received the great honor of sitting with God on His throne.

70 Bullocks

The number of animal sacrifices during the Feast of Tabernacles was greater by far than any other feast. 70 bullocks were sacrificed during the week, 119 lambs, rams and goats in addition to grain and wine offerings.

Numbers 29 details which animals were offered on which day. The number of smaller animals was the same on each day of the feast. There was one goat for a sin offering, and 14 lambs and 2 rams sacrificed every day as burnt offerings.

In addition to the smaller burnt offerings, bullocks were also presented to the Lord. On the first day of the feast 13 bullocks were offered; 12 on the second; 11 on the third; and so on until on the 7th day 7 bullocks were offered. The total number of bullocks then added to 70.

The specific meaning of all these animals is not easy to decipher. The Feast of Tabernacles is a picture of the work of the millennium. The goat for a sin-offering then may suggest that the world will be under the mediator, still in need of the covering provided by the Gospel Age sin offerings.

In seeking the meaning of all these burnt offerings, we notice one category of burnt offerings called "free will offerings." What is unique and interesting about free will offerings is that the individual bringing the animal would do much of the work of preparing it. According to Leviticus 1, the individual would lay his hands on the head of the offering and kill it at the door of the tabernacle. He would then flay it and cut it in pieces. At that point the priests would get involved. They would sprinkle the blood around the altar, wash certain parts of the animal, and then lay them on the altar.

In this offering the individual worked with the priest to prepare his sacrifice. This appears to picture the free will offerings mankind will bring in the kingdom. Consecration is a free will offering. However, free will alone is not enough. In the kingdom, consecrations to God will be acceptable only through the assistance of the priesthood. People will have to do their part. But they will not be able to present an acceptable offering without the intervention of the priesthood.

What is unusual in the Feast of Tabernacle offerings is the diminishing number of bullocks. Why were 70 offered during the week, and why offered in descending numbers?

The number 70 appears prominently in Scripture. For example, 70 elders were selected to assist Moses in judging the people (Numbers 11:16, 17). Jesus sent 70 disciples to preach the Gospel message (Luke 10:1-20). There were 70 years of Babylonian dominion (Jeremiah 25:11).

However, one use is most appealing when trying to understand the application we are considering. Genesis 10 gives the table of nations that descended from Noah. 70 nations and languages are enumerated. The 70 nations can also be found in the rabbinical writings.

In making a connection to the 70 nations we find an interesting comment offered by Frederic Ferrar when discussing the Feast of Tabernacles. He writes, "During the week of festivities all the courses of the priests were employed in turn; seventy bullocks were offered in sacrifice for the seventy nations of the world; the Law was read daily, and on each day the Temple trumpets sounded twenty-one times, an inspiring and triumphant blast" (*The Life of Christ*, page 396).

The suggestion that 70 bullocks were offered for the 70 nations existing at the time is very interesting. This is confirmation that the nations of the world will be part of the kingdom arrangement. It may also suggest that the many ethnic groups that comprise our race will be preserved in the kingdom. These will offer themselves in consecration to God on the altar that will have been cleansed by the previous Atonement Day sacrifices. These consecrations will differ however from previous Gospel Age consecrations, which are unto death. As the Psalmist describes them he writes, "Then shalt thou be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness, with burnt offering and whole burnt offering; then shall they offer bullocks upon thine altar" (Psalm 51:19). Here the bullocks of consecration presented in the kingdom will be unto righteousness, not unto death.

But why the descending number of bullocks; 13, then 11, and so forth? One possibility is that at the beginning of the millennium there will be a greater number of people offering consecrations. As the number of consecrated individuals grows the number of new ones will at some point diminish. This is not showing less devotion as time progresses, it is simply illustrating that there will be fewer new consecrations as time goes on. It is a blessed hope that one day every heart will be consecrated to God and the priesthood will have done its grand work of reconciliation.

Another suggestion of interest is that in ancient Israel the 13th tribe was Levi, the priestly tribe. The other 12 tribes had land inheritance, but Levi did not. So the number 13 is associated with priestly, even mediatorial functions. The number of bullocks beginning at 13 and ending at 7 may picture that the work of the priesthood will be in greater need at the beginning of the kingdom. When mankind finally reaches perfection, pictured by the 7 bullocks offered on the last day, the priestly work will be accomplished.